

16th Legislative Assembly

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Implementation of 911 Emergency Telephone Service

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today to voice my displeasure in this government's inaction as it pertains to implementing a 911 system here in the Northwest Territories.

This is not the first time I have spoken about 911 in this Assembly and today I find myself needing to weigh-in again, because of the absolute absurdity of the argument not to take action by this government.

During debate on October 15th, Minister Robert C. McLeod said: "we have to also ensure that this service or any basic service is available to a lot of remote communities we have out there." What the government is doing, Mr. Speaker, or attempting to do, is turn what is a public safety issue and turn it into a have and have-not argument, which is completely unbelievable and completely bizarre.

If Members of this House were to bring forward a motion to get basic cell phone service in all communities in the Northwest Territories, I would be sure they would have the support to get that motion supported by every Member in here. Why hasn't a motion like that hit the floor of this House and can Cabinet not see the forest through the trees?

How many more of our residents have to be put in peril because our government refuses to help phase in an emergency telephone number that, if implemented, could help save lives? How many coroner's reports have to get stacked upon one another recommending implementation of a 911 service?

Mr. Speaker, we have to start somewhere and if we get the service to 77 percent of our population in the near future, then we need to do that. Mr. Speaker, this should also come with a plan to address the other 23 percent of our population who will require, and absolutely deserve, the same service. No one is saying don't do it in small communities. We are just saying, from a public safety standpoint, the government just can't continue to sit on its hands. Why can't there be a phased-in approach addressing the needs of all communities?

Mr. Speaker, looking across the floor I see Mr. Lafferty who's largest community of Behchoko would benefit from 911. Mr. Miltenberger from Fort Smith who's community would be a safer place with 911. Mr. Roland and Minister Robert McLeod represent Inuvik, another community that would be safer with 911. Minister Lee and Minister Bob McLeod from Yellowknife, why aren't they supporting a phased-in approach to 911, which would make their constituents safer?

This is a very passionate issue here and I want to know why aren't the Yellowknife Members on Cabinet supporting a phased-in approach to 911, which would make their constituents safer? Mr. Speaker, six out of the seven Cabinet Ministers represent constituents that would be included in the beginning phases of a 911 service. Why, then, if you have six out of seven Cabinet Ministers who, one would think, support 911 service in their communities, is this hitting a brick wall, Mr. Speaker? I will have questions for the Minister of MACA at the appropriate time.

Thank you.