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Budget Process and Potentially Affected Employees

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to speak about the budget process and notification letters sent out to employees. We've had much discussion about this in the House in the past three and a half weeks.

The fact is that the government sent out notification letters to potentially affected employees prior to letting Regular Members know about it. It took over three weeks to get any response from the government. Regular Members were left for three weeks answering calls and e-mails from constituents that had received those letters. We did not have any prior knowledge of where and who these notification letters were going to.

It is clear that the government has pre-empted the 2008 - 2009 budget. These potentially affected employees are being moved around prior to any final decisions being made by this Legislature. As if this is not bad enough, they are also notifying employees who may be affected by the reductions in the '09 - 10 budget. This is completely and utterly unjust — not to mention confusing — to Regular Members, Government of the Northwest Territories employees and the public.

I just don't understand how a duly elected body like the 16th Legislative Assembly can make decisions in isolation from corresponding legislation being discussed and agreed to by all 19 Members of this House. It is just not right. The residents of the Northwest Territories deserve better.

Where did the direction come from to proceed with notifying employees for next year? Certainly Cabinet did not let us know. The Regular Members have had to find out through questioning various Ministers through the budget exercise currently under review. And, Mr. Speaker, it is abundantly clear that employees are receiving notification letters for the '09 - 10 budget year.

Just on Tuesday I was left wondering again: what is this Cabinet thinking when the Minister of Human Resources, when answering questions during the ITI Main Estimates reviews, states: "I would have to confirm whether in fact we are sending [out] notices"? And this one: "In the case of ITI, they would have received written letters, but I don't know about the other departments."

If the Minister of Human Resources doesn't know whether or not potentially affected employees in the '09 - 10 budget are all receiving letters, then we have a problem. Mr. Speaker, there has to be some type of plan or coordinated approach over there in Cabinet to deal with these issues. We've been here for three and a half weeks and I just don't see it. Mahsi.