

**JULIE GREEN—MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**Guthrie House Addictions Treatment Model**  
**Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review**  
**Dept. of Justice—March 6, 2018**

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Standing Committee on Social Development had the opportunity to visit a place called Guthrie House at the Nanaimo Correctional Centre. It is a therapeutic community within a corrections setting. I know the Minister has been there as well. I wonder if he could give us an update on the planning that is taking place to pilot a model such as Guthrie House within the NWT corrections? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also was impressed by my visit to Guthrie House when I was there in the latter part of last year. I understand we have developed a working group to look into the possibility of having a similar facility in the Northwest Territories. It is fairly preliminary, but I can say that, when the department went down, I think I can speak for the others who were with me, we were all impressed with Guthrie House and certainly would be considering such a model in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is good news that there is a working group looking into a similar program in the NWT. Can the Minister give us any more specifics around who is on the working group, what they have been asked to do, when they are going to report on it, when there may be an ask in the business plan to fund the pilot, that kind of detail? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I could defer that question to Mr. Goldney, I think he could give more detail. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. Goldney.

**MR. GOLDNEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and yes, the working group is very active, comprised primarily of officials from our corrections division. We have also included staff members at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre, and we do have the support of -- apologies, I forget the position, but we do have assistance with an official from the Department of Health and Social Services, from their mental health and addictions section, helping to evaluate potential program design and doing some preliminary costing.

We are very encouraged by the results that we are seeing so far from our look at the potential for this model to be applied at one of our institutions. The work will also include a program design that makes sense for the Northwest Territories, so we do anticipate that there will be changes to the model that we saw in the context of British Columbia in Nanaimo, but we are very encouraged by the results that we are seeing so far.

We are also looking at our inmate population and trying to keep point-in-time assessments of what kind of numbers we might have for our inmate population that could benefit from a program like this. We do recognize that we have some challenges in applying the Guthrie model wholesale, so we will have to consider things like the amount of time our inmates are available to us, but so far we are very encouraged that we will be able to come forward with a model that makes sense. We will have some more information on what the potential cost implications might be.

I would just also add that we have met with staff at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre who were also very encouraged by the potential this program might offer or a program like this might offer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you. I would like to thank the witness for the detail on that. Could he just now fill in a little bit around the timing? At what point does he anticipate the department will be ready to come forward looking for money to fund a pilot? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. Goldney.

**MR. GOLDNEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, our objective is to model this and cost this out so that we would be in a position to make changes in our next business plan. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to seeing that in the next business plan.

I recognize that there are challenges around time served. That was true in Guthrie House, as well. The inmates needed to be there for four months in order for the program to be successful. Another dimension of that program was that the John Howard Society actually was the staff support within the facility. What are the witness' thoughts on how to deal with those two potential challenges? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Mr. Goldney.

**MR. GOLDNEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the things that encourages us is the evolution going on within corrections right now to provide more modular programming and ongoing support for offenders once they are released from our facilities, and we are doing work within our probation services to provide that support.

We will certainly be looking at community partners as options to help deliver programs as offenders transition away from our facilities. We do recognize that one of the initial hurdles will be that peer support that seems to be a key feature to the success of the therapeutic community model, so we will be very interested in options that might assist on that front, but we do recognize that as a challenge. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those are the challenges, and I am happy to hear that they are being considered up front. One of the real successes that Guthrie House

has is working with residents to find them housing. They start working on the question of where they are going to be released to, almost from the time they come into Guthrie House. The idea there is that no one would be released into homelessness. I would like to know whether the department is also making this a priority; that is, where are inmates going to be released? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand we do that with our case managers now, but there are some challenges. One of the challenges being the shortage of available housing for anybody, and particularly in the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, if I recall correctly from Guthrie House, what the John Howard staff do there is set people up with market housing and then find the support to help pay for the market housing. Is that something that the Minister could look at for those inmates who are being discharged into communities with market housing?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Mr. Chair, yes, we could look at it. We have to be always cognizant that there are others looking for housing, and we do have it generally in the Northwest Territories, a shortage of housing, so there are some challenges, but we can look at it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Ms. Green.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am happy to hear that the Minister is willing to do that. What we heard from the inmates we met was that this was critical to their success. Rather than being discharged into the same kind of housing situation that they left when they originally got into trouble, they would be in a place over which they had control of who was in and out, and what was going on within the place. I recognize that this is an investment, keeping people in their own homes at a cost of, let's say, the average rent for a two-bedroom in Yellowknife, which is around \$1,650. It is a lot cheaper than keeping them incarcerated. I hope that the Minister, in looking at this initiative, also take into account a cost benefit analysis of incarceration versus release into market housing. I wonder if he has a comment on that? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. LOUIS SEBERT:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Clearly, there is a benefit to people not being incarcerated, because that is a very expensive housing option, if I can put it that way. Again, the challenge we face is the shortage of housing, and it might be difficult to suggest that our inmates upon release should get some priority over others. That is the problem we are going to be facing. Thank you.