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Privatization of Services at Stanton Territorial Hospital

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak again today about Stanton Territorial Hospital. I'm very encouraged and happy to hear that the Minister is trying to get some answers to the problems at that hospital.

Today I wanted to focus on a couple of decisions that previous governments have made regarding the privatization of services at that hospital. I believe the decision to privatize the housekeeping, laundry and food services at that hospital were, in fact, bad decisions. Seeing that we are currently looking at human resource, operational and financial issues at that hospital, we would be remiss if we did not look at revisiting these decisions.

Housekeeping, laundry services and food services are all integral components of having a well-run hospital. Staffing in these areas is always a problem, and turnover is sky-high, which means new staff are forever being trained. These staff interact day-in and day-out with health care professionals and other staff in this facility, and it is adding to the low morale issue when there appears to be no continuity or consistency in services in these areas.

I would like to know how much these contracts cost us and whether or not the Department of Health and Social Services is the least bit interested in reexamining these contracts. Sodexo is a huge \$7.9 billion corporation headquartered in Gaithersburg, Maryland. How much money is this big corporation taking with them that should stay here in the Northwest Territories, where the government should repatriate these functions and services to the people?

Even if repatriating these functions back to Stanton would cost us a little bit more, the economic impact of actually paying people a decent wage would add greatly to the local economy and to the level of service provided to health care professionals and the public that utilize the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, let's put all the evidence and all the contracts on the table and have a discussion about the future of these services. As I mentioned yesterday, Stanton has a number of issues that it's dealing with. This is just one issue, and it won't fix everything. But these are functions that cannot be underestimated or overlooked when looking at the overall health and wellbeing of Stanton Territorial Hospital. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Mahsi.