

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 756-18(3): HOUSING SUPPORT FOR RELEASED INMATES

May 30, 2019

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice. I know the Minister is aware of the Guthrie House Therapeutic Community in Nanaimo, and his officials are working to set up a similar program at the South Slave Correctional Centre. Can the Minister tell us whether the program in the South Slave will assist inmates to find housing on their release? Thank you

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reintegration of inmates back into society, of course, is a very important part of the correctional system. I also had the opportunity to go to Guthrie House. Currently there is no transitional housing specific to individuals. We could look at that, but there is a housing shortage throughout the Northwest Territories, and I don't know where this would be in our priorities, but we do realize the importance of reintegrating those who are incarcerated back into society. Thank you.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that question. Are there any supports in place now that would assist inmates to find housing on their release?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes. Institutional case managers and community probation officers work with other government departments to assist an inmate in navigating and accessing community resources and housing upon the return to their communities. We are aware, of course, that there are housing shortages throughout the Northwest Territories, and this is an important issue for inmates being reintegrated.

MS. GREEN: Is there any possibility that the Minister of Justice could work with the Minister of Housing to look at alternatives to releasing inmates into homelessness, such as, for example, transitional housing, so that it is possible to stop the cycle of people failing because they don't have stable housing and going back into the justice system?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I am always happy to work with the Minister of Housing with respect to issues such as this, but I think that we have to recognize that there are housing issues throughout the Northwest Territories. We do realize, however, that this is a particular problem for those who are attempting to reintegrate into their communities.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that answer. I wonder if the Minister would start on a small scale and try a pilot project in which staff could assist inmates to find housing, maybe just in one community, in order to maintain the department's investment in their wellness. I am thinking, in one of the communities where there is a correctional centre, that there be a pilot project and the Minister gauge

the results of ensuring that inmates have housing on their release, in order to see whether, in fact, that brings down rates of people going back into jails. Thank you.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: As I have mentioned, case managers and community probation officers work with various departments as they attempt to reintegrate those who are in custody back into their communities. I don't think that I can commit to a pilot project. I will speak to the Minister of Housing regarding this concept, but I don't think that we can make any commitments at this time. Thank you.