

Dear Editor:

Pam Frampton's editorial "The sentence that deserves an exclamation" dated June 27 echoed the sentiments of many people the members of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women have spoken to lately.

Is it not cruel irony that the government just launches a new campaign aimed at having men teach young boys to 'respect women', and put supports in place to have women enter better paying traditionally male dominated workplaces, only to have the behavior and sentencing of Bob Garland undermine both? The benign sentence sends a clear message to the public, but even more so to women who are silently 'putting up with' this type of abuse in their own workplaces, afraid to come forward.

Sexist and abusive behaviors are unacceptable no matter where they exist in society, but when they are perpetrated by people in positions of power and authority, it is even more reprehensible. While in our own province we are contending with Bob Garland, Alberta is contending with Conservative MLA Doug Elniski's advice that 'ladies' should always smile when they walk into a room, as "men are attracted to smiles, so smile, don't give me that 'treated equal' stuff." Pick up the paper any day and we see examples of women being treated as 'less than equal'.

We like to think in 2009, people realize that sexist, abusive, degrading attitudes and behaviors towards women are no longer socially acceptable, but the Garlands and Elniskis of the world prove the contrary. Those of us working to end inequality and violence against women clearly have a long way to go to end decades of entrenched attitudes.

As Frampton comments in her editorial, "you could be forgiven for thinking triceratops were roaming outside the RNC's Corner Brook detachment and pterodactyls were wheeling in the skies.." We can always live in hope that the prehistoric attitudes and behaviors towards women will go the way of the dinosaurs and become extinct.

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