

Hay River company behind on GNWT modular home project

Cochrane outlines concerns with Concept Energy Services Ltd.

by Paul Bickford
Northern News Services
Hay River

A Hay River company is having difficulty fulfilling a contract for modular homes with the GNWT.

The issue came up in the territorial legislature on Oct. 19 with questions to Caroline Cochrane, the minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

Julie Green, the MLA for Yellowknife Centre, asked Cochrane about the contract awarded to Concept Energy Services Ltd. in 2016 to construct 19 modular duplexes in Hay River for shipment to communities throughout the NWT.

In particular, Green asked how many of those duplexes have been completed and how many have been shipped to their destinations.

"Today, what we have is eight of the 19 buildings are now partially completed," replied Cochrane. "We have three that are in Ulukhaktok, one in Inuvik destined for Fort McPherson, and four are now under construction in Concept's Hay River facility."

Cochrane noted the original contract completion dates were between March and June 2017.

"There were some delays that have been happening, so at this point they have not met the completion date," she said.

Green asked if Cochrane was taking any action to either revoke the contract with Concept Energy Services Ltd. or to work with the company to have the terms and conditions of the contract met.

"At this point, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is exploring all of the

options that are available to us to ensure that all of the houses actually meet their needs within the communities," said Cochrane, adding that the number one priority is to ensure that homes are in communities and that is why some partially-completed units were shipped to Ulukhaktok.

Attempts by *The Hub* in Hay River to contact Concept Energy Services Ltd. president Pierre (Rocky) Simpson for reaction to the minister's comments were unsuccessful before that paper's press time.

In the legislature, Green attempted to obtain financial details of the contract.

However, Cochrane said the full contract would not be available because of the Privacy Act.

The minister said there will not be any further payments to Concept Energy Services Ltd. until the products are complete or near completion.

Cochrane said a tender to complete the units in Ulukhaktok is out or will be soon.

Green noted her understanding is that 11 units are outstanding.

"What are the options for completing these remaining units?" she asked Cochrane.

The minister said many options are being looked at.

"We can either work with supporting Concept Energy to do them," she said. "There are a variety of options. We can put them out to public tender. We can look at negotiated contracts



NNSL file photo

CAROLINE COCHRANE: minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation says there have been delays in building modular homes by a Hay River company.

within communities. There is a whole gamut of different options that we can consider."

In a statement to the legislature, Green noted that, when announced, the contract to Concept Energy Services Ltd. and a smaller contract for one two-bedroom unit to Yellowknife's Energy Wall Building Products – which did successfully complete the unit – were heralded by Cochrane as a game changer that would create a new northern manufacturing industry.

"My fear is that a promising idea hasn't panned out," said Green. "Instead of being a game changer, the northern manufacturing of modular homes is a bust."

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Sara Murphy, owner of Harleys Hard Rock Saloon, plans to open a new store offering marijuana paraphernalia in Yellowknife next month. Impending cannabis legalization inspired her new business venture.

Michael Hugall/NNSL photo

Bong shop to open

Yellowknife gets head shop in response to pending pot legislation laws

by Michael Hugall
Northern News Services
NWT

As the countdown to marijuana legalization across the NWT continues, one businessperson is opening a new paraphernalia store so Yellowknifers who want to imbibe can do so in style.

Premium MJ, a shop aimed toward the sale of marijuana accessories and goodies, is scheduled open next month.

Sara Murphy, 28, came across the idea of opening Premium MJ after the Government of Canada announced the legalization of marijuana.

The owner of Yellowknife Tattoos and Harleys Hard Rock Saloon said she just wanted to make sure residents had the proper tools necessary to prepare for the

anticipated July 2018 legalization date.

"I feel people are panicking," said Murphy.

"I'm about business and I wanted to be the first one to act on this idea."

Murphy is currently in the process of purchasing a downtown building to house the shop. She said the process has gone very smooth.

Murphy's plan for the business includes a two-room space with one side focusing on the distribution of marijuana paraphernalia and "swag."

The other is a planned restaurant. The restaurant will not be intended as a place where people can spark up, although Murphy said she has a five-year plan to potentially open a marijuana dispensary on site if she feels

there is demand.

There will also be a doctor on site to provide medical marijuana licences.

Murphy said she is confident there are a lot of closet smokers in the NWT, but she's diligently doing market research anyway.

"It doesn't matter what business you get into," said Murphy. "There will always be a risk."

To make the dream of running a culture shop a reality, Murphy has partnered with Kim MacNearney of Beyond 420, a group that advocates for the responsible use of marijuana.

MacNearney who has been fundamental in bringing the discussion of marijuana education to the city ahead of legalization.

"It's coming fast," she said.