

## MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

### STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS

October 19, 2016

**MS GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today I offer my congratulations to everyone who operates a small business in the NWT during this Small Business Week. Last year in Yellowknife the City licensed 146 new businesses, most of them small businesses, and it's clear that small business is a major driver in our economy, creating jobs, spending and tax revenue.

Mr. Speaker, I have some insight into the effort involved in developing an idea for a small business into a money-making proposition. I was self-employed before I was elected, but the experience I want to reflect on today is the development of our family business. First, the idea: a couple of evenings a week my partner would check the funeral home websites in her hometown, that casual interest moved her to recognizing that Yellowknife didn't have a funeral home and from there into thinking about whether she wanted to become a funeral director. She spent a year doing online courses to become a funeral director while continuing her day job as a social worker.

Second, the plan: near the end of her training she spent a couple of months working in a large funeral home in Edmonton. She loved working with the families, and made a decision to go into business. She began working out of Stanton offering funeral services in 2008. A family friend housed the caskets and hearse in her garage and the office for the business was in our laundry room. There were many sleepless nights at this point about giving up the certainty of a government cheque, benefits and pension in order to start a business. She had never run a business before and she worried about whether people would use her services. Government provided critical support by providing employment insurance while the business got rolling, alleviating some of the concern about cash flow.

Third, the expansion from funeral services to funeral home. We were referred to Akaitcho Business Development Corp. for mentoring, together we developed a business plan. The bank agreed to finance the purchase of a building and renovations. We held our breath while acquiring hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt, but believed the community would support this business. At this point, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment provided support by offering a year of interest payments on the commercial loan. McKenna Funeral Home opened November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. This summer, with almost eight years of business, experience under our belts, we expanded the funeral home to include a garage and casket storage. The business has one full-time employee and three part-timers.

We are grateful for various kinds of support provided by the federal, territorial and city governments as well as family and friends. The government programming I've mentioned—the employment insurance supplement, BDC mentoring, and ITI commercial loan interest payment support—was targeted very effectively and showed that these organizations know what kind of help small businesses need in the early start-up period. Kudos to them. Our biggest thanks go to the people of Yellowknife and beyond who buy our products and services and have enabled us to turn an idea into a viable business. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.