

## 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly

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#### **Alarming NWT Crime Rates**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement today is about crime in the Northwest Territories. According to an RCMP report that came out in 2001, the Northwest Territories was 27 positions short of having enough staff to address its policing needs.

The Minister of Finance recently announced in his budget address that the government would be allocating an additional \$1.4 million for 10 new RCMP positions to address the shortfall. To meet the target outlined in the 2001 report, the department will provide additional financing for more positions again next year.

But, Mr. Speaker, six years have passed since the report was written. Even if we meet the targets set in 2001, crime has continued to rise and it's only getting worse. We would be naïve to think there won't be an increase associated with the potential pipeline development, and here in the city, endemic use of crack cocaine has had an exponential impact on the incidence of crime. Resources, Mr. Speaker, are just not keeping up.

Mr. Speaker, from 2001 to 2003, the last year for which crime statistics are available, incidents of crime have increased territory-wide by almost 25 percent. In Yellowknife, for the same period, crime increased by 21 percent. The headlines from the Yellowknifer's biweekly crime report indicate there has been no slowdown.

From December 27th to January 9th, 624 complaints to police, 18 break-and-enters, 40 incidents of common assault and another three assaults with a weapon. January 10th to 23rd, 427 calls to police, 16 break-and-enters, 42 assaults and one assault with a weapon. January 25th to February 7th, 366 calls, 27 assaults, three assaults with weapons. February 8th to 21st, 406 calls, five break-and-enters, 20 common assaults and five assaults with weapons.

Mr. Speaker, in 2003, again the last year for which stats are available, the situation in the Northwest Territories for all incidents of crime is well over four times the national average. Incidents of impaired driving are five times the national average. Incidents of sexual assault are six times the national average. Incidents of crimes of violence, as a whole, are well over seven times the national average. I find these statistics absolutely shocking, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that Members sitting on the other side of this House are paying close attention.

An increase to policing is one way to get a handle on crime. Another way is to ensure there are hefty penalties to act as deterrents. Unfortunately, I do not see either. I was appalled at the two-year conditional sentence recently handed down to the Yellowknife man convicted of sexually abusing his young daughter for nearly a decade. What does a sentence like this say, Mr. Speaker? We are sending the wrong message to criminals. Mr. Speaker, I implore this government to make crime prevention a top priority. We must do more to get a handle on the crime around us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause