

15th Legislative Assembly

Fourth Session February 1 - March 2, 2006

FEB 23, 2006

Underused And Unused Addictions Treatment Facilities

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to speak today about addiction and how I believe that the Government of the Northwest Territories is not making the best use of resources, both financially and with its physical infrastructure, to address the ever-increasing demands our residents are facing when it comes to addiction.

I will start with facility utilization. For example, Arctic Tern Female Young Offender unit in Inuvik. In the past two years, it has had anywhere from one to six young offenders. It has 22 staff, Mr. Speaker, and costs this government \$2.1 million to operate on an annual basis. Is this the best use of our resources when Inuvik is in desperate need of a treatment centre?

Of course, there is the infamous Sombe Ke Healing Centre on the Detah road. I have questioned the Minister numerous times in this House and here we are today, two years later, Mr. Speaker. Nothing has changed. The building still sits empty. The Housing Corporation continues to pay the mortgage. Someone is paying the utilities and the cost of a caretaker, but still, Mr. Speaker, no action being taken on what this building could and should be used for.

Having a facility like Sombe Ke at your disposal and not using it while the public is demanding treatment centres should be a cause of great embarrassment for this government. However, they just keep paying the bills, paying only lip service to those demanding action. The government does not even listen, Mr. Speaker, to Regular Members of this House when it comes to treatment centres. We passed a motion in October of 2004 in this House calling on the government for action. We wasted our breath and the motion fell on deaf ears, Mr. Speaker.

Here we are again today demanding action from this government. Underutilized hospitals in Fort Smith and Hay River are being renovated over the next four to five years at a cost of roughly \$27 million. Is there anybody questioning whether or not we can incorporate space for addictions treatment in these renovations?

Last year, I tabled a petition signed by 98 inmates from North Slave Correctional Centre calling on the government to reopen treatment centres. Often a common denominator to crime is drug and alcohol addiction. We have to be proactive, Mr. Speaker, and try to give people every available resource to fight the demons of addiction.

Mr. Speaker, my feeling is we are failing our people and we cannot allow this to continue to happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause