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Human Resource Review At The North Slave Correctional Centre

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off, I would like to thank the Minister of Justice for finally recognizing there was a problem at North Slave Correctional Centre and acting on it. From day one of this Assembly, some Members on this side of the House had been speaking out about human resource issues at the North Slave Correctional Centre. Low morale, high staff turnover, wrongful dismissal suits and other problems were brought to our attention that were a result of poor management and leadership at the North Slave Correctional Centre.

Repeatedly, some of us hounded the Minister of Justice to take action, demanding a review. For the longest time, he refused to acknowledge that there might be some serious problems at the North Slave Correctional Centre. On June 2nd of last year, referring to the North Slave Correctional Centre, he said, "I have every confidence that the training and supervision is adequate at the centre."

On May 27th, he said, "I am satisfied that, other than the usual problems you can expect when one facility shuts down and people are moved into a new facility, there is nothing out of line there, so I don't see the need for it right now." On October 24th he said, "I have no inside knowledge that there are problems. I believe that the issues are being raised by individuals, and I do believe that a majority of the staff in Corrections are satisfied with their jobs and the way in which the department is running."

When the Minister finally conceded to an internal review, the findings pointed to far more pervasive problems than any of these statements would have led us to believe. A total of 36 recommendations to improve human resource functions came out of the review – a review that, until last June, the Minister adamantly stated was not required.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister owes an apology to the employees at North Slave Correctional Centre who had the backbone to come forward with their concerns and persist, despite the Department's initial refusal to even consider there might be cause for concern. Where was the leadership? I suggest it was sadly lacking, Mr. Speaker, at the political level and at the management level within the department.

Mr. Speaker, I don't understand how management could stand by and allow the working conditions and morale to deteriorate to such a state. I don't understand how a Minister could dismiss the concerns of Members and say that a review was not required in June, and yet have one take place in August. I would like to know what has happened to the employees who allowed this to happen under their watch. Are they still with this government? Mr. Speaker, I will be following up with questions at the appropriate time today. Thank you.

---Applause