

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 807-18(2): FAMILY VIOLENCE SURVEY

June 1, 2017

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice. In my Member's statement today, I noted that the mandate for this Assembly defines family violence as a crisis. Presumably, our efforts to combat a crisis should be extraordinary and urgent. Does the Minister accept the mandate definition of family violence as a crisis, and does this mean combatting that crisis is among the top priorities of his ministry? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The 18th Assembly, of course, has identified family violence as a priority. We do recognize that this is a very serious issue and in fact, a crisis, in the Northwest Territories. Our department, along with other departments, does treat this issue very seriously.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that response. I'm now going to test what that might mean in dollars and cents. If indeed this is the crisis that we all agree it is, then what information is informing the work of dealing with this crisis? What is the information that the Minister is using to change hearts and minds and combat attitudes which perpetuate family violence?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: We continue to work with Aboriginal governments, community groups, and other partners. We seek advice and direction from them so that we can deal with this very serious issue.

MS. GREEN: That was a less robust answer than I was hoping for. I believe we are agreed that combatting the brutal and unending murder of women is a priority, and redoing the family violence survey would give us the data to ensure our crisis response is an informed and intelligent response. Will the Minister commit to updating the cost of redoing the survey and including this funding in the upcoming business plan for his department?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, we of course wish to use the limited resources at our disposal in the most effective manner possible. I do note that a very similar question was asked of another Minister in March of this year. The answer at that time was that we didn't think that would be the best use of money and that we would rather focus our money and efforts on prevention and healing. I concur with that.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the entire Cabinet is going to Inuvik next week for the energy forum. Is there not any way to make choices, intelligent choices, about where to spend money that supports the residents of the NWT other than going for a little holiday up in Inuvik? Perhaps the Minister needs a more insistent

request. What if the Standing Committee on Social Development wrote to you and asked you to –

MR. SPEAKER: Member. What is your line of question?

MS. GREEN: Could the Standing Committee write to the Minister to ask for a commitment for this funding? Would that make any difference? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Certainly, the committee can write to me if they wish. However, I think this matter has been reviewed. Again, it's important that we allocate our resources in the most effective way possible.

I'd like to tell the Assembly some of the things the Department of Justice is doing. You heard about the A New Day Program yesterday. Well, we're hoping it will be more successful. Corrections is a new violence prevention program which teaches men in NWT jails to stop using violence. We have the Domestic Violence Treatment Option (DVTO) Court options, which is new in the last 10 years. We are doing a lot of things. We are expending a lot of money to deal with this very serious issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.