

Letter to the Editor:
Taxpayer Dollars Wasted Closing and Reopening Prisons

by Rand W. Gould

“As we all realize, punishment was never much of a deterrent, and could scarcely have afforded comfort to a victim already dead.”

- Philip K. Dick, *Minority Report* (1956)

Dear Editor,

While state roads crumble the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) is wasting millions of taxpayer-dollars to remodel and reopen a long-closed “temporary” prison in the U.P., Hiawatha Temporary Facility (HTF), consisting of polebarns heavily infested with the deadly black mold currently pervading U.P. prisons, so MDOC employees aren’t *inconvenienced* by having to work “below the bridge” due to the scheduled closing of Kinross Correctional Facility (KCF), where millions of dollars were spent a few years ago to build a new natural gas heating plant and to replace the showers due, in part, to black mold. The fiscally responsible choice, however, would be to reopen Mound Correctional Facility in Detroit, built at considerable expense as a permanent facility, which should never have been closed in the first place, is much newer, not black mold-infested, and much nearer to most prisoners’ family and friends. Moreover, Detroit could use the jobs if MDOC employees don’t want to relocate.

As bad as it sounds, the MDOC’s decision to throw away millions of taxpayer dollars reopening a long-closed prison is business as usual. Not too long ago, the MDOC spent millions of dollars remodeling Southern State Prison at Jackson, only to shut it down, then closed Muskegon Correction Facility, and let its buildings flood, before deciding to reopen it at great expense. Michigan taxpayers, and state auditors, should ask, how spending millions of dollars on remodeling prisons in order to close them and closing prisons in order to reopen them benefits state taxpayers? They should also ask, what the cost will be for prisoners’ healthcare, after exposure to black mold spores, and to defend and settle the numerous lawsuits to follow. Especially, considering the MDOC’s budget for this year is already a bloated \$2.6 billion, according to the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget.

I’d appreciate it if you’d consider assigning one or more of your reporters to investigate this matter and allegations enclosed, herewith, entitled “Hiawatha Temporary Facility (HTF),” a summary of what we prisoners believe, but cannot confirm for the most part, is going on.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Written 19 August 2015