

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**QUESTION 269-19(2): Opening of Northwest Territories Campgrounds**

**June 1, 2020**

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. As I said in my statement, there was a lot of freelance trailer camping going on, on the Ingraham Trail on the weekend. I do appreciate that we wait all winter for a chance to be outside, but gathering in places other than campgrounds presents some risks to people and the environment. What is the risk to people of opening the campgrounds immediately? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Chief Public Health Officer recently released Emerging Wisely and has identified certain permitted activities under the various phases. The opening of campgrounds is a permitted activity under phase 2. We are working toward opening campgrounds when the Chief Public Health Officer does move the Emerging Wisely plan to phase 2 to allow for overnight camping. I would like to emphasize that not all services will be open due to ongoing risk assessments, such as with the shower buildings. All parks are different and require different risk assessments. These will help identify what is the capacity or the use of that park. I will take this moment to reiterate: there is no compromising safety, and that is our number one priority for our staff, contractors, and the public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** Thanks for that little sermon. What kind of oversight is your department providing over freelance camping? Is anyone talking to campers about bears and fire risks, for example?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** A working group of ADMs from Lands, ITI, and Infrastructure have been considering approaches to deal with pressure on the land and outside campgrounds. I will ask that ENR also be looped into this process. Departments will be working on a joint communication approach on the subject, in the event that there is freelance camping beyond the campgrounds. Departments' inspectors are cross-appointed between health and departmental programs for compliance and enforcement under land and resource management legislation.

The GNWT recognizes that people will be enjoying social distancing out on the land this summer, but we will be encouraging residents to enjoy the land in a way that is safe, respectful, and does not interfere with others' enjoyment. We understand staycations will be popular alternatives in the NWT for the foreseeable future, to be safe and be responsible, know where you can temporarily use the land. You are permitted to camp on untenured territorial Commissioner's land short-term; two or three nights is acceptable. If you meet up with others, observe the two-metre rule. Leave no trace. Pack your garbage out with you and limit your stay at a popular spot so others can enjoy it, too.

**MS. GREEN:** The Minister makes this sound like a hypothetical question. This is not a hypothetical question. People are camped all over the Ingraham Trail. The bears are active. The lakes are sometimes still frozen. We have some very significant risks to having people have fires, garbage, sewage outside of the campgrounds. I haven't heard yet what the risk assessment is of that dynamic versus all of the words you've given us about safety first.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I would not want to overstep my authority. I only have authority to administer within the parks. If there are issues with things happening on lands, those go under other departments. I believe the Department of Lands would also be involved, or you can call the RCMP, if you're finding that people are not treating things properly.

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

**MS. GREEN:** No, thanks.