

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT — JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
CORRECTIONS ACT IMPLEMENTATION**

March 13, 2020

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In the last of the week of statements on justice issues, I want to reflect on the journey of developing the new Corrections Act. This was a journey I took with the Standing Committee on Social Development last year. Mr. Speaker, the committee was dismayed by the bill presented. It didn't reflect the many changes in approach and practice since the original Corrections Act came into force more than 40 years ago. It didn't compare well to new legislation in other jurisdictions such as Nunavut, which provided for more rehabilitation and re-integration of offenders. As well, the bill didn't reflect changes in case law around solitary confinement or provide for procedural fairness with the complaints process. Last but not least, too many issues that are rights-based were relegated to regulations and policies rather than being found in the bill itself.

I reached out to subject-matter experts, and we benefited from the advice from the BC Civil Liberties Association; the former Director General of Corrections for Canada; the Canadian Bar Association, NWT Chapter; the former ED of the John Howard Society; and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. With all this analysis, we were able to refocus the bill away from administration of corrections and make it more inmate-centric, so to speak. We looked at how we take care of inmates when they are in one of our correctional centres and how we can assist them in turning their lives around so there is hope for a better future.

It was really beneficial that the Minister of Justice in the last Assembly and his staff worked so well together with the standing committee and our staff to accomplish very extensive and useful changes to the bill. The new NWT Corrections Act is equivalent to corrections acts anywhere in the country. This process demonstrated the strengths of consensus government. I used to say to people while this was going on that this was the bill that kept me up at night. After waiting 43 years for it to be thoroughly overhauled, we needed to do a really good job so that it would last another 43 years. While I was initially doubtful that could be done, it was done. I am very proud of the result. I will have questions for the Minister of Justice on the next step, implementation of the act. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.