

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

GOOD NEIGHBOUR AGREEMENTS

May 28, 2019

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In early May, CBC North ran a story about how a day shelter and sobering centre in Calgary's downtown has succeeded in working with its neighbours and clients to minimize negative behaviours in the neighbourhood. Experiences there and in other places such as Vancouver and Quesnel, BC, have shown the benefits of creating a type of social license called a "Good Neighbour Agreement." These agreements share common features relevant to our experience here, all aimed at ensuring safe and hospitable experiences by shelter clients, area residents, businesses, and downtown visitors alike.

I met recently with the owner of the building next to Yellowknife's sobering and day centre to discuss concerns with the street activity surrounding the facility. We discussed the Good Neighbour Agreement approach, and I came away with a slew of positive suggestions for features to include. First is the vision of a centre as a positive force supported by the community with an agreement setting out concrete steps to maintain services to clients as well as the safety and liveability of the neighbourhood? Key stakeholders include clients, the contractor operating the facility, resident and business neighbours, the City of Yellowknife, territorial governments who provide the funding, and the RCMP. The agreement defines the parties' expectations to their rights, and commits the partners to responsibilities in issues of safety, conduct, and communication. A recommended feature found in other communities' agreements is the creation of a formal liaison committee as a meeting place for actions and concerns. The Good Neighbour Committee would meet regularly to check in, and ensure the parties are living up to their commitments and brainstorm for solutions to emerging issues.

All of these suggestions originate from a proactive and constructive attitude towards making the centre work for everyone. Creation of the centre and its supporting services, including the Street Outreach Program, have gone a long way to alleviating concerns with conditions in our downtown. A Good Neighbour Agreement should be the next improvement. I'll have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mahsi.