

# Assembly to debate on strike

Julie Green to move for assembly to call on GNWT to enter into binding arbitration to avoid strike action

by Avery Zingel

Northern News Services

Regular MLAs Kieron Testart and Julie Green are pressing for immediate action to address the threat of a looming strike.

Green will move today that the assembly call on the GNWT to agree to enter into

binding arbitration before the scheduled strike begins.

Testart asked Finance Minister Robert C. McLeod if the GNWT would consider binding arbitration.

Moments after McLeod suggested the GNWT would not take up binding arbitration, the Northwest Territories

Power Corporation served a strike notice Wednesday afternoon.

UNW president Todd Parsons suggested the union would forgo its right to strike if the power corporation and GNWT agreed to binding arbitration.

McLeod reiterated that

the GNWT would wait for the result of weekend negotiations. He stopped short of a commitment to accept binding arbitration.

Testart asked whether the GNWT needs a new leader for its negotiation team.

"I am fearful to gamble on optimism at this point. We cannot afford it," said Testart.

"We know the economy is not in the best place. A strike will slow us down and could have consequences that will take years to recover from."

Testart said he would work "tirelessly" to bring an end to the dispute. He read out the text of a controversial commu-

nique, which unionists allege encourages striking workers to cross the picket line.

Green, the MLA for Yellowknife Centre, challenged Minister McLeod on that same communique.

"Many interpreted it as people being encouraged to cross the picket line. Will the minister walk this statement back?" she said.

He responded, "No I will not ... if you read the statement it encourages them to speak to their representative. We thought we would be providing them the best information possible," he said.

Green asked McLeod how

he planned to cool tensions that have flared between the GNWT and UNW.

"Let's not presuppose the result of negotiation before it even happens," said McLeod. "My plan is to appeal to people's good judgement and treat people with respect. I think it will go a long ways."

If no deal is reached, nearly 4,000 GNWT workers will walk off the job Monday. The territorial government tabled its budget Feb. 6 without spending allocations for public service wage increases. Any wage increases must be borrowed as short term debt.



NNSL file photo

UNW supporters and members gather outside of North Slave Correction Centre for a practice picket in January. Local 11 president Frank Walsh, left, speaks over the megaphone.

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## Jail time for woman who sold cocaine

'Cocaine hurts all of us, not just addicts'  
— Justice Karan Shaner

by Brendan Burke

Northern News Services

A 52-year-old Yellowknife woman convicted of trafficking cocaine is heading to jail, despite her lawyer urging the court to sentence her to time served.

Serenus Bryan was convicted by a jury in November on one count of trafficking cocaine. She was acquitted of trafficking fentanyl.

Bryan was arrested in 2016 as part of Project Green Manalishi, a large-scale RCMP investigation into drug trafficking in the territory and its capital that targeted two illicit networks.

Jurors listened to wiretapped calls between Bryan and the leader of one of those drug networks, Todd Dube, where she was heard arranging to buy and sell cocaine. Bryan's drug debts, along with how much cocaine she had sold, were also discussed.

No physical evidence was ever tied to Bryan.

Justice Karan Shaner later ruled Bryan trafficked cocaine on a "social" or low-level, mainly to support her own addiction to cocaine and opiates.

Bryan's lawyer, Steve Smith, submitted his client should be sentenced to time served, followed by 12 to 18 months of probation, given what he argued were restrictive and onerous release conditions.

Bryan was barred from leaving the NWT, can't use a cellphone and was ordered to abide by a 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. curfew. Smith asked Shaner to give Bryan credit for each day she spent on bail, which would amount to six months, or

time served. Bryan, Smith said, was prevented from seeking addictions treatment due to the conditions.

Shaner rejected the recommendation Tuesday.

"(The conditions were) entirely ordinary with minimal restrictions to freedom," said Shaner in NWT Supreme Court.

Shaner added Bryan was not on house arrest, and called the hours of her curfew "minimal."

Shaner accepted the Crown's recommendation of eight months in jail, followed by a year of probation. Shaner acknowledged a jail term would delay Bryan's plans to seek treatment, but stressed the court had to uphold the law.

"This is the criminal justice system, not the health-care system," said Shaner.

Shaner acknowledged the challenges Bryan has faced in life, including addictions and abuse.

Bryan's story is "indeed tragic," said Shaner, but she "broke the law," and contributed to the tragedies of other addicts.

"Cocaine hurts all of us — not just addicts," she added.

Despite calls from the Crown, Shaner did not impose a DNA order or a drugs and alcohol consumption ban, telling Bryan she need to make her own choices to stop using drugs. Following her jail term, Bryan will be banned from owning weapons for life.

Bryan, who remained out of custody until sentencing Tuesday, hugged a supporter goodbye before being taken into custody by RCMP.

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