

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY  
AFFAIRS, GENDER AND  
HOUSING**

**STATEMENT BY  
THE HONOURABLE  
MIKE ADAM, MBE  
MINISTER**

**10 DECEMBER 2012**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Madam Speaker, The Premier, Leader of the Opposition, fellow members of the Government bench, other Members of the Legislative Assembly and members of the public listening today, I rise to speak on issues relating to the Ministry of Community Affairs, Gender and Housing.

### **Formation of the NCGFV**

Madam Speaker, crime reduction remains a priority issue for the country. It is necessary to invest in institutional responses which contribute to crime prevention and intervention. Hence, the Ministry that I hold responsibility for formed the **National Committee on Gender and Family Violence**, which met for the first time two weeks ago.

It was critical to re-introduce a multi-agency entity in order to bring a holistic focus to issues such as gender violence, family violence, child abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and stalking. This national-level Committee will

be a significant step in improving the institutional responses to victims and perpetrators of these crimes.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the two Senior Policy Advisors who have been appointed by the Ministry to Co-Chair the Committee on behalf of the Chief Officer - **Ms Tammy Ebanks, Senior Policy Advisor for Gender Affairs**, and **Ms Debbie-Ann Whittaker, Senior Policy Advisor for Human Services**. Given the cross-cutting nature of these issues, it is most beneficial to have these two Officers oversee and co-ordinate the work of this Committee.

Other members of the Committee are senior staff of:

- the Ministry of Health, Environment, Youth, Sports and Culture;
- the Ministry of Education, Training and Employment;
- the Ministry of District Administration, Works, Lands and Agriculture;
- the Portfolio of Internal and External Affairs;
- the Department of Children and Family Services;
- the Department of Community Rehabilitation;
- the Department of Counselling Services;
- the Health Services Authority;

- Judicial Administration;
- GIS Marketing and Communications;
- the National Drug Council;
- the RCIPS Family Support Unit;
- the Youth Services Unit; and
- the Cayman Islands Crisis Centre.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, membership is drawn from a wide cross section of areas, and we have had an overwhelmingly positive response from the entities involved. Each member is equipped with broad knowledge of the issues and the represented agency's role in the systematic responses, and will serve for two years with an opportunity for re-appointment. While the Committee consists mainly of government representatives, it will be incorporating representatives from non-governmental organisations to form Sub-Committees as necessary.

The Committee will work on improving systems by providing recommendations to Government in relation to the development of policies, procedures, legislation, training, public education, and other responses to these important issues.

## **Background and Recommendations**

Madam Speaker, as some of my colleagues are aware, previously - in 2000 - the **National Domestic Violence Steering Committee** was operational to oversee the Domestic Violence Intervention Training Programme for police officer, social workers and other front line personnel. This steering committee eventually evolved into a **National Committee Against Domestic Abuse or NCADA**, which was one of the institutional mechanisms behind the creation of the **Cayman Islands Crisis Centre**. However, once the Crisis Centre was operational, the **National Committee Against Domestic Abuse** dissolved in 2003.

The **Special Report on Gender Violence**, which was approved by Government in late 2008, identified the need to re-establish such a national entity that would bring together a cross-section of key stakeholders to address gender and family violence and other related issues. The **draft Crime Reduction Strategy** and the **IPAC Review of the Assessment and Treatment of Criminal Offenders** also support the establishment of a domestic violence prevention task force, which is to be coordinated by the Ministry of Community Affairs, Gender and Housing.

### **Terms of Reference of the Committee**

The Committee's **Terms of Reference** are based upon the recommendations outlined in the **Special Report on Gender Violence**. It is envisioned that the Committee will use this Report as a guideline to develop their work plan and that they may put forward additional proposals that they deem necessary.

The Committee will have an annual work plan that includes a monitoring and evaluation component and shall provide quarterly reports on the progress of its work plan to the Ministry. The Committee will also provide an annual report to Cabinet outlining and evaluating its activities and accomplishments, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors. It is anticipated that during the first two years of operation, the Committee shall focus its objectives in the following areas:

1. **Improving Institutional Responses and Resources** for victims and perpetrators of gender and family violence.

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## 2. **Coordinating Education of Practitioners and the General Public** on gender and family violence and other inter-linked issues.

We all recognise that - given the current economic constraints and limited resources - the development of a comprehensive continuum of care for children and families will be a challenge. Hence, we must approach this task strategically, ensuring that we utilise existing resources and enhance collaborative efforts. This synergistic approach through strong partnerships with key stakeholders is therefore all the more important in ensuring that we are able to effectively address issues of gender and family violence.

### **Impact**

Madam Speaker, it is widely accepted that the home is the socialising agent for healthy, non-violent youths and adults, as well as the youth and adults who follow the path of violence and crime. This has been repeatedly documented and is reinforced by the 2006 **Report on Pre-Disposing Factors to Criminality in the Cayman Islands**, researched and prepared by Yolande C. Forde.

With family violence crimes such as child abuse, domestic violence and elderly abuse occurring in the confines of the home and negatively shaping the quality of life for victims and those indirectly affected, it is necessary to ensure that serious collaborative efforts are made in the Cayman Islands which contribute to raising healthy, non-violent adults. Therefore, the need to safeguard the health of our family units - by providing optimum support and improving the coordinated institutional responses to those victimised by unhealthy relationships and gender based violence - is a critical component to addressing these complex social issues.

The institutional responses to gender and family violence are unlikely to improve without key stakeholders having a forum in which they can come together to make a concerted effort to create or enhance synergies, increase the efficiency of resources dedicated to these issues, identify and eliminate duplication of efforts and inconsistencies in the national framework, provide seamless service delivery and address gaps in services and programmes.

## **16 Days of Activism Campaign**

Madam Speaker, the date of the first meeting of the **National Committee on Gender and Family Violence** and the date that I stand to address this honourable Assembly are symbolic. Sunday, 25th November marked the commencement of **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence** campaign on the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**. The campaign finishes today, 10th December, which is **International Human Rights Day**. This is very crucial as it emphasises that such violence is a violation of human rights.

This year's theme for **16 Days of Activism** is "**From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!**" It focuses on how "peace in the home" can extend outwards to become "peace in the world". While the Cayman Islands are fortunate enough not to experience the conflicts of war, we know that there are victims of gender based violence in our community and we are currently experiencing increased and unprecedented threats of violence to the lives of our children and adolescents.

Behind closed doors, too many of our homes are war zones, leaving families scarred and bruised. We must focus our efforts to ensure that we eliminate all manifestations of gender and family violence, as peaceful homes will create a more peaceful country.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

In closing, Madam Speaker and fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly, I am confident that through the **National Committee on Gender and Family Violence** we will be able to harness local expertise and provide recommendations to Government to ensure that the institutional responses to victims and perpetrators of these crimes improve and, ideally, to decrease the incidences of these crimes.

I hope that you will all join me in providing your full support to the important work of this Committee, and I look forward to reporting on its successes.

Thank you.