

Update on the A New Day Program

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to taking action on the crisis of family violence. Over the past year I have heard several Members in this House stress the importance of the A New Day Program for men who use violence in intimate relationships.

I am pleased to report to this Legislative Assembly that the Government of the Northwest Territories has reached an agreement with the John Howard Society to continue to provide this program in Yellowknife. There will be no service interruptions, and men will have walk-in registration at the office next door to the current program space.

Qualified counselors will meet with men individually to prepare them to join weekly groups. Those groups will run continuously, so men can start as soon as they are ready. If they need to take a break for any reason, they can quickly get back into the group. These minor changes to the scheduling do not affect the curriculum. They are based on the demonstrated need for drop-in groups and on the attendance trends that we saw in the pilot.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to do no harm requires us to make sure men are in programs that meet their needs. This is a specialized program for men with a particular risk profile. We know that men who progress farther in the A New Day Program do better. We also know from our experience during the pilot that only a small number of men were able to do this.

We have an obligation to improve our programs with evidence-based decisions. We will focus our efforts on supporting the men who are ready, when they are ready, in the hopes that we can help improve the chances that they are successful. The assessment process will be improved to include treatment plans with a counselor who can help them access the services that are right for them. By improving the modular design of the program, by adding flexibility to its delivery, we can help more men heal. This is an objective we all support.

The transition to a new provider will be smooth. The mission of the John Howard Society includes the prevention of crime and is well aligned with taking over the A New Day program. Already, they are making arrangements for counselors to begin meeting with clients and start weekly groups. Again, all counselors will be properly trained, possess appropriate cultural competencies, and supported to ensure the program is delivered successfully. The Tree of Peace is still under contract until the end of June to finish the last group and prepare men to enter the groups that will start in July.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge and thank the community partners who helped with the initial design of the pilot project. This pilot has given us a solid foundation and valuable experience we can employ in future program delivery. I would like to thank, in particular, the current contractor for the program, the Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, for their efforts and the dedication of their staff.

The men who have found success through A New Day have learned new skills to address the root causes of their behavior, and done the hard work to heal themselves. They are better able to hold themselves and other men accountable for their violence. It is a challenging commitment and we should commend and support anyone willing to do this work.

We now face the challenge of implementing a program that improves outcomes and provides greater opportunities to offer this program throughout the Northwest Territories. I want to thank the John Howard Society for its commitment to work with our government in the continued delivery of the program. I am encouraged by the interest of potential partners here in Yellowknife and throughout the territories to find ways to deliver programs like A New Day.

Mr. Speaker, I am also encouraged by the commitment this Legislative Assembly to address the crisis of family violence in our territory. I look forward to working with the cooperation and support of all Members of this Legislative Assembly as we take meaningful actions to end family violence in our territory.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.