

**MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**  
**CONTINUING HIGH RATES OF SPOUSAL ASSAULT**

**October 24, 2018**

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker:

"Spousal assault in the Northwest Territories is a social problem of grave proportions. Wives, husbands and lovers have their eyes blackened, their teeth knocked out, their ribs and legs broken, their bodies bruised, and their lives disfigured by violence as a result of assaults which occur daily in the Northwest Territories. For many victims, beatings are regular and frequent.

"Spousal assault strikes at the heart of family and community life. It reaches every part of our society. Many of those who assault were raised in families where spousal assault has taken place. Many of them were themselves abused as children. Many victims of spousal assault saw their mothers beaten by their fathers. Some have grown up to believe that being abused is part of a woman's fate.

"For too long, the victims of spousal assault and their families have suffered in silence and isolation. This must not be allowed to continue. We must encourage victims to seek help, and, when they do, we must be prepared to provide it. Similarly, we must develop methods to deal with the problems of batterers. We must be prepared to do more than impose criminal sanctions through the courts. We must be prepared to reach out to them with counselling, therapy, and family-life education."

Mr. Speaker, those words are as true today as they were when they were first published in May 1985. The government of the day appointed a five-member task force to examine the nature and extent of spousal assault, the effectiveness of government responses, and to provide recommendations.

Under the chairmanship of the late John Bayly, the task force travelled to 30 communities in the NWT to hear from front-line service providers, victims and batterers themselves. They came back with more than 100 recommendations. Some of them have been adopted, such as diverting cases away from the courts and providing anger-management training. Others still wait for resources.

Mr. Speaker, the task force report was dedicated to three women for whom its recommendations came too late. Thirty-three years later, the NWT still has the second highest rate of spousal assault in the country. On average, a woman is killed every year, and occasionally a man. The task force is gone and forgotten, but the problem remains. What will it take to reduce and eradicate family violence? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.