

**ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE**

**QUESTION 453-19(2): SENIORS AND ELDERS STRATEGY**

**November 3, 2020**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madame la Presidente. My question is for the Minister responsible for Seniors. In the debate leading to the adoption of the motion calling for creation of a seniors' and elders' strategy, it was the position of the then Minister that a specific strategy would likely not be possible owing to COVID. He said that action on senior-related activities would be pursued piecemeal. I would like to know from the Minister: is this still the position of the new Minister responsible for Seniors? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Minister responsible for Seniors.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There will be an elders' strategy developed within this Assembly. Thank you.

**MR. O'REILLY:** That is a great commitment. I appreciate that from the Minister. My statement earlier today cited a number of statistics indicating the proportion of seniors is growing quickly, but it is not clear whether the strategy is going to include all services. How will the Minister not just complete a seniors' and elders' strategy but also see that seniors' planning is a lens applied to all GNWT programs and services?

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you for the question, Member for Frame Lake. We are collaborating across all government departments to identify what the gaps are and what the resources are available to seniors to figure out how we can develop a strategy that meets their needs in a holistic way. I also want to say that we plan to collaborate with the NWT Seniors' Society and other seniors' organizations and seniors as individuals in order to develop this strategy. It will be a collaborative process from top to bottom.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks to the Minister. It's a great day in the House when we get such fabulous answers. No, seriously, I do appreciate them very much. The poverty strategy talked about an integrated continuum of services, and I think that sets a good benchmark for how the seniors' strategy might roll out. How does the Minister intend to integrate cross-departmental delivery of coordinated services now until the development of a strategy with a view to the needs of seniors and elders?

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** We do now collaborate with other government departments in order to provide services to seniors, but we could be doing better. For example, I am very interested to see whether it's possible to have a common application for all seniors' services across all government departments, rather than having seniors having to apply to each government department for the service that they require. That is the kind of initiative that I'm looking at going forward. Of course, there is a lot of work related to seniors going on now around our priority to have seniors age in place with dignity. That involves housing, homecare, and other supports that will allow seniors to stay in their

homes, and that work will continue alongside the development of the strategy.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madame la Presidente. I love this new Minister. This is great. In a presentation earlier this year to the Standing Committee on Social Development, the NWT seniors said that they are ready to work with the new Minister, or the Minister responsible for seniors I think they've got a great ally, now, but how does the Minister propose to collaborate with the society and other stakeholders on the development and implementation of a new seniors' strategy during a pandemic? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Of course, the pandemic makes it more difficult. I have to say that I have attended three meetings of seniors' organizations via Zoom, and the seniors are up on Zoom. It's not a problem. They will connect and give their input. The department is hiring a person full-time for two years to lead the process of developing a seniors' strategy. It will be the job of this person to figure out how the consultation is going to work and to include the voices of everyone who needs to be heard. Thank you.