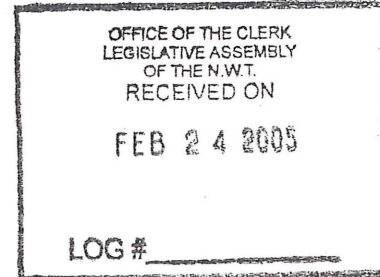




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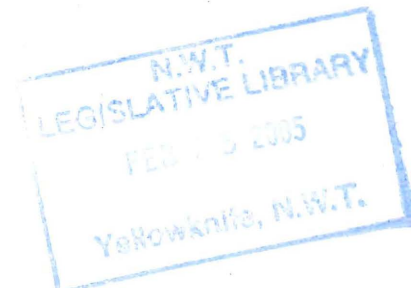
Northwest Territories Minister of Justice

TIM MERCER
CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**Response to Petition: Closure of Hay River Justice Facilities**

Attached, please find a copy of the response to petition on the closure of Hay River justice facilities tabled by the MLA for Hay River South, Jane Groenewegen on February 10, 2005.

Charles Dent

Attachment

c: Heather Riviere
Legislative Assistant

Petition tabled by Ms. Groenewegen on February 10, 2005

Response by the Honourable Charles Dent
Minister of Justice

Closure of Hay River Justice Facilities

After reviewing the draft budget with the Standing Committee on Social Programs, the Government decided not to proceed with the closure of the Court Registries in Inuvik and Hay River. This action was taken after carefully considering the concerns expressed in both Hay River and Inuvik.

However, the Department of Justice must continue to meet government spending reductions, and the Dene K'onia Young Offender Facility and the Remand Unit at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre in Hay River will be closed.

With the introduction of the federal Youth Criminal Justice Act, there has been a decrease in the number of youth being sentenced to open custody. Across Canada, all jurisdictions are closing "open custody" youth facilities because of the dramatic decline in the numbers of young people being sentenced to open custody terms. In the past 18 months, there have been very few occasions when we have had more than 8 male youth in open custody in the NWT. There are not the numbers required to keep more than one facility open.

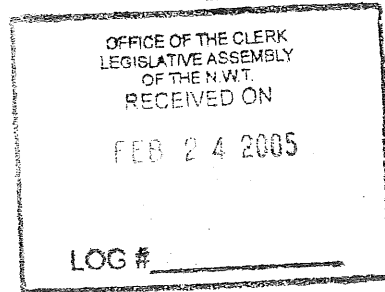
While it is possible the numbers may increase in the future, the preferred option for dealing with young people in open custody is to have them progress from an institutional setting to a group home in a residential neighbourhood, and then into family homes or camps. The Department of Justice had proposed to close Dene K'onia and replace it with a group home in Hay River a few years ago. The Department does not expect that more than one male youth "institutional" facility will be needed in the NWT in the foreseeable future.

The six-bed remand unit at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre (SMCC) in Hay River housed offenders who were just entering the correctional system. The decision to close the remand facility was supported because of the low numbers of people from Hay River who are placed in Remand (an average of 1.5 per month over the past 18 months), and because the full-time staff affected could be absorbed into the staff complement at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre. That meant the Department could avoid laying any indeterminate staff off.

The Government recognizes the impact on the Hay River economy that closing Dene K'onia will have. The Government is looking at options that may mitigate the loss of positions in Hay River over the course of the next year.



Northwest Territories Minister of Justice



FEB 24 2005

TIM MERCER
CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Response to Petition: Rent Controls in the NWT

Attached, please find a copy of the Response to Petition on the Rent Controls in the NWT tabled by the MLA for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Robert McLeod, on February 14, 2005.

Charles Dent

Attachment

c: Heather Riviere
Legislative Assistant

Petition tabled by Mr. McLeod on February 14, 2005

Response by the Honourable Charles Dent
Minister of Justice

Rent Controls in the NWT

The Department of Justice is aware that some tenants in the NWT have faced significant rental increases. The solution to this problem is not a simple one, and while rent control legislation may go a long way towards addressing this issue, it would come at great cost.

Every indication is that rent control, as a way of dealing with excessive rental increases for some tenants, would be expensive to implement and administer, and the negative aspects could well outweigh the positive by a large measure. Research and the experience of other jurisdictions suggest that rent control could divert resources away from the provision of housing and could even contribute to existing housing problems. Also, rent control may not work for all communities. It may be that there are other ways to address this problem while still balancing the interests of landlords and tenants.

The Department of Justice has begun consultations on amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act*. The purpose of these consultations is to modernize the Act and make it more focused, ensure that disputes are resolved more quickly, and make sure that effective remedies are provided to both tenants and landlords. I encourage interested residents to participate in this consultation. This is an opportunity to put forward your ideas and opinions for change.

