

International Women's Day

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge International Women's Day. International Women's Day is held annually on March 8th to celebrate women's social, cultural and political achievements throughout history and across nations. International Women's Day also provides an important opportunity to showcase commitments towards women's equality, to raise awareness and to highlight initiatives towards gender parity.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is *Better the Balance, Better the World*. As the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I am committed to achieving gender equality throughout our society. To me, the theme *Better the Balance, Better the World* means having women at the table making decisions that affect our every-day lives for the benefit of all. Women make up half the population of the Northwest Territories and the world. It is only reasonable to expect that half of the people in a position of power should be women.

Mr. Speaker, gender equality is something many nations aspire to. Far too often, we fall short of achieving that goal, but it is not impossible. We have to work together to get there. Here in the Northwest Territories, we are taking steps towards gender equality. When we passed a Motion in March, 2018 to increase women's representation in the Legislative Assembly, we collectively said we support this initiative. When we set up the Special Committee to Increase the Representation of Women in the Legislative Assembly, we demonstrated our willingness to work together to improve the gender balance in this House and to open important public discussions on how best to do this.

There are many exciting initiatives both within, and outside of government right now, the Trail Blazer event, Campaign Schools, Ted Talks and various Leadership events.

Our young women and girls have great potential to be our future leaders. We need to provide them with the support and tools to reach that potential. Providing better access for women to education, affordable housing, healthcare, employment and childcare helps women, but it also helps build a sustainable economy and benefits our society as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that women continue to face gender-based barriers and discrimination. These obstacles make it difficult for women to get an equal footing. We must continue to work together to develop and implement strategies to eliminate these barriers, prevent violence against women and girls, update policies and programs to promote the development of women in leadership positions and continue the momentum to take action to achieve gender equality.

I thank all Northwest Territories' women for their invaluable contributions to our society today and throughout the year.

Mr. Speaker, I invite each Member of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing International Women's Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.