

## MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

### POLICING RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT ALLEGATIONS

February 17, 2017

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday, I related the experience of a Yellowknife woman who came to me with her story of physical and sexual assault, followed by intimidation from her accused attacker, and all met with a lackluster response from the police.

The Globe and Mail newspaper recently published a report that reveals just how often women are mistreated by the justice system. Over 20 months, investigative journalists analyzed policing data from every province and territory. They discovered that across Canada police dismiss roughly one in five reported sexual assault complaints as unfounded, meaning police officers believe no assault took place.

In certain cities and regions, like ours, rates are even higher. When we look at cases from 2010 to 2014 in the NWT, even accounting for potential false reports, police closed the door on 30 per cent of cases. That means the police don't believe the complaints of one in three women who come forward. Add to that the fact that only one in 10 women report a sexual assault in the first place, and we can estimate that less than 5 per cent of possible sexual assaults are investigated.

A few other findings, Mr. Speaker, to share with you: according to The Globe and Mail, small and rural populations show higher unfounded rates than large cities, due in part to limited resources and greater demands on fewer officers, although Yellowknife rates buck that trend. The numbers of unfounded cases are smaller in the regions than they are in Yellowknife. Not surprisingly, police forces with more women officers than average documented fewer unfounded cases. Finally and significantly, "unfounded" statistics are no longer being tracked by Statistics Canada. Yet again, sexual violence is being kept hush-hush. These findings are shocking, but what's next? It is not enough to be appalled. We must respond.

The RCMP have committed to reviewing all recent unfounded cases across the country, including here in the NWT. I also urge the Minister of Justice to follow his Yukon counterpart's lead and commit to prompt practical changes to close the service gaps.

To realize the spirit of Hush-Hush No More, we must change hearts and minds. This will be hard work, Mr. Speaker. Change involves opening policing practice to thorough review and regular public oversight. It also means facing and changing biases ingrained in our cultures and in ourselves. To truly bring an end to sexual violence, we must walk the talk; we must believe all women, promote reporting, investigate complaints sensitively and thoroughly, and bring justice to all women who have been victimized. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.