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Under Representation of Disabled Persons in Government Workforce

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am going to continue on with the message I had yesterday for the Minister responsible for the public service, Mr. Roland, and the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, Mr. Miltenberger.

I listened very closely to Minister Roland yesterday attempting to answer questions that I posed to him about the lack of representation in our public service for persons with disabilities. The Minister just did not seem to believe that his government was doing anything wrong when it came to hiring persons with disabilities, even though his own departments of FMBS and Human Resources themselves currently have no disabled persons working for them.

Seeing that this Minister is responsible for carrying out the government policy that states quite clearly that the Government of the Northwest Territories will have a workforce representative of the population, it really makes me wonder why and how this gross misrepresentation is allowed to continue.

Let's do a comparison, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories has a rate of 13 percent of our population that have a disability, yet .4 percent of our public service are employees with a disability. That is a factor that is 30 times out of sync. In Saskatchewan, 9.7 percent of the population has a disability, yet their public service has 3.4 percent representation for persons who are disabled; a factor of less than three.

Just so the Minister is aware, the Labour department in Saskatchewan, which is the equivalent of our HR department, is a role model for the rest of the government, as it should be, with over 13 percent of its employees having a disability. The last time I checked, we still had zero working in our HR department.

Manitoba has 2.79 percent compared to seven percent of the population with a disability. Nova Scotia had a rate of four percent compared to the general population of 13 percent. That is 10 times higher than the Northwest Territories. The federal public service had a rate of 5.1 percent. These jurisdictions also have their requirement that individuals self identify, just to clarify that for the Minister.

Given the crystal clear disparities that exist, I find that by the Minister's responses to me yesterday and his lack of a single solid proactive measure to remedy the situation, he is avoiding his responsibility as Minister of Human Resources. I am hoping that, now that the Minister has the numbers in front of him, he can come up with creative ways to address the disparities, than simply saying an employment equity policy is in the works.

It has been obvious that the affirmative action policy has needed a replacement for years. This is nothing new. When will we have this new employment equity policy that the Minister speaks of, and when will the disparity be addressed? I will certainly have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Applause