



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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HANSARD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 1995

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The Honourable **Samuel Gargan**, Speaker

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MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Allooloo, Mr. Antoine, Hon. Silas Arngna'naaq, Mr. Ballantyne, Hon. Nellie Cournoyea, Mr. Dent, Hon. Samuel Gargan, Hon. Stephen Kakfwi, Mr. Koe, Mr. Lewis, Mrs. Marie-Jewell, Ms. Mike, Hon. Don Morin, Hon. Richard Nerysoo, Hon. Kelvin Ng, Mr. Ningark, Mr. Patterson, Hon. John Pollard, Mr. Pudlat, Mr. Pudluk, Hon. John Todd, Mr. Whitford, Mr. Zoe

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Mr. Samuel Gargan):

Good afternoon. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Todd.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 58-12(7): Community Futures

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Friday in Ottawa, I met with the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Human Resources Development, and the Member of Parliament for Nunatsiaq, Mr. Anawak, to discuss the future of the community futures program in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Axworthy and I have agreed to begin negotiations to transfer the program to the Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism views community futures as a highly successful program that provides much-needed support to the still developing Northwest Territories business community. This program provides loans, business information, self-employment incentives and occasionally, equity participation.

Community futures societies operate a number of offices in the Northwest Territories. Clients typically include small businesses and unemployed individuals wanting to start a business. The program provides much-needed support for small entrepreneurs and business people involved in the traditional economy.

The transfer of the program will ensure that it will not be placed in a large federal bureaucracy based outside the Northwest Territories.

Given the success that the four community futures societies in the Northwest Territories have had in administering this program, we intend to ensure its continuation and protect the integrity of the program through this transfer from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I have written to the chairpersons of all community futures societies in the Northwest Territories to arrange a meeting in the near future to discuss the transfer in greater detail.

I will keep the House informed of any new developments as they occur.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Nerysoo.

Minister's Statement 59-12(7): Report Of The Minister's Forum On Income Support Reform

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this session, I informed the Legislative Assembly about the establishment of the Minister's forum on income support reform. This forum of seven northerners has been consulting with people across the Northwest Territories for the past several weeks to gather their opinions on how income support programs can be made more effective and reformed to reflect the priorities and concerns of NWT residents. I am pleased that I will be able to table their recommendations later this week.

Mr. Speaker, the forum heard overwhelmingly that income support programs need to be changed to give people incentives to look after their own needs so that they can regain pride and self-esteem.

Many northerners recognized the need for individual and community healing as the first step towards greater self-sufficiency. The forum recommends that changes in income support be linked to the community wellness strategy.

The forum report also tell us that people want income support programs to recognize the role of traditional activities. Hunting, trapping, sewing, carving and

fishing are the cornerstones of a traditional lifestyle. Recommendations were made on how these activities could become part of income support. For instance, social assistance could be combined with harvesters' assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the forum leaders were particularly interested in how to improve the situation of young people in the Northwest Territories. Much of the advice they heard focused on how to encourage young people to develop skills to follow a traditional lifestyle and to take part in the wage economy. People said that if young people want to receive welfare they must meet certain conditions, such as staying in school, learning parenting skills, pursuing training programs or community service, working with elders or working at outpost camps in traditional pursuits.

Education and training play a key role in helping people become more self-sufficient. People said that training must relate to real jobs in communities, including traditional activities. People want to encourage the development of

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markets for traditional products like wild meat, fish and clothing and they want income support programs used as incentives to residents to go out on the land. People also said it was difficult for community residents to travel to large centres for training and proposed that training be provided in every community.

Mr. Speaker, many people also saw increased community control of social programs as the foundation for income support reform. Specifically, many communities want block funding so that they have the opportunity to plan programs in a strategic way that best meets the needs of the community and of individuals within that community. But the forum leaders caution that turning over control of income support programs to communities would need to be phased in, and that training would have to be provided for community resource people and for strategic planning.

People are well aware that income support reform will not happen overnight. The report recommends that communities and government negotiate pilot projects to allow communities to gain experience in managing block funding and to allow them to develop programs that reflect the community's needs and priorities.

Mr. Speaker, people across the Northwest Territories have supported the work of the forum and would like to see its work continue. Since implementing income support reform will take some time, northerners feel that the forum has an important role to play in conducting further community consultation and providing advice to this Assembly. One of the report's recommendations, therefore, is to appoint the forum as an advisory committee to the Government of the NWT to monitor and confirm the implementation plan.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with the high quality of advice that the Members of the Minister's forum have gathered from the people of the Northwest Territories. Reforming income support programs will be challenging, but I feel that the advice we have received gives us the direction we need. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Nerysoo. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Ningark.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Distribution Of Cabinet Portfolios

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in our Assembly, those who sit on Cabinet are chosen by all Members. However, it is up to the Premier to determine the assignment of portfolios. In doing so, the Premier has to consider a number of factors, including the interests and abilities of Cabinet Members, and fair and equitable workloads. With many challenges in Cabinet for Ministers during the life of this government, the Premier also has to consider continuity in ministerial direction to departments. Mr. Speaker, looking at all these factors, the Ordinary Members' Caucus would like to express concern about the distribution of portfolios among Cabinet Members. It is not a new concern and we have shared it with the Premier before.

We currently have two competent Cabinet Ministers with only one portfolio each. In contrast, the Premier has six portfolios out of a possible 22, Mr. Speaker. Through her portfolios, the Premier is directly responsible for over a quarter of the government's budget, more than any other Cabinet Minister. Among the Premier's six portfolios is one of the most

difficult, due to the challenges of amalgamation, Mr. Speaker. Health and Social Services, with the current changes under way, needs a lot of attention and support from its Minister.

This direct involvement with departments is confusing to Members. In the view of the ordinary Members, the Premier should play a role of overseeing the government. Mr. Speaker, it is her job to look at the whole picture and deal with the Prime Minister and other Premiers on issues of concern. We question how well she can do this when she must be concerned with the day-to-day happenings of a number of departments.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to continue.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Natilikmiot is requesting unanimous consent. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Conclude your statement, Mr. Ningark.

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. When objective decisions must be made about the allocation of skills, resources or opportunities, it must be very difficult for the Premier to detach herself from her portfolio obligations and consider the big picture.

Mr. Speaker, being a Cabinet Minister is hard work, both physically and emotionally. We need our Cabinet Ministers to share the load so they can be healthy, Mr. Speaker. We are very concerned that the Premier feels she needs to carry such a significant share of the Cabinet's work. To help us better understand this, Members will be following up with some questions to the Premier later today. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Pudluk.

Member's Statement On Eligibility Of Municipal Employees To Run In Municipal Elections

MR. PUDLUK:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a concern expressed by some of my constituents and

I'm sure it is a concern for some communities with a population under 500. There is a concern in the smaller communities, since the amendment of the Local Authorities Elections Act section 18(2)(c), whereby hamlet employees are not eligible as candidates in a local election.

Grise Fiord, with a population of 130 people, has a problem with a lack of candidates for local elections. They have had to appoint councillors more than once because the population in that community is very small. I'm sure this section is not a concern to larger populated communities, but it is a concern with the smaller communities. Will the government consider amending section 18(2)(c) of the Local Authorities Elections Act so that all communities could be satisfied with the act? Today

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during question period, I will be asking questions concerning this section of the act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Zoe.

Member's Statement On Constituent Suffering From Necrotizing Fasciitis

MR. ZOE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many northerners have heard about the young man from my constituency currently in an Alberta hospital fighting Necrotizing Fasciitis, better known as the flesh-eating disease. Many of us heard about the disease when there were a number of cases in England last year, then again when the leader of Le Bloc Quebecois was struck with the disease.

The disease appears to arise as a result of severe invasive strep bacterial infections, like strep throat. This common bacteria sometimes produces a toxin. The poison blocks off the blood flow by killing surrounding flesh, then the body's immune system can't reach the infection to control it.

Apparently, there are a handful of such cases each year in larger centres. Most are caught quickly and treated successfully. Medical officials in Edmonton have stated that the disease is not readily transmitted from person to person. There are suspicions that the

disease occurs when there has been a trauma, such as a bruise or a cut, after or during a strain or strep infection. In fact, there is less than one in one million chance of getting the disease.

In the case of the young man currently in the hospital, the disease spread fairly rapidly. Doctors are doing all they can to stop the disease and to help him recover. Mr. Speaker, I hope all northerners will join me and the people of the North Slave in lending our support and prayers to this young man and his family in this very difficult time. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Pudlat.

Member's Statement On Awarding Of Contracts To Northerners

MR. PUDLAT:

(Translation) I rise today regarding the people who are awarded contracts. I'm sure in the future, whether it's in the winter, summer or spring, contracts will be available. A lot of people who are certified in whatever fields, should also be considered to be awarded contracts. It's getting very difficult to get full-time jobs and there are people who are finishing their training in trades and the number is increasing in the Northwest Territories. The contracts that are awarded wouldn't go out of the Northwest Territories if they were given to the people in the north. We're in a restraint situation in the north, those people should be considered.

Mr. Speaker, those trades people who are qualified can also employ local people and train them at the same time, which is

beneficial to the north. I would like this to be given more consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Pudlat. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Lewis.

Member's Statement On Second Reading Of Recall Act

MR. LEWIS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week we gave first reading to Bill 31, Recall Act. I wanted Members to have the bill over the weekend so we could discuss the principle of the bill on Monday. On Monday, I was asked by Members if I could give the Caucus a full briefing on Tuesday. I did this, and Members will remember we spent the entire Caucus meeting discussing the principle of the bill. It was my intention to proceed with it on Tuesday afternoon. Tuesday, I was asked by the Premier if I could delay the bill until she could discuss the bill with Mr. Pollard, the Government House Leader, when he came back from Ottawa. I'm a reasonable man, Mr. Speaker, so I agreed. Mr. Pollard was at work in this building at nine o'clock today. At 10 o'clock, I received a letter from the Premier's office indicating that the government was in the process of developing its own legislative action paper on recall, with the assistance of the Canada West Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, I've spent a long time, a big chunk of my life, working on this bill, and I've made full use of the Canada West Foundation. I don't believe much further delay for the debate on the principle of this bill will serve any purpose.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. LEWIS:

The principle is quite clear. Since politicians get their power from the people, not from God...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. LEWIS:

...will we give the power to the people to remove a politician before his or her term has expired?

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that under the current system, the only way a politician can be removed is if the good Lord decides his or her days on this earth are numbered, or if she or he is so demoralized that they voluntarily give up the ghost and they resign. There's no other way of leaving.

At the appropriate time, I shall also table a proposal I received from the Premier's office today. I'm a very reasonable man, Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated.

So we will delay second reading on Bill 31, Recall Act, until tomorrow. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Lewis. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Whitford.

Member's Statement On Importance Of Sprinkler Systems

MR. WHITFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. The subject of automatic water sprinkler systems has been in the media lately and a few incidents have sparked my concern. Around the first part of March, the Government of the

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Northwest Territories Department of Safety and Public Services distributed a news release advising people of a national television program that would be featuring segments related to the safety advantages provided by automatic sprinkler systems.

Unfortunately, just last month -- incidentally, I caught only part of that program because the advertisement came too late -- it was reported that a fire in Ontario claimed the lives of three elderly residents of a seniors' home that was not equipped with an automatic water sprinkler system. Other residents of the same centre also suffered from smoke inhalation as they tried to flee the building.

As a result of those two incidents, Mr. Speaker, I have begun to look into the fire safety standards that we, in the Northwest Territories, provide for our elders in senior centres. I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that the fire safety standards in the NWT are generally regarded to be the most progressive in Canada.

---Applause

In Yellowknife, all three of our seniors' centres, as well as the Kitimatic and the Ndilo centres are equipped with sprinkler systems. The seniors' centres in our communities that are directly serviced by the GNWT have also been equipped with fire alarms and automatic sprinkler systems.

---Applause

I believe it is important to note that residents of the Northwest Territories can take pride and comfort in these high safety standards and that this is mostly due to the dedicated efforts and initiatives taken by our past and our present fire marshals and fire chiefs. For instance, our present fire chief, Mickey Beauchamp, is currently working on an amendment that would also ensure that all future housing construction in the city must include the installation of a sprinkler system. May I seek consent to conclude?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife South is seeking unanimous consent to continue. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Please proceed, Mr. Whitford.

MR. WHITFORD:

Thank you. That would ensure that all future housing construction in Yellowknife must include the installation of a sprinkler system. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this issue is scheduled for public hearings in May or June of this year. I suspect that many of our constituents will share our views on this matter and will be supportive of such amendments and provide suggestions to the fire chiefs on how best to proceed with these initiatives. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Whitford. Item 3, Members' statements.

Member's Statement On Promotion Of Northwest Territories

MR. BALLANTYNE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we, in the Northwest Territories, are entering a new era of federal funding cutbacks, program downsizing and PY cuts. The regional economic development programs that we have depended on for so long are in the process of being cut back, not just here but across the country.

As I have said many times, the north is probably the most vulnerable region to these cutbacks. We are the most dependent on the federal government. Mr. Speaker, we have two choices. We can sit here and we can divide and redivide a shrinking pie amidst clamouring from regions, Nunavut and the west, all fighting for an ever-diminishing pie; or, we can go out and aggressively pursue our economic future.

I have talked many times in this House about the opportunities in mining, the opportunities in oil and gas and I feel it is very important that we aggressively pursue those opportunities. There are also opportunities in many other areas of our economy: in timber; and, tourism. Japanese by the thousands are coming to the territories and are very interested in the territories. I ask, why don't we have a high level delegation from the Northwest Territories going to Japan with some of our operators...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. BALLANTYNE:

...to make deals. I was reading that the university in Newfoundland has found new uses for seal meat. It is very rich in vitamins. There is tremendous potential in the whole health industry for seal meat. We should be travelling the country and pursuing the opportunities in our renewable resources.

Mr. Speaker, we have the most experienced and the best negotiators on all sorts of land claims and aboriginal issues. There is a tremendous market for our expertise right across the country right now. We are leaders in the country. Why aren't we sending some of our people down to show their stuff and help the rest of the country to try to achieve the same progress as we have reached here.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of this country is spending a lot of time travelling the world seeking new markets and investment opportunities for Canadians. Mr. Speaker, in the midst of this emotional diatribe, I would like to seek unanimous consent to continue.

---Laughter

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife North is requesting unanimous consent. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Proceed, Mr. Ballantyne.

MR. BALLANTYNE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the Prime Minister has spent many days outside of the country drumming up business for Canada. The Premier

accompanied him on a very successful trip to China and the Far East. Premiers as we speak are crisscrossing the country trying to seek economic opportunities for their provinces.

I see tremendous opportunities for the Northwest Territories in this country. I would like to see high-profile visits from Ministers and business leaders from the Northwest Territories crisscrossing the country looking for opportunities; letting them know that the Northwest Territories is here and we have tremendous opportunities.

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Many times, I don't think we are confident enough in our own abilities. We are afraid to go out and beat the drums for what we have to offer. My fear is if we don't take advantage of the opportunities out there, we will soon be a forgotten backwater in this country. So I ask the government, the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development to provide some leadership, some enthusiasm, some excitement and let's hear the name of the Northwest Territories from coast to coast.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. BALLANTYNE:

Let's see if we can break the dependency we have on the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Patterson.

Member's Statement On Reduction To Legal Interpreting Division

MR. PATTERSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, on a less positive note...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Boo.

MR. PATTERSON:

Mr. Speaker, I wish I could be as inspiring as the Member for Yellowknife North. I must tell the House that I am shocked to learn that one of the exemplary official languages programs in the Northwest Territories, the legal interpreting program, has been savaged and gutted by the Department of Justice, even before the languages agreement with the federal government was finalized, even before the government's own aboriginal languages unit had a chance to assess its overall priorities and make recommendations on priorities following reduced funding and yes, even before the completion of the Avery Cooper evaluation of this program now under way.

This flagship program, Mr. Speaker, which has already relied very heavily on vote 4 federal funding and very little on vote 1 GNWT funding, is a model much admired across Canada and in the circumpolar world for the enlightened way in which the vital and sensitive question of legal interpreting in courts has been handled. A core of over 50 trained interpreters have been trained over the years and certified, not only in aboriginal languages, but also in languages which are used in courts in the Northwest Territories like Vietnamese and Somali. These trained, certified legal interpreters are available in communities throughout the territories. An up-to-date registry is maintained. A monthly newsletter is published. There is a 1-800 number available to interpreters anywhere in the territories to call when they have a question about legal terminology. Much excellent work has been done to refine terminology.

What is most significant about the legal interpreters program is that they are closely connected with the courts, where legal interpreters do their vital work. The best proof of the credibility and success of this program is that the NWT legal interpreters program has been given the direct responsibility for hiring court interpreters in the NWT and for administering the court budget for interpreters. They're ensuring that qualified interpreters are hired and are administering the budget efficiently in the process.

I would like to request consent to conclude my statement, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The honourable Member for Iqaluit is seeking unanimous consent. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Please proceed, Mr. Patterson.

MR. PATTERSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, court demands for legal interpreters are increasing, not declining. Furthermore, the recent Tran case in the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the right of an accused person to have the services of a qualified legal interpreter. Finally, in the Northwest Territories, I believe we are all very proud of an amendment to the Juries Act which allows jurors to sit in courts in the Northwest Territories even if their first language is not English or French.

The gutting of this program requires us to now ask whether the government is now required to repeal this amendment to the Jury Act. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, in response to a question asked by Mr. Pudlat in question period, we were comforted by the Minister of Justice who told this House that the "The degree to which changes in funding will change the budget of the Department of Justice is not clearly defined yet." Mr. Kakfwi talked about deleting a half person year plus some reductions in the O and M requirements for the coming year.

However, the Minister was talking only about the very small portion of vote 1 funding which has been available for this program historically. Vote 4 funding has always been very critical to the very existence of this program.

I was therefore astonished to learn that all this enormous progress and this vital program has already been put in terrible jeopardy by a decision already taken to cut two vote 4 PYs, of 4 positions in the entire program. The program's manager and the legal interpreter terminology position with responsibility for the Dene languages, located in Fort Smith, were each given notice on March 1, 1995 that their jobs are gone as of June 1, 1995.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very good program. We are very proud of it. I believe there is consideration being given within the government to transferring the program to the Arctic College interpreter and translator programs. Mr. Speaker, Arctic College, with respect, could not duplicate this program nor could Arctic College offer the vital connections and credibility which has been won over the years in the workplace with judges, court administrators, prosecutors and lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, I will not stand by idly and see this important program gutted and savaged. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Patterson. Item 3, Members' statements. Ms. Mike.

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Member's Statement On Public Announcements Re Seal Meat

MS. MIKE:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Three days ago, I was delighted to read an article entitled "Seafood-Rich Diet Immunizes Inuit Against Air Pollution" in the Edmonton Journal. I say this to inform my constituents, especially the residents of Broughton Island that, according to Dr. Eric Dewailly of the Quebec Centre for Public Health, seal meat is no threat to anybody's health. It, in fact, contains several contaminants and at the same time, an antidote.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage the young people in my constituency to make seal meat part of their diet and not to fear the contaminants reported by the Department of Health a few years ago. Mr. Speaker, a bit of advice for Department of Health officials: please seek advice and approval of your Minister before disclosing any studies carried out in less than five years before making any public announcements or, better yet, let the Minister responsible make the public announcement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Ms. Mike. Item 3, Members' statements. Mrs. Marie-Jewell.

Member's Statement On Importance Of Liquor Inspections

MRS. MARIE-JEWELL:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this session, the Minister of Safety and Public Services tabled the annual reports of the NWT Liquor Commission and Liquor Licensing Board. One of the important improvements in comparison to many other reports was the inclusion of the statistics about the number of liquor inspections completed in each community during 1993-94.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see that in Fort Smith, there were 152 inspections undertaken by the Minister's liquor inspectors and another 70 by the

local RCMP detachment. These inspections were devoted to the regulation of licensed premises in our community. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is important. People are going out to a liquor establishment and want to be in a safe and well-controlled environment. Parents want to know that appropriate safeguards are in place to prevent underage access to drinking. We all have a stake in reducing the illegal distribution of alcohol, the rates of impaired driving and the risks of alcohol-related violence.

I believe a conscientious approach to enforcing the regulations for bars and other licensed premises is an important component of our liquor control system and I would encourage the Minister to continue providing the resources needed for this effective inspection program in Fort Smith. In saying that, I would also like to commend the Fort Smith contracted liquor inspector. I understand that he not only maintains a regular schedule of inspections but he also spends a lot of time explaining regulations and regulatory expectations to bar managers and staff.

However, in further review of the report, I do want to state that I was somewhat surprised that the annual report for 1993-94 indicated the same quality of liquor inspections may not have existed here in Yellowknife. Yellowknife has nine more liquor establishments than Fort Smith and only 53 more inspections

were carried out in 1993-94. Fort Smith only has four liquor establishments.

Mr. Speaker, there are good reasons for MLAs from outside of Yellowknife to be concerned about liquor control in Yellowknife. Many of our students come here from communities all across the territories. People from our constituencies visit the city in large numbers for business purposes.

I seek unanimous consent to continue with my statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

The honourable Member for Thebacha is seeking unanimous consent. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Please proceed, Mrs. Marie-Jewell.

MRS. MARIE-JEWELL:

In addition, Mr. Speaker, tourists frequently form impressions of the Northwest Territories based on what they see in Yellowknife. All northerners consider the proper regulation of liquor to be a vital

government responsibility, especially since we have received the Report on the Review of Rewriting the Liquor Laws of the Northwest Territories: A Legislative Action Paper, which we are dealing with in our committee of the whole.

Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that every year after Caribou Carnival, there are concerns that certain establishments' reputations for overserving, overcrowding and serving minors are not being closely monitored. I've wondered whether any formal planning has gone into the organization in administration of the NWT liquor inspection program? Are there any policies and procedures in place to determine when, where, and how many inspections need to be conducted?

I was wondering whether or not there may be too much money going to pay for the Liquor Licensing Board's involvement in administrative details when, really, funds would be better spent on enhancing our enforcement capabilities.

I feel these are important issues and later on, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Safety and Public Services to undertake a full evaluation of the way our liquor inspection program is presently being organized and administrated. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mrs. Marie-Jewell. Item 3, Members' statements. Are there any further Members' statements? Mr. Koe.

Member's Statement On Community Wellness Strategy

MR. KOE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak today about the community wellness strategy, these are new initiatives that are being carried out in many communities across the Northwest Territories. And I believe that they are getting good reactions within the communities. But to make this strategy work, Mr. Speaker, we need the full cooperation from all agencies and all government departments and we must involve the aboriginal organizations.

In this time of scarce dollars and tight budgets, social agencies are overworked. We need to provide them with proper assistance to be able to implement proper programs and continue providing the services they do provide in the communities. Our communities have smart, knowledgeable,

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and resourceful people and they need to work together to get the best bang for our buck.

Government agencies, organizations and departments cannot continue to work in isolation of each other. Communities need to mobilize all their forces to make this strategy work. We also need to provide resources to train more facilitators and coaches. We cannot rely on one or two people in a community to carry the ball. We have to develop our pools of local talent.

Mr. Speaker, we have a strategy here that can work. It is working in some communities and it is up to everyone to cooperate and make it work. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Koe. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Antoine.

Member's Statement On Fort Liard Community Hall

MR. ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was debating whether I should raise this issue -- it is an issue about the community hall in Fort Liard -- because I had talked about it in the past, but I would like to give the new Minister of MACA the opportunity to hear it from that side of the House, because the last time I did it he was on this side of the House.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, the community hall in Fort Liard was built in the mid-1970s, indicating at least 20 years of usage. The log community hall was possible at that time by accessing funds available under the Canada works projects. Mr. Speaker, over the years, this hall has been home to numerous events of the community such as feasts and drum dances, and public functions such as court proceedings and public hearings, and other activities that bring the community together for one reason or another that benefits the community.

As a result of its usage and the lack of an infrastructure program in place at the time, the community hall has been allowed to become dilapidated over the years. Mr. Speaker, the community hall has served its purpose well, however, major structural repair is required; emergency retrofit.

The degree of repair is beyond economic common sense. As a result, Mr. Speaker, the community hall is being unused and sits as a reminder to the people of Fort Liard that the process involving the benefiting from a new community hall is once again left in the hands of officials in Yellowknife, which is quite a way from Fort Liard.

If an effective evaluation program was implemented by the necessary department where community consultations are seriously considered, Fort Liard could conceivably be enjoying the benefits of a community hall today. However, this is not the case. In fact, they have made arrangements, such as holding court proceedings in the airport hangar, which have become a sign of the times.

According to the government, Mr. Speaker, it officially recognizes the Fort Liard community hall by endorsing a health inspector's report in a letter addressed to me in October of last year, and I quote, "recommending the community hall be closed because of safety concerns." And, "the building has extensive structural damage, and renovations to bring it up to suitable standards would probably be extremely costly."

Mr. Speaker, I am running out of time. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.
Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Nahendeh is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Conclude your statement, Mr. Antoine.

MR. ANTOINE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Here in the north, the majority of the people come from small communities. So, it must be realized how important a community hall is; important to the social aspect of a community the size of Fort Liard. Once again, Mr. Speaker, efforts made by communities in taking steps to achieve community wellness should not be impeded by government, but rather encouraged by government cooperation.
Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Nerysoo.

Member's Statement On Gwich'in Healing Program

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to rise today to speak about a program that I believe is one that should receive a great deal of recognition and, I think, encouragement on the part of Members of this House. Mr. Speaker, it is called a Gwich'in healing program. It is located in the area that is about 18 miles south of Fort McPherson, which is, in Gwich'in language, called Tl'oondih.

There has been a great deal of work done on the part of the Gwich'in Tribal Council, and the Gwich'in leadership; particularly leadership by a young man by the name of Robert Alexie Jr., and formerly the chief of Fort McPherson, James Ross.

Mr. Speaker, the Gwich'in leadership and the communities have taken this issue of healing not only in the context of alcohol and drug abuse but rather total healing in terms of spirituality, emotionality, physically and mentally. They are considering doing it in a natural surrounding in an area that historically was used by trappers -- not only am I saying my grandfather, who had a cabin there, but by trappers -- and hunters who made their trips up and down the Peel River.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that last week, Robert Alexie Jr., Rebecca Francis, Karen Mitchell, Doug Smith, Frank Hope, and Joey Horesay, came to this community of Yellowknife to articulate the importance of this particular program; to see if this government would provide their advice and their support for the development of the program.

They have made some recommendations that may not, Mr. Speaker, be in the interest of some of my colleagues. But they are suggesting the possibility that clients who go to the Northern Addictions program here or people who are incarcerated, not come to this community but rather the

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resources be moved into a program of this type. Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to continue my statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Mackenzie Delta is seeking unanimous consent. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Nerysoo, conclude your statement.

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

Mr. Speaker, the suggestion that is being made by the Gwich'in leadership is that any monies that are so-called "identified for their purposes," for servicing their community and clients in their community, in fact be directed to their organization, not to any other territorial organizations, or not to any other community organizations that are providing that particular service.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say -- and I am going to provide a copy of the proposal to all my colleagues in this House because I believe, Mr. Speaker, this is the first program which an aboriginal organization has... This organization has spent \$800,000 developing the facilities for this particular program. There is no other community, no other organization that has taken the time to spend their own money for a program of this particular type that includes a total program that deals with all aspects of the community. They do not want inmates to be removed from their families. Of those situations where there is family violence, it should be dealt with between the community and within the family because a lot of the issues that deal with that violence, whether it's abuse, physical abuse or sexual abuse, have to be dealt with in the context of the family addressing those issues.

The family, the community and the individual; those are all important components. And they truly think that this is an important initiative and they want this government and, of course, my colleagues, to see the importance of not finding new money but rather taking advantage of existing money that is in our programs to support this particular important initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Whitford.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. WHITFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize our NWT Languages Commissioner, Ms. Harnum.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Whitford. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Ningark.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 399-12(7): Impact On Response To Questions Due To Premier's Number Of Portfolios

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following up on my Member's statement that I made earlier, my

question is to the Premier of this government. We all know the Premier of this government is a very, very hard working person.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear! Hear!

MR. NINGARK:

In fact, I think she works too hard at times; a workaholic. She needs a little time to do other things for herself. I think the Member's statement was warranted. I think the questions that are to come out of this are warranted. My question, Mr. Speaker, is, since February 15, 1995, the Premier has answered many questions about her numerous portfolios. We appreciate that very much. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, more than half of these questions have been taken as notice or required further follow-up with more complete answers. My question to the honourable Premier is has the number of portfolios being carried by the Premier impacted on her ability to answer questions in the House when they are asked? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Return To Question 399-12(7): Impact On Response To Questions Due To Premier's Number Of Portfolios

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, from my own assessment and from the questions, some questions are very easy to respond to; other questions are of a nature that would not be necessarily part of the daily knowledge of a Minister responsible because it's within the department; other

questions, I think, should be given a more thoughtful approach to answering. I don't recall any question that I've taken as notice because I did know the answer or I didn't know part of the answer but had taken it as notice, mainly because I had thought that there were other issues that should be looked at so when the answer came forth it would be a thoughtful one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Antoine.

Question 400-12(7): Redistribution Of Portfolios To New Ministers

MR. ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, my colleague, Mr. Ningark, made a Member's statement with regard to the Premier's role. He stated that currently we have two competent Cabinet Ministers with only one portfolio each, and that the Premier has six portfolios out of a possible 22. Mr. Speaker, both Mr. Ng and Mr. Arngna'naaq are capable Ministers and seem to be handling their single departments well. Can the Premier explain why more responsibility has not been shared with these Ministers, such as Personnel or even the Status of Women portfolio or even official languages? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Return To Question 400-12(7): Redistribution Of Portfolios To New Ministers

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, as the Members know, these Ministers are relatively new to Cabinet and it was my opinion that it would not be fair, since we are in the preparation of the budget from February to this point in time,

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to ask them to take on responsibilities on a last minute basis. So two areas that are important were assigned to the two Ministers. I didn't intend to reassess further changes until after the budget had been considered. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Antoine, supplementary.

Supplementary To Question 400-12(7): Redistribution Of Portfolios To New Ministers

MR. ANTOINE:

Supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Premier for her response. I take it from the response that the Premier will be considering redistribution of the portfolios, perhaps increasing and sharing her workload with Mr. Ng and Mr. Arngna'naaq. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Further Return To Question 400-12(7): Redistribution Of Portfolios To New Ministers

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, like I stated before, because of the budget preparation and the work that was already in progress I did not feel, as Premier, to make those changes during the deliberations of the budget would be proper, and that I would be looking at some redistribution after the session. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Patterson.

MR. PATTERSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Microphone turned off)

MR. PATTERSON:

Pardon me. I'm sorry.

MR. SPEAKER:

Supplementary, Mr. Antoine.

Supplementary To Question 400-12(7): Redistribution Of Portfolios To New Ministers

MR. ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is saying that because these two Ministers were new and the budget process was in the works and there are new initiatives going on, she did not feel they could handle the job. Why hasn't she considered sharing her workload with these two Ministers? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Further Return To Question 400-12(7): Redistribution Of Portfolios To New Ministers

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, we were in the process of the budget preparation and I didn't think it appropriate, since I had been already dealing with the issues that were being dealt with at that time, that both the very able Mr. Arrngna'naaq and Mr. Ng had two major portfolios and I felt that it was important that they get the focus around those portfolios. As far as I was concerned, the portfolios I was managing, although large, were manageable. I will just explain to you what those portfolios are because I think sometimes we have a lot of lines on our portfolios but it doesn't necessarily mean that the lines of responsibilities are bigger than some other departmental responsibilities.

In terms of the portfolios that I have right now, they are the Power Corporation, Personnel, Department of Health and Social Services and the Status of Women. Mr. Speaker, the Power Corporation is at arm's length from government and has a corporate strategy and a plan, and it is not a time-consuming responsibility. Although I was heavily involved with the Dogrib Nation in terms of the hydro power project to help get things moving in that area, it is not necessarily a day-to-day time-consuming activity.

The Department of Personnel was downsized when a large part of its operation was consolidated into the Financial Management Board. The women's advisory liaises with women's groups throughout the NWT and administers a grant. That's what they do.

From a departmental perspective, the only major responsibility relates to the Department of Health and Social Services. This responsibility is manageable and I don't find it burdensome, based on the experience I've had with this portfolio on previous occasions. With the directions established in Health and Social Services, I felt it best to assume responsibility rather than place one or two new

Cabinet Members in the position of finalizing, consolidating and implementing the community wellness strategy in the few months left before the fall session. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Final supplementary, Mr. Antoine.

Supplementary To Question 400-12(7):
Redistribution Of Portfolios To New Ministers

MR. ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Premier when she is busy doing all of this other work, being the Minister of all these other portfolios, how is she handling her role as the Premier? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Further Return To Question 400-12(7): Redistribution Of Portfolios To New Ministers

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I find with handling a departmental responsibility is that it keeps you in touch with what is going on on a day-to-day basis. It draws you into the workings and changes in government. I believe, although it's a difficult situation in some ways, it's also very helpful. I believe it creates involvement in the actual changes in government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Patterson.

Question 401-12(7): Premier's Balancing Of
Departmental And Overall Responsibilities

MR. PATTERSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, I think most people believe it is a very important role of the Premier to be an overseer of the government as a whole, and the Premier needs to be seen

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as an objective figure, both by departments and by other Ministers. I would like to ask the Premier how she distinguishes this role, being an overseer of a

government as a whole, from her responsibility to fight for and defend the departments and responsibilities she holds in her other portfolios? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Return To Question 401-12(7): Premier's Balancing Of Departmental And Overall Responsibilities

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, I believe in the last while, in the last three and a half years, the attempt of the government has been to try to create a partnership among departments, and not be in a position where we're thinking about individual departments but are really working in partnership to see how we can put necessary components and overlapping and duplication of functions together. I see my role as being in partnership with other Cabinet Ministers. I also see my role as the responsibility to be fair to the entire Northwest Territories. That works into the partnership relationship I'm trying to build. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Patterson.

Supplementary To Question 401-12(7): Premier's Balancing Of Departmental And Overall Responsibilities

MR. PATTERSON:

Maybe I can put the question another way, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Premier, what does she do when an important issue comes before Cabinet involving, say, a major decision involving Health, Social Services, or NWT Power Corporation? How does the Premier carry out her role as neutral chair of the Cabinet when issues involving her portfolio responsibilities come before Cabinet for decision? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Further Return To Question 401-12(7): Premier's Balancing Of Departmental And Overall Responsibilities

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, as I suggested, we have tried to build a partnership. As the Member is aware, in the areas of social well-being, we're trying to work in an envelope committee where there isn't one department that is more important than another department. We're trying to look at it in a holistic way where the community at large is focused on. I believe I've tried very hard, in working with this partnership, to instill in all Ministers that we're working collectively, not individually. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Supplementary, Mr. Patterson.

Supplementary To Question 401-12(7): Premier's Balancing Of Departmental And Overall Responsibilities

MR. PATTERSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure the question was answered. The Premier is the chair of Cabinet and we know the easy decisions are made before they get to Cabinet. It's the tough decisions that go to Cabinet, where there are difficult decisions to be made and a scarcity of resources. Unfortunately, sometimes it involves competing demands; say, for example, between the social envelope, infrastructure envelope and whatever other envelope there is, like resource management.

I would like to ask the Premier not whether they all try to work together. I know they all try to work together. I would like to ask the Premier, how does she reconcile her responsibility as Premier to be a neutral chair, to mediate disputes and achieve consensus in Cabinet, when she's responsible for a sizable portion of the territorial budget and accountable for a significant number of portfolios within that Cabinet? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Further Return To Question 401-12(7): Premier's Balancing Of Departmental And Overall Responsibilities

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, I guess there are two words. One is consensus, as the Cabinet operates and the other is common sense. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Patterson.

Supplementary To Question 401-12(7): Premier's Balancing Of Departmental And Overall Responsibilities

MR. PATTERSON:

Well, I'm still not satisfied, Mr. Speaker. It's easy to talk about common sense and consensus, but it's another matter to implement those objects. Maybe I'll ask the Premier a slightly different question. She said earlier today in her response to Mr. Antoine that it's useful for the Premier to get day-to-day experience in the trenches, dealing with the departments she's responsible for. She's able to know what's going on in the communities by this exposure to the departmental responsibilities.

I guess I would like to ask the Premier, would she not agree that the ideal situation would be, rather than having a Premier exposed to day-to-day experiences and issues of the community and departmental levels through a select few departments, that the Premier has no departmental responsibilities and instead can gather experience in the operation of all the departments of the Government of the Northwest Territories, rather than a select few? Isn't that the ideal situation, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Further Return To Question 401-12(7): Premier's Balancing Of Departmental And Overall Responsibilities

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, I guess I live in an ideal world because there isn't one portfolio I haven't held at one time or another during my tenure in this Legislative Assembly working in Cabinet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you.

MR. PATTERSON:

(Microphone turned off)

MR. SPEAKER:

I'm sorry, Mr. Patterson, I think you used your final supplementary. I've just been informed by the Clerk. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Koe.

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Question 402-12(7): Premier's Percentage Of Time Spent On Health And Social Services

MR. KOE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a question for the Premier. The Premier is responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services and the major initiative in those departments has been an amalgamation which has taken a lot of time and requires attention not only from the Minister, but from the departmental staff. The next major step in this amalgamation is to deal within the regions. So can the Premier advise us the amount of time she spends on Health and Social Services issues? Can she give us a percentage of her time spent on the work she does dealing with issues relating to Health and Social Services?

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to say exactly what percentage of time one spends on a portfolio. It seems that, at different times, as the Premier, I spend time on Health. There are overall questions that are being deliberated across Canada. The Premiers and the Ministers of Health and the Ministers of Finance have to get together to see how collectively they can resolve some of the changes in the social programs and the social network that will affect the various jurisdictional areas. So it is very difficult to determine exactly how much time is spent on each portfolio, but I will take it as notice and try to do a calculation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The question was taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Lewis.

Question 403-12(7): Free Vote For Ministers On Recall Legislation

MR. LEWIS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Premier, since the issue of recall is on our order paper, will Members of Cabinet be given a free vote as a matter of conscience on this issue?

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Madam Premier.

MR. PATTERSON:

Good question.

Return To Question 403-12(7): Free Vote For Ministers On Recall Legislation

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, as the Member has indicated, one of our Members was gone from Cabinet and I suggested that if we had an extra day to discuss it as Cabinet, we would be discussing it. At this time, I cannot determine what the outcome of our discussions will be. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Supplementary, Mr. Lewis.

Supplementary To Question 403-12(7): Free Vote For Ministers On Recall Legislation

MR. LEWIS:

Since the Premier operates by consensus, by her own admission in response to another Member, does this mean that the decisions that you have made will not be based upon your own particular feeling about this bill, but the wisdom that you collectively get from other Members?

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Further Return To Question 403-12(7): Free Vote For Ministers On Recall Legislation

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that there is another way to do it, with the way we operate. We discuss it, and weigh the pros and cons. If it isn't a free vote, it is a decision that is made based on everybody's input. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Lewis.

Supplementary To Question 403-12(7): Free Vote For Ministers On Recall Legislation

MR. LEWIS:

Have the Premier and her colleagues developed any kind of protocol or conventions so that you can be guided on which votes could be considered matters of conscience? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Further Return To Question 403-12(7): Free Vote For Ministers On Recall Legislation

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, we never could come to that consensus.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mrs. Marie-Jewell.

Question 404-12(7): GNWT Position On Euthanasia

MRS. MARIE-JEWELL:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I commented on communication that I received from the Fort Smith Society for Disabled Persons regarding the issue of mercy killing. I know, Mr. Speaker, that many would state that this is a moral issue. However, regardless of each individual's own feelings and beliefs, it is something we should have discussions on at the territorial level. I would like to ask the Minister of Health if she can indicate this government's current stand regarding decisions not to prolong life through extended medical treatment and regarding physician-assisted suicides as it pertains to severely disabled people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Cournoyea.

Return To Question 404-12(7): GNWT Position On Euthanasia

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, there has not been a request for the government's position on assisted suicides. To my knowledge, we don't have a stated position as a government, in terms of providing medication. This is generally the deliberation between the doctor and the individual. We have not taken any position on assisted suicides. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Supplementary, Mrs. Marie-Jewell.

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Supplementary To Question 404-12(7): GNWT
Position On Euthanasia

MRS. MARIE-JEWELL:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the government hasn't taken any stand, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that the Bourque commission report, Working Towards a Common Future, included a recommendation that would see a right to refuse life-prolonging medical treatment for individuals and their minor children and recognizing that the Rodriguez case and the Latimer trial have been brought to the attention of people and the governments across Canada, has the Minister of Health and Social Services given any consideration to engage in a dialogue with regard to this topic with the medical community advocacy groups and agencies that help the disabled people of the NWT? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Ms. Cournoyea.

Further Return To Question 404-12(7): GNWT
Position On Euthanasia

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, at this time, the dialogue that has taken place has been with the Ministers of Health across the country and with some of the coordinated working groups across the country on what would be the best approach in dealing with this very critical, sensitive issue. We have not, at this time, had a request from any group, whether it is the Council for Disabled Persons or other groups, that this was a topic they wished to discuss. There has not been any indication that this is a topic that people felt that they would want brought into a workshop or a seminar at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Supplementary, Mrs. Marie-Jewell.

Supplementary To Question 404-12(7): GNWT
Position On Euthanasia

MRS. MARIE-JEWELL:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware whether the NWT Medical Association, the NWT Registered Nurses' Association and the Public Health Association of the NWT, have taken any type of formal position on the termination of life support and the issue of physician-assisted suicide? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Ms. Cournoyea.

Further Return To Question 404-12(7): GNWT
Position On Euthanasia

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge I am not aware that there has been any position take by these various professional groups that the Member is referring to.

MR. SPEAKER:

Final supplementary, Mrs. Marie-Jewell.

Supplementary To Question 404-12(7): GNWT
Position On Euthanasia

MRS. MARIE-JEWELL:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because of it being such a difficult topic to discuss, that is why the issue was not brought forth. Will the Minister ensure that any discussion of these issues, in the event that they do come up, will involve a wide range of community organizations and advocacy groups, including those societies that speak out on behalf of disabled people of the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ms. Cournoyea.

Further Return To Question 404-12(7): GNWT
Position On Euthanasia

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there can be no question that it would have to be a very broad-based discussion. I will certainly make a commitment that if any momentum does take place in this regard, that it does take in consideration of a broad base of people who will be involved in those discussions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Koe.

Question 405-12(7): Continuance Of Role Of Rental Officer

MR. KOE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Safety and Public Services. Currently, the department employs a full-time rental officer and the office is supported by an administrator and a secretary. From talking to people in the communities, they are very pleased with the job that is being done by the office. The people in there seem to have a good understanding of northern housing rules and regulations and are perceived to be fair and knowledgeable about housing conditions and issues in the Northwest Territories.

Now that the budget for the department has been approved, I would like to ask the Minister whether or not the role of the rental officer will, in the future, remain the same as it has been.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Safety and Public Services, Mr. Nerysoo.

Return To Question 405-12(7): Continuance Of Role Of Rental Officer

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say that the responsibility will remain. However, I do want to say that there are a number of questions with regard to the tasks that have been assigned. In terms of the review of the department itself, we are trying to determine whether or not there are additional responsibilities -- whether it be labour or any additional responsibilities that are presently being undertaken by others -- which can be assumed by the rental officer. But that is a management decision and we are not at a point yet where we can say one way or the other what the responsibility will be.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Koe.

Supplementary To Question 405-12(7): Continuance Of Role Of Rental Officer

MR. KOE:

I would like to ask the Minister, is there or was there a review done on the role of the rental office?

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MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Nerysoo.

Further Return To Question 405-12(7): Continuance Of Role Of Rental Officer

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

I must say, Mr. Speaker, I am not certain if there was a review. What is being done is a review of the workload and the tasks that are carried out. All managers are asked for advice on those particular matters. That is why we have managers in the departments, to determine whether or not the roles and responsibilities that the staff are carrying out are such that the resources that we are providing are necessary, or for that matter, the tasks are not to the extent that they wanted. The other thing is whether or not there are other duties that they can assume. That is generally how the review is taken.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Koe.

Supplementary To Question 405-12(7): Continuance Of Role Of Rental Officer

MR. KOE:

The rental office doesn't have a very big budget. We have gone through tremendous changes in our housing programs, our social housing programs and our privatization of government housing programs, so there has been a great need for the services of the rental officer in all the communities. I would like to ask the Minister, are there any plans to enhance the budget of the rental office to enable the staff to travel to more communities and hold hearings in the communities rather than holding them here or holding them by telephone?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Nerysoo.

Further Return To Question 405-12(7): Continuance Of Role Of Rental Officer

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

At this particular time, no.

MR. SPEAKER:

Final supplementary, Mr. Koe.

Supplementary To Question 405-12(7): Continuance Of Role Of Rental Officer

MR. KOE:

Mahsi. I would then like to ask the Minister, are there any proposed changes to the way the rental office is to be funded?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Nerysoo.

Further Return To Question 405-12(7): Continuance Of Role Of Rental Officer

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

Mr. Speaker, I am not clear about the question, but the resources are there, they have been voted by the Assembly. With the exception of trying to address the issue of responsibility, which includes the method by which we carry out hearings; the issue is not that there will be someone in place. The question is what are the tasks, which is the issue that we are trying to address at this particular time.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Antoine.

Question 406-12(7): Tender For Renovations To Deh Gah School

MR. ANTOINE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, the Deh Cho Divisional Board of Education has been expressing an interest in piloting capital projects for some time now. This was expressed to the Department of Public Works and

Services as well as the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

There was one reference made on Monday to Deh Gah School which is in Fort Providence, for the renovation and addition to the school which was identified as a pilot project. Meetings have been conducted between the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the board to see what the implication of this project authority would be. Furthermore, they used meetings conducted with the Deh Gah Got'ie Betterment Corporation of Fort Providence. What has happened here is that on March 3rd, a tender was put out calling for design proposals by the Department of Public Works and Services, this came as a shock to the board of directors. As a result, I would like to ask the Minister if he could explain to the House what happened here in terms of the meetings that took place between his department and the Deh Cho Divisional Board of Education. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Nerysoo.

Return To Question 406-12(7): Tender For Renovations To Deh Gah School

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not clear about that particular matter of the tendering because the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is not responsible for the issue of tendering. That is a responsibility that falls under the Department of Public Works and Services.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Antoine.

Supplementary To Question 406-12(7): Tender For Renovations To Deh Gah School

MR. ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Deh Cho Divisional Board of Education, there was an understanding that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment was preparing the necessary documentation to transfer project of authority to the board. This is the reason I am questioning the Minister; his department has been meeting with the board to try to work out an

arrangement so that the Deh Cho Divisional Board of Education would do the pilot project for the renovation additions to the school in Fort Providence. So, I would like to ask the Minister, has the department done the necessary documentation to transfer this project authority to the board? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Nerysoo.

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Further Return To Question 406-12(7): Tender For Renovations To Deh Gah School

HON. RICHARD NERYSOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to advise the honourable Member that one of the issues that had to be addressed was a meeting between myself, the Minister of Public Works and Services, and the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. I am pleased to indicate to the honourable Member we did meet and have addressed a number of the pilot initiatives.

It is certainly our intention to come forward with a Cabinet submission to address some of the concerns, of which I believe the project the honourable Member has spoken about is one of those particular projects. But we do need some time now for the departments to bring forward the appropriate submission. It seems, Mr. Speaker, I can indicate through my honourable colleagues that the three Ministers are onside and trying to find the solution necessary to ensure that we carry it out. What is important though, Mr. Speaker, is that we recognize there is a process and we need to ensure that the partners, the people we're serving, the communities, the board, and also Public Works and Services, are clear about their responsibilities and roles. Hopefully, over the next week or so we will be able to respond to and resolve those particular issues. I can say that we have met and will be dealing positively with those issues.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Whitford.

Question 407-12(7): Installation Of Sprinkler Systems In NWT HC Homes

MR. WHITFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister responsible for Housing. The subject of sprinkler systems in homes comes up from time to time, particularly when a tragedy occurs as a result of fire. Fire chiefs feel that sprinkler systems in some homes could save lives. While there are pros and cons to the issue, I would like to ask the Minister -- because the territorial government is the largest landlord in the north -- in light of the opinions of fire chiefs towards sprinklers in homes, has the Housing Corporation looked at having sprinklers in their homes?

MR. SPEAKER:

Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Morin.

Return To Question 407-12(7): Installation Of Sprinkler Systems In NWT HC Homes

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Housing Corporation has looked at sprinkler systems for single detached units and have found that it is not economical to put these in the units. The cost is far too high and will drive construction costs very high. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Whitford.

Supplementary To Question 407-12(7): Installation Of Sprinkler Systems In NWT HC Homes

MR. WHITFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard quite a lot of support for such a proposal and also some concerns expressed by builders. Given the fact that the Housing Corporation has had a look at this, I wonder if the Minister could provide me with reports he may have on this study or review they did to justify costs. Would he be able to provide that?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 407-12(7): Installation Of Sprinkler Systems In NWT HC Homes

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Housing Corporation looked into this issue. There is a move in southern Canada to put sprinkler systems in all detached units as a fire safety precaution and as part of building codes. We did not support that move because of the costs. Also, home owners expressed concern that this would drive the costs up approximately \$6,000 to \$10,000 a unit, depending on where the unit is. The majority of our units have self-contained water tanks and you would have to put in another water tank to supply the sprinkler system. It would become too expensive and possibly drive the costs of home ownership up for citizens in the Northwest Territories.

I will give the Member the information I have available to me and make it personally available to him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Supplementary, Mr. Whitford.

Supplementary To Question 407-12(7): Installation Of Sprinkler Systems In NWT HC Homes

MR. WHITFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Housing Corporation and the territorial government, in general, are to be congratulated on providing sprinkler systems in seniors' homes and other institutions that they build and own. I would like to ask if it is just the single detached units that they're concerned with. Are the multi units, which affect a lot of people, in the category of being too expensive?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 407-12(7): Installation Of Sprinkler Systems In NWT HC Homes

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cost for single detached units would be a lot higher than it would be in triplexes and fourplexes, for example. But we are concerned with those units as well. The Housing Corporation, at this time, is not building multi units because we don't have a rent supp or public housing program at this given time. All of our dollars are allocated for home ownership now because that is the program that is needed.

Capital funding from the federal government doesn't exist for public housing any more, for building or new construction. It's not an issue for us right now. I guess we wouldn't agree to having this in the building code because it would drive the cost up more for construction in the Northwest Territories. We'd have to weigh everything out, but the initial kick at the cat is we wouldn't support that. Thank you.

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MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Final supplementary, Mr. Whitford.

Supplementary To Question 407-12(7): Installation Of Sprinkler Systems In NWT HC Homes

MR. WHITFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize the costs are there when one includes such things as safety but if it saves lives of home owners, children, elderly people and adults, I wonder what the cost factor would be? We have to take that into consideration as well. I wonder if the Minister's staff has looked at the number of fires we have and whether it is worth to put them in if it saves lives.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 407-12(7): Installation Of Sprinkler Systems In NWT HC Homes

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Comparing it to the saving of lives, we can look at that. But the Member must realize that what the Housing Corporation and government should look at is preventing fires. A sprinkler system is only good once a fire starts. If we can prevent that fire from starting, then we will save lives as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Dent.

Question 408-12(7): Elimination Of Unnecessary Fees Or Charges To Assist Businesses

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, some time

ago I asked the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism whether or not the department has considered the tax holiday scheme similar to the one undertaken by Newfoundland. I've now found out that Newfoundland has a related initiative. The government has appointed a committee to conduct a comprehensive review of all provincial legislation with the aim of scrutinizing permitting and licensing provisions in order to eliminate or reduce, wherever possible, unnecessary and redundant fees or charges in order to stimulate economic growth.

I understand that the Newfoundland government has already eliminated, totally, 171 fees that they have charged individuals and businesses in the past and they expect by this summer to eliminate a further 200 to 300. Mr. Speaker, has our Minister of Finance considered this sort of initiative in order to stimulate economic growth in the territories?

MR. SPEAKER:

Minister of Finance, Mr. Pollard.

Return To Question 408-12(7): Elimination Of Unnecessary Fees Or Charges To Assist Businesses

HON. JOHN POLLARD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. Mr. Speaker, several years ago we did look at giving tax holidays and making a better environment for business and so forth. But the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, we did not find at that time that we were going to attract more businesses to the Northwest Territories because there were less taxes or fees to be paid here, with the exception that there were a number of companies prepared to act as investors of funds. I believe we have one in Yellowknife already. A lot of paper travels back and forth and electronic transfer of funds. There are some gains to be made for those companies participating and, of course, there are some advantages in jobs and so forth.

But we found those to be fairly small and the economic advantage to us to be almost unnoticeable compared to if there was to be some large-scale mining activity, the fur industry was to come back, or if we were able to create some manufacturing jobs. At that particular point in time, we did not pursue giving greater benefits in tax areas or lesser licensing fees to companies in order to stimulate economic development. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary To Question 408-12(7): Elimination Of Unnecessary Fees Or Charges To Assist Businesses

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, in reaction to the territorial budget and fiscal plan, one of the points they say needs to be immediately addressed by the government is a thorough review process of the regulatory environment and degree of paper burden imposed on small business in the territories. In fact, the implication in the CFIB statement is that the paper burden is holding back the territorial economy from growth that it might otherwise experience. In light of that and in light of what Newfoundland has done, and since it has been some time since the Minister has looked at this issue, would the Minister commit to re-examining whether or not there might be reason to eliminate some of the fees and charges of this government.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Pollard.

Further Return To Question 408-12(7): Elimination Of Unnecessary Fees Or Charges To Assist Businesses

HON. JOHN POLLARD:

Mr. Speaker, I will admit on the area of paperwork, by the time you get done filling in forms for the federal government, for the territorial government, for municipal government and so on, it is onerous upon small businesses. I will commit right now to have a look to see if there are some ways to get rid of some of that paperwork.

Mr. Speaker, I should remind Members though that every time we pass a policy or a rule in this Legislative Assembly that affects employers, then we are adding to that paper load and we are adding to that reporting structure. Sometimes it is the governments who are creating the problems for the businesses that are out there and have to fill in those forms. I notice that the federal government is trying to consolidate some of the forms for small business. I have no problems in looking at that aspect. I will commit to the Member that I will sit down with Mr. Todd and go over the issue again of giving incentives to businesses in the Northwest Territories to see if we

could stimulate economic activity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Pudluk.

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Question 409-12(7): Review Of Local Authorities Elections Act Pertaining To Small Communities

MR. PUDLUK:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is directed to the Minister of MACA. It is with regard to the Member's statement I made earlier regarding the Elections Act in small communities. All communities are governed under the Elections Act. Have you reviewed your Elections Act, as it affects small communities that have small populations?

MR. SPEAKER:

Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Ng.

Return To Question 409-12(7): Review Of Local Authorities Elections Act Pertaining To Small Communities

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department is planning on undertaking a comprehensive review of all municipal legislation which affects municipalities. That would include the Local Authorities Elections Act. At that time, I would expect that we would address the issues that have been brought forward by municipalities, by the NWT Association of Municipalities and various other groups; particularly, as the Member has alluded to, how it relates to the eligibility of individuals in communities to sit for election to municipal councils. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Supplementary, Mr. Pudluk.

Supplementary To Question 409-12(7): Review Of Local Authorities Elections Act Pertaining To Small Communities

MR. PUDLUK:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for reviewing this because it is one

of the major concerns. When are you going to undertake this exercise?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 409-12(7): Review Of Local Authorities Elections Act Pertaining To Small Communities

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently, the department is drafting the terms of reference under which the review process will be undertaken. I can expect that that will be done within a month and the consultation process would probably start some time later this summer or fall.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mrs. Marie-Jewell.

MRS. MARIE-JEWELL:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week, I received a phone call from an individual and I can't remember whether he was in Hay River or Enterprise. Mr. Speaker, the individual was somewhat difficult to understand, but I understood part of his comments. He advised me that he was taking the Premier to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Mr. Speaker, I noticed, Mr. Fournier, the Chief Conflict of Interest Commissioner, in the Assembly today. I was thinking of possibly connecting the phone call with seeing Mr. Fournier. I would like to ask the Premier, are the actions of the Premier of this government being investigated by the Chief Conflict of Interest Commissioner? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Can I ask the Member to perhaps rephrase her question? The question I heard is whether or not she is being investigated because she is the Premier. Or, are you asking a question because she is responsible for one of the portfolios in which she is being investigated under? Mrs. Marie-Jewell.

Question 410-12(7): Investigation Of Premier By Conflict Of Interest Commissioner

MRS. MARIE-JEWELL:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look at the position of the Premier, Mr. Speaker, as Premier responsible for the overall government. Is the Premier of this government being investigated by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

Return To Question 410-12(7): Investigation Of Premier By Conflict Of Interest Commissioner

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Speaker, the Conflict of Interest Commission has a case before it which is alleging a conflict of interest with myself, as Premier. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Koe.

Question 411-12(7): Authority For Housing Authorities To Collect Damage Deposits

MR. KOE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Housing Corporation. I understand that housing authorities are able to collect damage deposits from tenants. Under what authority is the ability to collect damage deposits given to the housing authorities? Is it through the act, the policy or through the contribution agreement?

MR. SPEAKER:

Minister of Housing, Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suspect that it is through policy and contribution agreements with the NWT Housing Corporation, but I do not have that information readily available, so I will take the question as notice and get an answer back to the Member tomorrow. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Patterson.

Question 412-12(7): Determination For Reduction In Legal Interpreting Division Staff

MR. PATTERSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister has heard my concerns expressed about the gutting of the legal interpreters program in his department. I would like to ask him why two of four employees have been given notice that their jobs are cut. Specifically, I would like to ask the Minister how it was determined that the project manager and the legal interpreter and terminologist for Dene languages should be cut rather than either of the other two positions? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Minister of Justice, Mr. Kakfwi.

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Return To Question 412-12(7): Determination For Reduction In Legal Interpreting Division Staff

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Mr. Speaker, it was our view that the federal government had the intent to substantially reduce the amount of money it was providing to us under the languages agreement. As Members may know, there has been, in fact, a huge reduction in the amount of money that the federal government is now providing to this government for support of the French language and aboriginal languages. It was in anticipation of that, that the Department of Justice reviewed the operational requirements of the people who are funded through this program and decided that, at this time, those two positions would be the ones that would least affect the delivery of services at the community level. These are the reasons we have given notice to terminate those two positions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Supplementary...I'm sorry, Mr. Patterson, question period is now over. Item 7, written question. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Mr. Koe.

ITEM 10: PETITIONS

MR. KOE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that I wish to table today. Petition No. 4-12(7) has 530 signatures. These petitioners are expressing their support for continuation of funding of the Northwest Territories training centre in Inuvik. This

training centre is operated and managed by the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories. The petition states:

"Due to federal and territorial budget cuts, a large portion of the Northwest Territories training centre's budget appears to be lost. Without cooperation from government funding sources, we will be forced to close the NWT training centre. We, however, are in the process of seeking support through intervention of our Premier, Nellie Cournoyea. We ask you to support our concerns by signing this document which will be forwarded to local, regional and territorial politicians and our Member of Parliament."

As I stated, this petition is signed by 530 people from the Inuvik and Delta area.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 10, petitions. We'll take a 10-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER:

I will call the House back to order. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Mr. Koe.

ITEM 11: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee Report 7-12(7): Second Annual Report Of The Languages Commissioner

MR. KOE:

The first annual report of the Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, covering the 1992-93 fiscal year, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on December 14, 1993 and referred to the Standing Committee on Agencies, Boards and Commissions. Among the committee's recommendations was to amend the committee's terms of reference to provide that all reports of the Languages Commissioner would be so referred. This was approved by motion in the House on November 9, 1994.

The Languages Commissioner's second annual report, for the 1993-94 fiscal year, was tabled November 14, 1994. The standing committee considered the report in meetings in Yellowknife on December 7 and 8, 1994. On December 8th, public hearings were held with the Premier, the Honourable

Nellie Cournoyea, and the Languages Commissioner, Ms. Betty Harnum.

The standing committee wishes to acknowledge the input of the witnesses and thank them for their appearance at the public hearings. We would also like to thank the Languages Commissioner and her staff for their assistance in preparing for this review.

General Comments

The Members of the standing committee find this report to be an improvement over last year's first annual report. It is obvious that the Languages Commissioner now has a clearer vision of the mandate and goals of the office. Objectives and progress towards those objectives are stated much more clearly. The process by which the Languages Commissioner deals with complaints and enquiries is explained in excessive detail. Finally, the report is much clearer and more specific regarding the breakdown between complaints and enquiries.

Committee Members were less pleased with the Languages Commissioner's presentation during committee hearings in December. The committee did not feel it was appropriate for the Languages Commissioner to dwell on minor administrative matters. Committee Members would rather the Commissioner focus more on the accomplishments and achievements of her office, along with constructive suggestions as to how the Legislative Assembly and its administrative support staff could help her meet the goals and objectives she has set for the office.

As was noted in the committee's review of the first annual report, the position of Languages Commissioner is that of an independent "watchdog." This means that there may be some occasional contention in the relationship between the Languages Commissioner and the government. But it is also important that the Languages Commissioner and the government work together to ensure that the resources available for official languages programs are used as effectively as possible.

This last point is especially important, given the funding cuts in the new Canada-NWT Languages Funding Agreement. The government will have a difficult time balancing statutory requirements, existing programs, and community expectations with such reduced funding. The Languages Commissioner can, through information derived from the requests made of her office, provide useful

assistance to the government in assigning priorities to language programs.

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Committee's Response To Recommendations Of The Languages Commissioner

Languages Commissioner's Recommendation 1

"That the Legislative Assembly and GNWT fully consider all of the outstanding recommendations and take such actions as are deemed necessary and appropriate to implement them."

In considering the report, the committee focused on the recommendations made by the Languages Commissioner in chapter four. Recommendation 1 is essentially a follow-up to the 30 recommendations made in the first annual report. The standing committee feels that the Legislative Assembly has dealt with all of the recommendations directed to the Assembly, and that those recommendations that have not yet been addressed are the responsibility of the government.

In the review of the first annual report, the standing committee recommended that the government complete its official languages handbook by December 31, 1994. It was expected that this handbook would contain policies and guidelines which would ensure that government departments and agencies were aware of their duties and responsibilities under the Official Languages Act.

The government has still not completed this task. For example, subsection 14(2) of the act, which provides the legal obligation for services to be provided by the government in official languages other than English and French, was proclaimed on December 31, 1992. The committee is very disappointed that, although two years have passed, the government still has not clearly defined their specific responsibilities under the act.

Languages Commissioner's Recommendation 2

"That the annual reports of the Languages Commissioner be based on the calendar year, rather than the fiscal year, and that they be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in the first session of the following calendar year, to allow for a more immediate consideration."

Recommendation 2 is meant to allow the committee to review and report on the Languages

Commissioner's annual reports in a more timely fashion. However, this recommendation was drafted before the Legislative Assembly moved to amend the standing committee's terms of reference. The amended terms of reference now allow for the committee to review the Languages Commissioner's annual reports before they are actually tabled in the House. This will allow the committee to deal with the annual reports in a timely fashion, regardless of when the report is actually released. Committee Members feel that the new terms of reference address the situation adequately, and therefore see no reason to change the Languages Commissioner's continued reporting on a fiscal year basis.

Languages Commissioner's Recommendation 3

"That the interim and final activity and financial reports of any future language agreements be tabled in the Legislative Assembly to provide an opportunity for a review by the House, and to keep the public informed."

Recommendation 3 suggests that activity and financial report of future language funding agreements be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. While these are already public documents, the Languages Commissioner feels that actually tabling the documents will not only better inform the public, but also give Members of the Assembly a better opportunity to review them.

In previous years, the government often did not monitor the financial activity related to the languages agreements very well. This led to large amounts of funding being lapsed. While things have improved in the last couple of years, all parties are eager to avoid a repetition of this poor management. Committee Members agree that this recommendation is worthwhile, and endorse it.

Languages Commissioner's Recommendation 4(a)

"a)That the GNWT explore the possibility of establishing a joint management committee for the administration of funds for official languages;"

Recommendation 4 has three parts, which will be considered separately. The first section recommends that the government "explore the possibility of" devolving the management of official languages funding to a joint management committee. This recommendation is in response to the desires expressed by representatives of some language groups that they be given a management role in the

distribution of funds, rather than merely an advisory role.

The committee feels that the joint management concept has merit. However, the reduced funding available could preclude the formation of a formal joint management committee. Even though funding from the federal government has been reduced, the territorial government has statutory obligations under the Official Languages Act which must be met. These obligations will likely not be the subject of discussion by any joint management committee, nor will they be transferred to outside agencies or organizations. These obligations will have to be maintained, notwithstanding cuts in available funding. The result is that the amount of money available for other programs has been reduced by much more than the 38 per cent by which total funding under the new agreement was cut. Committee Members expressed concern that establishing a joint management committee, and then giving that committee authority over an extremely small funding base, would be seen as more insulting than empowering.

Languages Commissioner's Recommendation 4(b)

"b)That the Government of the Northwest Territories consider transferring the responsibility for such official languages programs and services as are reasonable under the terms of any agreements involved, while maintaining the resources necessary to meet its obligations under the Official Languages Act and the language provisions of other acts and regulations;"

The second part of recommendation 4 suggests a way to provide language groups with more management authority without the establishment of a formal committee. With land claims groups adopting and exercising greater powers and abilities, and with the government's community transfer

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initiative well under way, this is a timely and appropriate recommendation. By transferring the responsibility for community-based programs to aboriginal organizations, language groups, and community organizations, the intent of this recommendation can be accomplished. Committee Members endorse this recommendation, while encouraging the government to pay attention to the words "such...programs and services as are reasonable," and to not use this recommendation as an excuse to avoid responsibility for official languages services needed and requested by northerners.

Since the Languages Commissioner already has a statutory requirement to meet annually with representatives of language groups, this can be extended to include discussions on the management of funds assigned to community-based official languages programs. Committee Members suggest that the government, the Languages Commissioner, and language groups explore these concepts together and implement devolution of some responsibility for program delivery and funding management in the upcoming fiscal year.

Languages Commissioner's Recommendation 4(c)

"c)That the Government of the Northwest Territories clarify any obligations and expectations with regard to official languages services and programs when they are transferred."

Part c) is a necessary corollary to part b). Committee Members agree that the government must ensure that all obligations and expectations are made very clear whenever any official languages services and programs are transferred to non-government agencies.

Languages Commissioner's Recommendation 5

"That the Government of the Northwest Territories support the research, documentation and analysis of the Michif language in the Northwest Territories, to permit a thorough consideration of this language in the context of official languages."

Finally, recommendation 5 relates to a growing awareness of the importance of the Michif language in Metis culture and history. While committee Members are not sure whether Michif should be immediately embraced as an official language, they agree that the government should pursue some research and study of the matter, in order that the Legislative Assembly may make an informed decision regarding Michif's status in the future.

Motion To Receive Committee Report 7-12(7) And Move To Committee Of The Whole, Carried

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the report of the Standing Committee on Agencies, Boards and Commissions. Therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that the report of the Standing Committee on Agencies, Boards and Commissions on the Second Annual Report (1993-94) of the Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories be received by the

Assembly and moved into committee of the whole.
Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Koe. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Question.

MR. SPEAKER:

Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 11, reports of standing and special committees.
Item 12 reports of committees on the review of bills.
Mr. Dent.

ITEM 12: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE
REVIEW OF BILLS

Report On Bills 18, 20, 22 And 23

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Finance has reviewed bills 18, 20, 22, and 23 and wishes to report that bills 18, 20, 22, and 23 are now ready for committee of the whole. Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to waive rule 70(5) and have bills 18, 20, 22, and 23 placed in committee of the whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife Frame Lake is requesting that Rule 70(5) be waived. Are there any nays? There is one nay. Unanimous consent has been denied, Mr. Dent.

Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills.
Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Lewis.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

MR. LEWIS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a document to table today. Tabled Document 82-12(7) is a letter addressed to me as the Member for Yellowknife Centre. It is entitled legislative action paper on recall, and is dated April 5th, today's date. It is signed by the Principal Secretary, George Braden, who, I believe, is a political advisor to the Premier. There has been a mistake here, the person referred to on page 2 is Dr. Elton, not Mr. Elton, and he is a professor at the University of Lethbridge. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Pudluk.

MR. PUDLUK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table Tabled Document 83-12(7) which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife, requesting amendment to the Local Authorities Elections Act. It has been signed by four people. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motions for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters: Bill 1, Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1995-96; Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Fair Practices Act; Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Retirement Plan Beneficiaries Act; Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Elections Act,

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No. 2; Bill 24, Community Employees' Benefits Act; Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Land Titles Act; Committee Report 2-12(7), Report on the Legislative Action Paper on the Office of Ombudsman for the Northwest Territories; Committee Report 3-12(7), Report on the Review of the Legislative Action Paper Proposing New Heritage Legislation for the Northwest Territories; Committee Report 4-12(7), Report on the Review of the 1995-96 Main Estimates; Committee Report 5-12(7), Report on the Review of Rewriting the Liquor Laws of the Northwest Territories: A Legislative Action Paper; and, Committee Report 6-12(7), Report on the Review of the Legislative Discussion Paper on the Draft of the New Education Act, with Mr. Lewis in the chair.

ITEM 19: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF
THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

I would like to call the committee to order. What would the committee like to do this afternoon? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to recommend that the committee resume consideration of Bill 1 and Committee Report 4-12(7), specifically to deal with the budget of the Department of Health and Social Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Are Members happy with that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

---Agreed

Bill 1: Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1995-96

Committee Report 4-12(7): Report On The Review Of
The 1995-96 Main Estimates

Department Of Health And Social Services

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

There are no objections? This was an item that we left for a while and we're still on general comments. Madam Premier, would you like to take the witness table and bring in witnesses?

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Are Members happy with that? Is that all right?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

---Agreed

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Sergeant-at-Arms, maybe you could show the witnesses where they can sit.

Thank you. Madam Premier, we'd like to be reminded where we left off. Perhaps you could introduce your witnesses again, for the record.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, I have witnesses for the deliberation of the Department of Health and Social Services: the deputy minister, Mr. Ken Lovely; and, Mr. John Doyle.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Are there any general comments from Members? We're dealing with the Department of Health and Social Services. Mr. Dent.

General Comments

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some questions I would like to ask the Minister. It has been some time now since there has been discussion about standards for air medevacs. I was wondering if the Minister could advise where we are on this right now. I know it had been proposed that standards be set and I know there had been draft standards drafted for operators. I was just wondering if those draft standards have been reviewed by the operators? Have the operators all come to a meeting to discuss the standards for equipment? Where are we in terms of the overall management of medevacs?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, after the usual consultation, the standards for air medevacs were finalized April 1st. The next step is for the air carriers to have an opportunity to look at the standards and make comments, with the objective of finalizing the standards for air medevac carriers by June 30, 1995.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you, very much. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder, would the Minister be willing to distribute copies of those draft

standards to Members of the Assembly at the same time they are being made available to the operators?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, they're going to the air carriers, I see no reason why we cannot distribute them to Members.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you, Madam Premier. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. During the Standing Committee on Finance review of the department, I had asked the department for information on how many people would be impacted by the proposed increase in medical co-payment fees. I was wondering if we could get some indication of that right now.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you, Mr. Dent. Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the ones who would not be impacted would be the status people and people covered under other medical benefits. The co-payment would affect 1,800 non-native residents.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask, what is the department's rationale for increasing the copayments?

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MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Dent. Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, as the Member knows, the cost of services continues to increase. This is an area where we could increase the payment which is cost-shared by the federal government.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Minister has just pointed out, it is not cost-shared by the government for some 1,800 people. Mr. Chairman, I would submit that, by and large, this hurts mostly those who can afford it least, in other words, people who are working for very low incomes, typically for companies that don't offer health plans which cover transportation. I think it will significantly affect a number of people in Yellowknife, in particular. I wonder whether the Minister could make comment on the hardship that this might cause to some people.

MR. SPEAKER:

Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

As I've indicated, Mr. Chairman, we haven't increased the fees since the inception of the policy and when we increase the fees, the same fees which affect a certain number of people, the amount is also billed back for status increases as well. There is a benefit because the federal government, on behalf of status or the non-insured, will pay the full amount of the fee. Where there may be difficulties for an individual to cover the costs of the fee and they are not able to do so, there is still a policy where they can access payments through Social Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you, Madam Premier. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT:

In fact, I've had constituents who have tried to access that policy, but Social Services has refused assistance to them because they are working and they say that, because they are working, they can afford to pay for it. In fact, these constituents have told me that they haven't got any money left to pay for it. I understand that one of the reasons for increasing the co-payment is it is another way to get a few extra dollars out of the federal government. I think that it is

very important that we think about the number of people, especially in the larger centres, who will not be able to travel to get essential medical services. I have people in my constituency who have, in a very short period of time, had to travel to Edmonton three times. They have complained to me that it has been a severe economic hardship that they have had to pay \$300 in order to get the services that they are being sent south for because they aren't available in the Northwest Territories. With this co-payment going up to a proposed \$250, people in the same situation will now be faced with \$750 in charges. For someone who is working in Yellowknife for minimum wage, Mr. Chairman, this can present a significant problem.

I would like to point out that, for instance, Alberta Health does not charge anything when they are doing inter-hospital transfers by way of air medevacs. In the Yukon, there is no deductible or co-payment charged. In Manitoba, there is no deductible or co-payment charged on air medevacs. I think this is one of those fee increases that the government is choosing to introduce because they see it as a way of getting some money back from the federal government. There are 1,800 people who are getting lost in the shuffle who are going to wind up paying significantly more to get essential services that aren't available in the territories and they don't have any way to get this money back. I say that is unfair. It is unfair that we are leaving one group out there hanging and twisting in the wind, when it comes to having to pay for an essential service.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

That is a comment. I don't know if you want to respond, Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, I have already commented on the numbers that are there and the issue of the increase. If there are people who feel that they are unfairly treated at one level, there is a means test on this. I agree with that. If it is a hardship, then we should reconsider the individuals who are having the hardships. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you very much, indeed, Madam Premier. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT:

Mr. Chairman, I think we do then have to take a very serious look at how we set the levels for our means test because I have had a number of calls from people who tell me they can't afford what the co-payments are already, and increasing them will mean they will not be able to afford to have medical treatment.

In the long run, what that will probably mean is more money to this government because somebody will wind up getting so critically ill that they will be admitted to Stanton, in which case there won't be a co-payment charged for the services that are required because it will be an emergency. I think this government will wind up paying more for critical medical services as a result of an ill-advised fee increase.

After that comment, I would like to ask if the Minister will at least consider, as the Standing Committee on Finance has recommended, a cap on the annual co-payment fees so someone who has to travel outside three times in a short period of time will not be stuck with a huge increase in fees?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you, Mr. Dent. Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, perhaps I could make a suggestion. Rather than a cap, maybe I could commit to looking at how we're dealing with the means test, formulating a more encompassing means test, to determine aid that people would be judged for. I think perhaps it may be more beneficial for everyone concerned that the means test is what gets looked at. We could look at both things, but in terms of benefits, I wonder if the Member would be satisfied if we would pay more attention to looking at the means test.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT:

Mr. Dent...

---Laughter

Mr. Chairman, I hope the Minister will commit to coming back to the House and advising the House just exactly what steps

have been taken. If we can be assured that there will be some examination of the means test or the costs, such as a cap, so some way is found to ensure that the costs are kept more reasonable for especially those 1,800 people who won't have those fees reimbursed then, yes, I think we would be satisfied.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you very much, Mr. Dent. You were so overwhelmed with the response, that you forgot who you were for a minute. Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, I will make that commitment.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Are you done, Mr. Dent? Mr. Ningark was next and then Mr. Patterson.

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, besides the hospital care for medical patients, especially those who are unilingual and only speak Inuktitut or Dene, the ability to communicate is also very important at boarding homes, whether in Yellowknife, Edmonton, Winnipeg, or wherever people of the NWT generally go for medical treatment. Mr. Chairman, I think it's crucially important that we try to make medical patients absolutely comfortable, wherever they are.

I have been told, especially by people in my area and also the Keewatin region and the Baffin region, through my honourable colleagues who represent those regions, that there are times when medical patients going to major medical centres have to wait at the airports for transportation. On many occasions, Mr. Chairman, they are not even picked up. They have had to provide their own transportation by way of paying for taxis to and from the airport, especially from the airport to the boarding homes.

There are times when medical patients from the eastern Arctic are not able to communicate with boarding home staff because the dialects are different or there is no one on staff who are able to speak the language, Inuktitut mainly. I notice, Mr. Chairman, that medical patients from the western Arctic, mainly Cambridge Bay, Coppermine, and other communities are, in most cases, able to speak English and Inuktitut. They are more or less bilingual. But most

patients, especially elders, coming from the eastern Arctic, from the Kitikmeot, Keewatin and Baffin regions, are not able speak the English language which seems to be and is deemed to be a universal language in this area.

Mr. Chairman, I think the well-being of the patients is crucially important. Mostly medical patients who go to larger centres are elders or pregnant women and these are the people most easily subject to the slightest problem of stress. I don't think that we should undermine the system, Mr. Chairman. Many times people have come to me to talk about their appreciation for medical treatment at the hospitals, not having to pay for the transportation from their community to a major medical centre and back to their community, not having to pay for the accommodation -- either boarding homes, hotels and so on -- yes, Mr. Chairman, we appreciate those things very much.

But, I think that it is very important that the comfort is there for those patients, as well. When the patient is not being treated as expected, when a patient is not comfortable, when a patient is away from home is a strange environment, a patient, even when faced with the slightest problem, may experience stress, therefore prolonging the recovery for whatever medical problem that person has.

I would like to urge the honourable Minister to make sure that she communicates with the boarding homes, either here in Yellowknife, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and other major centres where people go from the Canadian north to the south for medical treatment. There are people who have talked to me about this. I have not taken a stand on the issue previously, because I was told by some other medical patients that they have no problems with the boarding homes when it comes to communication, being picked up at the airport or not being picked up at the airport. They are able to read, write and speak the English language.

From the airport to boarding homes, they are able to call the taxi on their own, they are able to talk to taxi drivers at the airports. But the majority of those people who feel that the services aren't all that great, are those people who are unilingual. They have no complaint about the food, they have no complaint about other things, except the ability to communicate and not being picked up at the airport on time. I think these are very crucial and important and I would like to stress that to the honourable Minister. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you very much, Mr. Ningark. Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, the Member has continually made sure that the times that patients that are not feeling comfortable has been brought to the attention of myself or to the medical service, and I very much appreciate that. I know that particularly the Kitikmeot boarding home tries very hard to do the very best job they can.

But it is true that we have boarding homes in Quebec, Winnipeg, and Edmonton, and I know that we have to strive to achieve as best we can in setting our goals to provide that services. I believe that there has been significant improvement but we still have a ways to go. I will continue to express to the boarding homes, and even within the terminals, that directions could be better presented.

I know that if someone is missed, the people who are responsible feel badly about it. But the only thing that we can do is try to do better all the time and I will continue to express that concern and continue to try to improve the service around the interpretation and creating understanding, particularly for unilingual people. By and large, we attempt to have an escort for each a person, but sometimes that doesn't happen and I realize that causes difficulties.

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So we will try to improve that service and continue to keep that in mind for the daily activities of the Department of Health and Social Services, because I know that it is important.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thanks very much, Madam Premier. Do you have further comments or questions, Mr. Ningark?

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There were not too many things that I wanted to talk about regarding this issue at this particular time, but since you recognized me, I thank you very much.

Another concern I came upon with medical patients...I am not saying, Mr. Chairman, that one particular staff has ever been pointed out as having not looked after the patients. There have been no complaints in that

area. In general, it is the inability to communicate and sometimes not being picked up at the airport. It is frustrating when the patient is not able to look after himself/herself; not able to communicate with officials at the airport; not able to call for a taxi -- they don't know how to do it, let alone know how to communicate with the dispatcher, in this case.

Another concern that came to my attention -- not too many times, Mr. Chairman -- is that there are times when the Kitikmeot boarding home in Yellowknife is full, it is booked, at the same time Rainbow Valley is booked. I think we should start to plan for expansion in the area of providing accommodations for medical patients.

There are times when Yellowknife receives patients from the Baffin. There are times when Yellowknife receives patients from the Kitikmeot region. I think we should start thinking about expanding or putting additions to either the Kitikmeot boarding home or maybe have Rainbow Valley...I don't pretend to speak for Rainbow Valley, as Rainbow Valley is mainly for the western Arctic people, according to my understanding. The Kitikmeot boarding home was mainly put up to accommodate the Kitikmeot region, but we also appreciate the fact that we are able to accommodate people from the Keewatin. We are able to accommodate people or consolidate people from Baffin at times.

Mr. Chairman, isn't it about time that all the health boards interested -- Keewatin, Baffin, Kitikmeot -- perhaps, meet with the Premier, the Minister entrusted for the Health department, and start to plan to expand the boarding homes for accommodations. The population is growing. We have had this problem of not being able to accommodate medical people for the past few years now.

Mr. Chairman, we are growing, and there will be more patients coming into this area. I hope, Mr. Chairman, that Madam Premier will take this very, very seriously.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you very much, Mr. Ningark. Any response Madam Premier?

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Yes, Mr. Chairman. We have a number of letters from individuals from the Kitikmeot region indicating that they often have to be put in another boarding home or in a hotel. I have started discussions with

the Kitikmeot Health Board and my understanding is that they wanted to talk to the present owners of the building, the Inuk Development Corporation, who put up the boarding home. They felt it was in their best interest, if they are going to expand, to put it in the same place because people were fairly satisfied with the management and the kind of facility that has been run from there. I know at the very beginning when it was put up there was a shortfall on space and there was the intention to take over a second lot but they couldn't really afford it. I don't know if there's a place for expansion but I believe that at the Kitikmeot Health Board level it's an active discussion and I'll continue to pursue that as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Mr. Ningark.

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this point in time, I would like to take this opportunity to thank people at the Rainbow Valley who have looked after patients from the Kitikmeot region. I know the Rainbow Valley was mainly designed and made for the people of the western Arctic. There are times when the Kitikmeot Boarding Home is booked that they're able to welcome people from the eastern Arctic, mainly from the Kitikmeot region. Also, the staff and management from the Kitikmeot Boarding Home will look after people while they are here, in spite of the fact that they may not be able to confidently communicate Inuktitut with the people. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you, Mr. Ningark. Anybody else? Next on my list I have Mr. Patterson.

MR. PATTERSON:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would like to identify some of the issues of concern in this department and perhaps give the Minister of Health and Social Services a chance to answer now or perhaps await the detailed consideration of the estimates as appropriate.

Mr. Chairman, I've been briefed on the community-based planning exercise in the Baffin region to plan for the long-awaited new hospital. I am impressed that the work is community-based. I'm impressed with the way existing hospital and community health representatives personnel have been involved in the research that has now started to identify health

planning issues and needs. I think it's been a very sensitive and effective process and will lead to a very clear definition of the priorities and the needs for the new hospital. I would like to ask the Minister if, in the course of presenting her budget, she could give an update on the planning process in the Baffin region and perhaps in other regions. This is really the fundamental issue in our region. There are so many needs that are not met by the present facilities and so many needs that can be forecast in future. I will only mention a few: chronic care for the elderly; psychiatric care; hospices for the dying which unfortunately will probably have to include AIDS patients and the range of needs that have been identified in the very good planning work that's under way. I would like to ask the Premier for her assessment of the progress and whether we're on target with the plans to build the new hospital as previously committed to in this House.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I made a statement about this yesterday. I'm very anxious to see the very good legislation implemented that's been developed on the Custom Adoption Recognition Act. I think this is an excellent piece of legislation that was developed by Mr. Graeme Garson and we should get on with making it work. I believe, Mr. Chairman, that the Minister's Department of Health and Social Services will have

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a role in implementing this act; will have a role in identifying the local Custom Adoption Commissioners, which I see as something like Marriage Commissioners; and, will have a role in making the act come into being. I understand, and I may be portraying my ignorance here, but I understand that community social workers may be expected to help get the program off the ground given their closeness to the community and their involvement with family and social issues.

Mr. Chairman, I know bureaucracies can make things more complicated than they have to be. Perhaps I'm naive but to me there are a few simple steps required. I would have hoped that by now perhaps MLAs would have been asked for input into -- MLAs or elders, or both, or local governments -- would have been asked for names of respected people in each of our communities who would be able to serve as Adoption Commissioners and would be knowledgeable of the area of custom adoption. I want to ask the Minister who, I believe, has a role in implementing this act,

how things are going and how we can help to get this long-awaited new act off the ground.

Another issue, Mr. Chairman, that is of concern to me -- which I've mentioned in the discussion of the main estimates of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment -- is the area of training in the health professions. Particularly training for nursing in Nunavut. There are some 250 jobs. We've only got some 10 students from Nunavut in the Yellowknife-based program. I'm sure it's an excellent program but I'm also sure that if it's working in Yellowknife at the Stanton Hospital it could work in hospitals closer to Nunavut. Of course I have in mind the Baffin Regional Hospital as a training ground. I know that the Baffin Regional Health Board, through its health promotion officer, is actively working on nursing training and a nursing training program. I would like to find out if the Minister is aware of this; if training nurses is a priority of her department, and whether or not we can build on the good work of the program that's now been established in Yellowknife and plan for a program that would give a bit more access to students from Nunavut for nursing. It is true and we all know that we've got a long way to go in getting northern people involved in nursing, particularly in our hospitals and health centres.

Finally, Mr. Chairman -- no, almost finally -- I would like to ask the Minister about the thrust of the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Finance in a previous report about making progress on distance technology. About how we're advanced in the Department of Health in taking advantage of the wonderful technology that is now available to transmit electrocardiograms and other medical information through the telephone and using existing telephone communications and electronic communication. I would just like to generally find out what initiatives the department is taking and whether or not we're starting to find ways of saving costly travel and perhaps, on occasion, costly medevacs through distance technology.

Another question I would like to ask the Minister, Mr. Chairman, is about, I think it's called, non-insured health benefits. I have heard the announcement about benefits for the Metis and I heard Mr. Bohnet, president of the Metis Nation, talking about the Metis in communities who do not have employer health plans and who have not been able to afford health benefits and how beneficial this new program will be for them. I know that money is scarce and I would like to ask the Minister, in order to ensure that the medical benefits go to those who most need them,

those who cannot afford medical services, what the procedure is going to be for determining eligibility for the Metis? Will there be a means test to ensure that the benefits go to the poor and not people who have the means or health programs in place as Mr. Bohnet described them?

Secondly, now that this step forward has been taken by the Metis, I would like to ask the Minister if she's concerned about others in the Northwest Territories who cannot afford medical services who don't happen to be Metis, status, Dene or Inuit, who don't happen to have the benefit of an employer or other health plan? Is there a plan to do something for those people as well? It seems now, according to the CBC report, that there's really only one class of people now who are not eligible for these basic medical benefits, and those are non-native people in the Northwest Territories who may not have employer health programs or the means to afford those services themselves.

I think the government should look at extending these services to the whole population as an investment in preventive health care. I believe there are still people in the Northwest Territories who do not treat themselves with proper medication, simply because they cannot afford those services. This deteriorates their health and perhaps contributes to problems accumulating later on. I would like to ask whether or not there's a plan to extend benefits to all people who need them in the Northwest Territories.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to congratulate the Minister. I was very pleased that proposals have been put out for the tendering of orthodontic services in the regions of the Northwest Territories. I think the Minister, herself, admitted that it was discomfiting that we were spending so much money sending people south with escorts for a procedure that sometimes involves very little time and, in some cases, where braces don't even require adjustment.

I think the tenders have now closed and I would like to get a progress report on whether or not bids have been received to provide orthodontic services, and what the status of that program is. I think it's welcome and now we want to make sure it gets off the ground. There are many people in my constituency who object to the waste of public money that is involved in their travelling regularly to Montreal or Ottawa for these services. I've had a number of people complain to me that they are uncomfortable, since they know we don't have a lot of money in our health system, in taking these benefits.

Then there is another group of people who have complained to me, Inuit who say that the criteria and procedures for getting orthodontic benefits through the non-insured benefits, the system now set up by Indian and Northern Affairs, is extremely convoluted, expensive and difficult to access. You pretty well have to be incapable of eating before you're eligible for orthodontic services as an aboriginal person.

I'm hoping that if we can bring orthodontic services to the north through the tender calls that have been put out in the various regions, we'll also somehow be able to give northern aboriginal people, who are funded for these benefits through the federal government, a little more access to the service than they've been able to get through the convoluted committee approval process they are now subject to.

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Mr. Chairman, I apologize for having listed a rambling series of issues. I don't know where they fall in the activities of the department but these are issues that are of concern to me. Generally, I'd like to say, Mr. Chairman, that I was impressed with the plan to base health services and funding to health boards more on a formula, to promote more fairness and equity in the system, and to re-establish better relations with health boards. I guess that relates to my final questions: how are relations with the health boards; is the long-awaited memorandum of understanding between the Department of Health and health boards close to being finalized; and, will we be able to get on with a new, more cooperative partnership between the boards and ministry based on a clearer understanding of appropriate roles and responsibilities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lewis):

Thank you very much, Mr. Patterson. I counted at least six or seven concerns. Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to the planning for hospitals, indeed, the Baffin hospital plan is progressing very well. It's on schedule and looks like they've taken into consideration some of the other components of health care in a more holistic way in providing a hospital facility. We're pleased that it seems to be progressing very well.

Regarding the long-sought-after health facility for the Keewatin, they've done a health needs studies and

right now they're doing an economic analysis of an approach to put a facility there. In the Inuvik region, because some of the Sahtu residents are accessing Yellowknife for medical services, they're well on the way to realigning according to the needs assessment that they've been working on now for some years. What they're doing presently because of the community-based rationalization of what would be required in the community and region, are community profiles so they can rationalize the type of facility that would go into Inuvik. They're a bit behind because they've had to refocus because of the decision to allow Sahtu residents to come to Yellowknife.

In terms of the other hospital boards, we still have a lot of work to do to rationalize the Hay River, Fort Simpson and Fort Smith hospitals as they relate to Stanton. I hope we'll be able to carry on much of that consultation this summer. There have been a number of studies done and a series of recommendations have emerged on how each can function within the southern Mackenzie catchment area. It seems that everyone is taking their needs study and their facility planning very seriously and are moving along quite well.

In terms of the Custom Adoption Recognition Act, I had hoped as well that we would be able to move much more quickly on that because it has been a long-outstanding issue. And I think both the Member and myself have advocated that something should be done about that for a long, long time. However, it seems that the actual implementation of the regulations and the selection of people probably couldn't be done until September. In the meantime, the plan is to seek out one individual who will do some of the backlog that we have now, so that there won't be some activity in trying to address those outstanding issue on those individuals that we know are there. So rather than saying that we cannot do anything until September, we will almost immediately get one person to coordinate the activity and get the backlog and the individuals that we know about now updated and put in the process. So we will be doing something.

In terms of the training for professional nurses, I am very much aware that often we can start the pilot project in one region. But I see it that this program will have to move to the Baffin to try to catch the eastern Arctic catchment area. This is a program that started off here in Yellowknife and we will continue with it, but that is not in absence of planning for one in the eastern Arctic because I think it is needed. There are a lot of opportunities there for Inuit to take part in

the professional nursing area. I know that we have a lot of changeovers and this will provide some stability if we can train our people to take over some of the responsibility in the nursing profession. What we have in Yellowknife has not been done with the intention of doing something for Baffin, because I believe that it is very necessary.

With regard to the progress on distance technology, I know that the Department of Education is working quite extensively on trying to see how they could use distance technology. The Department of Health is working with NorthwesTel right now with regard to telemedicine and how that can be made available and transmitted.

The other area, on Metis benefits, there is some work that has to be done to determine the type of benefits that we can cover within the parameters of the \$1 million that has been put in the budget for that. We won't be able to cover everything, so we will have to work with the Metis Nation and look at their eligibility list. As well, they will have to meet the same criteria, where if they have a medical plan, they have to access that first, like everyone else. This is one of the reasons why they felt that the cost wouldn't be as great, because a majority of Metis people who are working are either in government or have a medical plan as it relates to the work they have.

I will let Mr. Ken Lovely deal with the orthodontist issue and give you an update on that. I am pleased to say that our relationship with the health boards has improved extremely well. And in terms of the agreements, we have five finalized agreements and all we are waiting for is some of the health boards because they just haven't had a meeting to finally consider it. But I am very pleased with the really positive working relationship that we have established with them in the last year, and I think that has gone a long way. I think the compliment has to go towards the deputy minister of Health and Social Services. So on that final issue of orthodontists, Mr. Lovely could probably give you an update on that while I dig out my cough medicine here.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Deputy Minister.

MR. LOVELY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The orthodontic travel issue has been a very sensitive one because it is costing us a lot of money to send people outside the

Northwest Territories to obtain treatment that should be available here in the territories.

The department developed a draft call for proposals that could be used by all of the health boards to ask dental clinics and orthodontists to submit proposals to provide those services at the major regional centres. That would mean that our

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expenses would go down significantly because of the reduction in travel. Those calls for proposal are at various stages now. Some of them are advertised and the boards have received proposals. There are varying responses. I understand that the Inuvik board, for example, has received five proposals. Another board has received two. There are a couple of boards who are simply in the middle of the process of advertising it and that is expected to be complete by mid-April.

We are also working with the communities in the South Slave to allow more of them to access the orthodontic contract already in place between the Government of the Northwest Territories and a southern orthodontist who travels to Yellowknife to provide services in this community. That is a bit of a different negotiating process, but we are satisfied that we will have coverage across the Northwest Territories within the next two to three months, or at least we will have an agreement for that coverage. That will allow us to achieve one of the objectives that is identified in the main estimates: reducing orthodontic travel by about \$400,000. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. General comments. Mr. Patterson, are you done?

MR. PATTERSON:

(Microphone turned off)...Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Okay, thank you. Mr. Kenoayoak Pudlat.

MR. PUDLAT:

(Translation) Mr. Chairman, regarding Health and Social Services, regarding capital planning; first, I would like to say the patients who have to go through regional or southern hospitals for treatment are

treated very well and that is the least we can do for them.

I would like to say that in the east one of our problems is, for the smaller communities, only small aircraft are able to land there. Some communities are accessible by larger airplanes. A lot of times patients that have to go out for treatment have difficulty returning home because other patients are using the same aircraft. This has been a major concern in the smaller communities for patients who have to go out.

The other concern is -- we are aware of this ourselves -- that these people do not travel on their own; that is a necessity for them to go out for treatment. I know that many of the same people go out because I travel a lot. I have seen many patients who have gone out for treatment who have difficulty returning home. I wonder what the problem is. I am not too sure about the reasons they seem to get bumped off of scheduled flights. It seems that there are no problems when they can get a seat on an airplane. We feel really sorry for the people who are unable to get home because they have no seat on the aircraft. I don't know if this is a problem elsewhere, but there have been a lot of problems in this area up to now. There are patients who are not there of their own making and are not able to get home when they should. Perhaps the Minister is aware of that or she may not be. I think that you should know the problem in this area so that you are aware of how patients who go out for treatment from their home communities are handled and treated. I think that we should be very sympathetic towards these people. Sometimes we feel sorry for them when they become unhappy because they are homesick when they are unable to go home. It is very sad to see these people. I would just like to say something about that further.

Also, in the Baffin, especially Sanikiluaq, Yellowknife is used as a major centre to treat these people. As well, the Kitikmeot Boarding Home is used by those patients who have to come in. I would like to say again that these patients are not here just because they want to come here; they are here out of necessity. I think that there should be Inuktitut services or translation services made available for that dialect at the Stanton Yellowknife Hospital. I think that there should be a telephone available with an interpreter in a language that they can understand. In the Baffin region there is Inuktitut available at the hospital all the time to answer any questions or enquiries, and translation services in that hospital. There are many other centres in the south that are used by northern residents. I think there should

perhaps be a toll-free number or a number to call in our own language, Inuktitut, available in all major centres. I think there should be one made available at the Stanton Yellowknife Hospital. I don't know if there's one now or if there are plans to have one, someone who can answer questions in Inuktitut, because I know that Stanton, as it is at the present time, will continue to be used to treat other people from other regions, mainly the Inuit-speaking people, and there has to be someone looking after the patients who do come in.

We are very thankful that the Kitikmeot Boarding Home is available to be used by patients who come in, but even in the Inuktitut language we have many different dialects. A lot of times we can communicate but there are some problems that may occur especially for people who don't often get out of their own regions. There may be an interpreter available as needed in the Kitikmeot Boarding Home or at the hospital but I think there needs to be an improvement in this area because many people from Sanikiluaq have travelled to Yellowknife for treatment. It seems that we had a tuberculosis problem in Cape Dorset and there were many people travelling out for treatment. They were having trouble getting out of airports going into boarding homes or hospitals. I don't know what services you have about where to call or who to call in case there is no one from the hospital to pick them up. That is part of my concern.

The other concern that we have is in the social services area. When there is a death of a relative in another community, or if there is a serious illness of a member of the family, I know that there is one airfare that can be paid for a close relative to go to that community. We feel that there should be more than one airfare for a relative to go to that community for a funeral or to see a person who is terminally ill. This is a very serious concern for people from small communities who have no employment opportunities and want to fly out to see a dying relative or attend the funeral of someone who has died. When you are travelling from Cape Dorset to Lake Harbour, it is very expensive to fly between those two communities. I would like the Minister and his officials to think about this in the future. This is one of the major concerns in my constituency, whether or not Social Services can provide more than one airfare ticket to go see a dead relative or a terminally ill person.

I will stop at this point, Mr. Chairman, so that my points are understood more.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

I believe the honourable Member covered the medical referral from a medical centre to transportation, that's referral. The second item that he came up with was medical travel patient service in boarding homes, and transportation from the airport to the boarding homes. The third item that I think he talked about was compassionate travel assistance for those who otherwise cannot afford to travel. Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, I believe that most of the topics that were raised by the Member had been raised a little earlier. I know that these issues continue to be raised. Most of the issues raised by the Member are issues that are handled by the Baffin Regional Health Board. My understanding is that they have a very similar policy and guidelines and also initiatives to make sure that translation communication is in place. As I say, in these areas there's always room for improvement. What I will do is take the comments from the Member and write them up in a memo and relate them to the Baffin Regional Health Board and have a discussion around these issues with them because they are closer to the points that have been made. I can ask for a response as well. I will undertake to personally communicate with the Baffin Health Board in writing and ask them to reply and see if they can offer some solutions or give some explanations on areas where they may have been making improvements over the long-term.

In terms of the compassionate travel, I realize that this is always a big issue when someone is ill, because having any member of the family very ill or terminally ill is always a great concern. All the compassionate travel in the Northwest Territories, whether it's in the Baffin or the western or eastern Arctic. We do have compassionate travel guidelines which change from time to time, but are available. Compassionate travel guidelines require that a person wishing to travel to visit a relative who is in long-term institutional care or visit a relative in hospital who is critically ill, provide a medical certificate from the physician attending the patient to verify the person is in critical condition in hospital or to attend a funeral of a relative.

For visits to relatives in long-term care or critically-ill relatives, assistance may be given for one visit a year for the patient's next of kin. The next of kin refers to one person only and is the closest living relative in this order: a spouse; parent; brother or sister; another relative the patient lived with before being

hospitalized; an escort, if one is necessary; and, an interpreter. These are the general guidelines but I know, from time to time, these are stretched. I will take the comments under consideration as we continue to look at how we are going to provide assistance to the ill and the people who are close family to the people who have to leave home to seek medical treatment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Qujannamiik. On my list I have Mr. Tony Whitford, Member for Yellowknife South.

MR. WHITFORD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think my colleagues have already spoken about my concerns. I have had concerns expressed by constituents over the proposed copayment increase that is, and has already been, a problem with a number of people who reside in my area. While I say there is a concern now, there will be even more now with the proposed increase. In the past we've had excellent cooperation from the Department of Health staff who I brought these concerns to. They've always managed to work something out. But, it is not always possible to resolve these issues satisfactorily.

In addition to that, it's quite difficult for individuals to have to always challenge the department when they have to -- through no fault of their own, of course -- travel south for treatment more than once. It's okay if this happens once every so often and affects a person maybe once or twice in their lifetime, but when there are instances, such as broken bones or other major surgery that requires a person to go for additional treatment, it does become quite a burden on the household. It's tough enough to live in the north as it is, and anytime disposable income is used for such things, it is less money for things that people need in the territories.

It appears that from what the Minister has said, that perhaps they have to look at the criteria for eligibility to see if that can be changed; that's encouraging. I would like to encourage the department to do that. I recognize the need for increasing revenues, but health is one thing that I think is an investment. If we can eradicate diseases and illnesses, we would be saving a lot of money. If people, because of cost, neglect themselves, it is going to cost us a lot more money in the long run.

Another thing is, when I read through the budget, I see there are going to be some increases in some of the services that the residents of the north will be receiving through the hospitals that we have here; particularly those that are servicing a good portion of the territories at present. It is encouraging to learn that -- although it's not in the book yet -- the dialysis program will be coming to the Stanton hospital in the very near future. I asked a question about it and was informed that this was going to be possible by the fall. I've received some happy peoples' comments and will pass them on to the department for their initiative in this area.

The increase in services for patients in the north is encouraging. Years ago we had to go south for surgery of every kind. We can now get it done here. I think there's an experiment in a small way of the use of laparoscopic surgery which reduces the amount of trauma a patient would experience in surgery. It is certainly encouraging to see all of these things coming here, such as hip replacement surgery. I think one of the areas still of concern is something that we have heard about lately in the news, although we've known about it for awhile. It is the great concern about the vast numbers of northern people who are smoking and the increase in the amount of cigarette consumption over the past years.

Smoking has always been a pastime of northerners but, for some reason or other, it has increased in the last little while. I think not very long ago Members of this House saw, or heard in the news, statistics that indicate that a tremendous number of Inuit people smoke. I don't mean to just single out Inuit, but that is what the report claimed. I know that there is a substantial increase in the numbers of young people smoking, in spite of the programs we have. I'm just wondering why this is happening. The anti-smoking awareness program held in the past year showed very graphically the effects of the use of tobacco products on humans. Maybe it's not being delivered as much as it used to be or maybe people have become just so desensitized now that they don't really care.

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I know on the back of cigarette packs there are black labels that warn people about the dangers of smoking and these are required to be put on the packages. Recently, I saw in some of the novelty stores here black labels that have some very cute little sayings on them which people tape over the warnings on the packages. They make a joke out of it. All of a

sudden what was a very serious warning about the use of tobacco products is now taken very lightly. I wonder if maybe our approach and programs to having people reduce smoking are becoming obsolete and aren't seriously being observed by our residents.

It's a great concern to many of us that this happens, especially when you see the increase in young people smoking now. They seem to be getting younger and younger; in spite of the law. They still manage, for some reason or another, to secure tobacco products and use them. Whether it is against the law, they still do it. I think more than making it a law, we need to be able to come up with some ways of making sure that young people don't start smoking because of the adverse affects it is going to have on them, rather than making it a challenge because it is against the law and they have nothing else to do. It has been attributed to some people who I have talked to as being a very slow form of suicide. The effects are not noticeable right now, but the more you smoke, the greater the increase of long-term health problems the person will face.

I guess I would want to see a little bit more of those types of programs continued or revisited, for sure. As I have said, they seem to have lost their impact, if they are still being delivered. They don't seem to have the same impact as they had some time ago. Maybe it is time to revisit this and see what else we can come up with. One other area that is of concern that I wanted to bring to the attention of the department here, while we deal with their budget, is the support that special health treatments require. We have a few people who have had transplants; a very major medical item. They require certain medication that is of a very specialized nature and not only is it specialized, but there is the issue of the quantities that are required. Because it is specialized and of the large amounts, it is very costly. Some of those things are not covered under an insured program. It isn't on the list. If a person has a kidney transplant or a liver or lung transplant -- which are becoming more common -- the amounts of medication required to stave off the rejection effects are quite costly.

If a person does not have a health plan, although they may be gainfully employed or have a certain amount of income in that home, a tremendous financial burden is devastating. I would encourage that we look at those particular types of medical treatments that are unusual. It is one thing if you are going to get some minor thing done because there are quite a number of things like that, such as gall bladder

surgery. But if you go in for a transplant, this is major stuff. Something like that is not a great financial burden to the territorial government, at least in my opinion, because of the few people it affects. It is something worthwhile doing. I would like to encourage the department to look at that and recognize the long-term benefits that will be realized from people who have recovered successfully through our efforts. I probably will have more to say as we move along but, for the time being, I will say we are on the right track. There are many good things happening; probably too many to go over here in any great detail. There is the nursing program that will be established, so we can have more and more people trained in the north to do the jobs that are required to deliver good health to northerners; that is very encouraging. The department is to be commended on that initiative and other initiatives undertaken.

I haven't touched on Social Services because a lot has been covered. I think the social workers are doing a tremendous job in delivering programs to the people. People have gone through a traumatic time over the past three or four years with the reorganization of the department. It has shown the fortitude that they have, that they have been able to do their jobs and still go through the trauma of amalgamation, which we are well aware has been traumatic. It has been a long process. They are working to some fruition.

Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to make those few comments to the Minister. I don't think there is anything that requires an answer at this point. There is a list of drugs that are required for transplant patients -- I am not sure what the name of the program is -- that recognizes illnesses or treatments that require a lot of cost to individuals and more assistance can be given to the people who are undergoing that kind of treatment. I only hope that the department will take a good look at that, as they have had due to requests of people who use southern facilities for dialysis purposes. It is encouraging to know that we will have that in the north by the fall and it will reduce our costs to southern hospitals and increase the use of our own facilities here. With that, Mr. Chairman, I will leave it there. I say congratulations to the department and the staff who have put so much into the north over the past year, since we have dealt with this matter. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Whitford. Mr. Whitford, I am told smokers know the tranquillity of inner peace. Madam Premier, do you have a response?

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to the never-ending quest for finding better and more innovative ways of trying to get to the smoking public, particularly to youth, I think there have been many programs; however, they have an extended shelf life, where after people have looked at them for a certain period of time, they aren't interested.

The Pauktuutit organization has negotiated some funds from the federal government, so they are going to try to take a different approach and go on a campaign for encouraging people to become non-smokers. Throughout their tranquillity, they become as stressed as everyone else. We just have to keep finding different approaches because an approach can be very valid, but it only lasts so long and people look through it. It doesn't have the impact for very long, so we just have to keep looking for newer and more innovative ways.

Regarding the area of concern about extended health benefits on pharmacare, there is a list and we've expanded it from time to time. We've dropped some drugs that really weren't necessary or weren't used, and added on according to the requirements and the needs of the general public. So we continue to do that under extended health benefits. So if there is a case to be made, we can't always come to a positive conclusion, but the Department of Health has been fairly responsive to requests that have been very critical and made some changes to the ongoing list of what will be covered

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under the extended health care benefits and we will continue to do so. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. We are reviewing the 1995-96 main estimates of the Department of Health and Social Services. General comments. Mr. Antoine.

MR. ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the Department of Health and Social Services, I have some comments I would like to make. Again, this is the never-ending saga in my constituency of not having a board. At the

same time, this government is trying to provide programs and services to people in the communities. My concern is the type of services that are provided to people in my constituency.

In the past little while, there seems to have been a concern for getting the type of services that people require. I know the Minister has been pursuing this one for some time now, trying to get some sort of accountability in place by the providers of health services in my constituency. There is really no way to do it. There are a lot of problems there, but how do we solve it? I know there are problems that arise out of, for example, Fort Simpson, where there are health concerns coming out. The band there is doing a study now about culturally-appropriate health care in the community. The Deh Cho First Nations is also doing a study on a broader scale for the region. In the meantime, the Department of Health has a hospital there which is providing care to community people in the area.

A lot of my constituents in Wrigley, Simpson, Jean Marie, Nahanni Butte, Trout Lake, and Liard are going to Yellowknife to get treatment. They have to charter or even take a taxi into Simpson and then fly into Yellowknife and stay at the Vital Abel Home to get the care of the hospital here. In some cases we are hearing that people want to come here to get treatment but, somehow or other, they don't have the opportunity to come here. So there are problems like that, where do the people go to now that they don't have a health board to deal with? There is Mackenzie Regional Health Services, but it is really an office here in town. There are appointed people in there. There is a staff of maybe 10 to 13, I don't know exactly. I would like to know how many people are in that department.

With the amalgamation of Health and Social Services, as well there is going to be amalgamation in the regions. My concern is that in the regions where they have health boards, they already have a body in place that will oversee the health services, but in my constituency -- and also in my colleague's, the honourable Henry Zoe's region, and in the Speaker's area, there are concerns that we don't have a board in place. With the amalgamation that is being worked on now, how is it all going to work in? Is there going to be an interim type of body put in place now, in the regions or at the community level, to deal with concerns and complaints that come forward by the health services?

As an MLA, I have received a lot of different calls and letters with regards to health services. I move them forward to the Minister and her department. I am also going to the Mackenzie Regional Health Services. There is no real coordinated place where people can go and feel comfortable about expressing their concerns with regards to health services because we don't have a health board or a community health committee. Only in Wrigley, where they have set up a community committee to deal with health, does there seem to be a body that deals with issues from the community, as well as the health delivers -- they go to this body as well. So it goes both ways.

What I am seeking here is how we can deal with this issue now, before amalgamation happens and before a health board is created, because there is no coordinated approach in how to deal with the concerns that come forward. I have a concern with that.

Keeping in mind that this government is responsible to provide the health care to people in my constituency, as well as constituents in other regions where there are health boards, we don't have it. With the devolution of health care from the feds to the territorial government, this government took over the responsibility of delivering health care to treaty Indians and Inuit people, and the majority of the people in my constituency are treaty Dene people. The treaty rights include having medical checks in the communities. And with these translated to medical services, I want to make sure that they have adequate care, not only treaty Indians but everybody else in my area which the government is supposed to provide. There are many people that come through the system for health care and whenever there is a problem, people think that they should come and get treatment, but they don't. If there's problems in the way, I end up dealing with it. I have no problem with it but there should be a system in place for that. Could the Minister tell me if there's something in place now on how to deal with these issues that seem to be becoming more and more of a problem? How should we deal with it? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, the Mackenzie Regional Health Services -- and that's what it's called because it doesn't have a board, but it does have a unit -- is a

bureaucracy that serves these two regions. In the past I've tried on numerous occasions to try to get the board set up or a semblance of some kind of a board so that the representation could be there. In the past it was a bit difficult because there was quite a bit of work being done on the claim and people just really weren't available to put a lot of attention to it. It just really wasn't moved forward but came in bits and pieces. As I stated earlier in the proposal from the Dogrib Nation, perhaps a way to save some of the money on forming more and more bureaucracies is look for a board that takes in health, social services, education; a social program board. We would be willing to carry out some of these meetings to see what direction the Deh Cho themselves would like to move in. We're prepared to do that as soon as the people are ready to have those meetings and discussions.

Right now the Mackenzie Regional Health Services system takes care of that region as though they were a board but the Member is quite right, you don't have people sitting on a board but they do act as a service unit to those two regions and attempt to make sure that the health centres in each community... As much as possible, it's handled locally through the health centres and if there is a requirement for further treatment, sometimes the Fort Smith Hospital is accessed and then Yellowknife. There is a process for how people get from one place to another or how they get their health needs taken

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care. In that regard, the MLA probably gets more involved because of the lack of a health board. We try as much as possible to be positive in trying to get through those requests, whether it comes from a community, a chief or from the MLA to deal with those issues. We're prepared to start looking at the kind of organization that the Deh Cho sees as a model to serve the needs of the Deh Cho and if that can happen right away, we're prepared to have those meetings. I talked with Gerry Antoine and he had said that their study was almost complete, on what they feel should be a health delivery system. So, incorporating that, we would be prepared to meet at the earliest possible time.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. General comments. Mr. Antoine.

MR. ANTOINE:

Well, it's very frustrating and that isn't very satisfactory to me. I have been dealing with this one for the last couple of years. All I'm hearing is the same thing I heard before. I don't mind getting involved on some issues. However, if these issues could be resolved, I would probably feel a little better. The issues are still the same. There are some specific medical problems that even come to my attention. I'm not a medical doctor, I cannot diagnose or make any suggestions. I just want to get some attention paid to the type of medical treatment some people have or have not been receiving. There should be a way for people who have these problems in the communities to go to someone in the medical system to address these issues, so these issues could be dealt with in the medical system, itself. That's what I'm getting at.

I asked the Minister if there is anything in place in the interim until a board is created. Regarding the problems we are having with the boards, the Minister is saying that there is a proposal from the Dogrib region to have a social services board and they will be meeting with them to see if this would be feasible. How long are these meetings going to go on? Maybe they'll go on for another year or so. She is saying they are going to meet with the Deh Cho region to see if this is the type of board they would want to see in place. In the meantime, there is no board. That's my concern.

What is in place in the interim to deal with these kinds of medical concerns? In the other regions, I assume there are health boards that deal with different specific issues. They probably have a process in place so when somebody has a problem, someone goes to the board, voices the issues, and tries to resolve it. There may be problems with doctors, with different personnel in the medical treatment system or with transportation. These are the different types of problems I'm getting at. More and more of these problems are coming to my attention. This department has the responsibility to provide health services and all of these problems are included within health services.

If there is nowhere for my constituents to go to address some of these medical issues, then there is a problem. That's what I'm raising a concern about. Is there anything in the interim? I've gone to the Minister and the deputy minister and raised these issues. I cannot keep coming back to the Minister for specific issues on an ongoing basis. Finally, I've gone to the director of Mackenzie regional health services

and whenever I hear of a specific problem or concern, I go to this person. I

get a more positive response because they are on the ball and doing things.

Can there be an interim arrangement made somehow? Maybe there could be an interim body of some sort at the community level. In Fort Simpson, maybe there could be a community health committee of some sort comprised of different people. There was a committee looking at health problems, doing a study for the band. There's a group of people in the community who are aware of these different issues. They've been at it for a number of months now and their report is just about done. Can a group like that be recognized as an interim body for the time being to deal with different health issues that come into the community?

Is there something in the works that the department is doing to deal with these types of problems that arise, so the community can be involved in dealing with these health issues? At this point in time, Mackenzie Regional Health Services is dealing with some of these problems but the entire staff is in Yellowknife. They travel to Simpson once in awhile but there are people in the community who would like to be involved and should be involved because they are there on a daily basis and see how things happen in the communities. I would like the Minister to tell me if there's something that could be done in the interim until we come up with some sort of a health board in my region. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Madam Premier.

HON. NELLIE COURNOYEA:

Mr. Chairman, what is in place right now is Mackenzie Regional Health Services. That's what's in place now for that region. It is in Yellowknife, but that's what exists today. It's the interim body that tries to make sure that the health stations are staffed and that the programs are run in the communities of both those regions. As for a community health board, there's always the option for a community to make a request and say they want to be the ones to be consulted on a continuous basis about the health needs of Fort Simpson or any other community. It's not the Department of Health that's dragging its feet, it's the will of the people. If the community says they have an organization that they feel should be the organization

mandated to be the link between the health unit and the community, we're not putting any impediments in their way to becoming formalized. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Antoine.

MR. ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The will of the people is always there, Mr. Chairman. Health is always a key issue. We have political bodies in the communities. We had a chief and band council in the community a long time before the municipal government was put into place there. It's still in existence and will exist for a long time yet. The band council represents a lot of people in the communities. They have regular meetings and they have provisions in their meetings to have delegations come forward. The suggestions here are that if a representative of the hospital in Simpson -- the doctors and the different people in charge of the health services area -- could meet with the band on a timely basis, I think a lot of these problems could be dealt with at that level. Perhaps some misunderstandings could be cleared up. The band council is there and I don't see why they couldn't use that

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vehicle to try to resolve some of these health issues. After all, this government took on the health transfer to administer health services to treaty Indians and Inuit and that is one part of it. There's also the village council who also have meetings on a timely basis that represent everybody else in the community. At that level, perhaps some of these problems could be resolved. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Antoine. The hour being a little after 6:00 pm, I will recognize the clock. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the Premier and her witnesses for appearing before the committee. I will rise and report progress to the Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The House will come back to order. Item 20, report of committee of the whole. Mr. Ningark.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 1 and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of committee of the whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The seconder is Mr. Lewis. The motion is in order. To the motion.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Question.

MR. SPEAKER:

Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 21, third reading of bills. Item 22, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Nunavut Caucus immediately after adjournment today. There are meetings tomorrow morning at 9:00 am of the Standing Committee on Finance and at 10:30 of the Ordinary Members' Caucus.

Orders of the day for Thursday, April 6, 1995:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions

11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 31, Recall Act
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 1, Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1995-96
 - Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Fair Practices Act
 - Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Retirement Plan Beneficiaries Act
 - Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Elections Act, No. 2
 - Bill 24, Community Employees' Benefits Act
 - Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Land Titles Act
 - Committee Report 2-12(7), Report on the Legislative Action Paper on the Office of Ombudsman for the Northwest Territories
 - Committee Report 3-12(7), Report on the Review of the Legislative Action Paper Proposing New Heritage Legislation for the Northwest Territories
 - Committee Report 4-12(7), Report on the Review of the 1995-96 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 5-12(7), Report on the Review of Rewriting the Liquor Laws of the Northwest Territories:

A Legislative Action Paper

- Committee Report 6-12(7), Report on the Review of the

Legislative Discussion Paper on the Draft of the New
Education Act

20. Report of Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 15, An Act to Amend the Elections Act

22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned
until Thursday, April 6, 1995, at 1:30 pm.

---ADJOURNMENT