

Bad faith move indeed

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It makes sense Louis Sebert is the transparency minister because everyone can see right through his announcement to sole-source the contract for the men's domestic violence program A New Day.

Late last year, the counselling program was set to expire while waiting for the justice department to compile a report to measure its success. There was a public outcry and Sebert, who is also the justice minister, extended the program's mandate until June 30 of this year.

The justice department released its report, concluding A New Day was seeing success after a rocky start. Despite this, the department drafted a new request for proposals (RFP) that drastically pared it down: it went from full-time to hourly, as needed; abandoned one-on-one counselling sessions; and stated applicants to provide counselling need not have experience.

Another backlash ensued. Nobody bid on the project. Instead, a group of 14 community advocates submitted a letter to the justice department to question the changes.

Then at the eleventh hour, Sebert announced: "We are dealing with an NGO that has expressed interest."

That NGO ended up being John Howard Society, and strangely enough its executive director, former MLA Robert Hawkins, had a different take on what happened.

"We were approached by the GNWT," he told Yellowknifer.

In other words, the Department of Justice magically transformed a one-year request for proposals to run a mutated program nobody wanted to touch "with a 10-foot pole," according to Lydia Bardak, the community advocate Hawkins replaced after she was fired from the John Howard Society, into a four-year, sole-source contract.

Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green called this a bad faith move, and she is right.

This entire time, what has the obstacle been to prevent the justice department from re-issuing the A New Day RFP in its original form - the one with a proven track record success? How can Sebert believe A New Day will continue to provide good programming without the ingredients that made it successful in the first place?

On what planet does Sebert believe the public can't see right through what he's doing?

It's about time MLAs and community advocates acknowledge the truth -- Sebert has no interest in a successful A New Day -- and say loudly and clearly this is not an attitude NWT residents want in their leadership.