

15th Legislative Assembly

**Fourth Session
May 25 - June 2, 2005**

MAY 30, 2005

Closing Of Sleep Centre At Stanton Hospital

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sleep apnea is a very common medical disorder that our adult population suffers from. Sufferers of this condition need to have their condition properly diagnosed in a sleep lab prior to deciding on a form of treatment. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services is closing down the sleep centre at Stanton hospital.

It is estimated that 80 percent of sleep apnea sufferers go undiagnosed and this is a real shame, because sleep apnea can have a detrimental effect on your quality of life. This condition can cause severe drowsiness, so the sufferer is unable to concentrate on work, stay alert or take care of children or drive somewhere without severely injuring themselves or others.

A sleep apnea sufferer recently wrote a letter to the Yellowknifer, describing the devastating effects of sleep apnea. Madam Speaker, this woman couldn't even lay down to go to sleep without suffocating. Needless to say, she also couldn't believe that the sleep centre was being closed when she had been told there was a three year waiting list to get in.

It's not only sleep apnea patients that can use the help of a sleep centre, Madam Speaker. A constituent of mine suffered from a heart defect and had severe arrhythmia. One of the most significant symptoms is a marked decrease in oxygen while he slept. Once he was tested and given oxygen while he slept, he felt immediately better and the stress to his heart decreased significantly.

Madam Speaker, not only does the Northwest Territories not have a program to address sleep and oxygen related disorders, but the CPAP machines used to treat sleep apnea are not covered by the NWT health insurance. My constituent with the heart condition is also having trouble getting the government to pay the contractor that is providing him with oxygen.

Madam Speaker, I have some real concerns about how people with these disorders are being treated by our government and I'll have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Thank you.

---Applause

