

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

YELLOWKNIFE SOBERING CENTRE AND DAY SHELTER

October 16, 2018

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Yellowknife voters have chosen strong, business-oriented leadership for their city council. I am looking forward to working with them for community prosperity, not only in economic terms, but also for healing and recovery for our most vulnerable residents. Previous city councils have been valuable partners with the GNWT and non-profit organizations offering services to this population, and I hope that will continue.

Services to the downtown population of intoxicated individuals took a huge step forward last month when the sobering centre and day shelter opened together under one roof in my riding. The new combined facility is more than just a place out of the cold. In addition to expanded services for bathrooms, showers, and laundry, it is the new storefront access to health and social services programs, offering help to those ready to deal with addictions and find a way off the street. This is a huge and welcome shift.

With additional staff on site, clients can access programs for healing, anger management, and healthy relationships, as well as take part in activities. The combined location provides a focal point for partnerships with the city's outreach program, the RCMP, and the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation, among others. All of this flows from an understanding that our fellow citizens are suffering and that non-judgmental support can reduce the harms of addictions, poverty, and homelessness.

I realize that high levels of street intoxication are a concern to all of us. As the MLA for Yellowknife's downtown riding, I field a lot of public concerns. I want to remind people that these problems are not the result of the presence of the day shelter, and that services must be offered where clients are found. The first day shelter was created as an effective response to a lack of a safe place to warm up, eat, and use the bathroom. Since the opening of the new centre, efforts have been made to tune up coordination of services to effectively direct clients to the centre.

I congratulate the Minister of Health and Social Services for championing the need for continually improved services and getting the program resources that are so hard to find. I will have questions for the Minister on where we go from here. Mahsi.