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911 Emergency Telephone Response Service

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In September of 2001, the chief coroner of the Northwest Territories issued a recommendation that the City of Yellowknife, the RCMP, and Municipal and Community Affairs implement the 911 service in Yellowknife and then expand those services to other communities in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, here we are six years after that recommendation to move forward on 911 service, and still the government is dragging its heels and not moving this much needed emergency response issue forward.

Mr. Speaker, I was a city councillor back in 2001 and remember quite clearly the discussion at the time as focused on the fact that the Government of the Northwest Territories could not help implement 911 service in Yellowknife without providing the entire territory with the service. Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the GNWT has to start somewhere. There is no reason that I have seen nor heard why we can't start with communities like Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith.

Currently when you call 911 you get a computerized voice message saying "Sorry, there are no 911 services in your area. Please hang up and dial the emergency number for your area or hang up and dial zero." This, Mr. Speaker, is just not good enough. When the potential exists for people's lives to be at risk, 911 is a much easier number for children to learn and to remember. If you were to conduct a survey in our communities, I would be surprised if more than 50 percent of the population knew the numbers for the RCMP or emergency services.

Nine-one-one is a North American standard and it is about time that the Government of the Northwest Territories gets on with helping communities that can be easily hooked up into a system such as Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith. How can the government ignore the coroner's recommendation for six years for what would appear to be solely political reasons? My constituents, the city of Yellowknife, and all of our residents here in the Northwest Territories deserve much better, Mr. Speaker. I'll have questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

---Applause