

Pink Shirt Day

Mr. Speaker, we all share in the responsibility of ensuring that our schools and communities are safe spaces. Today, we take a moment to pause and reflect on how each of us contributes to safe spaces where bullying is prevented whenever possible and quickly addressed when it occurs.

In 2007, Nova Scotia teenagers David Shepherd and Travis Price organized a protest after a male Grade 9 student in their school was harassed for wearing a pink shirt. The next morning, these two youth brought pink shirts to hand out to all male students. Their school was full of kids in pink that day and 14 years later, Pink Shirt Day has become a global call-to-action as schools and workplaces are flooded with pink in solidarity against bullying. The national theme for 2021 is Lift Each Other Up, and I am happy to see so much pink around the House today, as we stand together on Pink Shirt Day.

As I am sure all Members of this House are aware, bullying can occur to anyone, of any age, at any time. It occurs when aggressive and repeated behaviours happen between one or more people in a real or perceived power imbalance. This imbalance can be based on a range of factors from size, age or ethnicity, to religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. No one, from any walk of life, is immune to becoming a bully, or experiencing bullying.

This behaviour has negative impacts on individuals, families and communities. It causes fear, emotional harm and physical, psychological and social distress. We must support victims of bullying, and ensure we provide education and formative consequences to bullies, so they can learn the harm in their actions and repair relationships.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has Safe School Regulations that establish a Territorial Code of Conduct and ensure all schools have a Safe School Plan. These plans ensure students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 take healthy relationship programming, and require schools to address instances of bullying in

accordance with the regulations. A Safe School Plan ensures there are structured mechanisms in place for keeping students and staff physically, emotionally, mentally and socially safe.

Last year, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment released the Guidelines for Ensuring LGBTQ2S+ Equity, Safety and Inclusion in Northwest Territories Schools.. We continue to support schools in upholding these guidelines and in the development of their Gender Sexuality Alliances through our partnership with the Yellowknife Rainbow Youth Coalition.

Mr. Speaker, Northwest Territories schools should be safe and caring environments for the entire school community. We must continue our vigilance to ensure our schools are safe spaces where people respect each other's differences and recognize each other's similarities. When we see bullying, we need to speak up; and if we bully others, we must reflect on our actions and seek ways to do better. Let's lift each other up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.