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Yellowknife School Facilities

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to comment on the Yellowknife schools issue, this ongoing saga that has become a very large topic of discussion here in Yellowknife. I have listened to many parents who have phoned or emailed me with their concerns. Parents and students are being put in a very difficult position because their children are all part of a very serious discussion regarding space utilization in Yellowknife schools.

Mr. Speaker, some are quick to point the finger at our Education Minister for his known aversion to making decisions. However, the circumstances surrounding the crises that are out there today is not the sole responsibility of Minister Dent or the Department of ECE. To his credit, the Minister has worked with both boards and the Regular Members from Yellowknife on this issue for well over three years. He has tried his best to get both boards to set aside their differences and to do what is best for the children of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I find myself in a very difficult situation with both Ecole St. Joseph's School and N.J. McPherson in my riding. I have seen the space crunch at St. Joseph's first-hand. With the fire last summer and the renovations that are desperately required, their students need to be accommodated somewhere. If the number of empty seats in YK 1 schools is anywhere between 500 and 800 empty seats, then a solution should be workable between the two boards.

No one wants to see funding cut or a school close. What parents I have spoken to want to see is a resolution. How can we expect to teach our children to share and to cooperate when both school boards seem so bent on not working together?

I implore both boards to cogitate about what their differences are doing to the community, its parents and students. A solution is out there and must be found. I do hope that all relevant information is available to parents of both school districts. The Minister should also host public information sessions for all parents and stakeholders of both districts to come and discuss the issues.

In a time of crisis, this community has a history of being able to pull together. We owe it to our students and to our community to work out this situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--- Applause