

Community Justice Review

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce the beginning of the Community Justice Review.

This program has been running since 1994, and it continues to be very successful. Last year, there were almost 2,000 activities with 6,800 participants. The NWT is one of the leaders in the area of community justice, and we are often a resource for other jurisdictions that want to improve their own systems. We are pleased to provide expertise in this area to those in both the north and the south.

An effective justice system truly serves its communities. What works in one place might not work in another. Our justice committees perform a valuable public service by making decisions that affect their own people. For example, a committee might decide that an offender should pay restitution to the victim, or do community service work, or go out on the land with an elder. Justice committees have many different options for innovative solutions at the community level. They deal with youth and adult cases using a restorative approach to justice. They administer programs that help offenders reintegrate and give back to their communities. And they promote abuse-free, crime-free lifestyles and activities that lead to healthier relationships and healthier communities overall.

The program review has already begun. We will be gathering information from every community and plan to visit at least two communities in each region to hear directly about their local justice programming. We have big communities and small communities. Places with lots of community justice activity, and places without much activity. Committees that are working well on their own, and committees that need a little extra help. We can learn from them all.

We want to know whether the committees are able to meet their own goals. We want them to tell us what works and what doesn't work. And we want to hear their ideas about how the program can be made better. Our goal is to build on our strengths, use our resources in the best way we can, and acknowledge the wide range of community-driven initiatives in this program.

In the coming months, I look forward to sharing the results of this review with Members and with the communities.

Masi, Mr. Speaker.