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Location Of The New Legal Aid Office

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, I had some questions to the Minister of Public Works on the location of the new Family Law Legal Aid office in Yellowknife. I would like to use my Member's Statement today to again address this decision.

I am a very strong supporter of this new office being opened in Yellowknife and it is long overdue. One of the main reasons that it has taken so long to open this office is the fact that funding it on an ongoing basis was going to be problematic for the department.

The space was sole sourced after the RFP closed and it is to be located inside Centre Square Mall. This is prime retail space in a shopping mall, Mr. Speaker. This government is going to be spending more money than it has to, to locate in this space. The clientele of this new office should not have to go through a busy shopping mall to access the service of legal aid lawyers.

Also, the leasehold improvements of what had been retail space to a full-fledged operating law office is too much money to pay. It only makes sense that the less money you spend on the operation and maintenance, the more that will flow through to the people who really need it and that is the clients.

It also hurts retailers located in the mall, Mr. Speaker, as they need to work collectively to attract consumers to that mall. Of course, the landlord is happy in that it has a deal with Public Works. It's hard to beat the government as a solid tenant, and it is no fault of the landlord, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I just want to reiterate that we are, over the life of this lease, going to be taking away valuable resources from the many clients out there who are in dire need of legal aid. It is a shame that no one stopped to think about the clients and the resources needed to meet their needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.