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Workers' Compensation Board Office Complex

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The subject I would like to speak about today is the proposed new Workers' Compensation Board office complex that is currently being entertained by the WCB. The Minister responsible has not presented any type of rationale or business case for this happening. The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development is finally going to be briefed next Wednesday, a day before this session concludes. It is only because, Mr. Speaker, we asked him for the briefing; he didn't offer it.

Mr. Speaker, I do not take issue with the WCB wanting to have its own building if it makes financial sense to do so. What I am taking issue with is how the WCB seems to be going about it. I have heard that the WCB was asking the City for Bartam Trailer Park. I know that they are also interested in the old Gerry Murphy Arena site here in the City of Yellowknife. Seeing as the City had no waterfront property, the WCB has gone out for an expression of interest to source some land.

An expression of interest, Mr. Speaker, obviously has guidelines that have to be followed. It would appear that the WCB did not even follow its own criteria and guidelines when it found a very nice piece of waterfront property. The only problem with this property, Mr. Speaker, is that it does not meet the zoning requirements, as specified in their own guidelines in the expression of interest.

The WCB is actively robbing the City of Yellowknife to rezone this piece of land. This property is located behind the existing development in the Saan/Quizno complex. From my understanding, the WCB is looking for 80 parking stalls and a rezoning of the property so they can build this new office complex.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask, what about downtown revitalization here in the city of Yellowknife? The WCB is looking at taking 100 jobs. That is 100 jobs out of the downtown core here in Yellowknife and moving them to an area of the city that is already plagued by traffic congestion. It just doesn't make any sense to me. I don't know why we wouldn't want to continue to maintain a central location, easily accessible for injured workers.

I want to know what efforts were undertaken to keep the office in the downtown core. There are options; even some that I am aware of that should have been explored. I am wondering why the WCB is so intent on having this waterfront address. The last time I looked, employer premiums were increasing, and injured workers were still feeling that the process and the bureaucracy were treating them badly and poorly.

How can the WCB justify the building of this waterfront castle? They even stated that they will maintain public walking trails within the vicinity of this new building, and all of this on the back of the injured worker and the employers paying ever-increasing premiums. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you.

---Applause