

Family Violence Awareness Week

Mr. Speaker, this week is Family Violence Awareness Week in the Northwest Territories. The theme this year is “Healthy Relationships, Healthy Communication.” There are events occurring across the Northwest Territories between October 16th and October 22nd to bring attention to family violence and promote healthier ways for people to deal with conflict.

Family violence is a complex issue, and it must be addressed. The truth is that family violence occurs at epidemic rates in the Northwest Territories. According to a Statistics Canada profile released in January 2015, the rate of family violence in the Northwest Territories is nine times the national average. This is horrifying, it is saddening, and it must stop.

Although our rate of family violence is unacceptable, we are doing some work to address it. I want to acknowledge the work of the Coalition Against Family Violence in organizing this special week every year since 2001. The Coalition is a territorial interagency group chaired by the NWT Status of Women Council. Its goals are to increase awareness, reduce the incidence of family violence, and respond to family violence and the needs of those affected by it in the NWT. The Coalition has often provided us with innovative approaches, advice and input for programs and services, and I thank them for that.

The Government of the Northwest Territories provides programs and services to address family violence through the Department of Health and Social Services and Department of Justice. We are providing support, but we can, and must, do more.

Mr. Speaker each Member in this Chamber, is a role model within their individual ridings. I am asking that each Member strive to address family violence by making it a topic of discussion when meeting with constituents, bringing the issue forward to municipal and aboriginal government and other community leaders to see how they can help, speaking out against family violence in your social media campaigns, and making a conscious effort to dispel gender-based comments, jokes and expectations. It's time for healthy communication it is time to speak out. It is time to say family violence is not okay and we will not tolerate it any longer.

Mr. Speaker we all have a part to play in promoting healthy relationships and healthy communications. This week is a great time to start. It's not always about marches and letters, Mr. Speaker. Here in Yellowknife on October 21st, Family Violence Awareness Week features a family fun day at Northern United Place from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Families are invited to spend quality time learning about healthy communication with free activities such as face-painting, a three-legged race, and a reading corner.

There are other events taking place throughout the Northwest Territories. The full list is available on the Northwest Territories Status of Women Council website, www.statusofwomen.nt.ca

I encourage everyone to attend a local Family Violence Awareness Week event, and to have a discussion about family violence with your colleagues, friends and family members. Let's make our communities, homes and families places where everyone is valued, respected, safe and free from abuse or violence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.