

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

ADDICTIONS TREATMENT FACILITIES TOUR

February 7, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in December, I joined my colleagues, including the Member for Nahendeh, on the Standing Committee on Social Development and the Minister of Health and Social Services for a tour of the four facilities which the government has contracts with as described by my colleague. I came away with a greater understanding of what is offered at these treatment centres and what we can do to strengthen after-care.

The four centres have a common approach shaped by the AA 12-step program with its focus on abstinence and peer support. Clients are offered group and individual therapy that acknowledges that almost everyone with an addiction has also experienced significant trauma in their lives. Between half and three-quarters of the clients complete the initial four- to six-week program, and some of the centres offer a second, transitional phase, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to you about a man I met from the NWT at the Fresh Start program in Calgary who had been sober for about nine months at that point. He says he has been an addict for 40 years and that no one who knew him believed he could change. After finishing the program, he stayed in Calgary because he does not want to go home. After two previous visits to treatment centers, he relapsed because there was not enough support for him in his community, such as daily AA meetings. He also does not have anywhere to live. He had been living under houses and in an abandoned car prior to going to Calgary.

We met other people in recovery in other treatment facilities who highlighted these same challenges: finding support for their sobriety in their communities and finding housing. The question is how to build on their success so that their investment in their sobriety and the government's investment in their treatment continues.

There are some basic ingredients for success. First, people who are leaving treatment need to be discharged into housing. Discharging people to a couch perpetuates the chaos they have worked so hard to put behind them. Second, we have to figure out how to strengthen after-care in the communities that do not have AA groups by increasing access to the after-care provided by the treatment facilities themselves. Mr. Speaker, this tour was both helpful and hopeful. Addictions do not have to be a life sentence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.