

ORAL QUESTIONS – JULIE GREEN MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

YELLOWKNIFE DAY SHELTER POLICY

DECEMBER 12, 2019

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my statement, the operator of the day shelter has adopted a new policy of serving only the homeless population. The population with homes are not welcome. My question for the Minister of Health and Social Services is: how does the day shelter staff determine whether clients are in fact housed when they come to the door? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Operating the sobering and day centre is not without challenges, and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services authority and the operator of the centre are working hard to make sure these changes to ensure programming is meeting the needs of the clients who are homeless and not receiving services from any other service providers. I would like to let the Member know that the day centre and sobering centre have been allowing people to come in and warm up during this cold snap. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister. In fact, my question to the Minister was: how does the day shelter staff determine whether clients are in fact housed when they come to the door? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: I have been there. I have had a tour of the facility myself. When clients come into the centre, they are asked, and it is a self-assessment. When you come in and you say, you know, that the operator will ask if you have, if you are homeless or if you are here for what type of service, and if you self-declare that you are homeless, then you will be provided, and you will be allowed in the centre.

MS. GREEN: I thank the Minister for that answer. The origin of this change in policy is the recent evaluation of the combined day centre and sobering centre. Can the Minister say when that evaluation is going to be shared with service providers and with us, so that we are all on the same page? Mahsi.

HON. DIANE THOM: The program evaluation was recently publicized, August 2019. All those providing services to the clients who visit the sobering and day centre would have been able to review the evaluation recommendations. The evaluation recommendations were added to the RFP [request for proposals] released over the summer for a service provider for the sobering and day shelter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that. As the Minister is aware, the evaluation says there is a lack of understanding about the shelter's mandate and about the target audience as well as a need for partnerships to extend programming. Will the Minister commit to facilitating the creation of an inter-agency committee for this purpose?

HON. DIANE THOM: The department recognized there is a need for the inter-agency group. The NTHSSA will formalize an inter-agency group with the mandate to monitor the impact of the new admission policy and establish regular meetings. This collaborative approach will create a formal venue for all parties to meet regularly, to raise issues, and to address concerns related to the operation of the centre and public safety. In October, a Good Neighbour Agreement was signed between NTHSSA, sobering and day centre, other stakeholders, including the City of Yellowknife, the RCMP and Department of Justice, and individuals and business owners in the direct vicinity of the centre. Meetings with the community service agencies are ongoing as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.