

# Politicians make call for more community policing

*MLA and councillor say frequent bike patrols could help deter downtown violence*

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## SOMBA K'E/YELLOWKNIFE

At least two Yellowknife politicians are pointing to bike patrols as a way to reduce violence downtown.

Although the RCMP confirms they have already commenced this summer, both Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green and Coun. Niels Konge have yet to see them.

Green said almost every time she walks through the downtown there is some kind of a rumble going on.

"People are yelling at one another, pushing each other. They may be doing more. I totally get why people find themselves apprehensive to be there," she said. "If I know them I will suggest to them that they settle down. I don't push it. I'm happy to call the police and let them sort it out."

She also championed community policing initiatives such as bike patrols as a way to send a "strong message" that authorities see what's going on and responding to it. Coun. Niels Konge agrees. He told Yellowknifer every spring he hears about the problem with violence downtown.

"It certainly is a good thing if police are visible," he said. "But we can't have the ability to pick up every drunk that's out there ... If the RCMP have the resources then I would like to see them do more downtown."

Green said she also hears from constituents about the yelling and noise that goes on downtown, and said people tell her it's upsetting to see so many people who are intoxicated, injured or both.

"They are a little leery about going up to people who seem to be unconscious and trying to figure out what kind of assistance they need," she said. "I think that it presents a difficult situation for the regular person. They don't feel comfortable about just walking past but at the same time they are a little apprehensive about stopping because they are not sure what all that might involve."

Green said she can't argue with people who tell her it seems as though the atmosphere downtown is getting worse. She added there are programs in place to help people who are suffering with addiction and mental health issues but nobody can force people to get help. In that line of thinking, Konge said he believes community policing could focus on providing structure and discipline to youth in Yellowknife who find themselves in trouble.

"We need to make sure our kids know that drugs and alcohol are bad choices and we need to as a society get control," Konge said. "I'm not advocating that they get beat. But they need more discipline. The people who are already on the street - I don't think there is much we can do for them. We need to make sure more people don't go there."

RCMP declined an interview about its bike patrol program.