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Public Service Growth and Dependence on Contracted Services

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I will again stand in this House to discuss the issue of government spending as it pertains to the growth of our public service and the contracted services which we enter into as a government. I want to start with the public service, Mr. Speaker. Since 1999, our public service has grown from 2750 to approximately 4700 in 2006. There are another 101 new positions included in this upcoming budget.

Mr. Speaker, I will not debate the growth in areas where we desperately need help such as social workers, teachers, nurses, health care professionals. However, our growth is occurring in the absence of any long-range human resource plan. With the settlement and implementation of aboriginal self-governments here in the Northwest Territories, we will need to look at how our public service will fit into what will ultimately become a new political landscape here in the Northwest Territories.

I have been asking questions about this growth and lack of a plan since I walked through the doors three and a half years ago. It hasn't been addressed and it has plainly been ignored. If we continue to operate as a government without a human resource plan for the future, we are failing those who we represent. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker, the level of growth is not sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, contracted services and growth in the use of consultants and the prevalence of reports, studies that just end up collecting dust has to be addressed. It has been my observation, Mr. Speaker, that not only are we paying over \$500 million for the 4700 employees that we have, but some of these employees are becoming contract administrators, hiring consultants or contractors to do the work that should be done by the various departments. Why do we sole source so many contracts? Why do these mostly end up in the hands of southern firms?

A case in point, Mr. Speaker, is the recent budget address delivered recently by Minister Roland. Why is it that his office had to contract via sole source contract to an Alberta communications company to write his budget address? The cost for this work was \$15,000. Between FMBS and the Department of Finance, they have 111 employees. Why wasn't somebody there tasked with doing this budget address, Mr. Speaker?

Last summer, the Department of Human Resources sole sourced a contract for \$550,000 to an American company. They were brought in to help straighten out the business processes at Human Resources. Mr. Speaker, what did Human Resources get for that money? The issues are still there. Things really don't seem to be improving any. Why can't our people in that department figure out how best to address the issues? Is that not what we pay the management at Human Resources to do?

Mr. Speaker, this government must develop a human resource plan for the future. What we require is a zero-based review of each and every position government-wide and a thorough analysis of our operation from top to bottom. Mahsi.

--- Applause