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Proposed Board Reform

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak today about the government's move to amalgamate boards across the Northwest Territories. The stated goal by this Cabinet is to go from 70 boards to seven. The model being presented is based on the Tlicho Community Services model and would be implemented in seven geographic regions across the Northwest Territories.

The government's plan and process that they have embarked upon is full of holes. The consultation, if you can even call it that, is a one-sided approach that is nowhere near meaningful. There's been no clear, compelling indication of what the problems are and what it is that you're trying to address.

To the school boards in Yellowknife, consultation has been a few restrictive, poorly worded questions that follow preconceived directions. There has been no opportunity to meet directly with the government as was promised. There's no research shown in the documents provided; no data or data analysis is offered to justify directions proposed, and a lack of understanding on the proposed regional board's governance. There's no financial plan or human resource plan or a costing of a regional board approach.

Added to this are some impossible timelines. How can adequate consultation take place with all of these boards in a two-month time frame? The GNWT sent out its package on January 29th without the much needed face-to-face meetings with boards. How can the government make a final call on this by April 1st? To me, that's simply impossible.

Once again I have to stand up and ask this government why they just don't seem to understand the reality that you must do all the groundwork, costing, and analysis prior to shopping an idea like this that would impact so many people across the Northwest Territories. On something as large as board reform, we owe it to our residents, to the stakeholders, to be able to answer questions.

We can't be lazy or allow sheer political determination to rule the day. Our citizens won't subscribe to it and I personally will not subscribe to this way of doing business. We must do better than what appears to me to be just another pathetic attempt at consultation.

This makes me think back to my days at university when one of my political science professors told the class that if a politician wants to end their political career, all they need to do is cause upheaval within education or health care. In our case, this Cabinet seems intent on throwing housing in for good measure.