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Concerns With The GNWT Apprenticeship Training Program

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's pretty ironic listening to the Minister of Education's statement today. I will start off today saying I would like to speak about my concerns with Education, Culture and Employment's Apprenticeship Training Program. A constituent of mine has been trying to get their journeyman certificate in plumbing but, unfortunately, all their attempts have been thwarted and not aided by this program at all.

Madam Speaker, the Minister has said, and I quote, "For our people to get the most out of the diamond mines, oil and gas development and other projects, they need to have the training to do the work. The jobs surrounding these projects require highly skilled labour and we need to have certified northern journeypersons ready to fill them."

Madam Speaker, I would like to tell you a story of one of my constituents, and I have heard this story from other people as well, about a man who was trying to become one of those northern journeymen. My constituent needed to take a trades entrance exam. It took five months of calling the apprenticeship training office to successfully schedule an exam time, because it was nearly impossible to get in touch with anyone at the office.

Every time they did manage to get hold of anyone, the 12 allotted seats for the exam were all full. Madam Speaker, at no time did anyone even so much as offer to put him on a waiting list and contact him when a seat was available. When he finally was able to take the exam, only three out of the 12 available seats were filled.

There is more, Madam Speaker. Anyone out of high school for a few years will need to brush up on their math and science in preparation for their entrance exams. While the apprenticeship training office wouldn't or couldn't offer any assistance in locating tutors or study sessions to help prepare for the entrance exam, my constituent had to contact every educational institution we have and finally he had to revert to placing an ad in the local newspaper before he could find a tutor.

After completing all of the above, my constituent couldn't get into the first year training course because it was too full. He had to take the course down south. He had to make all of the arrangements by himself. When he tried to access the second year training at the Thebacha Campus, they had no knowledge that he had the first year of training and that he now needed the second year. Madam Speaker, then the second year of training was cancelled at the last minute with no reason for the cancellation ever being given to my constituent.

I do not want to see any apprentices held back because of some desire to support Thebacha Campus, at the apprentice's expense. Madam Speaker, there is no logic in forcing apprentices to wait sometimes 10 to 12 months in order to receive training. Delaying an apprentice's training for this long means falling a year behind in your training and maintaining the same lower wage for yet another year.

Madam Speaker, I will be asking the Minister of Education some questions about his department's organization of the Apprenticeship Training Program and his commitment to producing certified northern journeymen. Thank you.

---Applause