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The Honourable Tony Whitford, Speaker

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2000

MEMBERS PRESENT

Honourable Roger Allen, Honourable Jim Antoine, Mr. Bell, Mr. Braden, Mr. Delorey, Mr. Dent, Honourable Jane Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Honourable Vince Steen, Honourable Tony Whitford.

ITEM 1: PRAYER

--Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Whitford): Good afternoon, Members, and welcome back. I wish to advise the House that I have received the following message from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories:

"Dear Mr. Speaker:

I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories the passage of the Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 1999-2000, and the Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001 during the Second Session of the 14th Legislative Assembly.

Yours truly, Dan Marion, Commissioner."

Members of the Assembly, before beginning the continuation of the Second Session this afternoon, I would like to take a moment on behalf of the Members of this House to offer condolences to the wife and family of Mr. Ipeelee Kilabuk, who passed away earlier this month after suffering a heart attack. I know many of my colleagues in the House today probably did not personally know Mr. Kilabuk when he was a Member of this House. However, I had the pleasure of serving with him as a Member of the 11th Assembly. I am sure that Mr. Kakfwi, who also served with Mr. Kilabuk in the 11th Assembly, shares fond memories of this gentleman.

Mr. Kilabuk was first elected in March 1975 as the Member for Central Baffin in the 8th Legislative Assembly and was re-elected to the 9th Legislature in a by-election in September, 1980.

As I said, I had the pleasure of working with Mr. Kilabuk as a Member of the 11th Assembly. I must say that it was indeed a pleasant experience. Despite a language barrier, Mr. Kilabuk was always quick with a smile and very easy to communicate with. He always had a kind word for everyone and was truly a pleasure to serve with whether it be in the House or on a committee.

Among his many other contributions to public life, Ipeelee was a founding member of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in 1971. As a statesman and gentleman, he was a true representative of the Inuit people, a gentleman who never had an unkind word for any one and treated everyone with respect and compassion.

Once again, I offer condolences and our deepest sympathy to the Kilabuk family on behalf of the Members of this House and all people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 14-14(2): NWT Social Workers Week

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week marks a special celebration. March 20th to March 26th is being recognized as Social Workers Week. Health and social services boards in the Northwest Territories are honouring social workers and their contribution to building healthy communities.

Mr. Speaker, as you know from personal experience, social workers greatly contribute to community wellness. They provide a variety of services in the areas of mental health, community wellness, child protection, adoption counselling and crisis intervention. Social workers practice their skills in a number of settings, such as health care centres, family violence shelters, social work offices, correctional facilities, and in counselling settings.

Social workers have a challenging profession that demands flexibility and the skill to adapt to the priorities of the communities they serve. They make a difference and deserve our recognition.

The Department of Health and Social Services and boards were recently faced with a shortage of social workers. Today we are pleased to announce we have reduced this shortage and the department continues to receive inquiries about social work employment opportunities. Perhaps the best news is that more and more Northerners are selecting social work as their career of choice. Recognition of social workers is important for recruiting and keeping social workers.

I am also pleased to give recognition to the work of the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada that was formed two years ago. This organization represents social workers from all three territories. The association provides a collective voice to address the issues of practice and policy for their profession.

Fostering a network of peer support across the North is a priority. The association sponsors an annual general meeting that has an educational component. They have a regular newsletter that the department is pleased to co-sponsor this month.

They are also developing a web site. This web site will offer social workers the opportunity to get online to discuss issues and share ideas.

As part of Social Workers Week, I was pleased to join the celebration for Mary Beauchamp, who is a very committed

social worker. She was given the first honorary lifetime membership to the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada.

Mary began her social work career 34 years ago. This commitment is a statement of her dedication to the profession. Today, Mary provides her expertise as an adoptions consultant with the department. Much of her work is helping adults search for their biological parents and siblings. The rewards of this work are realized when there is a successful reunion of family members.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in an enthusiastic round of applause for Mary Beauchamp and all our social workers who are making a difference in our communities. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Minister's Statement 15-14(2): Success of the 2000 Arctic Winter Games

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I recently had the pleasure of representing the Government of the Northwest Territories at the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse along with my colleagues Premier Kakfwi, Minister Allen and MLAs Paul Delorey, David Krutko and Michael McLeod. The Arctic Winter Games provided us with an important opportunity to meet with and learn about our neighbours from around the circumpolar region. Every two years, the games help foster friendship and cooperation among all participating contingents.

The Northwest Territories contingent in Whitehorse included over 300 athletes, coaches, cultural delegates and mission staff. All members of Team NWT were excellent ambassadors for the Northwest Territories.

Team NWT turned in a strong performance and demonstrated outstanding commitment and sportsmanship. Northwest Territories athletes participated in 17 of the 19 sports that were part of the Arctic Winter Games this year. Our team brought home 42 gold, 29 silver and 37 bronze ulus. Our total of 108 ulus put us in second place overall, behind Team Alaska with 174 ulus.

But our success cannot be measured in ulus alone. I would like to congratulate all the members of Team NWT. They all showed great determination in their competitions and each athlete did their very best. We can be proud of the whole team.

I would also like to congratulate the parents, coaches and volunteers across the Northwest Territories. The dedicated support you provide to our young athletes is an important part of their success. Without your efforts, our athletes would not have the opportunities that they do to participate in events like the Arctic Winter Games.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share some of Team NWT's successes with my fellow Members today:

- Eleven year-old Jason Baxter of Inuvik won three medals in dog mushing,

including two gold and one silver. The silver ulus was in a team event and was shared with Jordee James-McQueen of Yellowknife;

- Our speed skating team won a total of 34 ulus, leading all other speed skating teams;
- Our wrestling team won 11 medals, second only to a powerful team from Alaska;
- Our hockey teams played in three gold medal games, bringing home silver in midget, bantam and peewee hockey;
- Our women's team also brought home the bronze in their tournament;
- Twelve year-old Janesta McLeod of Aklavik and ten year-old Jennifer Waugh of Yellowknife were the youngest team ever to win an ulus in badminton. They won bronze in the juvenile ladies doubles;
- As always, one of the most popular events was the Arctic sports and Dene games. Team NWT won a total of 23 ulus, including 11 gold, three silver and nine bronze.

We finished in second place, just behind Alaska in the overall medal count. This was a remarkable accomplishment when you consider that previous Northwest Territories teams always had good representation from the Eastern Arctic in the Arctic sports category.

During the opening ceremonies for the Dene games, I had the pleasure to introduce a new Dene games resource, called Dene Games: A Culture and Resource Manual. This manual describes the role of the traditional games in Dene culture and how the games are played. The resource is part of a traditional games series which includes an Arctic sports manual that was launched during the 1998 Arctic Winter Games.

Two new manuals on snowshoeing and Inuit wrestling are already in development. A number of partners have been involved in these projects, including the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, Aurora College, Sport North, The Mackenzie Regional Recreation Association and the Government of the Yukon. These resources have been well received by everybody who has seen them.

Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to participate in the Arctic Winter Games is an important experience for young athletes all across the Northwest Territories. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will continue to work with community governments, Sport North and other partner organizations, such as the Aboriginal Sport Circle, to improve opportunities for participation for all Northwest Territories athletes.

I would like to invite all Members to join me now in congratulating Team NWT. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Indeed, we have a lot to be proud of in our young athletes. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Minister's Statement 16-14(2): Minister Absent From the House

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members that the Honourable Jake Ootes will be absent from the House this week to attend the International Rough Diamonds Conference in Tel Aviv, Israel. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier Kakfwi. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Yellowknife Members' Constituency Meeting

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night, all of the Yellowknife Members had the privilege of hosting our first joint constituency meeting here in the Great Hall. It was very well attended. It was about a three-hour meeting. We must have had about 60 to 80 people in attendance and about 20 presenters. There was a wide variety of very important issues raised. I would just like to report to the House at this time on some of those issues, so we are all more aware.

I appreciate everyone who took time to attend, but especially those individuals who were there to address the Giant Mine pension issue. One individual, Mary Kosta, who I think we all know, now, has been on a hunger strike for three weeks in support of laid off miners who will soon have their pensions reduced by 25 percent. There were several very emotional appeals made for help. I think we can all realize that this is an emergency issue and action must be taken on compassionate grounds.

Several others raised concerns about changes to the Student Financial Assistance Act, Bill 4. Most of the concern focused around the impact on Metis and Inuvialuit students, and the change going from grants to remissible loans will have on their situation. Delays in passage of the bill were requested because there are more concerns that need to be addressed.

One of the most important concerns was that student input seems to be lacking. We have new legislation, but there is no new money. I think we need to talk to the students and see how they feel this will affect them.

There were also concerns raised over travel by Members. I think it was mentioned that it is very important for us to realize that we are travelling on public money, and we are accountable to the public when we return.

Roads were mentioned, specifically the road between Yellowknife and Rae, and an all-weather road to the Slave geological province. Money was mentioned, but I think the underlying factors were that we cannot put a price on safety. It is important to do something about this now.

One constituent mentioned the idea of possibly setting up a trustee for territorial pensions. He suggested this might help

people in the North have protection against similar situations as those experienced by the Giant Mine pensioners.

Devolution of resources from the federal government was also mentioned. When will we receive control of our resources? What will this do to our federal grant? Do we have a plan or a timeframe? These are all very real concerns that were raised, Mr. Speaker.

A bill of rights is also needed in the North, and we have mentioned this many times.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Bell, your time is up.

MR. BELL: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Yellowknife South is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Bell, you have unanimous consent.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were also concerns about layoffs in the public service. People fear government will reduce the public service due to our deficit, and they wanted these concerns allayed.

The sunset clause was once again raised. When and how will it be dealt with? We do not want to see more committee reviews.

There was also some concern regarding government contracts. Regulations need to be changed to protect northern business. We need to establish a formal policy. There is a feeling that there is too much left for interpretation at this point. There was also concern about where and how government contracts are advertised.

The Business Incentive Policy was also discussed. It needs a review. People wanted to know why there are southern firms and international companies receiving BIPs. The policy should be there to support independent northern businesses, not corporations.

It was also mentioned that we need to be more aware of social agencies at work in the North and in Yellowknife, specifically groups like the Salvation Army, the Women's Centre, and the YWCA. They need the support of their MLAs and the government to continue providing the services they are delivering. Community service groups and social agencies also wanted involvement during committee decision-making, instead of being advised after the fact.

We also discussed sole-sourcing of contracts. There was concern with businesses taking contracts funded by social agencies.

Affirmative action issues also came up. The concern is the Affirmative Action Policy may not be doing what it was initially set up to do. It needs a review. All Members were asked and gave their support for an Affirmative Action Policy, but we want to see one that works.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to attend the meeting and voice their concerns. I would especially like to commend those individuals who are committed to fighting for the Giant Mine pension plan, and let them know they have our

support as a House. Later in the week, we will be moving a motion to this end. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement On NWT Power Corporation Employee Contribution

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 1999, the 64 employees of the central region of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation achieved zero loss time due to industrial accidents. These are all of the employees in Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Rae-Edzo, Fort Resolution, Wha Ti, Rae Lakes and Lutsel K'e. This includes both management and employees. The Northwest Territories Power Corporation recognizes this considerable achievement with a \$10,000 bonus to the group of employees. The employees in turn gave this funding to the central region Joint Occupational Health And Safety Committee to distribute.

This committee addresses workplace health and safety issues, and tries to eliminate the risk inherent in the work situation. Apparently, various ideas were considered, including something for each employee. However, in the end the committee decided to make a contribution of the full amount to the Fort Smith Health Centre.

The presentation was made last week during the committee's March meeting in Fort Smith. I would like to acknowledge this very generous contribution in this House from the Northwest Territories Power Corporation central region employees. I know the health centre will put the funds to good use, as they intend to purchase a signovscope. On behalf of the Fort Smith residents, to the central region employees, thank you very much.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Member's Statement On Mackenzie Hotel Group Training Efforts

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the efforts of the Mackenzie Hotel Group in Inuvik. They just recently launched "A Fast Track to a Management" training program. They are looking for 25 people to enroll in a two-year Hospitality and Tourism Diploma Program. This program is being made possible through the commitment of the Mackenzie Hotel Group. The Mackenzie Hotel Group is working with the Aurora Campus and Red Deer College so that the participants can be prepared to take on the jobs after graduation.

The Mackenzie Hotel Group will guarantee jobs to participants who receive a 70 percent plus average. This is good news for the people of Inuvik and surrounding communities. Mr. Speaker, this is the spirit of entrepreneurship we have not seen for quite sometime in the region. During the 13th Assembly, it was said the government could no longer be the engine of the economy. But it was also stated that the government had to at least supply the fuel.

With that, I hope this government will provide some support to entrepreneurs like the Mackenzie Hotel Group, who have expended much in resources to date to develop the Fast Track Program.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the work of the Mackenzie Hotel Group for their effort and I hope that they indeed fill the 25 training positions. I believe they have filled ten of them to date. I would also like to send greetings back home to my wife and children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland, we always look forward to that. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Member's Statement On Reflections On 2000 Arctic Winter Games

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to reflect on the week of March 5th to the 11th and the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse, Yukon. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of attending and taking part in the games as the coach of the Northwest Territories Junior Women's Curling Team. Although our team schedule kept us very busy and allowed us very little time to take part in any of the other sports, I can safely say that we enjoyed the games very much.

Mr. Speaker, the more than 315 participants from the Northwest Territories should be congratulated, first for being such great ambassadors and, secondly, for bringing home some 108 ulus including 42 gold.

As a coach, I get a great deal of satisfaction watching young athletes achieve their personal best performance when everything is on the line. Throughout the week there were many great performances, such as the 11 year-old Jason Baxter from Inuvik, who won a silver and two gold ulus in dog mushing, the first ever gold for the Northwest Territories in that sport.

There are many other examples far too numerous to mention here today. However, there were other events of a less positive note and some of these I will address during question period. Mr. Speaker, I would like at this time to recognize all the athletes from Hay River, who participated in the 2000 Arctic Winter Games and I congratulate all the ulu winners in all the sports. I want to especially recognize the following athletes:

- Megan Crowley from Yellowknife;
- Ashley Hval, Fort Smith; and
- Dayna Haley and Katrina Delorey, both from Hay River.

These four young athletes made up the Northwest Territories junior women's curling team. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that they did not have the opportunity to curl together as a team prior to the games. However, they were able to pull it all together and bring home silver ulus, losing the final game to a stronger Alberta North team. However, Mr. Speaker, their silver ulu performance is not the reason for their special recognition here today. This team was able to overcome any personal differences they may have had, overcome two player injuries that occurred, as well as a few defeats along the way.

But more importantly, this team was able to seize the spirit of the games and as a result received the Fair Play Award for female curling. These girls were very happy to receive this award. As their coach, I was extremely proud of them. Fair play and good sportsmanship, Mr. Speaker, I believe is what the games are all about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Member's Statement On Recognition of Elimination of Racial Discrimination

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask all Members to pause for a moment today, March 21st, in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, discrimination refers to actions at the individual level which assert the natural superiority of race, gender, religion, ethnicity or culture over another. It also involves institutionalized discriminatory practices that protect and maintain the position of certain groups, and continue the inferior position of others.

The Northwest Territories is blessed with a diverse population made up of peoples of different history, culture, education, religions, languages, gender and lifestyles. And with these rich blessings also come immense challenges. As citizens of the Northwest Territories, we must ensure that our actions embrace, value and respect this diversity through our words, actions, customs and styles and attitudes.

As legislators of the Northwest Territories, it is our duty to remove structural and behavioural barriers which inhibit the full participation of all members of society in all aspects and at all levels through inclusive policies, programs and practices that are adaptive to the needs of our evolving society.

We must be diligent, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of the Northwest Territories policies such as affirmative action and the equality of men and women in the Northwest Territories are continuously monitored for proper application and effectiveness and, when necessary, amended to meet our common goals.

Discrimination takes many forms, Mr. Speaker, as do the steps needed to eradicate it. Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that together we can make a difference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Member's Statement On Congratulations to North Slave Athletes and Coaches

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the athletes and coaches from the North Slave who recently participated in the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse. I would like to send congratulations to:

- Freddie Tinquí from Rae Edzo, who earned a gold ulu in Dene games and who was acknowledged as the all-around individual in the open male category. As well, Freddie received a gold ulu in the snow snake competition, throwing the stick 35 feet farther

than anyone else. Freddie also earned a bronze ulu in the stick pull event with Fred Steinwand and joined two other Team NWT members to win a gold ulu in hand games, and a bronze medal in the pole push competition;

- On his own, Fred Steinwand earned a bronze in the finger pull event; and
- I would like to acknowledge Colinda Blondin, who earned a silver medal in wrestling.

Along with their coach, Mike Botermans, seven soccer players from Rae Edzo joined Team Northwest Territories and placed fourth in juvenile men's soccer. I would like to send congratulations to:

- Glenn Blondin;
- Tyron Fish;
- Melvin Lafferty;
- Jonathan Mackenzie-Zoe;
- Shane Mackenzie-Zoe;
- Cody Mantla; and
- Marvin Migwi.

Team Northwest Territories was well represented in women's volleyball. Along with their coach Sara Tkaczuk, Tracy Beaulieu, Wendy Mantla, Kerry Lee Rabesca, and Pamala Richardson of Rae Edzo teamed up with four Wha Ti women to participate in women's volleyball. The players from Wha Ti were Bernice Beaverho, Katrina Jeremick'ca, Christina Simpson and Tephania Wedawin.

Although not all the athletes that went to the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse received medals, each and every athlete that participated deserves recognition. I would like to acknowledge the fine job they did in representing not only the North Slave region, but the entire Western Arctic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Member's Statement On CBC Tribute to Shirley and Sharon Firth

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend, CBC television aired a documentary titled "Olympians". The athletes that were presented were Shirley and Sharon Firth. Shirley and Sharon are twin sisters from the Mackenzie Delta who are indeed unique Canadians. I felt that it was time to also pay honour to them in this House.

Shirley and Sharon are products of the Territorial Experimental Ski Training Program, more commonly known as the TEST program. This program began in 1965 under Father Monchet and coach Bjoyer Pettersen. The program produced many national level and several Olympic level athletes. The program also placed Inuvik on the map of the cross country skiing world.

Mr. Speaker, Sharon and Shirley are unique in that they have done what no other Canadian woman has done. In fact, they have done what no other Canadian aboriginal person has done. The Firth twins are the only Canadian women to have represented Canada at four Olympic Games. Together, the ladies have 48 Canadian championships.

These, Mr. Speaker, are only the triumphs that are recorded on paper. There are other achievements that can be attributed to these women that are not recorded on paper.

Mr. Speaker, the Firth sisters have given hope to many aboriginal youth in small communities throughout the Northwest Territories and Canada. They have served as role models to all Canadians. Sharon and Shirley have represented the Northwest Territories and Canada all over the world and are the subject of television documentaries, such as the one aired this weekend. Throughout all of this, they remain true and proud of their Loucheux roots and heritage, and their origins in the Mackenzie Delta.

Mr. Speaker; as an aboriginal person from the Mackenzie Delta, I wish to thank Shirley and Sharon Firth for the trail they have blazed for the people of the Northwest Territories and Canada. I want to thank them for being an example of what Northwest Territories youth can aspire to at the national and international scene. Lastly, I want to acknowledge them in...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Krutko, your time has expired.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Krutko, you have unanimous consent.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I want to thank them for being an example of what Northwest Territories youth can aspire, and at what lengths they can go to achieve national and international success. Lastly, I want to acknowledge them in the capacity that they have shown as role models to all Canadians.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the other Members to congratulate these two unique ladies for achieving what they have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Indeed, the Firth twins have been able representatives of the Northwest Territories for many years. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

Member's Statement On Beaufort Delta Leaders' Conference

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 7th through the 10th, I travelled up to Inuvik to attend the Beaufort Delta Leaders' Conference. It was nice to see the leadership working together on identifying solutions to regional problems. The first two days, the leaders participated in a self-government workshop. This workshop focused on identifying common issues and prioritizing these issues as a group. I truly believe that workshops of this type are extremely valuable and important as the Beaufort Delta prepares for self-government.

A representative from the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation also made a presentation on the hydro-carbon development in the region. This development is going to have a great impact on the region and provides us, the Government of the Northwest Territories, an excellent opportunity to work in partnership with the Inuvialuit to ensure that these resources are developed in a manner that ensures long-term local, regional and territorial benefits. Overall, Mr. Speaker, the conference was a success. I look forward to working with the Beaufort Delta Leadership to assist them in meeting their goals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Member's Statement On Yellowknife Members' Constituency Meeting

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I too would like to highlight the concerns raised last evening in the Great Hall at our constituency meeting, attended by six of the seven Yellowknife MLAs. Mr. Bell has already given us a very thorough review of a number of the points, but there were two or three that I would like to highlight.

Mary Kosta, in her 22nd day of a hunger strike who, along with the Canadian Autoworkers' Local, is working so hard on behalf of Giant Mine pensioners to secure a fair and just entitlement. Highlighting, in a very passionate way, the unfair treatment and deplorable position Giant Mine pensioners, widows, retirees and former employees are in, who have not received severance pay are in.

She has asked us to put forth a motion calling on the federal government to provide immediate relief of Giant Mine pensioners and laid off workers. I should add that many MLAs have written to federal ministers seeking an immediate remedy to this unjust treatment. In the longer term, this House, Mr. Speaker, needs to seek control of legislation which affects not only our resources, but our workers, so that pensioners of the future can also be assured fair and just treatment in an accountable system of government.

The need for a vision and a plan of where we want to go in this Assembly over the next five to 15 years was also raised in relation to devolution of programs and the transfer of authority and responsibility of resources from the federal government. Caucus continues to work on this vision. We must remember that it has to be inclusive of many to be successful. We have been preoccupied, Mr. Speaker, with economic, development and fiscal issues, but we were reminded last night that we also have an obligation and an expectation on the broadest possible scale, to develop a caring and fair-minded society.

We heard from representatives of the non-government organizations, Mr. Speaker. There is a heavy burden placed on the social safety net in Yellowknife as a result of sexual and spousal assaults, gender issues, lack of self-esteem, and many other social ills. We value the efforts and the energy of the people behind these community support group efforts, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to press for the kinds of things that they want to achieve.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Braden, your time has expired.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, that ends my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Member's Statement On Yellowknife Members' Constituency Meeting

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to speak about the meeting the Yellowknife Members held with our constituents last night. Previous speakers have addressed a range of issues. One issue I would like to concentrate on has to do with the Giant employees.

We heard many presentations about the Giant Mine pensioners, and particularly from Mary Kosta. The impact not only on these pensioners, but also on the widows and the widows-to-be is something I think we have to encourage the federal government to deal with very quickly. After all, they will soon suffer a drop of about 25 percent in their pensions as a result of the company having under-funded the pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, I think the way these employees were treated by their former employer is disgraceful. There is no severance pay. I think the federal government should be ashamed that their legislation allowed this to happen.

We have talked in this House a number of times about devolution. Mr. Speaker, I think it is time to talk about devolution for labour legislation as well. I think it is time that we took over labour legislation in the Northwest Territories.

This is not just because of this issue, but unfortunately relates back to the Giant Mine strike. I know I was tremendously frustrated in the days of that strike by the failure of the federal government to act. Northerners should be able to decide whether to prohibit replacement workers in our own legislation. We should not be stuck waiting for a federal Minister thousands of miles away to decide that it is indeed a crisis.

Northerners should have our own developed and designed in the North legislation protecting workers. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call on the government to move quickly to bring forward a legislative proposal on labour legislation. This should then go out for public discussion. Then I believe we should move to occupy the field of labour legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Steen.

ITEM 4: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

MR. STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three returns to oral questions.

Return to Question 19-14(2): Accident on Highway No. 3

On Wednesday February 23, 2000, the Member for Range Lake asked me if I knew the cause of a truck accident on Sunday, February 20, 2000, and whether it was attributable to the road conditions. The Member's question was very specific and called on me to make a judgment on the cause of the accident, which would have been speculation on my part.

The Department of Transportation monitors and keeps reports on the motor vehicle accidents that occur in the Northwest Territories, including municipalities, but it does not analyze or investigate accidents for the purpose of assigning a cause or

causes.

The Department of Transportation received a copy of the official accident report from the Rae-Edzo detachment of the RCMP on Monday, February 28, 2000. Without implying any criticism whatsoever of the RCMP, the department received the report a week after the accident took place and three working days after the Member asked me her question in the House.

The accident occurred on Sunday morning shortly after 10:00 a.m., and involved a B-train transport hauling diesel fuel towards Yellowknife, about 15 kilometres north of Boundary Creek on Highway No. 3.

The driver reported that as he entered a left curve in the highway, he met an oncoming northbound tanker. He steered a bit too far to the right and the tractor's right front wheel caught the right shoulder of the road. The driver lost control of the truck. It left the road and rolled over 270 degrees into the ditch. The driver sustained minor injuries that were attended to at Stanton Regional Hospital.

The road surface was clear and in good condition. There was some limitation in visibility due to light snowfall. Traffic signs were in place warning of the curve ahead and advising a speed of 70 kilometres per hour. This was the speed the driver reported he was travelling. The RCMP report there are no charges pending in the incident.

Mr. Speaker, I have a second return to an oral question asked by Mr. Nitah on February 25th, 2000, referencing improving Northwest Territories highways.

Return to Question 55-14(2): Improving Northwest Territories Highways

The Member for Tu Nedhe asked me if the Department of Transportation had looked at alternatives to calcium as a surfacing material on the existing unpaved roads in the Northwest Territories.

The best material for stabilizing the surface of gravel roads depends on several factors, such as the strength of the road grade, the type of material in the road grade, traffic volumes and the available funds. Most of our gravel highways were built many years ago, and lack the strength required to support a rigid topping, such as pavement or chipseal. The best traveling surface is obtained from a product that remains flexible, is resistant to traffic wear, lasts over a summer season and can be reworked with highway maintenance equipment.

Calcium chloride has the required properties and it can be delivered and placed on our highways at an economical cost. The product comes from wells near Slave Lake, Alberta. The delivered cost for calcium chloride is much lower than for other competing products.

The department has considered and used products other than calcium chloride for stabilizing gravel highway surfaces. It has, for example, tried oil based and lignosulfate-based stabilization products. So far, no product is available that compares in price and performance to calcium chloride. It remains the Department of Transportation's best option for stabilizing gravel surface roads.

Mr. Speaker, my final return to an oral question is a return to a question asked by Mr. Krutko, the Member for Mackenzie

Delta, referencing highway maintenance funding.

Return to Question 86-14(2): Highway Maintenance Funding

The Member for Mackenzie Delta asked me if the Department of Transportation kept a contingency fund in case of some extraordinary event that required the department to make an unexpected and large expenditure on repairs.

No, the Department of Transportation does not maintain a contingency fund. The department's annual budget and the purposes for which it is to be spent is approved by this Legislative Assembly. There is no line item in the department's budget labeled "contingency".

In the event of an extraordinary expenditure requirement, the department would first look to see if, or to what extent, it could manage the expenditure internally. If it could not manage the expenditure internally, the department would have to seek supplemental funding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 84-14(2): Accounting For Tangible Capital Assets

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a return to an oral question asked by Mr. Bell on February 29th, on accounting for tangible capital assets.

The government is planning on implementing the new approach to accounting for tangible capital assets in the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

A work plan has been developed which includes an initial inventory and valuation of capital assets to enable an estimate of the amortization expense to be included in the 2000-2001 main estimates. Although some delays have been encountered, we do expect that departments will have completed the initial inventory in time to implement the changes with the 2000-2001 main estimates.

The amortization expense included in the main estimates will be our best estimate based on information currently available. We will be working with departments to refine the valuation and amortization of capital assets.

We may encounter a number of issues related to the valuation or title of assets. These issues will need to be clarified and corrected prior to finalizing the reporting of the tangible capital assets in the 2000-2001 public accounts. However, we still anticipate being able to complete the exercise during the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Actual amortization expenses for the 2000-2001 fiscal year will vary from the amount included in the main estimates as we progress in resolving valuation and title issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Allen.

Return to Question 85-14(2): Update on Power Rate Review

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a return to an oral question asked by Mr. Miltenberger on February 29th, 2000, on the update on the power rate review.

There are no legislative changes proposed at present. The Public Utilities Board requested proposals from interested parties with respect to a strategic and operational review of its operations.

The review may lead to legislative changes. Due to concerns raised by an unsuccessful proponent in the request for proposals, the Public Utilities Board withdrew the contract.

The Public Utilities Board is considering revisions to the request for proposals and expects to reissue the request for proposals later this year, probably in June, 2000. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honour to recognize the chief from Aklavik, Mr. Charlie Furlong.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Welcome to the gallery, Mr. Furlong. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize two former Hay Riverites, Pat Thomas and Georgina Rowe.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Antoine.

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the leader from the North, chief Charles Furlong from Aklavik.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Welcome, Mr. Furlong. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Ed Jeske, who is a former teacher from Sir John Franklin High School, who also taught me how to drive about 20 years ago.

-- Laughter

Welcome, Mr. Jeske.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Jeske also taught me how to drive some 40 years ago. Item 5, recognition of visitors

in the gallery. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a very special visitor in the gallery, Mrs. Whitford.

-- Applause

To everyone else who has taken this opportunity to visit us, welcome to the Legislative Assembly. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 92-14(2): Concerns With Substandard Eye Wear

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is addressed to the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services. Mr. Speaker, I was approached by a constituent of mine who is disabled, and as well, the recipient of a new pair of glasses. He had received a pair of glasses from the Stanton eye team.

Mr. Speaker, when he showed me the glasses, I can only say that I was shocked by the quality. The edges of the glass were all chipped. As well, there were fractures along the edges. These were brand new glasses.

I want to thank the Minister for her assistance in dealing with this particular constituent. But I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that this may be indicative of greater quality control problems and service, hopefully not just to the constituency of Fort Smith or the disabled, but a concern across the North.

I would like to ask the Minister if she is going to check on this to ensure there is a radical standard of quality for all recipients of this service. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Return to Question 92-14(2): Concerns With Substandard Eye Wear

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very much aware of the issue the Member raises in the House today and in the form of this question.

The constituent he spoke of was prescribed eyeglasses, which were ordered through the Stanton eye team. They came to him through the Family Vision Centre. When they arrived, they were damaged, and the constituent rightly passed these on to his MLA who passed them on to me.

I had them on my desk in my office. I saw first hand the condition of the eyeglasses. I concur with the Member that there was something seriously wrong with the workmanship in these glasses.

I hope that this is an isolated incident. However, if anyone else has similar issues where constituents have received eyeglasses which were not up to normal standards, I would be pleased to hear about it and would undertake to deal with the company on this.

I hope this is an isolated incident. I understand the constituent in question will have new glasses by the end of this month. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Supplementary Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary to Question 92-14(2): Concerns With Substandard Eye Wear

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I share the Minister's hope that this is an isolated example or incident, I would like to ask the Minister if she would commit to making sure, through her department, that the service providers are notified about the expectation of adequate service to all the people they serve. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 92-14(2): Concerns With Substandard Eye Wear

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe this was an isolated and unfortunate incident. If it became apparent that there were numerous cases of this, I would undertake to communicate with the providers of the eyeglasses.

I think there is a process that has been followed. It was an unsatisfactory purchase. The merchandise has been returned. It will be replaced. If there appears to be a broader issue and a broader problem, it may require direct communication with the supplier in the future. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary to Question 92-14(2): Concerns With Substandard Eye Wear

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister, hopefully in the not too distant future, will be coming to Fort Smith. I would ask that she add this issue to her briefing book. I am sure it will come up from the particular constituents involved. Once the word is out of the Minister's concern, I am sure others will be there with their concerns as well, not only about eyeglasses, but a whole myriad of related health issues. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. There was a question in there as to whether or not the Minister would add that to her briefing book, but it was more of a comment.

Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Question 93-14(2): Update on Ottawa Meetings

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we have been busy preparing budgets for the upcoming fiscal year, I know the finance Minister has travelled down to Ottawa to speak to Ministers in Ottawa regarding our fiscal situation. I would like the Minister to update this house as to whether or not his discussions in Ottawa were successful in getting more dollars for the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 93-14(2): Update on Ottawa Meetings

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The visit to Ottawa and the meeting with Finance Minister Martin was successful as a first step towards getting more money for the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Martin listened very well and carefully, and I think with some enthusiasm, to our description of the resources and the resource potential we have in the North.

As well, he listened very carefully to our concerns regarding the performance of the formula. I think it was a good first step, with the intention that we will be following up. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary to Question 93-14(2): Update on Ottawa Meetings

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister inform us what the next steps will be? Will they be in time to help us out with our present budget? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 93-14(2): Update on Ottawa Meetings

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance has committed to having a senior member of his staff, a member responsible for provincial-federal, territorial-federal fiscal relationships, come to Yellowknife to sit down with our finance people and go through the formula and our reasons why we feel it is not working well. We intend to have that done next week.

As well, we have made a commitment to provide the federal Minister of Finance and other Ministers with more information on our resource development potential. We hope to have a draft of the economic strategy, that is a work of a steering committee representing a lot of people, in his hands within the next two or three weeks. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary to Question 93-14(2): Update on Ottawa Meetings

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister spoke of the economic strategy that he will hopefully be able to present to the Ministers in Ottawa. Can the Minister inform us that this strategy will be shared with this Assembly as well, as we prepare to provide information to Ottawa? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 93-14(2): Update on Ottawa Meetings

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the economic development strategy is really a strategy that is being developed through the direction and advice of the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. I think that

it is a question that might be referred to the Minister there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary to Question 93-14(2): Update on Ottawa Meetings

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regarding the finances and potential debt wall that is sitting out there for us in the near future, is this Minister confident the meeting that will take place will positively impact our bottom line so we do not hit that debt wall? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 93-14(2): Update on Ottawa Meetings

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am optimistic that our discussions will be fruitful for us. I cannot say with any certainty that we will be successful in our negotiations regarding the financing formula. The federal Minister of Finance was very clear with us that it would be a tough sell and all we can do is do our best at it. In any case, I can assure the Member I am very confident we are not going to hit our borrowing limit. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 94-14(2): Highway No. 3 Safety Concerns

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, the Honourable Mr. Steen.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday a constituent of mine was almost killed on Highway No. 3 while driving home. That is the road between Rae and Yellowknife. A van collided with his truck. The van was going northbound. The accident occurred because the visibility was very poor, since the road was not ploughed after the snowfall on Thursday.

On March 10th, I sent a letter to the Minister sharing my constituents' concern about the lack of maintenance on Highway No. 3. As I pointed out in the letter, there were already two accidents on the road in February. Now there has been a third. I also know of a few other single vehicle accidents. My constituents are concerned about the safety of the road.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister why is the department not maintaining this road? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 94-14(2): Highway No. 3 Safety Concerns

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not aware that the department is not maintaining the road. I believe the department has a maintenance schedule for all aspects of the

highway, in particular Highway No. 3, which is heavily impacted with truck traffic.

I could take the question to the department and get a response to the Member to see exactly what our maintenance schedule is on the road. I believe the department does perform what they believe is sufficient maintenance on that particular stretch of highway. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 94-14(2): Highway No. 3 Safety Concerns

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to ask the Minister, what priority is this road to the Department of Transportation compared to that of the Ingraham Trail, or the Dettah road to the Yellowknife beat?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 94-14(2): Highway No. 3 Safety Concerns

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Highway No. 3 has a high priority, probably the highest priority of the highways as far as the department is concerned, which is relative to the amount of traffic on this particular stretch of highway.

Again, to be more specific, I will ask the department to respond in writing to the Member and identify what the priority rating of that highway is. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Question 95-14(2): Arctic Winter Games Concerns

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I stated in my opening remarks, there were some aspects of the Arctic Winter Games that did not shine such a positive light on the games, as did the statements that were made in this House so far. I would like to address a few of them with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

There has been concern in the House that we look at the Arctic Winter Games and the size they are getting to be and the problems associated with organizing the games.

I think we have reached a point with the Arctic Winter Games where there are very few centres that are capable of hosting the games. I would suspect Yellowknife would be a hard stretch to host the games and cover all the aspects, as was Whitehorse.

When we hear stories like two coaches, one from Yellowknife, Natasha McGage and Jack Keith from Hay River, who had their clothing stolen as well as wallets, personal effects and money simply because they did not have any security on duty at that time.

You hear stories about the games having a \$100,000 budget for food and by midweek they were already \$5,000 over budget. It really raises some questions as to the size of the

games. I suppose we all heard about the sexual charges that were laid against a security guard at the games in Whitehorse.

There were a number of concerns within organizational meetings that the international committee, that sets most of the rules for the games, is very close to listening to remarks from other bodies as far as setting up the games.

I was wondering if the Minister could tell me what he sees as the Municipal and Community Affairs role in setting rules and regulations and organizational procedure for the games? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Return to Question 95-14(2): Arctic Winter Games Concerns

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse is done and over with. I think we successfully concluded it. There have been some problems in the actual administration and running of the games. There were some flaws in it. I would like to examine that as the Minister responsible for Sports and Recreation for the Northwest Territories.

In my statement, I mentioned what we would like to do in Municipal and Community Affairs with regards to sports and recreation is take a close look at it and work with the other sports participants to see how we could improve on what we have.

Now that this Arctic Winter Games is over, the next Arctic Winter Games will be two years from now. We already talked to the deputy minister as to how we could analyze what we have to date. Listening to different inputs from this House, perhaps we could look at the games and analyze sports and recreation as a whole in the North.

At this point in time, this is where we are. We are in the discussion stage. We know there are concerns out there, and we would like to address them. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Antoine. Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary to Question 95-14(2): Arctic Winter Games Concerns

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The sexual charges that I mentioned, I consider them to be very serious. Although when I heard them on the radio, they were not a surprise to me.

I would like to mention the situation the junior girls curling team was put in the venue in Whitehorse. They were put in a school where it was an all female venue. They were in with female hockey players and female curlers. The security staff that was on duty in that school was all male.

To make the situation worse, my wife was the chaperone of our team and was very uncomfortable with the situation there. When any of the girls wanted to go to the washroom or the showers, they had to walk directly by the security desk at the

front of the school. Having all male staff made for an uncomfortable situation .

Additionally, if I wanted to check with my team, I had to check with the desk. They would not let me pass that because it was all female. Yet the male guard that was down hall would walk right into the classrooms to check with somebody. It created a very uncomfortable situation.

I would like confirmation from the Minister that he will address that particular situation and look into how they could better that situation.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Members are reminded to keep the preamble to the first part of the question, and refrain from too long of a preamble in the subsequent supplementary questions. The Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 95-14(2): Arctic Winter Games Concerns

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have mission staff for the Northwest Territories team that were involved in helping our athletes in Whitehorse. I will check with them. We have representatives that sit on the Arctic Winter Games International Committee. I will also check with them and relay these concerns to them. We will get to the bottom of this and make sure this situation no longer exists with any other participation of our athletes in the future. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary to Question 95-14(2): Arctic Winter Games Concerns

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The next Arctic Winter Games are scheduled to go in Nunavut and Greenland. There is already talk about dropping some sports from the games because they are unable to host them. One of the sports that is being considered to be dropped from the venue is the biathlon. The biathlon has been involved in the sports since 1974. It is a sport that has the potential to allow some of our smaller communities to participate.

I was wondering if the Minister could inform us if he indeed knows that this sport is being eliminated from the Arctic Winter Games?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The Minister responsible for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 95-14(2): Arctic Winter Games Concerns

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I attended a meeting on Monday with the Arctic Winter Games International Committee. The two host communities of Greenland and Nunavut raised the issue that they are pretty small and they may not be able to accommodate certain sports. One of them is the biathlon. Their argument is they do not have the facilities or the know how for hosting the biathlon. This meeting was the first time I had heard about it as the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

In the course of the meeting, I understand it will not be until June or July before things get finalized in this area. We may have a chance to try and convince them to include the biathlon in the next games.

I did go to the biathlon site in Whitehorse and I have seen the facility that is required. I do not think it would be that much more to have this type of facility in either Iqaluit or Nuuk. It is really up to the host communities to tell us what they are capable of providing.

The other sports they were looking at was the ice sports. As you know, they had three ice surfaces in Whitehorse, yet they still had to go an hour by bus to Haines Junction for another arena over there. They were able to accommodate all of the ice sports there.

The way the division of the sports is going to be in the next two years from now, from what I understand between Nuuk and Iqaluit, is that the ice sports will be in Iqaluit. They only have one ice surface. They were looking at how we would deal with it. During the meeting, we suggested that perhaps an hour on a bus is about the same as an hour on the plane and that is the way that transportation gets done in the North. Why do they not look at Kimmirut or Pangnirtung or some of the other small communities close to Iqaluit to do the ice sports?

Some of the comments from other participants were that the Arctic Winter Games are there to see how other people live. There are athletes from the bigger centres that will have a good opportunity to go into the smaller communities to see how other people live. I think the ice sports are going to be in if they use the outlying communities around Iqaluit to accommodate them. That was my understanding of the meeting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Antoine. Final supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary to Question 95-14(2): Arctic Winter Games Concerns

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister partially answered my question, but I think we have to look at who is going to be hosting the games. Splitting the games up the way they are for the next games, it may open up an avenue where smaller communities such as Hay River, Fort Smith and...

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me. Mr. Delorey, the supplementary should just be a question. Please go right to the question.

MR. DELOREY: Would the Minister consider looking at that type of proposal for the games?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 95-14(2): Arctic Winter Games Concerns

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you. I think by splitting up the games two years from now, it does open the avenue for splitting up the games, as the Member was saying in his preamble. We will probably look at it.

Just for your information, there is already a lobby for four years from now for it to be in northern Alberta. That is still some ways down the line, but there is still time to get into that.

Yes to the question that smaller communities may have the opportunity with this precedence in Iqaluit and Nuuk of splitting up the games. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Question 96-14(2): Aklavik ATV Trail Construction

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen, regarding the Aklavik trail they have been working on for a number of years to the mountains. His predecessor, Mr. Antoine, made a commitment to the people of Aklavik that they will continue to work on the strategy to someday have a road from Aklavik to the Dempster Highway.

This was one of the methods of getting there. Whether it takes us ten years or 20 years, we are going to get there someday. This project was supposed to be the kick start of a project that would be ongoing. But as I see now, through the interim appropriation and commitments from this government...I would like to ask the Minister how committed is his department to ensuring this project continues?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 96-14(2): Aklavik ATV Trail Construction

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have two different projects here for Aklavik. One of the projects is an ATV trail to the mountains from Aklavik. I understand there was an original cost of \$99,000. The department is still working with the community to put this particular trail in place. There is no change in the plans to my knowledge. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 96-14(2): Aklavik ATV Trail Construction

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is nice to hear the Minister say that he is committed. But I would like to know from the Minister that when he mentions commitment, does he mean dollars? And to what extent will this government commit dollars to this project?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Minister Steen.

Further Return to Question 96-14(2): Aklavik ATV Trail Construction

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned there are actually two different projects. One would be within the larger project. The larger project is the road from Aklavik to the Dempster Highway, and the price tag on that is \$100 million. The community did discuss it with the department. There has

been no thought to take it anywhere from there because of the price tag. The department also has no funding or mandate to build new roads.

It is the understanding of the policy department that the federal government has the responsibility for new roads. However, we have been addressing a portion of that highway with the community, which at the present time we have been funding as an access road program. On an ongoing basis, we have been identifying \$50,000 a year to that particular project in Aklavik.

At this point in time, there were no plans to change that. There is still a plan to work for the community on having that portion of the road pummeled on a regular basis.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 96-14(2): Aklavik ATV Trail Construction

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to the commitment from the Minister, is he willing to speed up the process or put more funding into it because of the importance of it, especially for the people of Aklavik?

The trail they are looking at also serves as the trail to the only gravel source they have in Aklavik, which is within the Richardson Mountains. I would like to ask the Minister if he would consider looking at advancing the project and putting more money into it now so we could speed up the process, similar to what they are doing on Highway No. 3.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 96-14(2): Aklavik ATV Trail Construction

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department could sit down with the community and again come up with an updated plan for that particular road. However, any reference to particular funding at this point in time...you will have to keep in mind that some of these projects are in the interim appropriations bill and it would be through that process that these type of projects would be addressed for highway funding for this year, and future years as well.

I would just like to say that we could sit down with the community and re-evaluate the plan. However, to try and suggest to do more funding would be subject to the approval of this Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 96-14(2): Aklavik ATV Trail Construction

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if this was in the interim appropriation, I would not be standing here today. It is not. That is why I am up here. I believe this government has already made a commitment to this specific project. I would like to have some assurances from this government that it will continue on. This government has to realize these socio-economic, small lumps of funds such as \$50,000, can go a long way to offset our socio-economic

problems in our isolated communities. I would like to ask the Minister, is he committed to ensuring this project will be in the interim appropriation?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 96-14(2): Aklavik ATV Trail Construction

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak towards the interim appropriations bill at this point. However, I would like to ensure the Member that as this was a multi-year project and there was funding identified specifically per year, there is no department plan to change that multi-year project. It is still going to go ahead as far as this department is concerned. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

Question 97-14(2): Federal Support for Pension Liability

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Finance. We have heard that as the Government of the Northwest Territories takes over the full cost of the superannuation pension plan, it will leave us with a \$13 million shortfall.

In committee briefings, the Minister let us know we were certainly covered by the federal government for these additional costs for this year, but we were uncertain about future years. I am wondering if the Minister can give me some clarification as to how long the feds have agreed to pick up the extra cost of us taking over this plan? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 97-14(2): Federal Support for Pension Liability

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to advise the Member that last Friday, I received a letter from Minister Paul Martin confirming the federal government will continue to pick up the shortfall for the life of this formula arrangement, April 20, 2004. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 98-14(2): Biathlon Removal from Arctic Winter Games

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is addressed to the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, regarding the Arctic Winter Games. Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues, I share a concern about the current state, structure, size, costs and impacts on community sports the Arctic Winter Games has.

However, my question is specifically in regards to the Arctic Winter Games two years out. I have been contacted by members of the biathlon team, the coach in particular. A team, I might add, Mr. Speaker, that came home draped in gold. They were very successful in all of their sports. Apparently, they have already been told that there has been a decision made

and that the biathlon has been removed from the next Arctic Winter Games.

This has caused them great concern, and it is of great concern to myself as well. This is truly a northern sport, as well as a sport that small communities can take active and full participation in. I would like to ask the Minister if he is aware of this decision. Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Return to Question 98-14(2): Biathlon Removal from Arctic Winter Games

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you. It is my understanding that the Arctic Winter Games International Committee had a meeting there and deleting the biathlon was discussed. My understanding was they were going to go ahead and not include the biathlon at the next Arctic Winter Games. However, I understand there might still be a possibility of trying to do something about it. I think there is some time there to see whether there is something that we can do about the biathlon.

If they are not going to have a biathlon event at the next Arctic Winter Games, my suggestion is that we have to do something for the biathlon athletes. I agree with Members in the House that there are many athletes in the Northwest Territories that participate in this event. By not including it in the next Arctic Winter Games, it would be a real blow to this event. We need to do something about it.

There still might be an opportunity to try to convince them to do something about it. But if a decision has been made and if it is firm, then I have to find out about it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary to Question 98-14(2): Biathlon Removal from Arctic Winter Games

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is a charter member of the Arctic Winter Games. I just want to reiterate the fact that the biathlon sport is fundamental to the North. It is a truly Northern sport. As a charter member, I would ask the Minister to aggressively and quickly pursue this issue before lines in the sand are drawn that cannot be erased.

I would ask the Minister to take every step possible to work with the biathlon sport in the Northwest Territories, and I am sure from Alaska and the Yukon as well, to maintain this important, relevant sport. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to 98-14(2): Biathlon Removal from Arctic Winter Games

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will do that. I will quickly and aggressively pursue this request of including the biathlon events in the next Arctic Winter Games. Hopefully, the decision has not been set in stone, and I

will be able to have some influence in trying to change some of the minds that make these decisions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary to Question 98-14(2): Biathlon Removal from Arctic Winter Games

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for his response. I would also ask the Minister to instruct his officials to get in touch with the biathlon coaches, especially since they have already offered their expertise. I think they have been talking to their colleagues in the Yukon and Alaska to bring their expertise to bare and assist Greenland to set up to host the biathlon sport. Would the Minister consider having his officials become involved with the biathlon people at the practical working level to see if we can move this along? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 98-14(2): Biathlon Removal from Arctic Winter Games

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will do that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Question 99-14(2): NWT Labour Legislation

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this ties into my Member's statement earlier today. I am not sure if the question is directed to the Premier, because it involves asking the government to take action, or if it should be directed to the Minister of Justice, who may be responsible for the legislation.

Given our history of frustration with labour law and the need for a made in the North solution, will this government commit to bring forward, for public discussion, a legislative proposal that would see our government occupying the field with labour legislation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Member to repeat the question. We did not catch what legislation he was referring to.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Dent, would you be so kind as to repeat the question please?

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given our history of frustration with labour law and the need for a made in the North solution, will this government commit to bring forward for public discussion, a legislative proposal that would see our government occupying the field with labour legislation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The question is directed to the Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Return to Question 99-14(2): NWT Labour Legislation

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will take the question as notice and consider the issue the Member raised. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier Kakfwi. The question has been taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 8: RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Speaker, a provisional return to written question 1-14(2) asked by Mr. Miltenberger to the Premier concerning Nunavut contracts.

Return to Written Question 1-14(2): Nunavut Contracts

This is a provisional return, made under the rules to written questions, to Written Question 1-14(2), Nunavut Contracts.

The service agreements between the Government of Nunavut and the GNWT had been consolidated by the former division secretariat.

In response to the question asked by Mr. Miltenberger, the Department of the Executive Is coordinating a review by all GNWT departments, boards, and agencies to consolidate the most current information. Given the number of contracts held by some departments and the various stages of re-negotiation, the updating of this information has taken more time than originally estimated.

It is anticipated that a full response can be made to this question by March 27, 2000.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): A return to written question 2-14(2) asked by Mr. Miltenberger to the Premier concerning energy costs.

Return to Written Question 2-14(2): Energy Costs

The Member for Thebacha requested the total cost incurred in fiscal years 1997-98, 1998-99 and 1999-00 by all departments, boards and agencies, including housing authorities, education boards and health and social service boards, for the purchase of fuel, electricity and other energy.

I have provided to Members a breakdown of estimated expenditures for 1998-99 only. The expenditures total \$33,043,970. It is expected that expenditures for 1997-98 and 1999-00 are comparable, although some variations may occur as a result of changes in asset inventories, price changes, weather conditions and energy management initiatives.

Purchasing, payment and accounting for energy and other utilities are the responsibility of individual departments, boards and agencies. Expenditure records are not maintained centrally. Precise numbers for each year and all agencies would require considerable resources to assemble.

The listing is based on actual expenditures recorded in the government's Financial Information System, and budget or formula information for those boards and agencies that do not use the Financial Information System. The figures in the table may not capture all costs since the government pays for some energy and utilities indirectly through contracts and leases.

Tax-based communities are block funded and are also not included in the table.

The government also subsidizes fuel and water/sewer services. Consequently, these figures do not reflect the full cost of providing the services.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Return to Written Question 3-14(2) asked by Mr. Miltenberger to the Minister of Public Works and Services concerning capital costs.

Return to Written Question 3-14(2): Capital Costs

The Member for Thebacha requested that the Minister of Public Works and Services identify all capital projects over \$5,000 managed by the Department of Public Works and Services on behalf of the government in fiscal years 1997-98, 1998-99, and 1999-00 to date. For each of the contracts, the Member requested the client department, initial project estimate budget, actual costs to date, projected additional costs to complete the project and the name of the primary contractor.

A copy of the 1997-98 Contract Report, the 1998-99 Contract Report and year-to-date listing of contracts for 1999-00 have been provided to the Member separately. The 1998-99 and 1999-00 reports identify the community, the project name, the month and year of award, the type of contract, the contractor to whom the contract was awarded, the local, northern or southern status of the contractor, the contract value at time of award, the planned year of completion, the type of tender or award, and the BIP status of the contractor. The information in the 1997-98 contract report is similar.

Information on cost estimates, project budgets and project costs is contained within project files and main estimate documents, which must be individually researched. Since it would be prohibitively expensive to research over 900 projects covered by the question, the department has limited the collection of budget and cost information to projects valued at over \$1 million.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Return to Written Question 4-14(2) asked by Mr. Miltenberger to the Minister of Health and Social Services, concerning nurses' supplements.

Return to Written Question 4-14(2): Nurses' Supplements

The two-year temporary market supplement for nurses has two components: a recruitment portion and a retention portion. It also includes funding for three nurse educator consultants at the Health and Social Services board level to provide education, mentoring and orientation to nurses. The three positions are placed at the Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Board, the Dogrib Community Services Board and the Deh Cho Health and Social Services Board, but also provide services to the other boards.

As of December 31, 1999, \$946,989 has been disbursed to 269 nurses as follows:

Inuvik Regional HSS Board	\$248,250 to 78 nurses
Dogrib Community Services Board	\$22,500 to 7 nurses
Deh Cho HSS Board	\$42,000 to 11 nurses

Lutsel K'e HSS Board	\$4,500 to 2 nurses
Deninu HSS Board	\$10,000 to 2 nurses
Fort Smith HSS Board	\$47,800 to 11 nurses
Hay River Community Health Board	\$85,800 to 23 nurses
Stanton Regional Health Board	\$425,506 to 116 nurses
Yellowknife HSS Board	\$60,027 to 19 nurses

A total amount of \$405,000 was budgeted for the employment and travel of the three nurse education consultants. These positions have only been filled recently and therefore no expenditures can be submitted at this point.

The remaining funds, \$1.65 million, of the temporary market supplement will be used in the coming fiscal year.

The department and boards have not, and will not, retain any of the funding for administration or other uses during the two-year funding for the temporary market supplement.

Regarding the turnover of nurses, the department has data available for two years, 1998 and 1999. The turnover for each board is as follows:

Inuvik Regional HSS Board	45.6% in 1998 and 58.8% in 1999
Dogrib Community Services Board	35.7% in 1998 and 35.7% in 1999
Deh Cho HSS Board	16.7% in 1998 and 33.8% in 1999
Lutsel K'e HSS Board	100% in 1998 and 200% in 1999
Deninu HSS Board	50.0% in 1998 and 0% in 1999
Fort Smith HSS Board	40.0% in 1998 and 33.3% in 1999
Hay River Community Health Board	22.2% in 1998 and 16.7% in 1999
Stanton Regional Health Board	20.2% in 1998 and 28.3% in 1999
Yellowknife HSS Board	0% in each year

In reviewing these numbers, it is important to note that the two boards with the highest turnover, Lutsel K'e and Deninu, each only have two nursing positions.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Return to Written Question 6-14(2) asked by Mr. Miltenberger to the Minister of Transportation.

Return to Written Question 6-14(2): Capital Project Costs

On February 28, 2000, the Member for Thebacha submitted a

written question asking me to give the initial project estimate, actual costs to date, projected costs to completion and the primary contractor for all of the Department of Transportation's capital projects over \$5,000 for the fiscal years 1997-98, 1998-99 and 1999-2000 to date.

Although the Member's written question might seem clear and direct enough, in actual fact, the answer to the question is much more complicated than it appears.

The total cost of a capital project includes the department's in-house direct expenditures, plus a series of separately tendered contracts for the consulting, design, material and equipment supply and construction phases of the project. Each of these contracts has its own estimated and award amounts. From initial planning and design to final construction and warranty work, capital projects routinely span several fiscal years from start to finish.

I have provided the Member with a summary of 16 capital projects, valued at more than \$500,000, that the Department of Transportation delivered during the three specified fiscal years.

Thirteen departmental staff were involved in compiling the data for this summary for an estimated total of 60 person-hours or eight person-days. Compiling the data for all capital expenditures greater than \$5,000 over the period of three fiscal years would have required a formidable and lengthy deployment of departmental resources.

Under separate cover, the department will provide the Member with its annual Contract Report for the three fiscal years 1997-98, 1999-99 and 1999-2000 to date.

If the Member wishes to inquire about specific capital projects, I will be pleased to answer them.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): A provisional return to Written Question 7-14(2) asked by Mr. Miltenberger to the Minister of Health and Social Services on board funding.

Return to Written Question 7-14(2): Health and Social Services Board Funding

On February 28, 2000, the Member for Thebacha, in Written Question 7-14(2), asked a series of questions regarding board funding. Because of the amount and detail of information requested, the department is still conducting the analysis for which we will require an additional two weeks. The information will be available by April 3, 2000.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Return to Written Question 8-14(2) asked by Mr. Krutko to the Minister of Health and Social Services concerning THMs in Fort McPherson's drinking water.

Return to Written Question 8-14(2): THMs in Fort McPherson Drinking Water

I am pleased to respond to questions regarding trihalomethanes (THMs) in Fort McPherson's drinking water.

1. Availability of necessary preventative technologies for early detection of cancers

Screening against cancer is a core program of the Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Board. All NWT residents

have access to necessary preventative technologies for the early detection of cancers.

In Fort McPherson, well woman and well man clinics are held weekly to enable people to come for regular check-ups. In addition, the community health representative calls people on their birthday to come in for a check-up. If any problem at all is identified, the nurse offers to do a clinical examination or refer the person to the doctor, who visits monthly, if this could help them feel more comfortable. If a problem is identified in the nurse's examination, the patient will be referred to the doctor or sent to Inuvik for further investigation.

Every effort is made to ensure that opportunities are available to residents to help them monitor their health.

2. Provide residents with guidelines for effective use of BRITA water filters

Environmental Health staff of the Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Board prepared guidelines for home treatment of drinking water, including the use of BRITA water filters. These guidelines were provided to all residents who were issued a BRITA water filter by the hamlet office. In addition, the BRITA filter system and replacement filters come with instructions on the effective use of this particular filter system.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 13: TABBING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 25-14(2): Letter From the Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter to myself from the acting conflict of interest commissioner regarding an interpretation of Section 79 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Bell.

Tabled Document 26-14(2): Letter From the Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter to myself from the acting conflict of interest commissioner regarding an interpretation of Section 79 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 13, tabling of documents, Mr. Roland.

Tabled Document 27-14(2): CBC Radio Transcripts of Premier Kakfwi's Comments Dated March 21, 2000

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a document that is the transcript of an interview with the Premier, Mr. Kakfwi, on his comments of his recent trip to Ottawa. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister Handley.

ITEM 15: NOTICES OF MOTION FOR THE FIRST READING OF BILLS

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three notices of motion for first readings of bills.

Bill 6: Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 23, 2000, I will move that Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 7: An Act To Amend The Workers' Compensation Act

Mr. Speaker I give notice that on Thursday, March 23, 2000, I will move that Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 8: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 1999-2000

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 23, 2000, I will move that Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4 1999-2000, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you indeed, Minister Handley. Item 15, Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Minister Handley.

ITEM 17: FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 6: Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to proceed with first reading of Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with first reading of Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may continue, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001 be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried. Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001 has had first reading. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. The chair recognizes Minister Handley.

ITEM 18: SECOND READING OF BILLS

Bill 6: Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes that Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001 be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill authorizes the Government of the Northwest Territories to make interim appropriations for the 2000-2001 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The motion is in order. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Thank you. Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001, has had second reading. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to committee of the whole for today. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 11, reports of standing and special committees.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Dent is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 11. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Dent, you may proceed.

REVERT TO ITEM 11: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee Report 2-14(2): Review of the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, honourable colleagues. Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has reviewed the draft 2000-2001 interim appropriation and has prepared a report on this review. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that the report be received by the Assembly and referred to committee of the whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. The chair recognizes Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I request unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 2-14(2) moved into committee of the whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 2-14(2) moved into committee of the whole for today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee report 2-14(2) has been moved to committee of the whole for today. We are still on item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Mr. Roland.

Committee Report 3-14(2): Review of the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development has reviewed the draft 2000-2001 interim appropriation and has prepared a report on this review. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that the report be received by the Assembly and referred to the committee of the whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All

those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 3-14(2) moved into committee of the whole for today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4), and have Committee Report 3-14(2) moved into committee of the whole for today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee report 3-14(2) is moved to the committee of the whole for today. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Mr. Miltenberger.

Committee Report 4-14(2): Review of the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Social Programs has reviewed the draft 2000-2001 interim appropriation and has prepared a report on this review. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for North Slave, that the report be received by the Assembly and referred to committee of the whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Mr. Miltenberger. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Mr. Miltenberger

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 4-14(2) moved into committee of the whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Mr. Miltenberger. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 4-14(2) moved into committee of the whole for today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee Report 4-14(2) is moved into committee of the whole for today. Thank you.

Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters. Minister's Statement 1-14(2), Sessional Statement; Tabled Document 4-14(2) "Our Community, Our Decisions, Let's Get On With It, Final Report of the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services"; Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001; Committee Report 2-14(2), Accountability and Oversight on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation; Committee Report 3-14(2), Governance and Economic Development on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation; and Committee Report 4-14(2), Social Programs on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation. with Mr. Krutko in the Chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We have a number of items to deal with in committee of the whole. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent?

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I recommend the committee deal concurrently with Bill 6 and Committee Reports 2-14(2), 3-14(2) and 4-14(2).

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee concur?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will take a short break and return to deal with Bill 6.

-- Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would like to call the committee back to order. We are dealing with Bill 6. At this time, I will ask for an introduction, overview and comments by the Minister responsible, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The interim appropriation is required to provide the government with the authority to make expenditures until the 2000-2001 Main Estimates are approved, which we expect will be by early July. We have instructed departments to prepare interim appropriations which reflect their expenditure needs for the first four months of the fiscal year. This gives us some flexibility and timing for final approval of the estimates. Departments were instructed to calculate their interim appropriation requirements based on:

- 1) the amount of compensation and benefits for staff for the four month period;
- 2) the portion of grants and contributions that must be paid during the four month period;
- 3) any existing contractual commitments or contracts that must be initiated during the four month period;
- 4) the full year amount of any contracts that must be committed at the beginning of the fiscal year. This is required because the Financial Administration Act prohibits a contract authority from entering into a contract if there is no appropriation; and
- 5) capital requirements including projects of an urgent nature, projects which were begun in a previous fiscal year are projects where commitments must be made because of shipping deadlines or other circumstances.

In addition to these requirements, the Financial Management Board did approve the inclusion of some new spending needs in the interim appropriation. These new expenditures are included in each departments' interim funding request and have been reviewed by the standing committee meetings. It is also important to note that the interim appropriation ceases to have any authority as soon as the Legislative Assembly approves the final main estimates.

Mr. Chairman, in light of the government's fiscal situation, departments have developed their 2000-2001 budget proposals anticipating some reduced spending levels. For example, some capital projects which were previously scheduled for 2000-2001 have been deferred and it appears that forced growth requirements for 2000-2001 may be lower than initially projected.

As a result, our previous forecast of an operating deficit for 2000-2001 of \$61 million has been reduced to a forecast \$42 million deficit, a \$19 million reduction to the previous projections.

This is an encouraging result. However, there are a number of factors which will affect the fiscal forecast over the next few months. The most notable factors will be a revised revenue forecast which will be available in April and the finalization of departmental forced growth needs for 2000-2001, which will be completed later this month. As a result, I will be bringing an updated fiscal forecast as part of the 2000-2001 budget that will be presented in June of this year.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my introductory comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Handley. At this time, I would like to ask the committee responsible for this department, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, to present its report. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight met on Saturday, March 19, 2000 to review the interim appropriation for the Legislative Assembly and to review issues with government-wide implications that arose in the Standing Committee of Governance and Economic Development and the Standing Committee on Social Programs.

The Office of the Languages Commissioner

Mr. Chairman, under the Office of the Languages Commissioner, the committee noted that the term of the Languages Commissioner expires on May 31, 2000. This requires a timely response from the Legislative Assembly. It was further noted that the Official Languages Act must be reviewed in the first sitting of the Assembly in January of 2001.

Forced Growth

Mr. Chairman, under forced growth, members of the Accountability and Oversight Committee are concerned that there does not appear to be a standard definition of what forced growth actually entails. In the presentations from the departments, it became apparent that some departments confused forced growth with new initiatives, according to the understanding of committee members.

The committee noted the government summarized these levels of forced growth were lower than expected. However, committee members noticed that departments may have different requirements for different times of the year, and may present the request for forced growth funding later in the fiscal year.

The committee suggested the departments and the Financial Management Board separate forced growth from new initiatives so they do not appear on the same column or explanation sheet. This would help the committee to determine whether funding is necessary because of forced growth or as a new initiative and would save the committee questioning the department during the review process.

It is recommended that the Financial Management Board Secretariat develop a standard definition of forced growth to assist the department in deciding whether changes to an activity funding is forced growth or a new initiative.

Administration

Under the heading of administration, Mr. Chairman, in reviewing the activities of the departments contained in the interim appropriations, committee members realized that each department had a different interpretation of what activities should be included under the general heading of administration.

This latitude in the definition renders it impossible for the committees to examine the true costs of administration on a government-wide basis. In some departments, for example, the policy section is included under the administration activity. In other departments it is a separate activity or grouped differently with another activity. Committee members believe that a standardized definition of what should be included under administration activities must be developed and communicated to the departments for implementation in time for the upcoming review of the business plans.

Tangible Capital Assets

Under the heading tangible capital assets, Mr. Chairman, the Government of the Northwest Territories has adopted the policy of adhering to the Public Sector Accounting Board recommendations on accounting for tangible capital assets. The committee was concerned that the proposed \$500,000 in funding for the acquisition of the asset management system may most likely entail increasing costs for the government. The software is to assist government departments in the implementation of new accounting methods for tangible capital assets.

Further, the committee expressed concern that the valuation of ownership process may require additional training, the recruitment for extra staff and may take longer than the government's completion deadline of March 31, 2000.

The committee is of the concern that implementation costs may have been understated, as were the costs incurred to date, for the Peoplesoft program. Further, the committee noted that capital tangible assets valued at less than \$50,000 will be included as operations and maintenance as part of the new government accounting process. Currently, any significant capital expenditures, including vehicles, are included under capital expenditures.

Debt Wall

Under the heading debt wall, Mr. Chairman, committee members reiterated that unless we narrow the gap between revenues and expenditures, our debt wall will soon be met. A current borrowing limit of \$300 million only has \$39 million remaining. Without new sources of revenues, debts and deficits shall characterize the next few years, as evidenced by the most current fiscal projections given by government during this review exercise.

Fiscal projections for 2000-2001 presented by the government indicated an increase in revenues of \$5 million and a decrease in expenditures of \$14 million and a decrease in the projected deficit from an initial \$61 million to \$42 million. Most of the cuts and expenditures came in the reduction of \$10 million in capital spending. The committee noted that even with these levels of cuts, the government may not be able to meet the funding requirements for the upcoming fiscal year.

At the very minimum, there will be less flexibility or wiggle room to allow the flexibility in expenditure planning. Committee members were concerned that inevitably it will no longer be practical to continue cutting funding to programs and services and capital projects without jeopardizing the safety and well-being of the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Further, committee members were concerned growth and new revenues may be minimal at best. Committee members suggested that with continued growth in the resource sector, primarily diamonds and oil and gas, our share of resource revenues and an increase to the tax window may offer the best hope for increasing our revenues.

Affirmative Action

Mr. Chairman, under the heading of affirmative action, the committee expressed concern the Government of the Northwest Territories public service was not representative of the population it serves.

The Department of the Executive has been asked to supply the latest affirmative action statistics for the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Digital Communication Network – Ardicom Ltd.

Under the heading of Digital Communication Network, Ardicom Ltd., the Government of the Northwest Territories has invested significant fiscal resources in the development of the digital communications network. There is a grave concern that the digital communication network is not meeting the needs of the government. The lack of bandwidth is impacting on the ability of the Department of Health and Social Services to implement its Telehealth Program.

This is also a problem with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and their ability to deliver distance education programs. Mr. Chairman, the committee strongly encourages the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the Financial Management Board to resolve the outstanding bandwidth issue with Ardicom and the digital communication network and looks forward to positive resolution of the issue.

Capital Budget Adjustments

Under the heading capital budget adjustments, the committee noted that funding for some capital projects reported in the proposed interim appropriation differed significantly with funding levels described in the 2000-2001 five-year capital plan.

A list of capital projects that had funding discrepancies was forwarded to their respective departments for further explanation. Mr. Chairman, on Monday March 20, 2000, the committee research staff received a capital budget adjustments document from the government, explaining some of these discrepancies. However, the lack of timeliness prohibited these discrepancies from being properly addressed in committee which met from March 16th to March 18th with government to discuss the proposed appropriation.

Further, committee research staff did not receive the 2000-2001 five-year capital plan until the afternoon of March 15th, a day prior to the start of the committee review of the proposed appropriation. Until that time, research staff are dependent on

the 1999-2000 five-year capital plan for capital funding comparisons.

Mr. Chairman, the committee would prefer to receive future information in a more consistent reporting format from all departments. Additionally, committee members would like a more timely flow of information. The committee requested, but still has not received, information that is considered crucial to the review of the interim appropriations in committee of the whole.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes the report of the Standing Committee on Governance and Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Dent. At this time, I would like to ask Mr. Handley if he will be calling any witnesses.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, I would like to call witnesses. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that the Minister may call his witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Would the Sergeant-At-Arms please escort the witnesses in?

Mr. Minister, please introduce your witness for the record.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, on my right is Mr. Lew Voytilla, Secretary to the Financial Management Board.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): At this time, I would like to ask if there are any general comments or questions from the Members regarding the opening comments. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the residents of the Northwest Territories have been eagerly awaiting any decisions that we will make regarding budgets and what they will have to look forward to in the upcoming year.

Many people understand the reason why we are doing an interim appropriation and not the main estimates. Due to the timing of the election and getting groups together and getting the process going for the 14th Assembly, we find ourselves having to go through an interim appropriation for four months.

Mr. Chairman, many people would consider this as being just as the term implies, interim, but in fact, I believe we are setting many of the goals through this interim appropriation. Some may say it is up until July, and we will have a budget in place by the end of June, maybe the first week of July.

I believe if there is any serious change in the government's funding situation, it would be very difficult for us as a government to change the direction of the ship once it has been launched and we are halfway through a budget year.

Mr. Chairman, we have seen through the work done on the interim appropriation with the departments. Many departments have gone in the direction that the percentage of the interim budget should be in the range of 33 percent. We have seen a number of departments come in significantly higher than that. That is understandable because the summer season is when

contracts are let. For example, the housing area, transportation, municipal and community affairs, a lot of the construction work is done in the summer.

There was concern raised by Members that in fact, by putting so much of the emphasis and so much of the budget through in the interim appropriation, that when we go to put the actual business plans in place, projects will have already been started. We will not see anything new in the business plans, or the main estimates, for 2000-2001. If the project did not make it in an interim appropriation cycle, you may be looking at a delay.

There was a lot of concern mentioned in committees that because of the time crunch we were under, we could not review in full the capital plans for a number of the departments. We requested some follow up material from those departments. We are going to have to go through the departments project by project. The timeliness of this has put a lot of strain on the departments and committees to try and make sure that we have done the best job we can in reviewing the process, the interim appropriation and the expenditures required.

There are a number of new initiatives, as we have heard lately. That is of concern to Members. It is good to have a positive message to let the people of the North know we are continuing to do business. As well, we must be prudent in our work and what we put forward.

If in fact we are finding ourselves getting closer to the debt wall, we must ensure we do not hit that debt wall. No one yet has been able to clearly say what would happen once we hit our borrowing limit. What would the impact be?

We have heard the Minister say in this forum on a number of occasions that they are doing the work that is necessary to ensure they do not hit the so-called debt wall. When you see the growth in a number of areas, whether it is under urgently required new initiatives or the heading of forced growth, which seems to have changed a bit from the understanding we had of forced growth in the 13th Assembly, I think we need to question the areas of new initiatives to make sure we are doing the best for the people of the Northwest Territories.

The majority of this interim budget is based on status quo, the 1999-2000 budget. And there is no significant change. My fear is that if we do not take appropriate actions now and plan for the potential of hitting the debt wall, we will be left with little or no time to plan properly in areas of strategic change, priorities and goals of the Northwest Territories.

Indeed, many people would ask today, as a government who has been in power for four months, where are our goals and priorities? I believe we are setting them, in a sense. The message being sent by this process we will go through in the next ten days is in large part determining our priorities, at least for the first year of the 14th Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, I will take part in this interim appropriation with great interest as we go through department by department, and try to ensure we are doing the best we can for all residents of the Northwest Territories. Also, we will ensure that any new expenditures we put forward as a government are the wisest decisions we can make for those new expenditures.

Somehow in the chaotic atmosphere we find ourselves in by not trying to hit a debt wall and the potential development that

is on our doorstep...how do we manage? How do we grow? How do we come up with new dollars?

Many people out there right now say they do not get enough of their existing budgets. I am sure they will be paying a lot of attention to see what we pass. Does it mean more for them, or less? Or is it the same? As I stated earlier, by basing it on the 1999-2000 business plans, with little forced growth attached aside from what we saw in the area of pensions and a few new initiatives, we are not going to do much that is new.

I think that is a concern, but I think that is where we as a government have to reevaluate our priorities to say what is essential to the residents of the Northwest Territories?

From what I see, we have not been able to do that in this process to date. Instead, we have looked at a past cycle, made a few minor adjustments and will try to do the best from within in that sense to ensure we are meeting the needs of the residents of the Northwest Territories.

I just hope the future will not come back to us in the sense that we have been too optimistic and built in very serious time constraints on making any serious change to government as we see it today. With that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to going through each of the departments to ensure that we, as a government for the people of the Northwest Territories, are spending the dollars that are provided for us in the best way possible. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister, would you like to respond to those comments?

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The timeframe we have had to work with is very short. We have had since mid-January to go through this process. We have not been in government for four months. It has been closer to two months.

One of the early commitments that we made, going back to our planning sessions, was that we would involve Caucus and work very much in partnership. We were not going to jump ahead and go off with our own agenda, that we would work with everyone. We have been doing that. It was only a couple of days ago that we agreed on our agenda, our vision, our priorities, our strategies, our actions, so we have really only had a couple of days to really have that to work with.

We had agreed in Providence that we would proceed this way, with the interim appropriations for the first four months, or until the 2000-2001 budgets were approved.

During this time, we have put limits on the departments. The interim appropriations generally represent spending that is restrained, that does not include a lot of new initiatives, and hopefully is responsible. When we take into consideration the contracts we need to enter into, the need to move ahead with some capital projects, and so on, then the amount in the interim appropriations in total represents 45 percent of our projected budget for this coming year.

I agree that is limiting our ability to be able to take new directions and initiatives in the balance of the year. There is no question about that. As well, being as close as we are to our borrowing limit does limit the wiggle room we have. It is continually narrowing and we are very aware of that. We have to manage that very carefully.

As we prepared the interim appropriations, there were a number of new initiatives. The new initiatives that are included in here are in large initiatives that come at the recommendations of the whole Caucus.

Working Together, for example, in education. That is a program that a lot of people spoke on. It had to do with student summer employment. It was necessary to put some money back into the old program, which was sunsetted.

The intergovernmental forum process is another one where we felt there was a consensus to move ahead with this as a new initiative and move it ahead more aggressively than we had planned. There are some new initiatives here, but we tried to read what Members were saying and have anything new in here reflect the priorities we were hearing.

We are aware we are getting increasingly close to our borrowing limit, and we need to look for new dollars. We need to look internally. We intend to continue doing that. We will review our capital budgets. We will review our operations and maintenance very carefully as we move along and as we prepare our budgets. That is essential, as was mentioned earlier on a number of occasions.

We initiated discussion with the federal government to review what might be available in terms of reconsideration or resource development support. We have also had to continue with some initiatives in the resource and development area in particular to try and maximize the benefit we get out of that.

I hear the Member very clearly. We do not want to be overly optimistic either. As I said, our wiggle room is a lot smaller. Being overly optimistic could create some risk at the end. We are very aware of that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of questions I would like to ask the Minister. There seems to be a bit of confusion as to what constitutes forced growth. I would like to ask the Minister if he could provide for the committee what the Financial Management Board Secretariat's definition might be of forced growth. Could he also advise the committee which departments included that in their submissions we will be considering in this interim appropriation?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The definition of forced growth that we use is that the growth has to be either a statutory requirement, a legal obligation, a contractual commitment or driven by external factors that are beyond our control. We do have to leave a bit of room for those items that would simply cause too much hardship if they were not addressed. I think we always have to have that bit of wiggle room so it cannot be simply left to statutory, legal or contractual commitments. It is essentially everything that is non-discretionary, with the exception of those that we judge to cause too much hardship.

In terms of which departments have included forced growth, I would have to compile a list and get it back to the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that list would be interesting to this committee, so I will take the Minister up on his offer and hope we would see that list within the next couple of days, and certainly before we conclude consideration of the bill.

I would like to move now to the debt wall topic. Mr. Chairman, we now know, given a stand pat budget, we could project a deficit in the next fiscal year of perhaps \$42 million. The Minister has, in this House, said he will ensure he brings forward a budget that keeps us from hitting the debt wall. Yet we know that we have as of March 31st this year, probably only \$39 million before that happens. We know there is already a danger of us being over by \$3 million.

We also know that we do not see any reallocations in here for the extra cost for education as a result of Bill 1, for instance. We have consistently heard that in order to deal with the requirements of Bill 1, it will require a reallocation from one department to another.

The Minister himself admitted that there is getting to be less and less wiggle room as we get into the year and get closer to the debt wall. I would like to seek confirmation from the Minister that he is comfortable that he will be able to bring forward a main estimate in June that will keep us from hitting that debt wall, and that there is still a commitment to reallocate funds to deal with the increased costs we are committing to in Education, or will likely commit to in Education, and that it will not be a further increase in the deficit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I think as a basic premise, keep in mind that this is an interim appropriation. This is not the budget. What we are showing here does show that we only have \$39 million worth of flexibility before we reach our spending limit. We have, in this interim appropriation, already begun to take some steps to ensure we do not hit that wall.

When we do the budget, and we are working on the budget, there will be further efforts made in both the expenditure and the revenue sides to ensure that does not happen. We should not take this as being the budget. It is not. It is just an interim appropriation.

In terms of where are the dollars we need for education, those will be identified in the budget as we do the budget. We are working on it now. They will definitely be in the budget. They do not show up here in the interim appropriation. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Handley. General comments? The Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just some quick comments on the Minister's opening remarks. We have now heard, and heard again here today, that the picture is a little better than we first thought. We now seem to have \$19 million on the upside. I think this was made up a few different ways. The Minister has explained that we have seen an improved revenue picture. We have also had to defer some capital projects which, although very important, did not make it to the top of the priority list and were seen to be sort of less important than some of these other capital projects, so it had to be put on the back burner for probably next year.

We have also seen that we have \$5 million less in forced growth that came back for the departments for the next fiscal year. That looks a little better. My concern is that I am wondering if it is possible that some of the departments did not factor in their forced growth. This would have attributed partially to the result of less forced growth coming out here in the interim, and less in the projections for the year.

When we talk about this \$19 million worth of room, I am concerned that not all factors were looked at. That in fact some departments were late in reporting some of these numbers, which may dip into this slightly brighter picture. I am wondering if the Minister can give us assurances that was not the case. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All of the departments were directed to identify any forced growth they required during this interim period. I believe they have all done that. If there is further forced growth, then the departments will have to factor it in as they prepare their budgets or, as a last resort, we have built in a supp reserve, which would be drawn upon to cover any of those expenses we were not able to identify earlier. It has been factored in. We realize that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that reassurance. I think when we went through the interim appropriation for health, the break out showed while they factored in the superannuation additional costs to the Government of the Northwest Territories taking over the pensions, they had not identified other forms of forced growth. Our committee specifically asked the question, is there other forced growth involved this year you have anticipated? Do you know what that amount is and have you identified that in the interim? The response was that yes, there is additional forced growth, some \$5 million. We submitted that, but it was not identified in the interim. I am wondering if the Minister could clarify.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, health is the only department where we will find forced growth in the main estimates that is not in the interim appropriation. The reason for that is the advice they gave us was that they could manage without the forced growth during this interim appropriation period. We are aware of their forced growth estimate for the 2000-2001 year. They felt they did not need it during this period and did not include it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some concern. We know some of this will be seen in the first four months. When we come back and talk about the fact that projected forced growth comes in at \$5 million less than we anticipated, and health tells us they have \$5 million worth of growth that has not been identified in the interim yet, it is of some concern. I am wondering if he could just assure me that the amount Health did not report is not the \$5 million gain we have made up. . Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister

responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I could assure the Member the \$5 million they had identified that is not in here, is included in the \$42 million accumulated deficit. We have already factored it in to that deficit. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Handley. General comments? If there are no other general comments, what is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Mr. Chairman, if there are no further general comments, I would recommend that we move on to consider the Executive portion of the interim supply bill.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee concur?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would like to thank the Minister and his witness. Thank you, Mr. Handley.

The Minister responsible for the Executive, the Honourable Mr. Kakfwi. Do you have any opening comments?

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Yes, Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to use this opportunity to provide committee members with a brief overview of the functional units within the Department of the Executive.

The department, sometimes known as the Cabinet Office, is a pivotal point in the Government of the Northwest Territories, ensuring that Cabinet has the advice and support required to carry out its mandate. It is also charged with ensuring that action is taken on decisions made by Cabinet. The Executive plays a similar role in the North as the Privy Council Office plays in Ottawa for the federal government.

The Department of the Executive is managed by the deputy minister, Ms. Elizabeth Snider, who also serves as secretary to Cabinet and deputy minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The Department consists of the Office of the Commissioner, Minister's offices including that of the Premier, and divisions and secretariats established to support Cabinet.

The deputy minister of the Executive is the most senior public servant in the Government of the Northwest Territories and is charged not only with managing the department, but also with leading the public service. Ms. Snider provides overall management and direction to the public service and ensures government-wide coordination of Cabinet direction.

The Department of Executive also provides support for the Office of the Commissioner, also for Ministers' offices, which include staff employed to assist Ministers and the Premier in carrying out their duties.

The Department of the Executive has a number of functions, the central ones being to support the Executive Council.

The Cabinet Secretariat provides broad policy advice on priorities, strategies, policies and legislation to the Premier, Cabinet and its committees, as well as general support for Cabinet meetings. The secretariat also transmits Cabinet decisions to the public service.

Legislation and House planning provides advice and support to

Cabinet, departments and government agencies with respect to the development of legislation

The regional and community affairs division has been established to assist the Government of the Northwest Territories in communicating government-wide agendas, goals, strategies and initiatives to communities, the public, to regional staff and to employees in Yellowknife. Enhanced communications within and between regions is an objective, as is improved communications between regions and headquarters operations.

The Department of the Executive is also home to a number of functions which have responsibility for broad policy issues that span the range of departmental mandates.

Intergovernmental Affairs assists in the preparation of strategies to address territorial, national and international issues which affect the Northwest Territories. Intergovernmental Affairs also establishes, maintains and coordinates official contacts between the Government of the Northwest Territories and federal, provincial, Nunavut, Yukon and circumpolar governments, and non-government organizations.

Corporate human resources services develops and monitors government recruitment policy, the Affirmative Action Policy, and other government-wide human resource policies. It provides specialist training and advice to government departments, boards and agencies on human resource planning and staff development. It also monitors and provides advice on communications with employees and staff morale.

The Department of Executive is, from time to time, used to house special task groups, secretariats, or support working committees charged with starting or steering special projects.

For example, the Government of the Northwest Territories, aboriginal governments and the Government of Canada have agreed to participate in an intergovernmental forum to look at the future agenda for the Northwest Territories. This is a first, is important for the people of the North, and has been given high priority by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The Intergovernmental Forum Secretariat has been established to co-ordinate this important initiative for the government.

The Regulatory Reform Secretariat is charged with a broad-based review of the way government departments and agencies are carrying out regulatory responsibilities. The objective is to reduce government processes and eliminate "red tape" that create unnecessary barriers to economic growth and business profitability. The department provides support to the Secretariat.

The Department of Executive also provides support for the Public Utilities Board of the Northwest Territories. The Public Utilities Board is an independent board that regulates the energy utilities under its jurisdiction and reporting to the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board.

The Women's Advisory Program, which supports the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, supports and provides liaison with the Status of Women Council, the Native Women's Association and other organizations which enhance the participation of women in society.

The corporate services division provides financial, administrative and human resources support to the Department of the Executive, the Financial Management Board Secretariat, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Women's Advisory, the Regulatory Reform Secretariat and the Public Utilities Board.

In conclusion, it is evident that the department has a broad range of responsibilities. Some are new and have been established to meet new needs or to enhance activities already being undertaken by the department.

You have before you the interim financial requirements of the department. I am now prepared to entertain any questions you might have. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time, I would like to ask the committee responsible for this department, the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development, to present its report. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: The Standing Committee for Governance and Economic Development reviewed the Department of the Executive. The committee met with the Premier and his staff on March 17, 2000, to review the proposed 2000-2001 interim appropriation for the department. The committee made note of the following issues:

Corporate Human Resources Services

Corporate human resources develops and monitors the government's recruitment policy and affirmative action and other government-wide human resource policies. The committee was concerned that the government does not reflect the population of the Northwest Territories at the management and headquarter levels.

- The Premier suggested that affirmative action could be a topic of a full Caucus retreat.
- Further, the Premier agreed to provide the latest affirmative action statistics for the government.

The regional and community affairs division has been established to assist the Government of the Northwest Territories in communicating government wide agendas, goals, strategies and initiatives to communities, the public, regional staff and headquarters employees.

The Premier elaborated that it was important to recognize where the regions are heading and that there must be recognition of self-government agreements.

- The committee would like to be apprised of the mandate of the regional and community affairs division and other developments related to this initiative.
- The committee also agreed to send a letter to the Premier confirming its attendance in a "think tank" session in regard to this division.

Proposed Increase in Positions

Committee members noted that \$332,000 in additional proposed funding directed towards the Cabinet Secretariat and Ministers' offices activities. The government had explained that

in its interim appropriation submission that a significant portion is designated for additional positions.

The committee was concerned that given our current fiscal situation, the proposed addition of more positions to the department may be inappropriate.

- The Premier, at the request of the committee, agreed to provide an inventory of positions and describe their respective roles within the department.
- The Premier also agreed to provide salary information on the necessary operations and maintenance for each of the cabinet secretariat's positions, current and proposed.

Mr. Chairman, that is the report on the Department of the Executive by the committee.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Roland. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister if he would like to call in his witnesses.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Yes.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Can the Sergeant-at-Arms escort the witnesses in? Just for the Members, we are dealing with the red binder on tab 6, page 4, the Executive.

Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses for the record.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you. I have with me today on my left, the deputy minister of the Executive, Liz Snider, and on my right, the director of corporate services, Carl Bird.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time, I would like to ask if there are any general comments or questions from the Members. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some brief general comments. In regard to the Executive's budget, we have all heard the discussion about the debt wall. Even though things are optimistic, there is a need to show prudence and restraint. The expectation would be that the Executive would lead by example.

But what we have here is a budget that, according to the calculations I have seen, is 18 percent forced growth. They are layering on, more than doubling the staff palace guard around the Premier at a time when our jurisdiction has shrunk almost 40 percent from division.

Cabinet has shrunk by one at a time when we tell people there is no money for adult education, that there has been no increase in student financial assistance since 1992, that the food basket used for income support has not been increased for many years. There is inadequate housing, health costs...and yet we have the Executive coming forward with this very luxurious budget and what appears to be to me for a relatively new Cabinet, some very expensive habits that far exceed the necessary size.

I am also concerned about the comments I hear periodically about using Caucus discussions to justify some expenditures that we have no say over.

In regard to the actual positions, they make the case of telling us they have gone from 72 before division to 70 now, which to me is miniscule and probably unsubstantial in relation to the loss of jurisdiction and the shrinkage in government. The only thing that has not shrunk is headquarters. I can tell you the services in regions and communities have shrunk quite significantly, but not in headquarters.

There have been concerns with the affirmative action program for a long time. In the 13th Assembly, committees did the work. There are a lot of recommendations and considerations just sitting on the shelf. The offer now for the Premier to do another retreat to talk about things is appreciated, but the reality is that this is a program that has been with us for a long time. It has a lot of shortcomings. My hope would be that the Premier would be instructing his staff not to just remain with the status quo, but to take the steps to start dealing with that.

I also have significant concerns about this regional community affairs division with its yet undefined mandate, which to me shows full potential of becoming a significant decision making forum that could possibly undermine or circumvent community and regional decision making.

The other area of concern is the Regulatory Reform Secretariat, that started with much pomp and circumstance a number of years ago to thin out the red tape, to give us efficiency and regulatory reform. It contains all of the books, but as far as I have seen, has yet to show any product, is long on process and has no real outcomes.

I would hope the Premier would be casting his attention to that as we talk about regulatory reform. One of the main concerns that drives investors away is that things are too cumbersome and are unclear on how to deal with.

Mr. Chairman, when I look at the battles we are facing in our communities, when I look at the battles we are facing to maintain programs and services and I see a budget that comes with 18 percent forced growth, I must say I am deeply disappointed. I am not happy having to stand up in this House and go after the government for money for adult education, to put money into the food baskets of the people on income support, the needy, or the homeless. When we tell them there is no money, what we see is an amoebae-like growth, and the Executive demands to increase their already palatial circumstances. To me, Mr. Chairman, we are not sending the right message that the focus should be on the people and needs of the people. We should be demonstrating that we can live within our resources and provide the service without these kinds of excessive demands. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Department of the Executive, Mr. KakfwI.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: I would like to thank the Member for his comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I think we should ask for some process. The process we were using with the previous Minister was that Members had the opportunity to make comments, and then they were to direct questions to the Minister, with a

response back from the Minister. That was the process we were using, Mr. Kakfwi. So if that is the process that we are going to use, I would like to continue on with that process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Mr. Chairman, the Member offered some comments and his view of some of the activities we are engaged in. It sounded like a whole series of rather negative views on just about everything. I did not hear any questions. I thank him for his comments. If there is something specific I could try to answer, I would do that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Miltenberger, can you be more specific in regards to questions to the Minister and make it a little clearer so he can have a chance to respond, instead of making it general?

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask the Premier a specific question. In light of the difficult circumstances in maintaining programs and services, how does he justify the significant increase in staff, the 18 percent forced growth to the Executive at a time when we should be leading by example in terms of being prudent and keeping the dollars with the people and the programs where they are needed? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Department of the Executive, Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is true that there are some changes in the Department of the Executive, some new positions, some new functions that are being put in place. One of them, dealing with regional operations, as the Member pointed out, was in fact set up by the previous Cabinet. It was simply not funded. So we are just carrying on with that initiative. The Member would be very aware, with his long memory, that it happened in the previous Cabinet and that it was a good initiative that I think he personally supported.

The regions in the Northwest Territories are changing with division. The old Fort Smith region that some of us fondly remember is no longer able to be a reality.

The Inuvik region is also changing, not at the demand of this government, but of the aboriginal and community leaders in that part of the Territory. What is emerging are new realities for us that we have to grapple with as a government. There is a Beaufort Delta region that is emerging. A Sahtu region that is defined in land claim legislation. There is a Deh Cho region, which is accepted as a political fact. A Dogrib region is also becoming a legislative reality in the very near future.

These are the realities the Executive and this government have to grapple with. It requires central planning. It requires a capacity to be able to look at how we can enhance recognition of these realities in the way we operate as a government.

The functions within the Executive that were set up by the previous Cabinet are something this Assembly and this government should continue to support. It is what the communities and regions are asking us to do. We have to find a way to ensure the way we operate reflects what the Deh Cho,

the Dogribs, the Sahtu, and the Beaufort Delta want, as well as make an effort to support what people in the southern part of the Territory want as well. That explains that part of it.

There is the call by all governments, the federal government, our government and aboriginal governments, to set up an intergovernmental forum. This function has to be provided by the Department of the Executive. We cannot do it within existing resources. It is a major initiative that demands full time attention by a core group.

In keeping with the high priority that has been placed on this by the previous government and Legislature, as well as this government and this Legislature, we have set up a secretariat to provide support to our government on how to engage in an intergovernmental forum.

We have created an additional Cabinet position that was asked for by the Legislature. We have complied with that wish of this Legislature. With my insistence, we have enhanced the executive assistant position that is tied to my office and created a chief of staff. This is to ensure we begin a concerted effort to ensure that all Ministers' staff and offices are coordinated in the best way possible to ensure the Cabinet, Ministers' offices and staff operate as a unit. It is an opportunity to enhance the operation of the Executive. We have done that. It has been a very welcomed development by all of the Ministers, as well as by the staff that service each individual minister, the executive assistants and the executive secretaries.

We have asked the Executive to provide an additional executive assistant to my office simply because I retain the portfolio of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. That requires a full time, executive assistant to help me deal with the responsibilities that comes with that portfolio. We have brought in a secretary to provide support to the office of the principle secretary. These are all things that we require in order to operate in a time when there are incredible demands put on the Premier and the Ministers.

There is a tremendous amount of activity and there are exciting opportunities that none of us can afford to miss. The excuse that we simply did not have the time or the resources to respond quickly to opportunities that presented themselves to us is just not going to fly.

We have to be ready. We have to be prepared. As Members know, it has been non-stop since we have been elected. There have been workshops and sessions.

We are into our second session already. There have been no breaks. There have been no free days for most of us. The opportunities are tremendous.

We have just come back from a week in Ottawa. The federal government has indicated a keen interest in what is happening here for the first time in many years. They have also indicated a very strong commitment to work with us to make some things happen.

Members should take comfort in knowing we are not alone and we should not continue to express our fears and think we are talking into the dark. There is some real possibility that exciting things can happen with the federal and aboriginal governments partnering with us.

I believe we are well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that are there and that we have helped to create. We cannot lose sight of that. My response has been too long for the Member. I will stop here.

-- Interjection

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just a reminder to Members there is a set timeframe for people to ask questions and also to respond to questions. You have ten minutes, so please keep your eye on the clock. General comments or questions to the Minister? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am a member of the Social Programs Committee and did not sit on the committee review of this department, so I too have some interest in the presentation and have not been privy to some of the background information. I need to seek that.

I am also concerned about the growth and the expenditures in the Executive. Knowing that we are going in for an interim supply bill and would be coming forward with a budget in a little while, was any consideration given to putting off some of these expenditures until we knew what the final budget would look like?

It appears to me we jumped right in here with growth. I certainly hope Premier Kakfwi and Minister Handley are tremendously successful with Ottawa. I agree with them that we have tremendous potential here. In addition, there is reason for the federal government to be excited about that potential. I would hope that they would invest in the North so we can achieve that potential, because they are the ones that will reap most of the benefits in the long run.

But until we have a better idea of what results we might see and until we have a full budget, does it not seem a little inappropriate to expand the offices in the Executive to this level?

Minister Kakfwi has talked about the tremendous amount of activity that is underway. I have been around this Legislature now for over eight years. I have to tell you there is no more activity this year than what I have seen the previous years. Certainly there is no more challenge that we face than what we faced four years ago when we were heading into division. I think we managed to pull that off quite well with the existing level of staff we had.

I am just a little concerned we may have embarked on an expansion in a department where it is servicing us and it is not servicing the front line. It does not give any services to people. Could we have not put this off for awhile? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Dent. The Minister responsible for the Department of the Executive, Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you. I would like to thank the Member for sharing in the optimism. It is good to hear.

The suggestion is that perhaps we could have put some of these off. As I have said, the idea of placing staff to look at regional operations and community affairs was made by the previous Cabinet, so they are included because there was no funding provided for it when it was done.

The decision to add an additional Minister was made by everyone and we are simply adding it in there because it needs to be funded.

The additions to the Premier's office are ones that are needed now. We are operating in a slightly different style than the previous Cabinets, and I think it has been a welcome change by everyone that is aware of some of the enhanced ways we are operating now.

New positions set up for the intergovernmental forum staff is one that I believe could not wait. The first intergovernmental forum is tentatively scheduled within the next month or two. The federal government has indicated a keen interest in having an intergovernmental forum happen as early as May. The aboriginal leaders have indicated a keen interest in moving ahead with that. It is important for us to show that we would place a high priority on it and prepare ourselves by having appropriate staff support and guidance in making sure that we are good, constructive, positive participants in this forum.

It is a suggestion, of course we thought of, that we could do nothing and hope that somehow it pays in dividends; it does not. We see some opportunities. There are some demands made and we are responding with what we think is in the best interest of the public, this government, this Legislature. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, to the Minister for that response. You pointed out that the regional position had never been filled by the previous government and having been there, I know the reason for that was we saw other priorities for the money.

It would have been nice to have that position funded. We did not feel comfortable to fill that position when we were saying we did not have enough money for education. Again, it comes back to my position that this perhaps should have been postponed until we got to the mains, at which time there would be a better idea of how we would allocate funds to make sure we had enough for it.

Under regional committee relations, the previous government eliminated the regional directors positions in order to save money, but we are now talking about three positions. I am not sure if they are in the regions. Regional directors may have been a better way to handle this than what is being proposed right now.

Under intergovernmental forum, I would hope we are not the only ones that are going to be taking on the significant expenditures here. I agree this is an imperative issue. We must be well prepared to deal with it. Why have we not expected the federal government to contribute to the cost of organizing this? I see us with three PYs dedicated to it. Have the feds committed to the same level of expenditure, or have we even talked to them about sharing the costs for the organization of this operation?

I would think this certainly is an area in which, if there is an Intergovernmental Forum Secretariat, there should be a sharing of costs between this government and the federal government. I know once we start undertaking an expenditure, it is pretty tough to go back to the feds and have them kick in after the fact.

I am not sure how many questions I can ask before - I know the Minister takes a while to respond to questions. I am scared that if I stop now, I may not get another chance to ask. It is a natural break in the questioning, so, I will take a chance and end there and ask the Minister if he can respond to those two comments and questions.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to costs of the intergovernmental forum and the devolution of the revenue sharing process, if there is one, it is an item to discuss on the agenda. We have discussed this with Minister Nault. We have pointed out to Mr. Nault that in the development of the secondary diamond industry, we have done this entire initiative on our own. There has been no federal money coming in to help us develop our economy for the last number of years. That was strongly noted.

Hopefully, in the next couple of weeks, we will get back to having some discussions with Minister Nault and the Finance Minister, Paul Martin, on arrangements like this. There is no doubt we expect them to pay the majority of the costs for these types of initiatives. It has come up in the course of our discussions.

I should say as well, Mr. Chairman, when I say we only seem to be more busy and there are more things happening now, I say that because last month there was a unanimous motion by aboriginal leaders to support the idea of owning and managing a pipeline. In the last two years, there has been a few trillion cubic feet of natural gas found in the Deh Cho.

In the last few weeks and months, a few million have been bid by oil and gas companies to do exploration in the Beaufort Delta, which was virtually non-existent in the last few years. We have spoken of an intergovernmental forum and again, there is a renewed interest in setting up a process to have discussions or negotiations on devolution and revenue sharing that were not there before. We have the Akaitcho people that are sitting down to resume negotiations with the federal government. We have the Deh Cho as well.

These type of things call for increased time and resources by our government. These are just some of the things that we see that compel us to do as much good, quality work as we possibly can in a very short period of time. As well as try to be as inclusive as we can as Members of the Legislature, as well as the aboriginal governments, who we have committed to being full partners with as we carry out our work in the next few years. Thank you. I tried to be brief.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Mr. Dent's ten minutes are up. I will recognize another Member. General comments. Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Recognizing that I lack a fair bit of experience compared to some of my colleagues, I have to say that I share some of their concerns. Since I have been elected to this position, and at some of the meetings we attended when we were in Fort Providence, we heard a very dismal picture of the situation this government is in and how we have to watch our steps in this coming Session for avoiding the debt wall, as we call it.

Every time we have had a briefing in all different areas of government, there seems to be an increase in positions. I think

I have counted at least 13 positions now that are being created at the Executive level. I have some concern that someday we are going to find out that we are really heading down the road and we are going to have to make some hard decisions. I am a little concerned that it is going to come at the cost of youth programs and social programs that we have out there.

We all share the enthusiasm and we all want the Territories to go forward and prosper, myself as much as anyone else. We are really looking forward to some good news from Ottawa. We have heard they are excited, and that is good news. We have also heard they have expressed not commitments, but an interest in putting money into government. That could possibly come in the form of training programs or major infrastructure work as far as getting ready for pipelines. That may not do a lot for our budget. I do not know if the Premier has any idea how many positions are actually being established and how many positions this government can actually sustain without putting excess strain on our budget.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Mr. Minister.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I have said, some of the positions that were created, for instance, on regional and community operations, there are three positions that were created by the previous government. The three were directly appointed by the Premier's Cabinet. There are actually three people in those positions. We are simply putting them in there and asking for the dollars because the dollars were not assigned to it previously.

We have asked for money to add an additional Minister. The Minister's office, the executive assistant secretary, in keeping in direction with the Legislature to bring Cabinet up to seven. In there, I think, are two additional new positions in the Premier's Office. One, as I said, is an additional executive assistant to assist me with my duties as the Minister for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. The other is a new executive secretary to provide support to the office of the principal secretary. Those are the new positions that have been created in the Department of the Executive. That is what we have there.

Some of them are, as I said, new initiatives. We have created a special advisor to Cabinet on the intergovernmental forum, on devolution, and revenue sharing, which is critical for this government. Those are new positions, but we require them because we do not have the capacity to get into the intergovernmental forum. We have asked for those positions to prepare for discussions on devolution and revenue sharing. You should know that the previous government once spent \$1 million pursuing devolution and the Northern Accord, and it all came to nothing. We need some investment in it. This is nowhere near a \$1 million commitment, but it is important for us to have the best possible staff we can to support us on it. This is reflected here.

I appreciate what the Members are saying. If it was possible, we would not ask for additional staff. We know we should keep it within existing resources. At the same time, we know it is going to be difficult, if not impossible to cut the community regional levels because it would be seen as a sign of bad faith by just about everyone.

We also know we need to reorganize our regional operations. Even if we had not initially agreed with the direction of the

previous government, we now agree we need the staff that were directly appointed by the previous Cabinet to look at regional and community affairs and the operations, because the regions are asking us to do this, and it is in keeping with the recommendation to support and accept the changing political landscape out there in the regions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments, Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have heard concerns on the growth within the Executive. We know there are many pressures facing us as a government and there is a need to do some reinvestment in areas, so we can make sure that we meet the objectives that we have set for ourselves.

We know it is a high priority of the 13th Assembly as well as the 14th Assembly when we speak on the issue of aboriginal governments and their involvement with the Government of the Northwest Territories. We know there is a need to do some expansion.

The question that comes to bear is, for example, we went from the end days of the 13th Assembly down to six Ministers after division. There was discussion of going up to the seventh Minister so there could be a fair distribution of the workload in the Cabinet offices. What we have seen here, in a sense, for the time being at least, the Premier has elected to hold his portfolio of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and with that, an extra position. We know that there has been work going on upstairs to try and accommodate the growth of the Cabinet Members.

A concern that I have is there are areas where, yes, we are going to reinvest. Until we know our fiscal situation, we have to be very prudent about where we are going to spend our dollars.

The Minister has provided information, as the committee requested, in identification of new positions and associated costs. I thank the Premier for getting that information to us. But there are a number of areas we have to look at. As I said earlier in my comments to the interim appropriation as a whole, in approving the interim appropriation, we are in fact setting the stage for the business plan as a whole. Although we are combining areas in the Executive that have grown from the Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministerial offices, we are looking at over \$500,000 or a third of the budget.

So that adds up to almost \$1.5 million or higher for the year. That is a significant increase of expenditures in the Executive. How do we balance that? That is a difficult question to go with. We know that demands are out there and no previous governments seemed able to find dollars. For example, the Constitutional Working Group, which did not have an actual line item, but seemed to find the dollars by coming back to the government for supplementary appropriations, and so on.

Early in the life of the 13th Assembly, regional director positions were removed or were no longer considered a vital part of government and maybe that is something that has to be revisited along with a lot of other decisions that were made.

The ideal is to be prudent. It is a situation where all the positions put forward are vital to ensure the effective operation of the Cabinet and Cabinet Secretariat. With the information provided by the Premier's office, the executive assistant, executive secretary and chief of staff, the executive assistant

has been a revised position to the chief of staff and the dollars associated with that.

The dollars identified, are they the total cost of the area? Or is it a situation where positions have been revised and the dollar amount identified is to top up the existing salary that was there? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Minister responsible for the Executive, Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member had offered comments on the need to balance the workload, which were the reasons for adding an additional Cabinet position, which is true. We appreciate that. It is true that as the Premier, I have retained the portfolio for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. It is a big workload. In the previous Cabinet in which I served, I was responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and Justice as well. The workload has not changed much. However, the support is stronger now and we appreciate that.

It is a four-year commitment, so Members will know that portfolio assignments will change from time to time as time allows. I think it has been the right decision as we have some new Ministers.

As I said earlier, there was very little time for new Ministers to get briefed on the operations and the mandates of the departments. We have had no time for them to absorb the details and grasp the issues that are before them in their respective portfolios. We took note from Mr. Miltenberger, when he served notice at the end of the last session, that all Ministers should be well prepared to answer all questions that come their way. In the course of this session, again, that was only a couple of weeks ago.

So we have this very hectic schedule that we are working with and I believe it has been well managed. We are working long hours as a Cabinet. It has been a very enjoyable experience to date. We are getting our work done. We are finding that we are able to meet the demands for work, as well as plan and prepare strategically for issues that we have to deal with. So far, as some of the Ministers have commented, we have done very well in our initial foray into engaging the federal government.

We talked about our issues and we are finding the future of the North. We have been very happy with that, and the workload will continue to be shared. Portfolios will be reassigned in the course of the very productive four years coming up. Thank you.

-- Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General comments. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: The specific issue that I had raised earlier, is this interim appropriation as a full salary complement to the new additions or, in some cases, is it a top up to existing salaries? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The new positions are new dollars that are being requested. In the case of the chief of staff, that required an enhancement, so that is the only one that we have enhanced in this request. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister. General comments or questions to the Minister. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With a couple of the specific initiatives that the Executive has launched on here, I must indicate my support for the intergovernmental forum. It has been my experience, in watching and participating in Northwest Territories political development, the most positive and encouraging signals that I have ever seen at one time are happening right now. I fully support the initiatives that the department is taking to prepare and build capacity for that.

There is one aspect of the plan though, or of the budget, that I would like to pursue. My colleagues have already gone down this path. I would like to follow down it as well. On regional community affairs, Mr. Chairman, what I am a bit concerned about is duplication, or crossover, with other existing mandates or responsibilities. In the paper that was just circulated, which gives us a bit of a job description here, is the director of regional co-ordination. I get the sense preparing for transition to self-government will be one of the mandates of this job. I think it is a very good one, capacity building.

I do see a lot of overlap here with some existing roles, like the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is now playing and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs has in negotiating land claims and self-government, perhaps in the role of the intergovernmental forum itself and in areas where it is going to be involved in this.

From my perception, Mr. Chairman, there may even be a fourth area that would be mandated in some fashion or other to deal with transition from this government to self-government. Is it necessary at this time? That is my question, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Braden. A question to the Minister.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Member for his very positive comments in regard to the possibility that these functions within Executive for regional community affairs may lead to duplication in what is happening in Municipal and Community Affairs.

The Department of the Executive always provides overall co-ordination for all departments. We know that in the Beaufort Delta, the Deh Cho, and the Sahtu, there is no overall coordination capacity available at this time.

When a person goes to the Sahtu, for instance, you cannot go to one person that can give you an overall view of what is happening across departments within the Sahtu. You have to go to Yellowknife to really get that. Even then, you would have to go to each individual department to do it. It addresses a real need for and the vacuum left by the elimination of the regional director positions a few years ago.

We know that as the Executive, we need to provide overall coordination. We have the Beaufort Delta that is negotiating for a regional form of government. We have the Dogrib self-government negotiations preparing to see established a regional form of government and operation. We know the Deh Cho is speaking of a regional form of government. The Sahtu has asked for regional autonomy for some years. All these things tell us as a Cabinet, as a government, not only as Ministers but I think as Members of the legislature as well, we require a paper at some time that would scope out what is

happening out there right now, and some considerations we should be taking note of that will compel us to say we need to do something.

Perhaps a paper will outline some ways in which we could support and prepare for these eventual realities. If it did not, that is what I see these positions being assigned to do.

I was part of the former Cabinet, but I do not recall exactly what was intended for these people. I do know that is what we intend to do. It is a major piece of work that we are going to be undertaking here. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Braden, any general comments?

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My thanks to the Minister for that answer. I would like to explore a bit of the communications side of the additional positions. If I had my information correct, and this is from some briefings we have had over the course of the last few weeks, Mr. Chairman, I understand there are now four existing positions attached to the Executive with a purely communication job description or mandate. There is one that is attached to the Legislative Assembly.

The budget would indicate that two or more communication positions are going to be taken on. If I have my information correct, Mr. Chairman, from the point of view of the residents of the Northwest Territories, that amounts to seven communication people attached largely, if not exclusively, to political and legislative information and communication.

Quite frankly, if I have my information correct and I stand to be corrected, this seems to be quite excessive for the size and scope of what we have got going, as broad and exciting as we may perceive it to be.

I think we are going overboard in an area and I would challenge the department's requirements for this number of positions at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Minister Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Mr. Chairman, I will ask Liz Snider to explain.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Snider.

MS. SNIDER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Braden, for the question. The communications positions in the Department of the Executive are part of the regional and community affairs and will be assisting in the work of communication to the regions, communication to people within the Government of the Northwest Territories and communication to the public.

It is a very different role played by the public relations press secretary position that is in the Executive Council offices over here in the Legislative Assembly. They deal with Minister statements and media relations. Several departments within the Government of the Northwest Territories have actually set up communications units to assist their departments in the fulfillment of their mandates and to ensure there is transparency and public accountability in the delivery of the programs and services.

The Executive is no different than that. Apart from the work they do with the regions, the people involved in the communications with the Department of the Executive would be communicating approved agendas, for instance, the agenda the Caucus has been working on just recently, the goal strategies and initiatives of the Government of the Northwest Territories, both within the government and to the public.

They would be coordinating and promoting integrated communications at the interdepartmental level. I believe, Mr. Braden, you raised this when we did our overview of our department and how important that initiative was, but communications are coordinated within the government as a whole. They would also be coordinating the department's production and distribution of a number of major initiatives.

For instance, they were involved in the drafting, setting up, and publication of the self-government handbook, which was well received by the public here in the Northwest Territories. They also provide communication within the government through a publication called "The Bear Facts", which is sharing information within the department with employees. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Ms. Snider. Mr. Braden, your time is up. Mr. Krutko, general comments.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is in regard to the regional and community relations positions. As you know, in the past there were positions known as the regional directors in most of the regions. Those were eliminated as part of the cuts to the 13th Assembly while dealing with the deficit.

Yet I see regional coordination mentioned, but I do not really see any individuals on the ground in the specific regions here. It seems to me that it is going to be centralized in Yellowknife again. I would just as soon as see them at the regional centres where we have an array of different positions, but nobody there to coordinate on the ground. I am just wondering why that was not considered? If it has been, how do you see this working in the coordination at the regional centres to ensure they work closer together?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is a very good question. We know the regions want to have increased say over how programs and services are delivered and resources at the community and regional level are best utilized. We know that some function like a regional director, coordinating regional or executive function is being requested by a number of regions.

What we have asked these people to do is to put a paper together for us, for myself and then eventually for Cabinet. We have offered to share it with the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development, for them to have an idea what is being considered for regional organizing.

I think eventually every Member of the Legislature will want to engage in it because it is going to have some profound implications for the future of the government as we know it. We need to be clear amongst ourselves where we stand on issues of a central government, how strong you want the central government to be, what are you willing to recognize at the

community and regional level and how allocation of resources should be made as well as the extent of the decision making.

We need to work at it carefully and present it in a way that meets the needs of the communities, yet does not make any commitments that will perhaps have regrettable implications for governments at the community and regional level or government at the central level. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am wondering, at what point or time do we see the possibility of reinstating so-called regional directors in the communities? I think we should be developing from the ground up instead of from the top down. That is what it looks like. We are developing a new department, or through the directorship and coordination of it, at the central level.

What we are asking for at the community and regional level is that we would like to see it happen from within the regions. If anything, those positions should be developed in the regions so they will be more accessible. That way, we do not have just an administration role to play, but more of a coordination role.

What we see has happened is that we have taken all the powers away from the regions and communities and we still have it at the central agency. I think there has to be a change in philosophy here. We have to start putting more decision-making in the regions and allow them to not only manage, but coordinate what happens within the region and in the planning process here.

I find it astonishing, especially in my riding. There are a lot of dollars not put into the interim appropriation because of the so-called decision-making process. A lot of those decisions were made here in Yellowknife. But at the community level, it happened after the fact. They did not have a say in what was going to be in the interim appropriation. Will this eventually become a more regional based position than a central distribution office? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you. I believe a number of regions have some clear ideas as to how they see their regions operating and how government should function at the regional level. We know these vary as you go up and down the valley.

We also know that in some cases, the topic of self-government negotiations, as is the case in the Dogrib area as well as in the Beaufort Delta, is also an aspiration of the Deh Cho to find a way to become self-governing within their own region. Although we are not aware of the nature and the form that might take.

Again, we do not want to make any moves that would have implications we had not thought of beforehand. We are primarily asking for a paper to go to myself and then to Cabinet that would scope out the realities as we see them out there and identify some of the issues we have to take into account when we are looking at this merging political landscape.

We need to know what the financial implications are. We need to know how we can meet our needs as a government, as a central government meeting the needs of community regional governments, plus respect the self-government negotiations

that are going on. Once we have a paper like that which puts it all together, it will be shared.

We are not going to impose anything on the regions. The regions have profoundly exerted pressure on our government to act. We are preparing to do that. It is not like we are trying to impose anything. There has been tremendous pressure on us to act and we are doing that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Regarding the intergovernmental forum, I see you have a position here. Is that a contract position which will be going out for sole-sourced contract or is that a position within the government? It looks like a contract position. Is that the case?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am not certain what position the Member is referring to.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Mr. Krutko, can you clarify?

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under the intergovernmental secretariat, you have a special advisory to Cabinet. Is that a negotiated position or is that someone on retainer or contract? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the question. The special advisory to Cabinet has currently been filled by direct appointment. Richard Bargery, who was the former principal secretary, and also assisted former Premier Antoine on dealing with aboriginal issues on devolution and revenue sharing initiatives, is the person who has been appointed to continue this important work. He is working with Minister Antoine.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko, your time is up. Are there any further general comments?

We are on page 4, detail, operations and maintenance, Executive offices subtotal, \$3,248,000. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Ministers' offices, are there any grants or contributions specifically under the Premier's office that are under consideration in this amount?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Minister Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are no grants under the Premier's offices.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Minister Kakfwi. Mr. Dent, any further comments?

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am not a Member of governance and economic development, so I was not at their meetings. But I notice on the Department of the Executive information that was supplied from the Financial Management Board, under the 2000-20001 interim appropriation detail, there is a column showing grants and

contributions. There is \$25,000 shown opposite the title of Premier's office. The other grant and contribution that is shown is for the women's advisory, for a total of \$215,000 in grants and contributions.

If the \$25,000 should not be under the Premier's office, could I find out where that \$25,000 should be shown? For what purpose is that money there?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was an amount set up to meet commitments at the Beaufort Delta political accord, and has been reassigned to regional operations. It is no longer the Premier's office.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Since this is shown as a grant and contribution, to whom would this grant be typically given?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This amount was very specific. It was to meet the commitments we made upon signing the Beaufort Delta political accord. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I expect we will enter into political accords with other regional governments. Is there an expectation that similar amounts will be required as contributions as we conclude agreements with regional governments?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Previous governments have seen it in the public interest to seek political accords. Once we sign them, we honour them. If other regions and other groups wish to seek accords with us, we are always open to discussing those. It usually implies some financial commitment that we have to meet. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we have heard from the Premier that he will at some time consider shuffles in responsibility. Does he intend to, in the course of the next six or twelve months, attempt to arrange things so another Minister will be responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development? If so, will he at that time ensure the executive assistant position, which now has been justified as being needed so he can fulfill that responsibility, also disappears?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All of the Ministers are very busy and happy with their portfolios. The arrangement with the Minister of Finance, Mr. Handley, and the Minister of Justice and Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine, will assist me as the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development in doing the work required in that portfolio.

It is one that all three of us are very happy with. We also, as you can see, brought in Mr. Ootes to do something specific with us this week by representing us in Israel, where this government was asked to speak on the issue of diamonds in Canada. That is the very first time we have been asked to do that.

I have asked the Deputy Premier, Mrs. Groenewegen, to represent me as Premier at the recent prospectors and developers conference in Toronto. We are very much working together as a team. We have offered to have as many Ministers that are interested in working with this portfolio to be a part of it. There has been no lack of interest. We have done tremendous work together.

Once we see a need to reassign portfolios, we will look at it. I cannot make a commitment that it will happen in the next year or so, but that is our prerogative. It will be done in full consultation with my Cabinet colleagues. If we feel there is a need to do it, we shall consider it.

I believe that if the Premier is without a portfolio or responsibility, there would be no need to have an additional executive assistant assigned to the office. That is true. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. I recognize the clock. I will rise and report progress. I would like to thank the Minister and his staff.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. SPEAKER: The House will come back to order. Item 20, report of committee of the whole. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act 2000-2001, Committee Report 2-14(2) and Committee Report 3-14(2), and would like to report progress.

Mr. Speaker, I move the report of the committee of the whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The Chair recognizes the Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko. We have a motion on the floor. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

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

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Speaker, meetings tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, at 10:30 a.m. of the Standing Committee on Social Programs and the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development. Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 22, 2000:

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 Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 1-14(2), Sessional Statement
 - Tabled Document 14-14(2), "Our Communities, Our Decisions: Let's Get on With It!", Final Report of the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services
 - Bill 6, Interim Appropriation Act, 2000-2001
 - Committee Report 2-14(2), Accountability and Oversight on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation
 - Committee Report 3-14(2), Governance and Economic Development on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation
 - Committee Report 4-14(2), Social Programs on the 2000-2001 Interim Appropriation
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 22, 2000 at 1:30 p.m.

--ADJOURNMENT