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As a farmer, Kit Bell, isn't making anywhere near his former salary of \$83,000, but the former fire marshal of the NWT is a lot happier shoveling grain than he would have been working for the new minister responsible for the fire regulations. Bell says before John Todd became the minister, the Rankin Inlet businessman was the biggest offender of fire regulations in the NWT. So when Todd came on, it was either quit or lose his self-respect. Bell chose the former. He is on the phone now from his farm in Saskatchewan.

Good morning Mr. Bell.

Mr. Bell:

Good morning Randy.

Announcer:

How serious a disregard for fire safety are you talking about?

Mr. Bell:

Well, over the period of the last couple of years, we had records of at least 96 violations in the property in the Rankin hotel. It was controlled by Mr. Todd.

Announcer:

Ninety-six. What kind of fire safety infractions are you talking about?

Mr. Bell:

Some of them on the surface appeared to be minimal, but we had things that really causes a lot of concern - blocked exits seemed to be an ongoing problem, fire alarm systems not operating, exit signs not functioning, things like that that would affect people in the hotel if there was an emergency.

Announcer:

How do you know that it was Todd's fault and not the fault of his staff. Maybe he just didn't know.

Mr. Bell:

Ah, Mr. Todd knew. Mr. Todd made many public statements that could be attributed to the fact that he was being inspected and he made it quite clear that he was not in favour of the inspections that were being done at his place.

Announcer:

Now apparently Todd has no recall of saying that you and your officers were nitpicky and overzealous. Is it possible that your people brought much of this resistance on yourselves?

Mr. Bell:

No, I don't know. The rest of the NWT community were all faced with the same rules and regulations. The Government of the NWT adopted, through the Fire Prevention Act, a set

of minimum standards. These minimum standards were the standards that were accepted across Canada. Most of other jurisdictions, they took these minimum standards and increased them, but we didn't do that. We stayed with the national building code and the national fire code and we enforced them to the best of our ability. So I don't think that we were nitpicking.

Announcer:

Now Todd has also made the point that your officers weren't sensitive enough to the financial hard times he and other companies are facing. You should have gone easier on them at least until the recession was over. What about that?

Mr. Bell:

No, I don't think that there is any cost involved in keeping an exit door cleared of ice and snow, other than somebody shoveling it away. If that is a hardship, then you shouldn't be in business. Maintaining your existing light safety equipment is a cost of doing business. We were cognizant of the fact that we were in tough times. However generally, if it was an extreme life safety hazard, we would give some time for people to make arrangements to get something upgraded on a time schedule that they could afford.

Announcer:

Mr. Bell, it said in some circles, that Todd harboured a vendetta against you and he would have fired you anyway. Is it possible that you quit just to avoid being dismissed?

Mr. Bell:

I don't think so. I think that Mr. Todd, if he would have chosen to fire me, would have to give his cheque book out and unfortunately when that happens, it is the people of the NWT and the taxpayers that would pay for the costs of dismissing a civil servant, especially when it was unjustified in the fact that we were only doing our job. I advised the deputy minister on the day of Mr. Todd's appointment as the minister that I wouldn't be staying. I wouldn't work for Mr. Todd.

Announcer:

So on the very day he was appointed, that is when you handed in your resignation.

Mr. Bell:

No, I didn't hand my resignation in written form, but I advised the deputy minister at the moment the deputy minister came down to my office and advised me that Mr. Todd had been appointed the minister of Safety and Public Services.

Announcer:

Now, why should Todd's previous record on fire safety make any difference to you as a fire marshal. After all it's the law you're enforcing, not the whims or wishes of the minister.

Mr. Bell:

The Minister is the leader of the department. The minister of the department sets the tone. The minister of the department sets the priorities for funding of the department. The minister, despite what the Act might say, is still the leader of the department.

Announcer:

Now given this record of Todd's, how difficult do you think it will be for the territorial government to recruit a qualified replacement for you.

Mr. Bell:

I don't know. I suppose you can always find somebody to do a job to a different standard.
Hopefully, that won't be the case.

(Tape ended here.)

