

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

**QUESTION 734-18(3): GOOD NEIGHBOUR AGREEMENTS**

**May 28, 2019**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, the lead for the Yellowknife shelter and sobering centre. I know the Minister is familiar with the social-licence approach of the Good Neighbour Agreement. I related some of the feedback I have received on creating a similar agreement for our centre's operations yesterday. Can the Minister tell us if there are plans to introduce such an agreement here and, if so, outline the status of that work? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of months ago, the mayor of Yellowknife actually approached me with information on these Good Neighbour Agreements. At that time, I did direct the department to do the research into the Good Neighbour Agreements and approach the neighbours to see if there was any interest in actually pursuing those agreements here in Yellowknife with the neighbours around the day shelter sobering centre. There appears to be some interest.

One of the neighbours has actually submitted a draft for consideration, recognizing that this is about getting an agreement from all the partners, all the proponents, including City of Yellowknife, RCMP, Health and Social Services, the day shelter staff, sobering centre staff and operators, as well as those who have businesses or their homes immediately adjacent. I have now directed the department to work with the neighbours to see if they are interested in actually doing a facilitated process where we can come together with a facilitator and find a way to come to a mutually agreeable Good Neighbour Agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** I appreciate the Minister's response that he is prepared to enter into a facilitated process. One of the features that is common to these types of agreements is a liaison mechanism such as a committee where all the stakeholders the Minister listed can gather and consult on how responsibilities are being met and where solutions are considered. As usual, of course, there are some resources needed, primarily administrative, to run a committee like this. Will the Minister commit to providing the necessary support to run a Good Neighbour committee?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** In the absence of a Good Neighbour Agreement, we have already made a commitment to working with our partners in bringing them together on a regular basis to receive their input and feedback on how things are going. I do appreciate the Member's description of an organization or committee that might be struck. I am prepared to have that discussion, but I would hate to presuppose what a facilitated Good Neighbour Agreement is going to look like. I think we need to leave it in the hands of the individuals, those who are going to be the signatories, to come up with a plan that meets their needs as opposed to us presupposing what that agreement will

look like.

**MS. GREEN:** I'd be very surprised to know that the neighbours don't want to have a regular mechanism of input into the agreement should they reach one. Just as the day shelter and the sobering centre is a 24-hour operation, neighbours have suggested the need for an around-the-clock phone line that can be used to report problems and incidents. Is that something that the Minister would consider introducing through the operator of the day shelter and sobering centre?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I wasn't suggesting it wouldn't be part of the agreement. I just suggested it's too early to presuppose what that agreement is going to look like, so I appreciate the Member suggesting that I said or suggested something else. With respect to a phone line, we're totally open to that. It actually does make some sense. We've tried to set up a situation to give those neighbours an opportunity to call somebody within the system already. If it needs to be clearer, if we need to set it up in a more structured way, we're happy to do that. I think it's important that we work with our neighbours. This is an incredibly important program, the service being delivered here in Yellowknife, and our neighbours are essential to its success. I will certainly pursue that.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that strong endorsement of neighbourliness from the Minister. My final point is about timing. There will be a request for proposals for a new operator coming out sometime in the near future. It seems to me that a Good Neighbour Agreement might be an essential part of that RFP. Can the Minister say whether this Good Neighbour Agreement is intended to be part of that RFP? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I'm certainly not waiting for the RFP to be issued before we actually make progress on a Good Neighbour Agreement. I think we need to have a Good Neighbour Agreement now. I've given the department the direction to work with a facilitator to see if our neighbours are interested in working with a facilitator to come to an agreement on a Good Neighbour Agreement.

Having said that, yes, we will be issuing a new RFP. I have asked the department to reach out to the current proponent, other interested proponents, the public, and others on types of things we need to do to strengthen those services, to enhance those, and include new ideas which may be things like security and other things into the new RFP. I will certainly encourage them to find a way to make sure that the Good Neighbour Agreement is built into that, but I'm not going to wait for that to happen before we move on this Good Neighbour Agreement. If we end up with the same proponents, the Good Neighbour Agreement will stand. If we end up with different proponents, we may need to do a little bit of negotiation again to get a new Good Neighbour Agreement, but I do believe it needs to be part of this operation, this service, and this community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.