

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE  
QUESTION 29-19(2): STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL ISSUES**

**February 7, 2020**

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought you might have forgotten me. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As I said yesterday, and again today, there have been a number of issues related to the new hospital building. Also, last we heard, there was a shortage of nursing staff. Today, let's start with the nurses. In June, there was a 13-percent vacancy rate, equal to 37 nurses. What is the vacancy rate now, and particularly, what is the net gain of nurses in the last six months when you account for those who have been hired and those who quit? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. It is very hard to forget you. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of December 31, 2019, the vacancy rate across the NTSA, which is all the regions, all positions, was 12.3 percent. This represented 178 of 1,450 positions. The vacancy rates for some specific job types across the NTSA include 25 percent nurse practitioners, 15.5 percent registered nurses. As of December 31, 2019, the vacancy rate across the NTSA, which is all regions, for frontline registered nursing positions was 17.1 percent. This represented 55 of 322 positions. As of December 31, 2019, the vacancy rate across Stanton for frontline nursing positions was 10.3 percent. This represented 19 of 185 positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** I appreciate that answer from the Minister. It is a surprising answer to me because it was my understanding that the Stanton nursing workforce was 280 individuals. The Minister is saying 185 full-time equivalents is, in fact, the total number. There is some mismatch there, which we need to get at, which is: what is the total workforce, and what is the vacancy rate within that? I realize the Minister may not have that information to hand. Let me move on with whether the number of new hires has allowed nurses to reduce their overtime and to plan for holidays and vacations. Has overtime cost gone down?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Yes, efforts are under way as part of the overall recruitment process to ensure that Stanton hospital has enough nursing staff to cover holiday leave and reduce the demands of overtime. As summertime approaches, that is what the department is looking to now.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that. I know that was a point of unhappiness as last summer holidays came around. There were not enough nurses to allow people to take time off. There was a commitment by the previous health Minister to expedite the recruiting system and to get job offers into the hands of nurses more quickly. Are you able to say whether, in fact, that system has been expedited?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** At this time, I am not aware. I will commit to getting back to the Member on whether or not the efforts are in place.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, I want to talk about the heat regulation in the building. It seems to be a significant problem, and it affects both patients and staff. What actions have been taken to figure out why some of the rooms and hallways are so cold and how to make them warmer?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The Member is correct. During the months of December and January, it was extremely cold here in Yellowknife. The building was not maintaining temperatures, parts of the building. Cold air was being sucked into the building. Metal doors on the exterior of the building were frosting. In order to resolve these issues, Dexterra investigated and resolved air supply issues. Additional investigation is scheduled for spring of 2020. An additional heater was added in the emergency entrance. There was resequencing to the two sets of sliding doors. Those are a number of the issues that were done, and I respect that the staff up at the Stanton hospital had to go through this. I went up there and was able to speak to some of the staff, not all of the staff, but just to reassure them that this is something that the department is looking into. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.