

Constituency Newsletter

From the Assembly

Getting GNWT on board with City's homelessness plan

Congratulations to the City of Yellowknife for completing its 10 year plan to end homelessness. Research for the report confirms that overcrowded and substandard housing pushes people to leave their home communities for Yellowknife. The availability of more affordable goods and a wider range of services pull them here. But newcomers soon learn that housing is unaffordable and waiting lists for subsidized housing are long. So homelessness in Yellowknife is a territorial problem.

The report firmly says that "continuing to manage homelessness costs more than ending it." The starting point is to create a high-level leadership council, including elders and people with lived experience, to implement the plan. During the fall session I will ask the Housing and Homeless minister to participate in the council and begin working on solutions.

The report is available on the City's website.

AVENS Seniors Day Program Assessed for Renewal

AVENS, A Community for Seniors suspended its seniors' day program late last year pending a thorough review. AVENS, the NWT Department of Health and Social Services and the NWT Health and Social Services Authority undertook the review together. A survey of clients and caregivers confirms the need for more seniors' day program options, and for additional programming for caregiver respite.

The review assessed the current space and design for the program at AVENS, policies, procedures and equipment. There was also consideration of how many staff are needed and what kind of training they require to deliver the program. Best practices in other jurisdictions were studied as well.

Information gathering and analysis has now been completed and a draft report with recommendations is under review. I look forward to the release of the report and will work to see a new program resourced and launched.

Survey Shows Critical Public Housing Need

The NWT Housing Corporation has released results of its territory-wide survey and the news for seniors' housing is not good. Yellowknife's has 344 public housing units, and non-profits offer an additional 94 units. Seniors occupy about a quarter of public housing units.

People who responded to the survey had some good ideas for creating more affordable housing, including tiny homes and more co-op housing. The Housing Corporation is pushing home ownership as the best solution, but people with low income can't afford to buy or maintain homes.

Constituency Meeting

The Legislative Assembly's next session starts September 19. The Mid Term Review takes place October 5.

Health and Social Services Minister Glen Abernethy will attend my constituency meeting to answer questions on long term care and other issues.

Monday September 11
Baker Centre 7 PM

Please come and share your issues and concerns.

The real solution is for the federal and territorial governments to build more energy-efficient housing. The GNWT has consistently refused to expand the public housing stock. Meanwhile, the federal government has offered a paltry \$3.6 million a year for 10 years. We have a long, long way to go to meet current housing needs. I'll continue to push the government to invest in housing before building roads.

Sobering Centre and Rides Programs Begin

A new sobering centre and street outreach program have opened to get intoxicated people to a safe place where they can sober up.

The City has contracted the Yellowknife Women's Society to run the outreach program. Staff have a van to provide a ride to the sobering centre for those who need it. The NWT Health and Social Services Authority contracted the NWT Disabilities Council to run the sobering centre.

The programs are a great example of how the GNWT must partner with the City to solve the territorial issue of homelessness and addictions that has become centered in Yellowknife. I'm going to press for continued resources to meet these needs. Call the Outreach Program hotline at 445 7202 to request assistance for persons in need



Lynda Koe received the territories' highest civilian honor, the Order of the NWT, in recognition of her decades of service to seniors and the community as Care Supervisor at Avens: A Community for Seniors.

Getting Serious About Reducing Family Violence

Redo the Family Violence Survey

Four out of five murders in the NWT in 2015 involved domestic violence, more than twice the national rate. That's the same rate as in 2010. The coroner's report on these findings said we need a massive shift in attitudes so people realize that violence is not normal or acceptable. We need education for young people, public advertising campaigns, and culturally appropriate on-the-land programming.

It's been 10 years since the last survey of public attitudes on family violence. That survey showed that a quarter of men and 16 percent of women still believe that family violence is a private matter. Judging by the lack of change in murder rates and causes, our public awareness campaigns aren't working well and those attitudes haven't changed.

I am renewing my call for this government to budget funds in 2018-19 to redo the Family Violence Survey. Updating the survey will give us the information we need to create an effective new action plan to address the attitudes that perpetuate family violence.

New Day Program Renewed

New Day—the program to help men unlearn their habits of violence towards spouses and families—was finally renewed after a period of controversy and confrontation.

The Department of Justice was going to let the program die, even though reducing family violence is a priority of this Assembly's mandate. Reacting to the backlash against cancellation, Justice contracted an evaluation that confirmed the program's success for those who completed it. Regular members lobbied to have the program reinstated. Then, a request for proposals to deliver a revamped program scrapped the previous approach, and only offered a one-year contract. When no one bid on the contract, it looked as if the program was going to die yet again. Then Justice made the surprise announcement that the contract for program delivery had been awarded to the John Howard Society for four years.

New Day continues to operate. We'll see how well the revamped delivery meet client needs. The best lesson from this sad episode is for the Justice department

to stop fixing what isn't broken and to work with stakeholders for the best results.

"Unfounded" Sexual Assault Complaints

Since the winter session of the Assembly, I've been following up on reports of the RCMP dismissing 30 per cent of the sexual assaults complaints in the NWT. These cases are described as "unfounded" meaning that police don't believe a crime was committed. As a result of my questioning, a review of the "unfounded" complaint files uncovered errors in coding complaints, and the "unfounded" number has been reduced to 18 per cent. I followed up in June with the Justice Minister to urge that the cases which are no longer considered "unfounded" be re-opened and the victims contacted to test the case for further action. The Minister hasn't given very good answers to that suggestion, and I'll continue to press him. Meanwhile, I will continue to call for better oversight of sexual assault complaints. A key improvement we could learn from other jurisdictions is to have a civilian member on the panel reviewing cases to determine their validity.

Private Hospital Space for Sexual Assault Victims

I followed up in the Assembly to support the request by the Native Women's Association of the NWT for a dedicated space at the hospital to receive and

treat victims of sexual assault. Now, victims are received in the common area of the emergency ward, which offers no privacy. The Minister of Justice has followed up with the RCMP on these concerns, and also reports that consideration is being given to creating a separate and private entrance to the RCMP detachment, and a new interview room that is less intimidating for victims. I'll monitor and push for progress on these matters in the Assembly and through my work on the Social Development Committee.



Ivan Ceria from Sir John Franklin High School was the 2017 Youth Parliament "MLA" representing the Yellowknife Centre Riding. Students from every NWT constituency attend the mock parliament every second year. They learn about governance, meet in committees and stage a youth Legislative Assembly session with the real Members acting as pages.



Construction was officially launched in June on the new addition to École Allain St-Cyr. Attending the sod-turning ceremony were Commission scolaire francophone Territoires du Nord-Ouest Superintendent Yvonne Careen, Board Chair Simon Cloutier, Education Minister Alfred Moses, Public Works and Services Minister Wally Schumann, Frame Lake MLA Kevin O'Reilly, L'association des parents ayants droit de Yellowknife President Jacque Lamarche and me. The project is expected to be completed in December 2018.

Mid-term Review Highlights Fall Assembly Session

Work is underway to review how effectively the government is achieving the mandate of the 18th Assembly. We want to make the best use of our resources for the people of the NWT in the two years we have left.

This is the first time there has been a mid-term review since 1999. The review will take place in the fall session. This is a multi-step process involving both the mandate and Cabinet's efforts to implement it.

All Members agreed to the mandate document and the mid-term review shortly after the election in November, 2015. During the last sitting, the government rated its progress on fulfilling the mandate. Of the 200 commitments, government says 40 have been fulfilled, 153 are underway and

seven are in the planning stage. Regular members also assessed progress on the mandate and we produced our own report. We don't fully agree with the Cabinet's assessment, but there's been considerable progress in some areas, while many others still have a long way to go.

All Members met twice before the summer to assess how the NWT and the needs of its residents have changed in the last 18 months, and how these changes are reflected in the current mandate. Once the revisions have been agreed to, the mandate will be tabled in the Assembly for debate.

The second part of the mid-term review is to evaluate the performance of all ministers. The ministers will evaluate themselves and they will be evaluated

by Regular Members. The results of these reviews will be made public and debated in the House. The process will include a vote of confidence on both Cabinet's progress on the mandate and individual ministers' performances. The vote will take place in an open forum by secret ballot at the beginning of October. If Ministers don't pass the confidence vote, they could be removed from Cabinet.

The terms of reference for the review are in a report from the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures, which includes additional detail on the review. The Cabinet member on that committee did not agree with the report, and filed a dissenting report.

Go to my website for a link to all the documents referred to in this story. www.mla-yellowknifecentre.ca

Changes to Education Act Pass

The government's proposed changes to the Education Act (Bill 16) were spelled out in just a few sentences. But the debate they triggered occupied much of my time in the last year. It is the issue that has generated the largest and most divisive reaction so far in my term. I received dozens of emails from those with a stake in junior kindergarten and the proposal to reduce student instructional hours.

Regular Members succeeded in getting more resources in the budget for junior kindergarten. But make no mistake, JK is not fully funded. School boards have decided they don't have the funds to bus four-year olds this fall. I will continue to press the government to fully fund this important educational support.

During negotiations for a new contract, the GNWT and teachers signed an agreement aimed at improving both teacher wellness and student achievement. But the only option presented to Regular Members was to cut instructional time by up to 100 hours across the board.

As I said during debate on the Bill, teachers have legitimate concerns about the long hours they work and the impact



I rode my bike in this year's special Canada Day parade celebrating our 150th anniversary of Confederation.

it has on their wellness. There aren't enough teachers in our schools to keep up with all the demands of students, parents and administration.

Meanwhile, parents expressed concerns about whether the high school diploma their children would earn in the NWT would be on par with Alberta. If instructional hours were reduced below the Alberta minimum, would students still have enough time to prepare for departmental exams? Yellowknife Catholic School Board trustees answered this question by passing a motion to keep high school instructional hours the same as Alberta's.

I tried to find a middle ground between teachers and parents. I proposed an amendment to Bill 16 to reduce instructional hours by 45 rather than the full 100 at the high school level. This change would give teachers an additional 55 hours to spend on ways to improve their health and student outcomes, and still provide parity with Alberta. This amendment was defeated and the Regular Members voted with the government to pass the Bill. I abstained.

The department is preparing an evaluation plan for the reduced hours to measure the impact the changes are having once implemented this fall.

New Yellowknife Day Care is First Class



Yellowknife Day Care Association Executive Director Marine Voskanyan took me to the 52nd Street construction site that will be the child care facility's new address in 2018.



The new 5,000 square foot facility is purpose-built to the highest standards for care of children infant to 8 years.

On track to open at the end of 2017 with three times the space and more than twice the capacity for youngsters, the Yellowknife Day Care Association's (YDCA) new facility on 52nd Street is the latest expansion to the association's 36 years of service to Yellowknife parents.

YDCA Executive Director Marine Voskanyan describes the expansion as "a dream come true."

"The old facility is not a purpose built day care," she says, "We made it work, but now we are moving to a facility that meets the highest standards."

The new space has capacity for 32 babies, 56 preschoolers and 16 after-school children up to 8 years old, and should clear the waiting list of parents seeking child care. The after-school program was suspended two years ago

for want of space, but will be back this fall in Northern United Place rooms pending the opening of the new YK Day Care building at year end.

The new two-storey centre has more than 900 square meters of space, including four nursery, multi-purpose activity room, classrooms, a kitchen, pre-schooler rooms and full staff and administrative accommodations.

Expanded facilities also bring increased employment, with staffing increasing from 14 to 25 full- and part-time staff.

The YDCA appreciates the support for the project from Clark Construction, PSAV Architects and the Dept. of Education, Culture and Employment. ECE is providing funds for some equipment and furnishings, and there will be special fund-raising events this year.



I attended the Skills Canada Territorial Skills Competition. The one-day event highlights trades and technology careers for students, parents, educators, and the general public. It offers young northerners an opportunity to test their skills in an Olympic-style competition.

Did you know?

Vital Statistics Act

Regulations have been amended and forms developed for people born in the NWT to change the sex designation on their birth registration. Residents who wish to register with a single name based on their traditional culture may now apply to do so. Contact the Registrar General of Vital Statistics at 1-800-661-0830 if they have any questions.

Medical Service Fees

The NWT Health and Social Services Authority (NWTSSA) has established standardized fees for services that are not covered by the NWT Health Care Plan. Such fees include vaccinations for travel, employer-required medical exams and sick notes from doctors. See the list of fees on the NWTSSA website.

Enhanced NWT Child Benefit

The enhanced NWT child benefit is now in effect. If you filed a tax return in 2016 and your income is less than \$80,000 per year, you should have received a cheque or direct deposit on July 20. If you have questions, contact CRA Benefits at 1-800-387-1193.

Your Input is Important

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

Julie Green

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