

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

FAMILY VIOLENCE SURVEY

March 10, 2017

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following the discussion that took place in this House yesterday, I am renewing my call for the Minister for the Status of Women to repeat the survey of attitudes toward family violence. It is clear that we 19 Members do not share a common understanding of what family violence is, and I suspect that we are representative of the territory as a whole. The information the survey will produce is fundamental to creating policy and programs that reduce rates of family violence.

The mandate for the 18th Assembly calls on us to take action on the crisis of family and community violence. It is also one of three priorities of the Standing Committee on Social Development. The rate has been high for many years and has resisted any and all efforts to reduce it. It is time to look for a systemic fix. That means we need to promote acceptance of women's equality.

A first step along this road is to ensure we have a common understanding of what family violence is. Ten years ago, the NWT Bureau of Statistics surveyed 753 people in communities large and small to answer this question. At that time, 88 per cent of respondents said they were either very worried or somewhat worried about family violence. There was a significant number of men and women who said they believe that physical violence between a couple is a private matter to be resolved within the family. There's a general reluctance to define family violence as a problem for which help is needed, and we saw that only too clearly here yesterday. Finally, there is also a considerable misunderstanding that men are victims of family violence to the same extent as women. It's simply not true.

I believe that updating the family violence survey will give us the information we need to create effective policy and actions that are aimed at the attitudes that perpetuate family violence and women's inequality. The Coalition Against Family Violence and the Status of Women NWT have also requested the survey be repeated.

Members had the opportunity yesterday to be role models in family violence prevention, and they decided not to take it, but the issue is not going to go away. It is time for us to get serious about reducing rates of family violence and to work in smart and consistent ways to ensure that every NWT hears the message that women are equals and violence, that violence is not inevitable, and it is preventable. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.