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Consolidation of Boards and Agencies

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today about board reform and initiatives of the government to move this large piece of refocusing government forward.

During the life of the last government, I was a big supporter of the agencies and boards review that began in 2004 but unfortunately was shelved in 2005 by the previous government. Under the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiatives Committee, the current government is moving ahead with board reform in our territory, and I still am a supporter of this being examined and analyzed.

There are currently 70 GNWT boards involved in governance for health, social services, education and housing. This is about half of all GNWT boards. Board reform supports the goal of the 16th Legislative Assembly of effective and efficient government, and the priority to achieve greater effectiveness, efficiencies and a more client-focused, service-oriented approach through better planning, coordination and communication between GNWT departments.

These are all lofty words and noble pursuits; however, this is a colossal undertaking. From what I am to understand, the GNWT is moving forward with a regional based boards approach whose responsibility would include Health and Social Services; Education, Culture, and Employment; and the NWT Housing Corporation.

I would like to thank the lead Minister, Michael Miltenberger, for meeting with committee recently to discuss this important initiative. I certainly do have a number of concerns as this moves forward. What I am seeking is reassurance from the Minister that once this is proposed to stakeholders, he shares all the concerns with Regular Members before proceeding to the implementation phase.

I'm also concerned about the cookie cutter approach to board reform. Just because the Tlicho Community Services model seems to work effectively, will this model work in other regions? And, Mr. Speaker, what will this initiative mean in terms of legislation?

We will require enabling legislation for regional boards and also changes to the Hospital Insurance, and Health and Social Services Administration Act, the NWT Housing Corporation Act, the Education Act and even possibly the Public Service Act.

This is no small undertaking, Mr. Speaker, and again, we need to make sure that we get things right and that Regular Members have meaningful input before implementation of the reform takes place. Mahsi.