

ORAL QUESTION— JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE
QUESTION 271-19(2): Impacts of Camping outside of Campgrounds

June 1, 2020

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of ENR. As I mentioned in my statement, there is a lot of freelance camping that happened on the Ingraham Trail this weekend. I do appreciate that we wait all winter to get outside, but gathering in places outside of campgrounds presents some risks to both people and the environment. My question for you is: what kind of monitoring has your department done of the freelance camping on the Ingraham Trail in the last week? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for her question. The department does go out there and inspect various campsites and that. Unfortunately, right now, campsites are closed right now, so we have actually asked the public to advise us of situations so that we are aware of them and so that we can send staff out there to make sure that they are following the guidelines that we set out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: As I understand it, it's up to the public to police themselves in the matter of freelance camping, and there is no either proactive inspection or proactive education taking place with the campers about the risks of camping in wild places at this time.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We actually do get out there with the town people, being fire smart, being safe, looking out for the environment, don't feed bears, and stuff like that. Again, what we are trying to do is, because we are in a new environment, we do have stuff out there, but we don't have them out there on the weekends right now. We will look into this matter, and we will advise the public what we are going to be doing moving forward. Right now, we rely on the public because we are asking them to advise us of situations so that we can help them move forward. Wearing my other hat with the Minister of Lands, we do have inspectors out there, as well, but again, we are asking for people to work with us on this.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that. You don't inspect on weekends, so I'm going to say that that's when the most freelance camping takes place. How is your department keeping a lid on the potential risks of fires, sewage dumps, garbage dumps, bear interactions, and so on? How is your department keeping a lid on that if they don't go out on weekends?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I should clarify. They do do weekends, but right now, we aren't because we're in a new environment. The campgrounds that are going on right now, freelance and that, we are working on that. We are looking at that situation. We do have our bear line up. We have our fire line up. We have those things there. As

for the sewers and that, we have to work across departments. As the Minister for ITI spoke about, we have people who are cross-trained. We work together with these matters.

Again, we are asking the public to bring it forward to us if we have concerns. We have heard the Member loud and clearly here. We will get back and educate people on this process. To get the details, I don't have that with me right in front of me right now, but I will make that commitment to this Member right now and to the public. What we will do is we will get that information to you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Just a reminder to Members and Ministers, please direct your questions and answers through me, Mr. Speaker. With that, final supplementary, Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that response. When should I expect to see this follow-up action? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: As for follow-up, I know that the department is listening to us right now. Within five days, I am hoping to have that answer, if not sooner. Thank you, Madam -- Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Must have been a long weekend there, Minister.