

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

APPREHENSION AND DETENTION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM BY RCMP

October 23, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an incident that calls into question the trust that should exist between women and the Yellowknife detachment of the RCMP. That trust has been eroded here by the police response to a recent assault. The national leadership of the RCMP is talking about a new relationship with women, but I am concerned the news hasn't reached G Division here, in the NWT.

In May of 2017, a man sexually assaulted an intoxicated woman in the alley behind the movie theatre in Yellowknife. Theatre staff called the RCMP, who arrested the assailant. What is more surprising is that the RCMP took the woman, who had just been sexually assaulted, to their cells, not to the hospital, not to a family violence shelter, not to the women's shelter, to their cells.

Mr. Speaker, Judge Garth Malakoe brought this unacceptable treatment to light when he convicted the accused in August. In his ruling, he said, and I quote: "I am unable to imagine circumstances which would justify this type of treatment of a victim of sexual assault. It appears the victim was not treated with dignity or compassion that she or any victim of sexual assault deserves."

After the assailant was sentenced, the officer in charge of the Yellowknife detachment responded to the questions the judge and others have raised about this incident. He claims this incident has provided a teachable moment for members, but he hasn't given a reason for not taking the victim to the hospital, to Alison McAteer House, or anywhere else that was safe. He has said, "Members offered the woman victim services, but she didn't want them." The inspector acknowledged the victim shouldn't be in police cells because it appears insensitive. These statements, Mr. Speaker, miss the mark in terms of treating the victim with compassion and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, the RCMP at the national level responded to the scandal of their handling of the unfounded sexual assault complaints by promising a new relationship with women. An action plan was released in December of last year. It says, and I quote: "Sexual assault is a devastating crime that has traumatic and long-lasting effect on victims. A negative experience with police investigators can bring more trauma to victims and discourage others from reporting these crimes."

Mr. Speaker, I would argue that the Yellowknife detachment has further damaged an already frail relationship with women because of their treatment of this victim, and I will have questions for the Minister of Justice. Mahsi.