

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT — KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE**

**VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM ISSUES AND REVIEW**

**February 27, 2020**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. In the last Assembly, the Minister of Justice agreed to carry out a comprehensive review of Victim Services. There are basically three programs; the Victims Assistance Fund, which receives the victims of crime surcharges, which are then used for application-based project. This program is working well, although there is an opening balance of \$351,000 as of April 1, 2019, as shown in the most recent annual report tabled in this House.

The second 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 in their communities 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 appears to be some issues with regard to consistency of support for the coordinators themselves, access to resources to support victims, and thus the need for a comprehensive review, along with more funding to complete the network and provide services to all of our communities.

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

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