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STAFFING PROBLEMS AT Y.C.I.

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Government of N.W.T.  
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

On Friday, October 14 a demonstration took place on the steps of the Legislative Assembly in which the Union of Northern Workers and employees of the Yellowknife Correctional Institute presented their grievances to the Minister of Social Services. The essence of their grievance can be summarized as follows:

1. There are casual correctional workers at Y.C.I. who do not receive proper rates of pay. Although a pay level is specified for positions, they are paid according to a subjective judgement of the Department of Personnel. This practice was ruled to be contrary to contract in an arbitration ruling in January, 1987.
2. There are too many casuals working as Correctional Officers at Y.C.I. Of a total of 30 officers who actually work on the floor, fully one-third are casual employees.
3. Despite contract stipulations against the practice, casuals are being used when there is clearly an indeterminate staff requirement. A casual works for three months and then is laid off. After five days the casual is rehired.
4. There is too much overtime being worked at Y.C.I. by both casual and indeterminate staff. There is one recorded case of a casual working 102 hours of overtime in a two week period.
5. In addition to the over use of casuals, contracting out of security service means a further loss in the ability at Y.C.I. to ensure a well trained professional work force.

6. Lack of training is a major problem, especially among casuals. Casual employees are sometimes required to supervise an entire wing of 70 - 80 people with only a few days experience in the Correctional Institute.
7. There are continuing charges of ministerial influence in hiring but individual public servants are reluctant to give examples for fear of reprisal.
8. Correctional Officer level 2 staff are required to dispense medicine between 7:30 and 8:45 every day. The staff are uneasy about this responsibility since they are not trained. There is one reported case of an inmate who slept soundly for two days because of a mistake in administering medicine.

The Department of Social Services should request its independent inquiry to consider these issues when it examines the staffing problems at Y.C.I.