

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM ISSUES AND REVIEW

October 24, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. As this is Family Violence Awareness Week, I will speak on Victim Services programs of this government, offered through the Department of Justice.

There are basically three programs. The Victims Assistance Fund receives the victims of crimes surcharges, which are then used for application-based projects. This program is working well, although there is an opening balance of \$260,000 as of April 1, 2018, as shown in the most recent annual report tabled earlier in this sitting.

The second program is the Victims of Crime Emergency Fund, which provides financial assistance to victims of serious violent crime. Although the program has eligibility requirements, there is apparently some discretion for justice officials. I understand that about \$40,000 per year is available for the Victims of Crime.

The third program is the network of victim services coordinators that are funded through contribution agreements with the Department of Justice. This system has been in place since 1996, and there are currently eight community-based Victim Services coordinators, with outreach positions in Hay River and Inuvik dedicated to serving communities without resident victim services providers. These coordinators, other service providers, and volunteers provide victims of crime with information, assistance, support, and referrals to community support services. Support is also supposed to be available to victims of crime in surrounding communities by phone. It is my understanding that the number of service contacts with victims has more than doubled over the last five years. Given that this program is delivered through contribution agreements, there appear to be some issues with regard to consistency of support for the coordinators themselves and access to resources to support victims. There is a need for a comprehensive review, along with more funding to complete the network and provide victim services in all of our communities.

I will have questions for the Minister of Justice on the adequacy of victim services and how this government intends to improve support for the victims of family violence and other crimes. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.