

15th Legislative Assembly

Fourth Session May 25 - June 2, 2005

MAY 25, 2005

Relocation Of The Territorial Treatment Centre To Hay River

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I start my statement, I would like to welcome all the distinguished guests who are with us here today. I'd like to use my Member's statement today to highlight the impacts of moving the Territorial Treatment Centre from Yellowknife to Hay River.

I can understand and appreciate the politics that are at play when a decision like this is made. What I haven't seen is an actual business case for the move. I'd like to know how the Minister can say that workers in Hay River who lost their jobs with the closure of Dene K'onia will gain employment if and when the TTC is relocated to Hay River. That's at least 18 months from now and how could anybody wait that long for a job?

I've not heard from any of the employees at the TTC who are interested in relocating. The employees that are there today and the ones who come before them have made some very serious and substantive investments in our community and in our children. What cannot be overlooked here is that the average length of employment by staff at the TTC, both full-time and part-time, is over five years.

For the most part, all of the employees are long-term residents of Yellowknife at over 10 years per employee. These employees work under private contract and are notoriously underpaid compared to the equivalent work done under the public sector. I'm worried that comments being made in the media are downplaying and dismissing the hard work and dedication of the staff at the TTC.

Mr. Braden, the MLA for Great Slave, has noted that the move to Hay River will allow more children to be helped. How is this possible when 40 percent of the referrals to the TTC are from Yellowknife? Have we given any consideration to the clients that the TTC serves? What about the families and the children that will feel the brunt of this decision, the majority of children that will be located seven hours drive away from family and friends?

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that this decision is going to impact 17 full-time employees, six part-time employees, and numerous families here in Yellowknife. I would like to close by saying that typically I am in favour of decentralization when it makes sense. Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will ask the Minister how this decision makes sense. Thank you.