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DENE NATION CONCERNED OVER APPOINTMENT OF A SINGLE ADMINISTRATOR, AFTER REMOVAL OF GNWT HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE- [YELLOWKNIFE, DENENDEH – DECEMBER 11, 2024] The Dene Nation expressed grave concerns over the dismissal of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Health and Social Services leadership council. The announcement from Health Minister Lisa Semmler was met with criticism by Dene leaders who have passed resolutions calling for systemic changes to the administration of health care and social service programming in Denendeh.

“The replacement of a health board by a single government administrator raises significant concerns regarding governance, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of health services. Dene, Inuit and Metis leadership must be included in all decisions that affect health and social services administered to our people. We are in a crisis state regarding medical travel, child/family services and the recruitment and retention of health care providers,” stated Dene National Chief George Mackenzie.

The concentration of power in a single administrator can lead to a lack of diverse perspectives in decision-making. Health boards typically comprise a range of stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, community representatives, and public health experts. This diversity fosters a more inclusive understanding of community needs and promotes collaborative problem-solving. A single administrator may not possess the breadth of knowledge or experience necessary to address complex health issues effectively.

Accountability mechanisms may weaken when governance shifts from a board to an individual. A health and social services board encourages transparency and responsiveness to community concerns. A single administrator may operate with less oversight, potentially leading to decisions that prioritize political agendas over public health needs.

Dene National Chief Mackenzie also stated that, ““The GNWT has failed our citizens time and again with deaths, and failing grades in health and social services noted in reports by the 2014 and 2018 Auditor General Reports. It is time for Dene to determine our own ways of caring for our people as the GNWT has shown its lack of care, consideration and respect for our people. ”

The Dene Nation stance is that the shift can disrupt established relationships between the health board and the communities they serve. The purpose of Health boards are to engage in community outreach and foster partnerships that enhance public trust and cooperation. The removal of this governance structure further alienate community members, weakening their involvement in health initiatives and undermining public health outcomes.

Additionally, research indicates that centralized governance can obstruct innovation and adaptability within health systems. Health boards are typically more agile in responding to local health challenges, as they can tailor strategies to specific community situations. A single administrator may lack the flexibility to realize localized solutions, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach that may not effectively address unique health disparities in the NWT.

The Dene leaders expressed grave concerns about the transition from a health board to a single government administrator which poses several challenges, including diminished accountability, reduced stakeholder engagement, and potential inefficiencies in addressing community health needs.

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