

Editorial & Opinions

COMMENTS AND VIEWS FROM YELLOWKNIFER AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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You can e-mail us at editorial@nnslnsl.com; mail to Box 2820, Yellowknife X1A 2R1; or drop your letter off at our office at 5108-50th Street.

All letters submitted must be signed with a return address and daytime telephone number so that we can confirm it came from you.

Not all letters will necessarily be published. Preference is given to short letters of broad interest or concern.

We particularly encourage new contributors as we attempt to publish a cross-section of public opinion.

Letters of more than 300 words, open letters and those published elsewhere are seldom used. We reserve the right to edit for length or taste and to eliminate inaccurate or libelous statements.

We may also choose to use a letter as the basis for a story.



NNSL file photo

Recent allegations of inappropriate sexual conduct between two North Slave Correctional Complex (NSCC) employees and former inmate Kelly Canadian – both inside and out of the institution – has Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green calling for an investigation and for good reason.

What's going on at the jail?

Allegations of inappropriate sexual relationships must be investigated and measures taken to correct problem if founded

Northern News Services

A jailhouse sex scandal may make for good headlines but there is no denying it is poisonous to the institution.

Recent allegations of inappropriate sexual conduct between two North Slave Correctional Complex (NSCC) employees and former inmate Kelly Canadian – both inside and out of the institution – has Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green calling for an investigation and for good reason.

If true, that corrections officials, who are paid to oversee – and protect – prisoners, are engaging in sexual



Facebook photo

Kelly Canadian, 26, has retained Alberta-based lawyer Steven Cooper who is preparing a lawsuit against the territorial government, seeking damages for the "harm" caused to his client while allegedly engaging in sexual relationships with staff members at the North Slave Correctional Complex (NSCC).

THE ISSUE:

TROUBLING CLAIMS
ABOUT JAIL STAFF

WE SAY:

INVESTIGATION NEEDED

relationships with inmates while in their care it would be a shocking abuse of power.

Canadian claims the first of two relationships began at the jail in September 2016. At that time an employee asked him to perform oral sex when the two were alone and unsupervised in the staff member's office. He alleges the incident was the first of some 40 encounters between himself and the man from 2016 to 2018.

It goes without saying that to be a prisoner incarcerated in a correctional facility is to be marginalized to the fullest extent society allows. This is not to say that we should automatically feel sorry for people who are sent to jail, but to note that their incarceration makes them vulnerable to mistreatment if any were to occur behind those walls.

When people think about jail they often think about punishment. But when considering North Slave Correctional Complex, what we are usually talking about are inmates in remand awaiting court dates or prisoners serving sentences for offences that don't justify penitentiary time – thefts, assaults, impaired driving and process crimes, such as failing to make

a court appearance.

Canadian was serving nine months for theft and assault when he was sent to jail in 2016.

Most prisoners at North Slave are Indigenous and are either residential school survivors or descendants of residential school survivors. Alcohol and substance abuse play a major role in most of the cases.

In any event, residents of the Northwest Territories have left it to the Department of Justice to ensure Yellowknife's jail is being properly managed and its prisoners cared for in a professional manner.

Having sex with inmates, giving them money and gifts and carrying on with relationships outside of jail would not only be a violation of that trust, it would be a serious breach of security.

In his 2016-2017 annual report, Ivan Zinger, correctional investigator of Canada, stated that "rehabilitation and reintegration cannot be accomplished in a workplace that tolerates a culture of indifference or impunity."

Canadian's lawyer Steven Cooper had it right when he spoke of the potential power imbalance created when corrections officials don't behave professionally when dealing with inmates.

Justice Minister Louis Sebert must investigate these allegations and should he find truth to them, ensure correct measures are being taken to protect inmates from any more inappropriate abuse.

Jail is not a nightclub and corrections staff are not lovers and friends.