

MEMBER'S STATEMENT — JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

Impacts of Camping Outside of Campgrounds

June 1, 2020

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The weather was lovely here in the North Slave this weekend so some people decided to go camping. I saw campers in sandy spots at the end of short bush roads all along the Ingraham Trail, and I heard there was a big group of 20 trailers by the Cameron River Bridge. Mr. Speaker, this would normally be a good news story: Northerners get out camping in nice weather, but these campers are not in campgrounds. I wonder where their sewage is going, where their garbage is going, what they are using for fire pits. These are important questions if we want to keep the off-road areas free from the unwanted human footprint.

Further, Mr. Speaker, we don't want bears interacting with humans. The bears have recently emerged from hibernation, and they are looking for food. I saw one last week near the Prosperous Lake boat launch. A camper who is not careful with food storage and garbage could have some unwanted company, and a fed bear is a dead bear. As well, Mr. Speaker, having fires outside of fire pits isn't a good idea, especially at this time of year. The ground, until today, was dry, and the trees haven't leafed out yet. The deep lakes are still frozen and inaccessible to water bombers. I'm sure campers are being careful, but fire pits are the better option.

Then, there's the need for physical distancing. It's unlikely that 20 campers clustered together are following the social-distancing guidelines or complying with orders to keep outside gatherings to 25 people or fewer. In fact, those guidelines aren't being followed at all in the day-use area. There was the better part of 100 people at the Yellowknife River day-use area on Saturday. Mr. Speaker, all of these risks could be mitigated if the campgrounds were open. We have beautiful campgrounds with all the amenities and sites spaced well apart. What we need to do now is open them before freelance campers create unintended problems. I will have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.