

MLA JULIE GREEN – YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE – IN THE MEDIA

Health minister says Stanton problems are 'declining over time'

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The NWT's health minister insists staff at Stanton Territorial Hospital, plagued with issues in the nine months since it opened, are facing fewer concerns over time.

The minister, Diane Thom, was responding to questions from Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green in the legislature earlier in the week. Reports by [Cabin Radio](#) and [the CBC](#) have documented a range of employees' concerns.

Doors have frosted over in extreme conditions, temperature in the building has proved difficult to regulate with some areas too hot and others too cold, and staff have had to contend with water leaks and patches of mould.

Green described spending a day in the emergency room over Christmas and hearing an alarm ring in the building for hours.

"I understand alarm fatigue is now a problem because medical staff don't know whether the alarm is for a real problem or whether it's an all-too-frequent false alarm," she said in the legislature.

Saying staff had told her of problems matching those reported on late last year, Green said employees were "tired of the workarounds" at the hospital.

Responding to Green, Thom said a 10-year "latent defects warranty" is in effect regarding the new hospital, and all repairs are being paid for at the contractor's expense. (Latent defects are faults that could not have reasonably been discovered through inspection before the hospital was handed over to the NWT government.)

The new Stanton Territorial Hospital cost \$350 million to build and opened in May last year.

Constructed through a public-private partnership – also known as a P3 – the hospital building's unforeseen expenses are met by contractors while the territory pays them a fixed sum of \$18 million annually, for three decades, to cover building maintenance.

Thom said the building had been inspected and certified fit for use in late 2018. Asked if any deficiencies were found in those inspections, the minister identified none.

Thom said the NWT government was not immediately considering a "construction audit" – a process [now happening](#) in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, where another new hospital has faced extensive problems.

"We are aware of the issues in Saskatchewan, which were much more severe than the challenges we have faced within the Stanton Hospital," the minister told Green.

"Our focus is working with the P3 partners to ensure challenges that have been experienced are dealt with. We are seeing the number of issues decline over time."

Green had earlier said the state of the hospital, as reported by staff, was "discouraging to say the least."

"We expected better of this \$350-million facility," said the MLA. "We want to know that we're getting value for money."