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Proposed Changes to Supplementary Health Benefits Program

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to speak about the direction the Minister of Health and Cabinet has taken on the supplementary health benefits.

I'd like to begin by saying that the hypocrisy in this building sometimes is really something to behold. On Tuesday, May 10, I stated the Health Minister was being arrogant and ignorant in her handling of the supplementary health issue. Hansard is a very valuable tool, Mr. Speaker. Back on October 21, 2005, Ms. Lee herself can be quoted as saying, "I urge this government to start acting like a responsive and responsible government, not an arrogant dictatorship of majority."

Mr. Speaker, back on October 26, 2001, Ms. Lee was called on a point of order referring to a special committee report as a palace coup. In her speaking to the point of order, she, and I quote, "I have discussed this with my constituents and the words actually come from my constituents."

Mr. Speaker, is this not how the system works? We listen to our constituents and the public. We are the voice of the people of the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to remind Minister Lee of that. Her handling of the proposed changes to supplementary health benefits has, and continues to be, abysmal and embarrassing.

Certainly the government must be listening to the valid and genuine concerns put forth by many of the Regular Members on this issue. Why is it that no one on that side of the House seems to be hearing us? Why is it that Cabinet is intent on silencing the public outcry on this issue?

Mr. Speaker, it will be a very sad day in the history of our Territory should Minister Lee and the government proceed with the changes to supplementary health benefits. My belief is they don't know how devastating these changes will be in some of our residents' lives, especially during the greatest time of need.

And if escalating health care costs are as big a concern as we all know they are, why on earth would we put forth changes that will undoubtedly cost us more as people continue to dump third-party coverage. The plan is asinine and needs to be reworked.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as if the plan itself is not bad enough, the administration and subsequent costs to government will certainly be more than our government could bear. Thank you.