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Need For A Medical Detoxification Facility

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the need for a medical detox facility in Yellowknife. I'd like to talk about this subject because I don't want Archie Tsetta and Vawn Ruthven, who are two of hundreds of northerners who struggled with drug and alcohol addiction problems, to have died in vain.

Eighteen months ago, coroner's juries in both Ruthven's and Tsetta's case called for a medical detox facility, but the Minister of Health and Social Services has failed to respond to those recommendations. In response to a report calling again for a new addictions strategy, including medical detoxing, Minister Miltenberger's response was, and I quote "we have to make a fundamental decision about whether we want to put money into bricks and mortar or do we want to put money into programs at the community level."

Mr. Speaker, I think the money should go where the people need it most, and that is to a dedicated detox facility. That, to me, is fundamental, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, for some addictions like the addiction to crack cocaine, you need to be able to medically detoxify. Your withdrawal has to be managed safely and medically. Twenty percent of addicts die while going through delirium treatments, or the DTs. Currently, Stanton and Hay River are the only places in the North that have detox beds and these services are inconsistent. Stanton is currently spending \$5000 per week to care for addicts. That's \$250,000 per year, Mr. Speaker. The time and resources used to deal with addictions takes away from the hospital's ability to deal with other medical issues.

We have a serious drug problem in the Territories and it's only getting worse. A while ago, the RCMP found 541 grams of crack cocaine destined for Yellowknife in a truck that went off the road. At the beginning of this month, police seized 193 grams of crack cocaine out of a hotel room in Hay River. One million dollars annually is spent on the drug trade in Hay River alone, and about \$100,000 of that is for crack cocaine. Really, no one knows how much is spent in Yellowknife.

The RCMP have noticed a drastic increase in cocaine usage. The Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre, who two years ago used to only treat those addicted to alcohol and marijuana, is now starting to see a rise in those addicted to stimulants like crack cocaine. Drugs are reaching the North from the highway system and the dealers are attracted by the high prices they can sell crack cocaine for in the North. The going rate is \$120 per gram. That's \$40 to \$50 more a gram than it sells for down south.

Mr. Speaker, apparently we have become a Disneyland for drug dealers. Our drug use is going through the roof, but we have very little to offer those who are addicted and those who need help. We have to be able to help addicts when they need help and we need to do it safely, humanely and effectively. We need a medical detox facility and we need one now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.