

15th Legislative Assembly
Fifth Session
October 17 - November 2, 2006

NOV 2, 2006

Problems at Stanton Territorial Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my Member's statement is going to focus on Stanton Territorial Hospital. There have been two major events affecting Stanton that have led to the breakdown of staff morale and the building developing such a sour environment.

The first decision happened when the decision was made to privatize the janitorial services back in the mid-90's and later on, dietary and laundry services in 2000.

Mr. Speaker, this totally destroyed the close-knit, family atmosphere of that hospital. Today in these three areas there is tremendous turnover of employees, language barriers and daily questions about quality. The GNWT should rethink this whole effort. It was all done in an attempt to save money and, Mr. Speaker, that decision has cost this government more than it could ever have imagined in terms of morale, atmosphere and quality of services.

I would like to ask myself, how can a government be cheap when it comes to caring for its people? As if that decision to privatize wasn't bad enough, the Government of the Northwest Territories two years ago made what amounts to me to be one of the worst decisions ever made by this government. And that was the Hay Plan reclassification system, where government drove a wedge firmly between many of our nurses at Stanton.

This mess is still being sorted out, Mr. Speaker, to the detriment of our health care system and to the people that we serve. This reclassification practice, as far as I can tell, is only utilized in one other venue in this country: a psychiatric hospital in Newfoundland. No other hospital treats its nurses in this manner and why do we have to accept this?

What we should be doing as a government is to help all our health care professionals pursue their own collective bargaining unit. I get tired, Mr. Speaker, of hearing why it can't happen. I want to hear how it can happen. Our teachers have their own union. Why can't our health care professionals have their own union as well? Then and only then can we say for sure that they are being dealt with fairly. And Mr. Speaker, it opens up a world of possibilities in the area of recruitment and retention.

Mr. Speaker, Stanton Territorial Hospital is the flagship of our health care system. Why are we not focussed on fixing the human element? There's close to \$28 million going into that hospital in terms of renovations in the next few years. Mr. Speaker, money alone is not the answer. We need to show our health care professionals that we care about them and that we're going to listen to them. Then and only then will things get better. Mahsi.

---Applause