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Need For Addiction Services

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to use my Member's Statement today to draw some attention to a problem that is plaguing many of our residents. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is addiction.

I recently had the opportunity to help a constituent of mine, who has a very serious addiction to crack cocaine. This individual had no place to turn to address this addiction. Through the Minister's office we were able to find her a program in the south that will help her try to break this cycle of dependency.

I would like to thank the Minister for his help in that. She will get help, but how many other people are out there suffering the same way she was, and are we doing enough as a government to address addictions?

As was evidenced by the large crack cocaine bust in Hay River two weeks ago, our children and communities are at continuing risk of falling prey to this terrible drug and the addiction that it brings. Crack cocaine, Mr. Speaker, is not the only addiction afflicting our people. Addictions can have a devastating impact, as we know, on families and communities. Whether it's cocaine, crack cocaine, alcohol, or the very dangerous crystal meth, we have to ensure that we have the resources and safety and support network in place to deal with these additions.

I believe the Government of the Northwest Territories must seriously consider, once again, the need for a dedicated drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. Residents are often sent south to get help far away from friends and family to support and encourage them. Money seems to be the biggest hurdle to overcome in making this happen.

I would like to comment that during last fall's election campaign, many residents felt that a dedicated treatment centre was necessary and much needed. As a government, we need to prioritize the needs of our residents, with health and welfare being at the top of that list.

Why do we continue to operate a young offenders' facility in Inuvik with no clients, or a hospital in Fort Smith with hardly any patients? Mr. Speaker, we need to take stock of what our priorities are. I do believe this facility should be located in Yellowknife, as this is where half of our population resides. However, if it can be located elsewhere, so be it.

The bottom line is we have to get serious with how we are dealing with addictions. Residents are putting their faith in us to make this happen. This is not an area that we can afford to fall on, but an issue that we must meet head on. Thank you.