

JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
Managed Alcohol Program
Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Health and Social Services—February 28, 2018

MS. GREEN: Moving on to my next question, I would like to commend the Minister for finding a permanent home for the sobering centre, and I look forward to the day that that opens. I would like to pursue a point I made in my reply to the budget address, and that is the possibility of creating a managed alcohol program in that new space. This would be a program where people who are chronic alcoholics are served a measure of alcohol as a way to help them control their addictions without resorting to negative behaviour of all kinds which may be criminal. It may be involving the hospital and so on. Can the Minister tell me what would need to happen for him to make a case for a managed alcohol program in that space? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I already made a commitment to move forward with exploring a managed alcohol program in the sobering centre, but I indicated that we wouldn't even explore that until the sobering centre had been open a year, which would give us an opportunity to sort of get our feet wet, figure out how things are working, maximize or make sure that we are as efficient as possible before we start exploring that. Now, I do know that we did open our first sobering centre in July, but we haven't really gotten into our sobering centre per se. It will still be a number of months before we get into that building. My commitment still stands. I have directed the department, a year after the sobering centre opens, to begin exploring the possibility of incorporating a managed alcohol program into that facility. I stand by that commitment, but I'm not prepared to pull the plug on that one year until we have been in that new building for a year. It will be towards the end of this Assembly, assuming we get it in the next couple of months. Thank you, Mr. Chair.