

# From protest to celebration

Local pot activist looks to new era of legalization

by Simon Whitehouse  
Northern News Services

After nearly a decade of fighting for legalized marijuana, Kim MacNearney is finally moving from protest mode to celebration mode as the drug became available in the North, Oct. 17.

*Yellowknifer* spotted MacNearney at the Liquor Shop, the sole retail distributor for Yellowknife after a \$26.66 purchase of pre-rolled cannabis. After the purchase Wednesday, MacNearney went to the legislative assembly to listen to MLAs speak to the issue before hanging out downtown to wish people happy legalization day.

"I feel amazing and I think it is like a dream," she said happily. "I can't even believe it is reality. I didn't think the day would come and that it just would be a medical push for a long time. To be fully legal, I didn't expect that. It is the end of an amazing push by lots of people."

MacNearney has been a leading advocate for legalized cannabis since she and her husband Craig were charged for growing multiple pot plants at their home in 2009. The couple were convicted in 2014 of growing marijuana. Since then, she has become the poster person locally for the push to end prohibition. She has been known for heading the annual 4/20 protest since 2012 and starting her own marijuana consultation business called Beyond 420.

She doesn't hold grudges from her experience, but looking back, she is appreciative that the change did eventually come.

"To be persecuted for something so intensely and then to finally have a societal switch. I almost want to be like - 'I told

you that it wasn't that bad' or 'You treated me like a dirtbag and it wasn't that bad.' "The other part of me is not quite an 'I told you so,' because I'm just glad that no one ever has to go through what I went through."

MacNearney said as an activist, she has tried to be as positive as possible and has been slow to criticize as the GNWT worked through the process of legalizing the drug. Even at the Liquor Shop, she noted the price was on the high end, but stated that she was likely paying a price that reflected the quality of the product.

### Important to be aware of 'bigger picture'

"I've really noticed people being negative about it, whether it is the general public or activists, people are picking it apart," she said, noting for example, complaints about how much one can grow or carry. She admits she is also critical of some of the fines and jail time that is included, however, she said being aware of the bigger picture is important.

"I am not going to let that cast a shadow on the fact we are in the middle of a massive fundamental shift with regards to cannabis, prohibition and cannabis awareness," she said. "There is no away around that because prohibition is never good."

MacNearney is looking forward to the implications of legalization which include growing business opportunities and less apprehension among medical users about trying it for medicinal therapy.

"(Removing that stigma) is probably the biggest thing because people who have been curious about its potential medical benefits will be far more willing to come out and try



Dylan Short/NNSL photo

**Kim MacNearney stands outside the uptown Liquor Shop on Oct. 17 - the day of legalization of cannabis across Canada. The leading pot activist purchased the newly available product at Yellowknife's only retail distributor and celebrated during the day by wishing the general public a happy legalization day.**

it. At its base, it is a plant that has medicinal qualities."

She also notes that with the acceptance of cannabis for recreational users, it will allow

for a professionalization of its sale, with specialists being able to freely communicate the best types of marijuana to suit specific needs.

- with files from Dylan Short

### MLAs press, from page 4

Students are flunking out because they are unable to take university level elective courses in Yellowknife, Cochrane acknowledged.

She said the review was very "negative focused" during that meeting.

It should be redeveloped as a bachelor of social work degree, which would ameliorate the challenges students face in taking third and fourth-year courses in their first year of university.

Moving Aurora into a polytechnic university would not mean "becoming all to everyone" and quality programming is a must, said Cochrane.

A future for Aurora College must establish an "identity" for those who attend and specialize in transferable and recognizable credentials, she said.

- Avery Zingel

### Sobering centre could pilot managed alcohol program

A managed alcohol pilot program could be considered by the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) as early as one year into the Yellowknife sobering centre's opening.

The centre is a "huge and welcome shift" to serving the downtown population, said MLA Julie Green in the legislative assembly Oct. 16. The new facility is "more than just a place out of the cold," she said.

Its expanded services for bathrooms, showers and laundry as well as access to health and social services are a shift to help those living with addictions.

Partnerships with the city's street outreach, RCMP and the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation all converge in the new facility.

"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," said Green.

Intoxication in the downtown core is a common public concern, said Green, adding that the shelter is not the source of these problems.

"Services must be offered where clients are found," she said.

Green congratulated Minister Glen Abernethy for "championing" the need for improved resources that are difficult to find.

She asked whether HSS would consider a managed alcohol program during this assembly.

Abernethy is "committed" to having HSS explore a possible managed alcohol program pilot at least one year after the shelter first opened.

"We have seen that the managed alcohol program does work in other jurisdictions. I had an opportunity to visit a managed alcohol program in Ottawa which is getting some really great results," said Abernethy.

Additional staff on site connect clients with healing, anger management and information on healthy relationships.

**JULIE GREEN**  
MLA YK Centre

**October 21 - 27**

**FAMILY VIOLENCE AWARENESS WEEK**

This year's theme is "Standing Together to End Family Violence"

In the time of MeToo, let's be believers, helpers and supporters.

Communities can end family violence.

Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

Green asked how the department will continue to monitor the effectiveness and delivery of the new centre as a harm reduction measure.

HSS contracted NWT Disabilities Council to track individuals using the service and the value of services people expect and need. The Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation is using the program space to offer programming.

Green asked for additional funding to the Common Ground litter pick up program to address increased littering in the area.

Abernethy said he was unsure of the financial situation of the program, but acknowledged its value and said he was willing to explore continuing the program.

- Avery Zingel

## Haunted Halloween Annual Benefit Auction

OCTOBER 26

Spook-tacular Event Fundraiser hosted by the NWT Disabilities Council

Visit:  
[nwtcd.net](http://nwtcd.net)

Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

Honourable Bob McLeod  
MLA Yellowknife South



Constituency Office: 867-445-9457  
Email: [bob\\_mcleod@gov.nt.ca](mailto:bob_mcleod@gov.nt.ca) • [www.mla-yellowknifesouth.ca](http://www.mla-yellowknifesouth.ca)