

**16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly**

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**Programming At North Slave Correctional Centre**

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to speak about programming at North Slave Correctional Centre. I believe that it is inconceivable that the Department of Justice would look to programming as a way and a means to appease the government's reduction exercise.

The Northwest Territories has four times the national average in the areas of sexual assault and incidents of family violence. It is hard for me to comprehend why we would look to reduce program delivery officers at our largest correctional facility. It makes absolutely no sense. The government's own strategic goals talk of safe communities and strengthening treatment of addictions and mental health. The actions proposed by the Department of Justice fly directly in the face of both of these goals.

I just do not feel comfortable without the adequate resources available at North Slave Correctional Centre to ensure that those inmates who require treatment and programming get that service in a timely, coordinated and professional manner. We can't slough off the delivery of family violence and sex offender programs to other personnel. It took nearly three years to recruit a psychologist to the centre, and the caseworkers are busy with other duties. The affected positions are entitled "program delivery officers," because that is their role and that is their function, not someone else's.

The safety of our community is at stake, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to see us shortchange our community's safety by offering programming on a substandard basis. The department has also collapsed the deputy warden of programs position, which is also very, very unsettling. Those duties are now in the hands of a sentence administrator, who obviously would not be an expert on programming that would be required at the centre. The department has chosen to take these measures, and I am left wondering what is next — the teachers at the centre, or perhaps even the chaplain?

Again, this is a classic case of reductions that are just not well thought out. Certainly the safety of our families and our communities should have gotten a higher billing from this government than it obviously has. Mahsi.