

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

ADDRESSING FAMILY VIOLENCE

February 24, 2016

MS. GREEN: It's recently been confirmed that the Northwest Territories continues to bear the shameful distinction of having the second highest rate of police-reported family violence in Canada. Statistics Canada reports that set against a national average of 243 incidents per 100,000 persons, the NWT comes in at eight to nine times the national average, a rate eclipsed only by Nunavut.

These abuses include the second-highest rates of violence against children and youth, as well as seniors and of course against intimate partners, most often women. Eight women were murdered in the Northwest Territories between 2011 and 2015, a horrifying and unprecedented number. Even so, we are poorly equipped to help those women and children fleeing violent settings. As the Coalition Against Family Violence recently pointed out to us, we must urgently act to address core needs.

The Coalition Against Family Violence's presentation focused on three immediate priorities. First is prevention and the need to change social responses to this crime. Working to reverse the normalization of family violence is an important long-term project that will lead to lower rates of violence in northern communities. Updating the 2007 NWT Family Violence Attitudinal Survey to support the delivery of a complete family violence campaign applying social marketing and principles will start on this need.

The second priority is emergency response. There must be adequate and consistent funding for shelters and victims' services. This is critical.

The third priority is healing. It is crucial we invest in a permanent community-based therapy program available across the NWT for those who have used, experienced, and/or witnessed violence. We need to support systemic responses to family violence, such as the New Day pilot program that works with abusers.

The mandate for this 18th Assembly specifically identifies this "crisis of family and community violence," as one of the five priorities for action on community wellness and safety. These are just words, unless we put resources behind them. We all know there are dozens of priorities.

We all know there are dozens of priorities, but where do we make a difference if not against lowering the number of people who are being beaten, terrorized, and killed. What could be more important?

I recommend the Coalition Against Family Violence's presentation as required reading for all Members, and I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time.