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Socio-Economic Funding from Resource Development

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am going to again address the fact that it is my belief that the Government of the Northwest Territories has let down the majority of its residents and settled on socio-economic impact funding that isn't flowing through the GNWT and won't even start to address our needs as we move forward.

You know, \$500,000 sounds like a great sum of money, but when you spread the funding over 10 years and then split it amongst 22 communities, it doesn't add up to much, Mr. Speaker. It's anyone's best guess on what the administrative cost would be to administer this money; quite possibly as high as 20 percent. What money does get down to the communities will certainly be well used and much needed.

I want to state quite clearly today that I believe, as a government, we could have done, and should have done, much better for our residents. The 22 communities deserve the funding, every bit of it, the entire \$500 million, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe Yellowknife, Fort Smith and Hay River should get a cut from the \$500 million. What I do believe, and have evidence of, is that the Government of the Northwest Territories has failed 70 percent of our population: three out of four of the major population centres in this territory, by not standing up for them, or themselves, for that matter, and demanding more.

The major tax-based centres deserve and should receive funding from Ottawa, as well. This is on top of the \$500 million, Mr. Speaker. I speak from experience, Mr. Speaker. Yellowknife is a much different community today than it was 15 years ago. Resource development and the negative social impacts have hit Yellowknife hard. The saying "more money, more problems" is quite an accurate description. Drugs, crime, addiction and unhealthy lifestyles are very prominent in our communities.

As we embark on the exciting prospects of mega resource development here in the Northwest Territories, our government must be willing to fight for each and every one of its residents, whether they live in Tulita, Fort Simpson, Hay River or Yellowknife. We will all be hit by socio-economic impacts. How is the government going to protect us? What is the government going to do to pay the social costs in every one of our communities?

They don't have an answer for this, Mr. Speaker, and, for that reason, they have, thus far, failed us. Remember, gentlemen, you are a public government. We are a public government and it's time to start acting like one, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Premier. Thank you.

---Applause