

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**QUESTION 242-19(2): ENFORCEMENT OF CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER'S**  
**ORDERS IN APARTMENT BUILDINGS**

**May 27, 2020**

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. As I mentioned in my statement, enforcement of the Chief Public Health Officer's orders in downtown apartment buildings isn't happening or, if it is happening, it's not making a difference to the people who routinely report to me about the orders being ignored. The gap in enforcement is important because it could put us all at risk of the community spread of COVID when it recurs. My question for the Minister is: what responsibility does the enforcement task force have for ensuring that orders are followed, specifically in apartment buildings? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Compliance and Enforcement Branch is actually there to enforce the orders of the Chief Public Health Officer. A lot of that is, like the Member said, around public education. Some are verbal warnings. Some are written warnings. The last would be a fine. That is the purpose of the Compliance and Enforcement Branch. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: That wasn't really the question that I asked. Apartment buildings are kind of a complex environment because there's the tenant, there's the landlord, in some cases there is the Yellowknife Housing Authority, and by-law is not eligible to be there. RCMP can be there. What I'm trying to clarify is whether the enforcement task force members have the authority and the resources to enter apartment buildings to ensure compliance.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The big difference is that the public health officers who are doing the compliance and the enforcement are not RCMP officers. They come with a different set of skills. All along, we've said that, if there were huge parties and people were breaking orders, disturbances and stuff, we would not put our public health officers at risk within that. That is the job of the RCMP. I do think that sometimes our public is getting confused. They tend to phone us. What I have to say is that we have almost, I believe it was, 800 inquiries or calls in to Protect NWT. Every single one of them gets followed up. However, we will not put those officers at risk. If there are people partying in apartment buildings, there are laws. If they're disturbing, it is not to call the Protect NWT; at that point, it's to call the RCMP. I think that's the confusion. If tenants are having complaints about repeated parties, like I have heard in the statement, then it is the landlord who has to be notified of that.

MS. GREEN: Well, Minister, as you see, there are a lot of gaps in this because, when tenants call the RCMP, they are told that it's not up to the RCMP to enforce the Chief Public Health Officer's orders to not gather in apartment buildings. I appreciate that the peace officers don't feel equipped to go into the apartment buildings if there is a big party going on, but it just seems to be no one's problem to put an end to this. I'm trying to say, look, this is really a significant problem. In the end, what can you do, as the Minister, to coordinate the response in the apartment buildings? I can tell you, from living across the street from one of them, this will be ground zero for the community spread. It's like a train station. Now we have a chance to figure out how to deal with that, so how can we make these gaps disappear, Minister?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I hear the Member's concerns, and I have the same concerns about people. We have been doing as much as we can to try to make the public aware that we are not in a bubble; we are at risk, and it takes every individual to do this. What I worry about is that we are trying to deal with an issue that has been long-standing. It's the partying, it's the drug dealers, it's the people who aren't being good neighbours in apartment buildings, and we're trying to deal with all of that with COVID-19.

I'm not sure if that's the answer, if we even have the capacity to do that. What I will commit to, because that was the question, was what I can do about it. I will actually meet with my colleague who is responsible for the RCMP. We'll talk about how it is. I think there might be confusion. If people call in to the RCMP and say, "I want you to enforce an order," absolutely, that's not the RCMP's job. If people phone in and say, "There's a big party going on next door and they're yelling and screaming and drinking and it's after 11 o'clock," that is the RCMP's job. It might be a communications thing. That, I will look into with the Minister. We will talk about that. It's also about working with landlords. It's about time that we actually talk to landlords as well.

I will commit to, not during this session because we're busy, but when session is over and we can get back to normal business, then, I will commit to meeting with the landlords in our bigger centres that have longstanding issues and see if we can actually talk to them about the risk that they're putting residents to as well.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is on the right path here. My specific ask is that there be a meeting between the COVID enforcement task force, and the RCMP, and the landlords, and the Yellowknife Housing Authority, which, in some cases, is the landlord, and Northview, in the other case; and to bring these people together to talk about exercising better control over the apartment buildings so that they don't become a ground zero for community spread of COVID-19. I think it's really important to have the parties at the table and to discuss how this kind of enforcement can be made more effective. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The reason we have seven Members on Cabinet is because there is value in having many voices. I do appreciate. My first question was, "Can we do this?" and it was, "Yes, we can meet." Then, a wise Minister said to me, "That's why we have a

committee of Cabinet for COVID-19, our social issues committee." What we will do, then, is bring that to our COVID-19, our committee, to address that issue, but we will be talking about it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.