

**16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly**

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**Impending Closure of Edmonton City Centre Airport**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise an issue today that I believe is something this government cannot continue to ignore. This issue is the impending closure of the City Centre Airport in Edmonton.

The City Centre Airport receives approximately 4500 medevac flights per year from northern Alberta, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. About 1000 of these flights originate in the Northwest Territories. Of the 1000 flights, typically 10 percent are of a critical nature.

The Cross Cancer Clinic, Stollery Children's Hospital and other health facilities at the University and Royal Alexandra Hospital are established to serve the needs of critical care patients arriving from the Northwest Territories by medevac. The closure of the City Centre Airport will undoubtedly put lives in peril and cost this government thousands of dollars more in transporting our residents from the international airport.

Mr. Speaker, in an emergency situation, a STARS helicopter service will charge \$2500 an hour, and at the best of times it will take 30 minutes to get a patient from the international airport into a major hospital. A ground ambulance for a return trip to the international airport would be in the neighbourhood of \$700.

Mr. Speaker, as the Members of this House are well aware, all jurisdictions across this country are dealing with ever-growing expenditures in health care. Here is an example of the City of Edmonton, who like to say they are the gateway to the North, showing little regard for the safety and well-being of our residents.

Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, the closure of the Edmonton City Centre Airport will increase health risks for NWT residents. NWT residents will be exposed to longer flight times and riskier hospital transfers. And again, these increased patient risks will be accompanied by increased costs.

Mr. Speaker, where is our Health Minister at in this process? Has she had discussions with the mayor of Edmonton, the Premier, or the Health Minister in Alberta to convey obvious concerns that this government would have? I have not heard her say anything publicly about it. Is she waiting for the bulldozers to move in or what, Mr. Speaker?

In life and death situations, minutes count and we owe it to our residents to champion the fight to keep the City Centre Airport open. We need to ensure all of our citizens have the best access to medical services when they need it the most. We need to find allies in northern MPs, MLAs and municipal politicians to lobby the City of Edmonton and province of Alberta to try and keep this airport open.

This closure will affect each and every community in the Northwest Territories and all of our residents. In the North, air ambulance service is a service that our residents depend on. Why doesn't our government have anything at all to say about the closure of the City Centre Airport in Edmonton? Thank you.