

15th Legislative Assembly

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The Perpetual Planning Department of Health and Social Services

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today again about addictions, especially services that should be provided to our youth. How important is the issue of youth addiction services to this government? Judging by its actions to date, I would have to say the record is absolutely abysmal.

Prior to becoming the Minister of Health and Social Services, the current Minister referred to the Department of Health and Social Services as a department of perpetual planning. Mr. Speaker, he loved to call it that. I guess he doesn't like to rock the boat much, as under his leadership the department continues down the road of the "study it to death" attitude.

Meanwhile, our residents and youth continue to demand action. No question, Mr. Speaker, our youth need help. In 1998, the Department of Health and Social Services shut down the NWT Youth Addictions Program that was operated by Northern Addictions Services, which at the time had a budget of \$584,000. The department stated that by April 1, 1999 it was going to develop a new, more effective, they liked to call it, program.

Here we are, Mr. Speaker, seven years later. Where is this program? How many youth have we lost from your perpetual planning department? Every Member of this House is well aware of the problems and addictions our youth face on a day to day basis. With more resource development, more money, there are more problems today in the Northwest Territories than in 1999.

The Minister is really good at saying he'll look at it or it is being dealt with, but his department is very short on action. This government has to wake up to the issue of mental health and addictions for our youth. They are the next generation and we must have the programs and resources in place to give our youth every possible chance at leading a well-rounded and productive life.

When Regular Members are speaking about addiction services, we mean it. Is it too much to ask for the Minister and Cabinet to actually pay attention to what we are saying?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MR. RAMSAY: It seems the only time they do pay attention, Mr. Speaker, is when someone over here is asking for their job. Thank you.

---Applause