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Rehabilitation Programming at North Slave Correctional Centre

Mr. Ramsay: I want to speak again today about sex offender and family violence programming at North Slave Correctional Centre.

I've been greatly concerned over the Minister's comments to me in previous rounds of questioning that the two program delivery officers are going to be reassigned to caseworkers and that other staff at the facility are going to be trained to deliver the programming. This is completely absurd. Does the Minister really and actually believe that other staff could attend a week or ten day training course and just simply step into delivering a group therapy sex offender or family violence program?

If this is the case, what does this say about our commitment as a government to keep our families and communities safe? We have an obligation to our residents to rehabilitate offenders before we send them back into our communities. Sex offender programming is very specialized training, and it takes years of training, clinic practice and dedicated professionals to effectively deliver the programming. You can't just simply open a manual and teach lessons. It is actual group therapy, and I would really like to know who is going to train these new people.

The existing delivery officers trained for over two years with a psychologist who put the program together. I don't understand how individuals who are caseworkers, who deal with inmates and issues day in and day out, are going to have the non-judgmental attitude the trainers will need. The two positions should not be melded together.

I've had the occasion to speak with some officials from Correctional Service of Canada who have some very deep concerns over our Department of Justice's now nonchalant approach to programming. They tell me that in the federal system all programming must be delivered by qualified staff — the delivery of sex offender and family violence programs with individuals that must have at least a master's degree. How can we get away with proposing a week or ten days worth of training to individuals with no clinical, university, or academic training?

Perhaps the Minister should look at Corrections Canada, at its guidelines for the provision of programming. He might be surprised by what he finds, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.