

# Constituency Newsletter

## From the Assembly

### Why is Aurora College being reviewed again?

Aurora College is not only a place to study, it is a place that is being studied, again. The Education, Culture and Employment Minister cancelled the social work and teacher education programs, saying graduation rates were disappointing. Students now enrolled in these two programs will be able to complete their studies but no new students are being accepted. Following protests, the minister ordered a top to bottom “foundational review” of the College to “confirm its long-term direction.” He then fired the board of governors, suggesting that getting rid of them was necessary to the review. None of this makes sense. In 2013, the College was subject to a thorough review that produced 36 recommendations. The author of that report said, “possibly the greatest challenge facing the college is that of rationalizing its purpose against the resources available.” The new review must provide clear direction on this point, when it is completed in March.

### Elders Day Program still on hold

Yellowknife is still without a day program for older adults. Avens operated this program until fall 2016 when staff decided to close it. A subsequent review of the program revealed that it was understaffed for the variety of needs clients had. Some required physical assistance because they were frail while others needed assistance with behavior because they are cognitively impaired with dementia and similar ailments. After much prompting, the Minister of Health and Social Services released the review in the fall. Avens has confirmed it is not interested in resuming the program at this time. The minister promised a request for proposals to meet the social needs of older adults and respite for caregivers, but the timing is up in the air. The sooner, the better.

### Cannabis plan unveiled

In November, the government presented its plan for cannabis legalization in the NWT. Here are a few highlights: the minimum age for the purchase, consumption and possession of cannabis will be 19; the Liquor Commission will be responsible for importing and selling cannabis; there will be limitations on smoking cannabis in public places; testing for drug-impaired driving will be strengthened and communities may hold plebiscites as they have with liquor to put their own restrictions in place. I expect the government to table legislation to legalize cannabis in the winter sitting (starts Feb. 7). Standing committees will then consult widely on what the public wants.

### Insight into North Slave Correctional Centre

A total of 69 inmates at the North Slave Correctional Centre mounted an unprecedented letter writing campaign to MLAs in October. We learned many inmates serve time for repeated crimes because they are trapped in a cycle of trauma and addiction and all the negative behavior that results. The lead letter writer said, “We have firsthand knowledge of how ineffectual this prison system is; it’s just a warehouse for people to bide their time, so when inmates are released, they have learned virtually nothing.” Inmates are offered a suite of group counselling and education programs through the day but they have a lot of unproductive time on their hands because the larger recreation yard had been closed for more than a year, the recreation officer position had been eliminated and the arts and crafts room dismantled. The Minister of Justice has said inmates are meeting with Corrections staff to explain their concerns. *(Read about a potential solution on page 3.)*

### Constituency Meeting

The Legislative Assembly’s winter session is February 7 to March 15.

Members will review and debate the 2018-2019 Operations and Maintenance budget.

**Constituency Meeting**  
**Wednesday January 31**  
**Baker Centre 7 PM**

*Please come and share your issues and concerns.*

### Maintenance money, traffic volume don’t match on Highway 3

The Infrastructure Minister says the maintenance budget for Highway 3 is “sufficient” but many of us who drove the highway through the summer beg to differ. There are frequent and unmarked dips, cavernous potholes and loose gravel. Even when drivers drop below the 90 km/hr speed limit, they suffer broken shocks and struts, flat tires and cracked windshields. Forty per cent of all the kilometers driven in a year throughout the NWT are driven on Highway 3, including trucks resupplying the mines and tourists. Yet only five per cent of the capital spending on roads is allocated to Highway 3. Before investing in more new roads, the government should take care of the roads already in place.



*Congratulations to our new Commissioner, Margaret Thom from Fort Providence.*

# Mid-term review process disappoints

During the last territorial election campaign, accountability and transparency were much-discussed issues. One of the ways all Members decided to increase accountability was to hold a mid-term review on the performance of the Premier and Cabinet, the first in 20 years.

The Rules and Procedures Committee created a process that was open and fair. For me, it was important that it be evidence-based and removed from the self-serving “let’s make a deal” process that leads up the election of the Premier and Cabinet by the territorial leadership committee.

The mid-term review committee met in early October. The first sign of trouble came right at the start when the MLA for Hay River North asked Cabinet if they would honour the results of the confidence motions that would be held after the question and answer session. Each Cabinet Minister said no, not unless they were forced to by motion in the House during a regular sitting.

It’s important to note that Members are elected to the Cabinet by a secret ballot and then confirmed by a motion in the House. The same process doesn’t apply in reverse though. Rather than leaving when asked, Cabinet Ministers wanted to be thrown out the door. Minister Lou Sebert lost the confidence motion after the debate, yet he survived the motion to remove him the next day.

**Why does any of this matter?** Because Ministers must be held responsible for their leadership and the work of their

departments by the Assembly. If the Members of the Legislative Assembly believe Ministers are not effective in their roles, then it is clear that Minister’s leadership is no longer wanted. Having every Member of Cabinet say they don’t care what the Members think about their performance is not only disrespectful of the will of the majority of the Assembly. It defends bad performance and poor public service using the kind of tactics that give politics a bad name.



*I was honored to meet with our new Governor-General, Her Excellency Julie Payette, during her first visit to the Northwest Territories in November.*

## Legislative Agenda behind

The 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly has passed less legislation at the mid-point of this 4 year term than either the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> Assemblies did. In addition to money bills, we have debated only five bills of substance. Reviewing, debating and approving legislation is one of our most

fundamental tasks in order to provide good governance.

It is not as if there is no need for new legislation. Every department has a list of legislation to introduce during this 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly, but the fall session ended with only one bill to review.

There has been some debate about where the bottleneck is in this process but no agreement. Regular members have been told there is no shortage of resources to accomplish the legislative agenda. Yet we sit and wait for what I hope will be a busy winter session when it comes to bills.



*Janet and George Diveky joined their grandson Graham Diveky-Suchlandt when he served as an Assembly page in the fall.*

*Janet was also honored this fall with an meritorious service award from Governor-General for her exemplary volunteer service with the Yellowknife Association of Community Living’s annual Gumboot Rally.*

# Eye-opening tour of addiction treatment

In early December, members of the Standing Committee on Social Development and the Minister of Health and Social Services toured facilities that provide addictions treatment to NWT residents. We wanted to learn about what is available and how to support people when they return home from treatment. A report on our tour will be tabled during the winter session.

We had a memorable conversation with an NWT resident who started treatment in Calgary in April, graduated in July and now lives in transitional housing there. It's his third time in treatment for alcohol addiction, and the most successful. He goes to an AA meeting almost every day and visits the treatment centre for additional support. He's in no hurry to return to his home community because this level of support is not available there, and he would be homeless.

He attended Fresh Start, a program exclusively for men. We also visited Aventa Centre in Calgary, which is specifically for women. Edgewood Treatment Centre in Nanaimo is co-ed and has the capacity to offer on-site detox and treat disorders accompanying alcoholism. Poundmaker's Lodge in St. Albert is also a co-ed facility with Cree spirituality as the cultural context for treatment.

The four centres had a number of things in common: they all operate from a trauma-informed perspective, meaning that almost every client with addictions also has a history of trauma; each follows the abstinence-based, 12-step program made famous by AA; days are structured around group counselling and positive behaviour; and all promote peer support and accountability.

After care takes a number of forms, from on-site family visits to alumni reunions to 24-hour phone support. The treatment centres connect NWT residents with their local health centre for follow up as well. A key to success is ensuring the resident being discharged is offered suitable housing (ie not a couch). Attending AA meetings is another possible follow up, but one that's not available in most NWT communities.

We also visited a therapeutic community operating inside the Nanaimo Correctional Centre, a medium security facility. At Guthrie House, residents

participate in a program operated by the John Howard Society that's similar to that offered by the treatment facilities. The focus is on group counselling that addresses the trauma underlying addictions. Residents self-identify their addiction and need for treatment, and once in the program, hold one another accountable for participating in it. This program has been operating for 10 years and in that time has seen a 44 per cent drop in residents returning to jail. The good news is that the Department of Justice is looking at the possibility of adopting this program in the NWT.

Admission to any of these facilities is literally a phone call away. It all starts with a referral from your family doctor. Waiting times are minimal, with as little as a one-week wait to begin treatment. Even if you have been before and relapsed, GNWT will assist you to go again. There's no reason to be like our friend in Calgary who said, "because of my stubbornness, it took me four decades to discover myself."



*Kyla Kakfwi-Scott and Amos Scott received the Minister's Choice Award of the Culture and Heritage Circle on behalf of Dene Nahjo.*



*It was my pleasure to draw the ticket for the prize I donated to the annual YK Seniors Society raffle. Past president Merlyn Williams kept us entertained. Thanks to Linda Basillie, the raffle organizer for all her efforts. In 2016, the raffle raised over \$40,000 for the society.*



*I joined market manager Neomi Jayaratne to ring the bell opening the last day of another successful season for the Yellowknife Farmers Market.*

# Supports that make community belonging possible

*Thanks to the Yellowknife Association for Community Living (YKACL), our community is a welcoming place for people living with intellectual and other disabilities, their families, Yellowknife employers, educators and family services providers*

It began in 1963 with services offered in portable trailers, expanded into the Abe Miller Centre in 1989 and today offers services to more than 100 clients a month in additional leased facilities. Eighty full- and part-time employees provide clients with a wide range of abilities and needs a gateway into the community. "People with disabilities want and are capable of learning and growing, working at real jobs for real pay, living independently and contributing to our community," says Lynn Elkin, YKACL's Executive Director for the past 7 years.

Support for clients and community engagement takes many forms, including:

- Employment assistance and skills training services, working with the business community to create job training and jobs
- Supported living services with daily assistance to teach, assist and encourage participants to live independently

- Respite services providing safe, individualized short-break relief for families
- Literacy outreach services in partnership with Aurora College, for students and adults with low literacy and numeracy skills
- Family and children's services, providing resource materials, parent information sessions and individual family assistance. Teen and youth programs support free and fun social groups, with advisory assistance to childcare and pre-school staff

- Outreach programs for people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum and other disorders
- Advisory services to special needs service providers territory-wide

As YKACL services have grown, the needs have grown as well. More than 50 per cent of clients originate from outside Yellowknife, and increased inclusive schooling in the capital will further increase the long term client base. YKACL continues to meet this wide range of needs from its increasingly cramped building on main street.

			Continuing Care Levels of Service					
			Able to stay at home with a small amount of help for daily activities and personal care.	Able to stay at home with help for daily activities and personal care; needs some nursing help	Needs help from nursing and/or other supports for most daily activities and personal care 24 hours a day	Needs help from nursing and other supports 24 hours a day; condition can change quickly	Needs nursing, physician and other supports 24 hours a day; medical condition can change quickly	Palliative care: needs nursing, physician, family, community and other supports 24 hours a day to maintain comfort; condition can change quickly
Living Arrangements			Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Private/Public Housing or Senior Residence	Group Home or Supported Living	Extended Care or Long Term Care Facility						
<b>Independent Living</b> Persons living in private/public housing or seniors residence who do not require support								
<b>Home Care</b> Persons living in their own home or public housing who needs assistance with daily activities and personal care			✓	✓				✓
<b>Supported Living</b> Persons requiring 24-hour support and supervision who generally do not have medical needs or require nursing care				✓	✓			✓
<b>Long Term Care/Dementia Care</b> Persons with complex care needs who cannot live independently and require 24-hour access to nursing services					✓	✓		✓
<b>Extended Care</b> Persons with complex issues requiring 24-hour nursing care, support from other health professionals and medical supervision							✓	✓

Health and Social Services Minister Glen Abernethy fielded questions about long-term care at my last constituency meeting. The terminology for each of the different levels of care for seniors can be confusing. This graphic will help us all to speak the same language when we are talking about the care elders need.



I attended the YKACL year-end pot luck lunch at the Abe Miller Centre with YKACL Executive Director Lynn Elkin, her staff and clients.

## Your Input is Important

I need to know what you think and what actions you want to see.

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