



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2nd Session

Day 2

18th Assembly

HANSARD

Friday, February 19, 2016

Pages 43 – 62

The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 19, 2016****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Hon. Alfred Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. Wally Schumann, Hon. Louis Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

The House met at 10:00 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 1-18(2):
FISCAL UPDATE

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to provide Members with more background on our fiscal situation. As Members heard on February 16, 2016, the federal Finance Minister announced a partial restoration of \$24 million in annual Territorial Formula Financing funding lost through the unintended consequences of the data methodology revisions. While this is welcome news, the GNWT has already included a scenario in its fiscal forecast presented to Members that included the partial restoration of the Territorial Formula Financing. The problem, however, has not changed. The GNWT still faces a situation where expenditures are growing and revenues are declining over the life of the 18th Assembly. Under this scenario, the GNWT operating surpluses will start to decline, resulting in a small operating deficit position by 2019-2020. Put another way, unless we find a way to curtail our expenditures and/or grow our economy by approximately \$150 million over the next five years, the GNWT will continue to use short-term borrowing to pay for operating expenditures and to finance infrastructure investment.

Clearly, our current fiscal situation is not sustainable, and unless we take decisive action, we will be in a clear violation of the guiding principles of our recently approved Fiscal Responsible Policy. The formal approval of this policy by Cabinet reconfirms our commitment to responsible fiscal management in order to produce the operating surplus to fund at least half of our capital investments. We cannot fund day-to-day operational needs by undertaking increased short-term borrowing that would see us increase our total debt to over \$1 billion, and drive us unnecessarily

close to the federally imposed debt limit of \$1.3 billion. We cannot burden future generations and future governments with the costs of the services we consume today.

We will pay for programs and services that meet our priorities and are affordable over the long term. Our government is committed to fiscal responsibility and our fiscal responsibility policy. We need to live within our means, not just for today or just for this year, but for the entire four years of the 18th Legislative Assembly. As we start addressing our current fiscal situation, in the long term we are not encouraged by the five-year outlook for the NWT economy and its implications for GNWT revenues.

Although some regions are benefitting from resource development projects, economic activity in other areas has slowed considerably. Over the medium term, the available information suggests a protracted decline in resource production. Existing diamond mines are maturing and currently planned projects will not replace their contributions to the territorial economy. At the same time, exploration necessary for the new development is also slowing down. The expected slow economic growth and flat population growth are the main reasons for declining total revenue projections.

The NWT economic outlook and the implications for GNWT revenues are the 18th Legislative Assembly's most serious challenges. We need to support growth and diversification in the NWT economy, with investments now, so that the closing of the existing mines in the medium term do not shrink the economic base. Promoting economic growth and increasing the tax base is important for the long-term health in own-source revenue. However, unless we make changes to expenditure management, we will not have the fiscal resources to make strategic economic investment, let alone sustain current programs and services. Investments in infrastructure are vital, because infrastructure provides the framework in which our economy operates. We depend on infrastructure to transport goods and service between communities, and improving and maintaining transportation infrastructure is critical to combat the high cost of living in all parts of our territory. We need to continue to protect the infrastructure we already have, and prevent our assets from falling into disrepair. These are our schools, health facilities,

and transportation and community infrastructure. We choose to make strategic investments to support a prosperous economy that connects NWT residents with economic opportunity. Our infrastructure investments provide the means to deliver services important to NWT residents, including health care and education.

Reducing and delaying infrastructure investments is not an option. It should go without saying that we need to protect and support our economy as it provides the jobs for our residents and the revenues for our government. Today our economy is fragile, and tomorrow we want an economy that is strong, diversified and sustainable. This means we must address our fiscal problem now. If we do nothing, we will be forced to take more serious action at the start of the 19th Assembly to remain in compliance with our Fiscal Responsibility Policy. By taking decisive action now, we will achieve fiscal sustainability over the long term that allows us to increase investments in infrastructure and fund new initiatives to address our priorities, improve residents' lives, and support our economy.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, we are also looking at actions to raise revenues, but we have to be realistic about what we can and cannot do. We cannot solve our fiscal problems solely on the revenue side. As we well know, approximately 70 per cent of our revenues come from the Territorial Formula Financing. As provincial governments continue to restrain their spending to address deficits and increasing debt burdens, growth in our Territorial Formula Financing Grant will remain limited.

Later this session, I will be tabling a paper on possible options to increase our own source revenue, but the paper does not provide any new information or alternatives than those provided to previous Assemblies. Quite simply, our tax base is too small to make increasing taxes the answer to our declining revenue problem. If we increase the tax burden on businesses and individuals, we risk damaging the economy further. Increasing taxes will take money out of the local economy, which affects families' pocketbooks and the bottom line of local businesses. It also reduces the attractiveness of the NWT as a place to do business, live, and work. Already our tax revenues are in decline, as global events affect our recourse-based economy. Increasing tax rates on a declining tax base will require careful consideration to make sure we do not jeopardize our ability to advance the Assembly's priority to support and sustainably grow the economy.

Revenue projections for 2015-16 have declined \$36 million from the 2015-16 Budget to \$1.79 billion, largely due to lower resource and corporate income tax revenue projections. On the expenditure side,

fire suppression costs and increased diesel fuel costs incurred by the NWT Power Corporation meant the GNWT was over its \$30 million supplementary appropriation reserve allocation by \$46 million. Consequently, the \$147 million operating surplus projected in the 2015-16 Budget is now projected to be \$69 million, a \$78-million decrease.

This mix of bad news reinforces the need for prudent and responsible fiscal planning, meaning we need to learn to live within our means. Mr. Speaker, we cannot take the position of an ostrich and bury our heads in the sand and pretend and hope to escape reality. We are no longer in a position where we can keep expenditures at their current rate and hope to keep expenditure growth in line with revenue growth to maintain fiscal sustainability. Revenues are declining, and we need to reduce the level of expenditures as well as restrain their growth. We do not make this conclusion lightly. Government expenditures are part of the economy that we are trying to support. However, we need to consider an economic outlook that anticipates the difficulties of the resource sector, which is the main driver of our economy. Commodity prices today and in the foreseeable future are much lower than in recent history, and we are already seeing the effects of these lower prices. We also know that potential mines are having difficulty getting financing, and even if these projects are built, they will not replace the economic output of today's existing mines.

We must take steps now to provide us with the fiscal flexibility to make strategic investments in our economy, such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Wha Ti all-weather highway, and the all-season road into the Slave Geological Province, all of which will lower the cost of living and doing business and provide skills training so NWT residents have more opportunities to contribute to and diversify the NWT economy. We also need this flexibility to have cash available to take advantage of any federally cost-shared infrastructure, like the New Building Canada Plan, which is needed to provide economic stimulus in our regions. The GNWT has started its part by making the difficult decision to freeze any economic adjustments to the salaries of deputy ministers, senior managers, and excluded employees for two years, starting in 2016-2017.

The priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly include addressing the cost of living, supporting education, training and youth development, fostering community wellness and safety, and investing in the economy, environment, and climate change. In short, we are seeking to foster the environment that allows NWT residents to create a future of prosperity. This goal requires investments that we cannot make without addressing the

expenditure side of the budget. We were aware of the fiscal challenges as we came into this Assembly and we know we have difficult choices leading up to this year's budget. We must now work together to address the fiscal challenge so that this Assembly's priorities may be realized in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner. We are building for future in the decisions we are making today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON 2023 CANADA WINTER GAMES

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my statement is about the largest multi-sport cultural event for youth in the nation, the 2023 Canada Winter Games. As a former city councillor in my recent political life, I was excited, to say the least, when the Canada Games Council came to Yellowknife to perform an assessment on our capital city to see if we had the capacity and ability to host the games. That was the first indication to me that we must, or why would the national council even consider coming to Yellowknife in the first place?

Mr. Speaker, the Arctic Winter Games has been instrumental in increasing the level of competition, talent, and sporting infrastructure in the Northwest Territories and throughout the circumpolar world. The Canada Winter Games could do the same for the next generation of athletic games in the Northwest Territories. Looking at Whitehorse's experience of the games in 2007 gives us a sense of the positive impacts the Northwest Territories could see. The Whitehorse games came with a \$120-million price tag, but the positive economic impact was massive as the games injected millions back into almost every sector of the economy.

Visitors to Whitehorse spent nearly \$9 million during those two weeks alone, according to an independent economic impact study, and many of them indicated they were likely to return in the near future, bringing a long-term boost to tourism. Investment in sporting infrastructure and athlete and coach development would help more athletes from the Northwest Territories make national teams and put us on the map as a sporting destination for future national level events. The games would also have a positive impact on the community. At last, Friday's Q and A session on the 2023 Canada Winter Games, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs announced that the GNWT is willing to invest in an athletes' village that post-

games could be repurposed as low-income and seniors' housing.

The biggest benefit of the 2007 games, according to Whitehorse Mayor Dan Curtis, was improving healthy lifestyles and community involvement. Hosting the games would give us an opportunity to include the whole territory, not just Yellowknife; showcase our cultures; and reach out to our sister territories to the east and west, involving as many northern Canadians as possible in the event and making the games more attractive to the federal government and southern investors.

Mr. Speaker, Yellowknife's bid for the 2023 Canada Winter Games deserves serious consideration and support. At the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs on this topic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CHALLENGES FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES PARTICIPATING IN ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

MR. THOMPSON: Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was daydreaming there for a second. Today I would like to take the House on a journey that was shared with me by a great-grandmother recently. Like all great-grandmothers, she had a vested interest in her great-grandchildren. She had a dream for each of them. The one she shared with me started some eight years ago, when her grandson started playing soccer. She had a dream that he would one day be successful; get the chance to play soccer on national and international stages.

Well, the international stage opportunity came with Arctic Winter Games this year. This young man worked hard, attended practices on a regular basis, and played basketball as a cross-training opportunity. The first hurdle was the regional soccer camp. He and a number of friends worked extra hard, and were selected to go on to the next stage. At this point in time, you would figure it was a nice stepping stone for him, his friends, and his great-grandmother. Unfortunately, it was not the case.

After the excitement of being selected, he found out that to go on to the territorial selection process, he had to have a passport in hand by the territorial trials date. This was not going to happen because he did not have a passport photo, and he was not going to be able to get one because the ferry was going out and the ice bridge was not going to be in until early December. The option to fly to Yellowknife to get it done was not feasible. Too much cost to get him and his family there to do it. As this wise lady says, she has witnessed these

types of hurdles and hindrances placed in front of Aboriginal youth, especially from small communities, too many times, and it is time something was done about it. She feels the system is stacked against the small communities and Aboriginal youth.

After reading this story, I took the time to find and speak to her grandson about this situation, and ask his take on it. His comments were that it was a very disappointing time for him and one of his friends, who was in the same boat. He was frustrated that there was limited information from the very beginning about the requirements to have the passport in hand to attend the territorial trials.

If this information was shared better, he felt that he and his friend could have gotten the picture and passport application done on time. This is very sad. I realize in bigger centres this may not be an issue, but for the smaller communities it is. Later on, I will ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs questions regarding the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FUTURE OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make some general comments today on the future of the Northwest Territories. The proposed mandate tabled yesterday in this House and the Commissioner's Opening Address provided Cabinet's assessment of our fiscal situation, which is not shared by all in this Assembly.

We have inherited new authority and jurisdiction under devolution. We must use our resources very wisely to ensure that we do not take away opportunities for future generations, but also maximize the retention of benefits for our residents today. The federal government did not review revenues from these resources for many, many years. As part of the devolve-and-evolve approach, we need to thoroughly examine whether the Northwest Territories is getting a fair return for the use and extraction of these public resources. We also need to ensure that there is some benefit to future generations from this non-renewable natural capital through a defined revenue stream into our Heritage Fund. I look forward to a comprehensive and public review of our resource revenues during the term of this Assembly.

Yesterday, we heard from Cabinet about traditional values of thrift and self-reliance. There was another traditional value that was not discussed: sharing. We look after each other here. Those that have, share with those that do not have. Income disparity

has steadily grown in the Northwest Territories over the 30 years I have lived here. Despite the high cost of living, there is room for us to better share our wealth within the Northwest Territories, and I will be looking for ways to increase our revenues.

There are sectors of our economy that are enjoying growth, including tourism, arts and crafts, manufacturing, and agriculture. Those are exactly the areas we should be supporting to diversify our economy and to build long-term sustainability and resiliency. Now is the time for public strategic investment in these sectors of our economy. Building large surpluses in the operations and maintenance side of our budget to spend on infrastructure will require cuts to programs, services, and staffing that support our quality of life. Building roads to resources will perpetuate our dependency on non-renewable resources and the boom and bust cycles of commodities that we cannot control. If we are to invest in infrastructure, let's invest in our people and a knowledge economy through a university in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. There is tremendous global interest in our natural environment, cultural, traditional knowledge, co-management systems, and cold-weather technology. Canada is the only circumpolar country without a university in its north. This is something that I believe the new federal government would support. This is the kind of vision I had expected to see as part of the proposed mandate. I look forward to the debate in the coming weeks on the future of the Northwest Territories and our fiscal situation. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Hay River North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR ECOLE BOREALE

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights of people whose first language is French or whose primary school education was in French to have their children educated in that language if they reside in a province or territory where that is the linguistic minority. In Hay River, Ecole Boreale services this right. In 2008, the Minister of Education issued a directive stating that admissions to French language programs shall be restricted only to those students who qualify according to a strict interpretation of section 23 and have the documents to prove it. This is contrary to virtually every other jurisdiction in Canada, where the power

to determine admissions is delegated to the French language school boards. The result of this directive is that admissions to Ecole Boreale are at critical levels. There is currently only one child enrolled in kindergarten, in a split class with grades one and two. There are only three children eligible for kindergarten next year. If those numbers continue, Ecole Boreale won't survive. Parents and other residents are frustrated, confused, and angry about the situation, and I share those feelings. We have a school that is providing high-quality education, yet the government seems content to see Ecole Boreale close its doors. A closure would mean the loss of 17 full- and part-time jobs. It means people will leave the community, and it takes away a vital incentive for people from the South to move to Hay River.

According to the Supreme Court of Canada, section 23 was designed to correct the erosion of official language minority groups. Many of the children who have been denied admission to Ecole Boreale have grandparents whose first language was French; however, that language was not passed on because it was lost at residential schools or because of the historical lack of French language schools in the North. This loss of language needs to be corrected.

The Supreme Court also states that there's a critical need for vigilant implementation of section 23 rights to protect from further language erosion. In the case at hand, a vigilant implementation merely calls for allowing a small number of non-right holders to attend Ecole Boreale so that it remains viable in the long term.

I know that the Minister is well aware of these concerns. Parents, grandparents, and former students have been writing letters to the Minister pleading their cases and showing their support. We need the government to work with the French language and Hay River school boards to resolve this issue and assure that Ecole Boreale remains in Hay River for generations to come, and at the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BUDGETARY PRIORITIES AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday the Regular Members of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning issued a media release to give our view of the budgetary process now underway, and to propose some priorities for measures and public consultation. I would like to add that information to the record here by speaking of it. The government's

media release of February 9, 2016 said, "The GNWT is committed to working closely with MLAs to identify practical solutions to the fiscal challenge," and that "The GNWT will develop proposals and share them with MLAs for input prior to the preparation of business plans."

Yet Regular Members are concerned that government has decided on a course of action, a concern that is exacerbated today when we hear the Finance Minister say he is not looking at any new taxes, \$150 million in cuts, and a freeze on senior government salaries, none of which were agreed with by this side of the House. The Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning's media release of February 16, 2016 called on government to ensure effective public engagement on government budgets to ensure spending and programs are aligned with the 18th Assembly's stated priorities, to create new sources of revenue, invest in infrastructure projects and economic incentive programs, and fund cost-saving efficiencies within government. The committee is asking the government to balance new revenue generation, program efficiencies, and cost-saving measures to ensure a change of course is not detrimental to our economy.

Key among these recommendations is the need for public consultation. The previous Finance Minister went to the public last fall on budget preparation. But note that he did not consider at that time how to increase revenues. The picture has changed since last fall, with the closure of Snap Lake and loss of the federal Territorial Formula Financing funding, to the tune of \$10 million. Now is the time to consult, before the June offering of the full operating budget, and there is a model convenient to hand. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, faced with the recent crash in oil prices, moved swiftly to public consultation on budgetary measures. They recognized their fiscal situation was not temporary. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. They recognized their fiscal situation was not temporary and that before setting a direction that would be long-term, they would ask the citizens their views. They are asking citizens to identify a combination of measures to increase revenues, reduce expenditures, eliminate waste, and establish fiscal targets. Citizens have many choices for participation. They can comment on a discussion document, attend public discussion sessions and town hall meetings, host their own meetings, and make submissions online. In order to focus their comments, residents were asked to comment on three main questions:

1. What three things could government stop doing in order to save money?
2. What three new things could government do to raise money?
3. How can government be more innovative or efficient to provide quality services at lower costs?

These are the questions we need to ask the residents of the NWT, and since we can expect our fiscal situation to be as equally long-term as Newfoundland's, we need to build public support, ownership, and partnership in making our fiscal approach work. These questions align very well with the priorities called for in our committee's release. As this government points out and Newfoundland realized, our financial situation is not going to change in the short term. Government needs to move forward in partnership with civil society. It's not too late for consultation, and budgeting can't begin without it. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILIES OF RECENTLY DECEASED TU NEDHE-WIILIDEH CONSTITUENTS

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I did some short eulogies for people that passed away in my riding. I'm going continue to do the same and finish those up.

[English translation not provided.] Today I would like to send my deepest condolences to the family of the late Noel Michael Francois, who sadly, passed away on November 14, 2015, more commonly known as Michael. Michael was born on August 30, 1982. He loved learning. He loved school and excelled in math, and did very well in calculus with a mechanical engineering program he completed at NAIT. Michael loved his boys, his parents, sisters, family. Michael's boys will follow in Michael's footsteps. They both excel in math and enjoy hockey, and are very sweet, well-mannered sons. Before becoming ill, Michael enjoyed working as a math and science tutor for the after-school program down at the Ndilo school. He planned to go back to school to complete his engineering program. He enjoyed playing the bass and he was always an Oilers fan, no matter what. He would have enjoyed Connor McDavid. Michael leaves behind his children Isaiah and Hayden Boucher-Francois; his parents Mike and Mary Jane Francois; his sisters Diane, Jackie, Mary Ann, Stella, Berna, Bernice, Helen; and his brother Sean. He also leaves behind many nieces and nephews who

loved him, and he loved them, and cousins and friends across the North.

I would like to send my deepest condolences to the Boucher-Beaulieu family of the late Isadore Boniface Boucher-Beaulieu of Fort Resolution. He was born September 20, 1988 and passed away February 6, 2015. Isadore enjoyed playing video games and riding around with his friends. He was a very kind-hearted young man who suffered from cancer since 2000. Even though he was sick, he did not show it. He always put his friends and family first. He was a very strong young man who did not show any pain. Isadore is survived by his mother Catherine Boucher and his father Leon Beaulieu; brother Brendan; sisters Elizabeth, Leanne, and Isabelle; and two nieces, Emily and Piper. Isadore will be sadly missed by all his friends and family in Fort Resolution, and all over the North.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COMPLETION OF THE WILLOW RIVER BRIDGE PROJECT

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many times in this House I have thanked the Department of Transportation for providing funding to the community of Aklavik for the Willow River project. Over the last two years, we have received funding from the department to purchase a bridge to put in place at Willow River. This bridge is now actually on site, but now the community needs funds to have this bridge in place and operational. The community is looking forward to the completion of this project so we can open up opportunities for tourism and also the community to go to have picnics or go hunting, more recreational activities for the community. I will have more questions for the Minister later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORMAN WELLS CHILD CARE FACILITY

MR. MCNEELY: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to discuss in my Member's statement here the daycare building in Norman Wells. It's a beautiful building contributed and donated by the Town of Norman Wells, the private sector, and the territorial government. It has since provided a meaningful service to the working parents, a vital component to the working class community of Norman wells, and a huge contribution to the child welfare side of the community. Today I will be addressing that concern

to the Minister of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FISCAL SITUATION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Minister of Finance on his statement on the fiscal update this morning. It's good to have some facts on the ground for us to consider and some clear projects for moving our economy forward.

I also agree with his assertion that the tax base at this time is too low to fuel the kind of revenues that we require. However, the low-hanging fruit of our economy has always been the mining sector, and of course our Territorial Formula Financing Grant. These are areas that we can work to directly expand by making the Northwest Territories the most attractive place to invest, live, and work. We should be looking at ways to lower taxes for businesses and create tax credits for investment and tax credits for people to encourage the growth of economic migration to the Northwest Territories.

Furthermore, we should be expanding useful programs, like the Mining Incentive Program, and looking at ways to settle land claims and create certainty for the industry so we can make use of those resources through enhanced features like a heritage fund that actually invests in our economy today, instead of keeping the money in reserve for a rainy day. We need to work diligently towards these activities, and we need to be bold and ambitious. I'm pleased to see that we are finally starting to move in that direction, but I would also like to see further public consultation and further discussion with this side of the House about how we are going to move forward.

I will have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment on how we are moving forward on mining. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BUFFALO AIRWAYS AND ICE PILOTS NWT

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a moment to recognize Buffalo Airways, a business within the Range Lake constituency. This long-standing business has been a staple within our community for over 40 years. With the premiere of Ice Pilots Northwest Territories in 2009, we received international attention from

this highly popular television show, located here in the North.

I would like to congratulate Buffalo Airways on six successful seasons and for the various nominations and awards won with this television series. Throughout the duration of the show, Ice Pilots was nominated four times for the Canadian Screen Awards, which brought them to a win in 2015. Ice Pilots received one last nomination for their final season, and I wish them the best of luck during the awards ceremony on March 13, 2016. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCES AND IMPACTS

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Detachment, abandonment, and denial are a few concepts I have come to learn in my brief personal journey. As I contemplate these three new concepts, I wonder just how many further issues there are because of the effects of the residential schools in our families and communities. [English translation not provided.]

I remember as a child, travelling by boat with my parents into my home community of Fort Providence. What impressed me was a towering building sitting atop the riverbank. There are times that I recall having to visit that large building, and I was scared to go into that building. That building was torn down in the 1970s, but its effects are still felt today. I became aware of the residential school experience from my parents sharing their stories. I recall my late father telling me that he was forced to learn French and forget about Slavey. When he left the residence, he was unable to speak to his mother, to his parents. His brother had to translate for him to communicate with his mother. [English translation not provided.]

At that time, students were then separated and detached from their parents. Students likely felt abandoned, and they were denied their language and culture. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Like all people that have been affected by residential school, my hope is that the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report will not be in vain. That the Government of Canada and the GNWT will work together to ensure initiatives of wellness and that healing will reach back into the far reaches of our nation and families. I dream that

one day the Dene values of honour, love, and respect will be upheld in their highest level. That we learn once again to take care of ourselves and our relationships with each other and make Denendeh the place that it should be. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RECOGNIZING THE CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION OF GERALD KISOUN

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome everybody. Good morning. During my statements, I'm going to celebrate people who have contributed to our society, both in the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit regions of Nunakput and Inuvialuit. Today I'm going to commend Mr. Gerry Kisoun. I'm going to speak a few notes on Gerry right now. Gerry was born in the Mackenzie Delta during 1953. Gerry grew up as a trapper, like myself, and growing up on the trapline you realize the hardships of life and then you celebrate the rest. Gerry moved to Inuvik and Aklavik in 1956, today known as Inuvik, the East-3. Gerry attended Sir Alexander Mackenzie School and then attended Samuel Hearne Secondary School during his high school years. Gerry, in 1971, joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. After seeing service in Alberta and the Yukon, Gerry eventually worked back to the Northwest Territories in the RCMP and retired in 1996. After retiring from the RCMP, Gerry took a position with Parks Canada and the Western Arctic Field Unit working with visitor services, which today is known as the Parks Canada Western Arctic Field Unit, which he retired from in 2013. Today, Gerry guides with the tourism company called Tundra North Tours, guiding and sharing many great stories of the people of the Mackenzie Delta.

Gerry is from Inuvialuit and Gwich'in background. With his wife Rosa, Gerry has four children and five grandchildren. Gerry has been involved in many, many areas that pertain to our people. Gerry took part in northern games since his teenage years, and continues to do so today. Gerry volunteered many hours with our Muskrat Jamboree, northern games, and other activities in our region, including the Northern Dene Games Summit, which is going on its fourth year now in Inuvik. Gerry sits on a number of boards, which take a good portion of his time. Also, Gerry is a recipient of the RCMP Long Service Medal in Canada, the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal, the Queen's Jubilee Medal and, most recently, the Polar Medal. During 2011, Gerry was appointed as the Deputy Commissioner of Northwest Territories and was reappointed to another three-year term in 2014. Today, I just want to commend Gerry and thank him

for keeping the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit culture strong and respectful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi, Member for Nunakput. At this time, I'm going to allow that to go into Hansard, but I'd just like to remind the Members that part of our rules is that we're not allowed to mention first names in the House, so I just want to remind the Members. Masi. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize our interpreter in the Dogrib language, Wiilideh dialect, Mary Rose Sundberg. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because I can't really see the gallery clearly, I just want to thank all the many folks that are here today watching the ongoings.

---Laughter

Yesterday you heard me speak about the Arctic Inspiration Prize, and one of the beneficiaries in particular is FOXY, which stands for Fostering Open eXpression among Youth. I want to take this opportunity today to recognize the founders and operators of FOXY. We have with us today Ms. Candice Lys and Ms. Nancy MacNeill, and I want to thank you for your incredible contribution to Northern youth. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Have we missed anyone in the gallery today? Welcome to the Chamber. I hope you're enjoying our proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in gallery. Masi. Item 6, acknowledgements. Member for Range Lake.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 1-18(2):
COURTENEY LIZOTTE, CANADA'S 40
OUTSTANDING PRINCIPALS AWARD
RECIPIENT

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge Courteney Lizotte. Ms. Lizotte has been with the Range Lake North School for the past five years and has been the principal for the last two years. Earlier this year she was nominated by the PAC president of Range Lake North and has been recognized by The Learning Partnership as one of Canada's 40 Outstanding Principals this year. She's the only educator to be recognized for this

acknowledgement from the NWT in 2016. She'll collect her award alongside other recipients in Toronto on February 23, 2016. We're grateful to have Ms. Lizotte within the Range Lake North School and look forward to many more years of her providing quality programming for the children within our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Acknowledgements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 2-18(2):
PASSING OF ESTHER BRADEN

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge the passing of Esther Braden. Mrs. Braden arrived in Yellowknife with her husband and five children in 1964 and she soon became a tireless and indispensable volunteer in our community. She most recently was involved with the Hard of Hearing Association and with the seniors, and she was a frequent entertainer at Aven Manor often playing the piano, which was a true love of hers. Her efforts earned her an Order of Canada in 2006. Mrs. Braden helped build Yellowknife in her reflection: kind and caring. As well as her own contributions to public life, Mrs. Braden's son George was the first premier of the NWT and her son Bill was a two-term Member for Great Slave. I offer the family my deepest sympathy for their loss. Their loss is our loss too. Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 10-18(2):
BUILDING CANADA PLAN

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the Building Canada Plan last year the GNWT received a little over \$300 million with just under \$300 million of those dollars going to the Department of Transportation. Just under \$300 million was put into bundles of under \$100 million each, sorted out into the three bundles. Bundle number one has been rolled out and construction is underway. I'd like to ask the Minister of the Department of Transportation, when will the department be rolling out bundle number two? Thank you.

MR. Speaker: Masi. Minister of Transportation.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department is currently seeking approvals required for bundle two. The current plan is to ask for supplemental funding for bundle two in the May/June session so work can proceed this summer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BEAULIEU: I'd like to ask if the Minister has been in touch with his federal counterparts or infrastructure counterparts from the federal government, and if they recognize the urgency of the approval of these bundles so that the construction companies that will be doing the work can do their planning for the summer.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Both the federal government and the territorial government have recently gone through an election, which slowed down the process for approvals on this. Now the new governments are in place and bundle two is underway. I have recently met with Minister Sohi in Ottawa, and the new federal government has indicated they're all ready to approve the projects and get them out the door as quickly as possible.

MR. BEAULIEU: I wonder if the Minister would be able to provide us some sort of a status on bundle number two from the Canada Building Plan, sort of like a status that gives us the next steps so that people out there that are in the business of construction can hear firsthand what type of schedule they're looking at in order to do their planning.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Bundle two will be considered by the Financial Management Board very soon.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Final supplementary. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm assuming we're beyond that, where we have gone to the federal government, the federal government has approved one bundle. This is a matter for holding out the second bundle. I think I need to know, and I think the people need to know, when. If it's approved, then if it's going to approval, what is the anticipated time that we can approve it? It's very important that people in construction have things like bridges. I know that there's two bridges that go between Hay River and Fort Resolution that need to be replaced. There's going to be some heavy hauling if the pellet plant goes through in Enterprise and that the deal with the Forest Management Agreement in Fort Resolution is complete, then those bridges have to be in good condition in order to do the haul. They're planning on doing that over several years. I just want to get a better indication than it's going to the Financial Management Board. I'd like to get some timeline, some sort of assurance that there will be some work this summer.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: If the Financial Management Board approves bundle two, then the officials at the Department of Transportation will seek federal approval on bundle two from Infrastructure Canada. As far as the bridges go, they are also in bundle two's application, so the

Member can be reassured that that is in there. We would then be in a position to return to the House for the May/June session to seek approval from the Legislative Assembly for the funding of bundle two.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi, Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 11-18(2):
BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Finance. Today the Minister of Finance in his update is asking us to consider a 10 per cent cut in the territorial budget in the order of \$150 million. Yesterday, in the Opening Address, the government said they want people to see collaboration and collective decision-making aimed at addressing pressing challenges together, so with those two things in mind, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance what the plan is for consulting the public about the next budget.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Finance.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given the timing of the elections and the need to get our budget through, for this particular year our plan is to proceed with working with committee and we're hoping that we get a lot of feedback from the public through the Members of this Assembly. We've heard from a number of people their views on the budget, but given the timing of the election and our need to get the budget through, it was not in our plan to do an actual public consultation this year. However, that may change in the future when we have a bit more time to develop our business plan and our budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I don't think that hoping the public will give their input into the budget process is a very systematic response to the scale of change that the government is planning to make. Therefore, I would like to hear that the government is going to attempt some consultation on the budget in the next few weeks, whether that means visiting communities, having an online tool available, or putting ads in the paper, that there is a mechanism for people to respond to the big changes that are coming their way.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We're not hoping the public responds; speaking from past experience, we do know that the public is fairly plugged in and they do respond to a lot of the issues that we raise in this House. I take the Member's point, though. I'll work with the department to see if there's an online tool that they could use as far as public consultation goes. To actually go out and visit the communities at this late stage of the game and the amount of money that it may cost, may not bring much value at this point. However, as I said before, we would

consider doing something when we're developing the 2017-2018 budget.

MS. GREEN: Thank you for that commitment. I urge you to make good your promises for collaboration and open government by consulting people in whatever manner is feasible within the time that is available. This is a very significant change in direction for the NWT and I think that people will want to have their say on it. Further to your fiscal statement today, as you know, government jobs are very valuable jobs, especially in the small communities. I'm wondering whether you have done any analysis of the impact of the loss of jobs at the local level and that you'd be able to share with us?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We are working on the options now, and for me to say anything in here about those options would pre-empt our consultation with committee. We are going to have our meetings with committee and then through the business planning process, committee will have an opportunity for feedback to the government before we develop our main estimates for the May/June session. Committee will have an opportunity to see what some of the plans are for the upcoming budget. Then, during the business planning or the budget process, we have a number of different options in place as far as letting everyone know if they're affected or not.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Final short supplementary. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm looking for a commitment from the Minister of Finance to follow evidence-based decision making in developing his budget. That would mean not only looking at the fiscal benefits of investing in infrastructure, but also in the potential problems of cuts, not only to the people who are working now, but to the possibility that they may also leave the territory and take their share of the Territorial Formula Financing funding with them. My question to the Minister is: Will he commit to evidence-based decision-making in this budgetary process?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The evidence points to the fact that our expenditures are rising a lot quicker than with our revenues, and with our limited base, we would put a terrible burden on those that are paying taxes. It could work both ways. We may have folks leaving if they're paying too many taxes or we could have folks actually come into the territories if we provide opportunity and a fairly steady, predictable tax rate. Again, as I said before, we will commit to working with committee. We have committed to working with committee in reviewing our budget and our options, and I need to point out that Newfoundland case has been mentioned in this House a number of times already. They're looking

at reducing approximately 30 per cent of their budget, and they're consulting. I think it's a three-year process, and they're also consulting about a complete reorganization of their government. We're not quite there yet. Our scale, I think ours is about 8.5 per cent of our budget, so we need to be fiscally responsible and we will continue to do that in conjunction with committee members and Members of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

QUESTION 12-18(2):
CHILD CARE FACILITIES IN THE SAHTU

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned in my Member's statement, I'm addressing my question to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on the daycare facility in Norman Wells and the surrounding communities as well. My first question is: what level of funding is being committed to the daycare home and the daycare facilities in the Sahtu communities?

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department is funding, I believe, the Norman Wells Land Corporation, and they're providing programs in Norman Wells. We have had proposals from day homes. However, none of the day homes have met the standards that we can supply funding for. But the Norman Wells Land Corporation is getting funding and we are open and consulting with the community to try to open up the daycare in Norman Wells again and provided them with the options for funding, for rent, mortgage, food, all those types of expenses. We'd like to continue to work with the community and the residents of Norman Wells to seek options to open up the daycare in the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MCNEELY: We have talked a number of times here on the physical limitations of our government, and currently, we are going into the closure of a fiscal year and entering into a new one. Would the Minister commit to supporting a funding model for the Norman Wells facilities? As said, it's a beautiful building here donated by the private sector, this government, and the Town of Norman Wells. It'll be a waste to see that facility going through another year of not providing services.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned earlier, in 2015 we had consultants go into the community, meet with community members, and give them the options in terms of how to start up a licensed daycare, the funding that is available to the community. Unfortunately, community members after the consultations decided not to go ahead with

the daycare. However, as the Member asked, there is start-up funding as well as program contributions should the community want to move ahead with the project that could total in the amount of, through our programs within the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment, about \$89,000 for start-up in program contribution. So, as I mentioned, I would invite the community members to continue to look at opening the daycare facility.

MR. MCNEELY: On the comments and the information provided, we did have a new administration system or administration personnel in the Town of Norman Wells, so I look forward in working with the Minister's department and the new staff of the Town of Norman Wells to explore the re-opening of the facility there with the contributions as said.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: It is unfortunate that the daycare centre did close in 2012. We do recognize that early childhood development is very important throughout the Northwest Territories, hence the Right From the Start Action Plan that we're developing, but I will commit that the department will work with the new administration to look at the possibility of opening the daycare again in Norman Wells.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 13-18(2):
COMPLETION OF WILLOW RIVER BRIDGE
PROJECT

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to my Member's statement, I have questions for the Minister of Transportation. I'd like to ask the Minister: Will the Minister ensure the department will provide adequate funds to complete the final stage of our Willow River Bridge in Aklavik? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Transportation.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Transportation has advised the Hamlet of Aklavik that the bridge project has exceeded the funding capacity of the Community Access Program. It has been recommended that the Hamlet of Aklavik look into other alternatives of funding for this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: I realize the funds have run out for the Community Access Program for this year, but in the next budget, which starts in April, will the Minister assure the community that funds will be available through the Community Access Program to complete this project?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: The Community Access Program is not included in the appropriation

funds for the first part of this fiscal year because there's no eligible expenses for applicants for work in this period of time. We'll have to talk about it in business planning.

MR. BLAKE: I realize the Minister is new to this position and he doesn't realize that to do the work that's needed has to be done with three weeks in April, that's in our new budget. Otherwise, it'll have to wait until next February or March to even start this work, which holds this project up by at least a year. That's just not going to work for the community. That's holding this project back. That's even longer the community will have to wait to progress with, whether it's tourism or... But I'd like to ask the Minister, will the Minister ensure that, through the appropriation, that the Community Access Program is in there, because a lot of these communities depend on these programs.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: We have to submit the appropriations to the business plan for the upcoming fiscal year, and we're going to have those timely discussions through business planning.

MR. BLAKE: I can't stress it enough. All three of my communities depend on this Community Access Program, and I just want to emphasize the importance of this program in our small communities. It's more of a comment, but I sure hope that Cabinet could make those adjustments.

MR. SPEAKER: I'll take that as a comment. Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

QUESTION 14-18(2):

ENROLMENT DIRECTIVE FOR FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my statement today about Ecole Boreale and the ministerial directive, I will be directing my questions to the honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Will the Minister commit to conducting review in good faith of the ministerial directive related to the enrolment of students in French first-language language education programs before the end of this school year? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I'd just like to thank all the parents and families who have written letters to the department in regards to concerns with the French first language education programs and enrolment of students. The ministerial directive has been in place since 2008, and I have communicated with the Commission scolaire that I have directed the department to do a review and look to see if any changes should be considered. Hopefully those will be done before the next school year begins. Thank you.

MR. SIMPSON: That's good to hear that a review is underway. I'd like to know what impediments or roadblocks that the government perceives stand in the way of loosening these strict admission requirements that are stopping the GNWT from bringing its admissions policy more in line with the rest of the country.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As the Member had mentioned in his opening remarks around the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as the government, we need to ensure that we meet our obligations under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms when providing French first-language education programs throughout the Northwest Territories, as well as having facilities open for all children. Those are some of the roadblocks that we're seeing that might prevent this, but we are looking at other jurisdictions, seeing what they're doing that can help loosen up some of these restrictions.

MR. SIMPSON: I'd just also like to ask, would the Minister commit to working in good faith with the Hay River District Education Authority (DEA) and the Commission scolaire to find a solution to the Ecole Boreale enrolment issue?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, the department is committed to working with the Hay River DEA and the Commission scolaire. We did have a meeting earlier this year with the Commission scolaire, as well as we sent letters out to their staff. We will be sending letters out, as well, to the families that have sent letters to the department, and we do have a meeting set up with the Hay River DEA in the near future to discuss some of these concerns that are brought up from the community of Hay River.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Final supplementary. Member for Hay River North.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is all good news and I appreciate the Minister's response. Finally, I'd just like to ask the Minister, is it the department's working assumption that Ecole Boreale is viable in the long term as a French language school in Hay River? Thank you.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, the department does consider that Ecole Boreale is viable in the long-term as a French language school. As mentioned, we do want to serve the francophone population in the community of Hay River. Earlier I talked about the review of the ministerial directive, which hopefully should address a lot of these issues. I do thank both Members from Hay River for bringing these concerns forward to the office and to the department.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 15-18(2):
YELLOWKNIFE RCMP STAFF HOUSING

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the RCMP has recently stopped providing housing for its staff posted to Yellowknife. I also understand that when the Police Services Agreement was renewed for 20 years, a new Contract Management Committee was created for consultation on just these kinds of issues. Can the Minister of Justice confirm if the RCMP is pulled out of staff housing in Yellowknife and whether the GNWT was consulted in any way before it occurred? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The RCMP has been examining its policies in relation to providing housing, not only in the Northwest Territories, but across the whole of the country. Currently, housing is provided by Public Works, Government Services Canada, to RCMP members and, as I say, they are reviewing that policy. Public Works has made it clear that they will no longer be providing housing in Inuvik, Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, Norman Wells, Hay River and Yellowknife. "G" Division is working with the NWT Housing Corporation for the provision of housing in most of those locations, but not in Yellowknife where housing will no longer be provided to members. It is thought that Yellowknife has a viable housing market where appropriate housing is available for sale and rent. This is, of course, an internal management function of the RCMP, so they do speak to us, but really, in the end it's their decision. They've made this decision and they don't think that it will affect recruitment. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I'm very concerned about the ability of the RCMP to attract and retain staff to Yellowknife. Now we've heard that this is going to potentially impact a number of other communities. Can the Minister of Justice tell this House whether there will be any monitoring and evaluation of the impacts on recruitment and retention of RCMP in this transition to private housing? Will that monitoring be carried out by GNWT or the RCMP itself?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: "G" Division continues, as I mentioned, to receive a large number of applications, and they don't expect that this change of housing policy will affect that. As I say, it is mainly an internal duty of the RCMP to look into this, and they are doing so. They will be consulting with us, but ultimately it's their decision.

MR. O'REILLY: I appreciate the answer from the Minister, but although it may be an internal management issue for the RCMP, I think this has potential impacts on our communities in terms of the ability of the RCMP to provide appropriate

policing. So once again, can the Minister tell this House whether the GNWT then, if the RCMP won't do it, is going to monitor the impacts of this change in policy in terms of retention and recruitment?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, we will of course be monitoring with the RCMP if there are any changes and if there are problems, and I assume that if there are issues of retention, they will speak with us and there may be further changes in policy. They are not expecting this change of policy to have any effect on the recruitment, as they already currently receive far more applications than there are positions, so they're not expecting a change in that. If there is a change in that area, I would expect they would consult with us.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Final supplementary. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to seek a commitment, then, from the Minister that he would report back to the House perhaps within six months about retention and recruitment rates for the RCMP in the communities where this transition in housing policy is going to take place. Thank you.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I think I can make that commitment. I will be in touch with the RCMP, and certainly if there are any changes in the issues of recruitment, we will be discussing those with them, and perhaps there will be tweaking of this policy. But they are fairly certain that this will not affect retention or recruitment.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Colleagues, I would like to take this time to direct your attention to the visitors in the gallery. Mr. Eugene Hodgson, the son of the late Mr. Stuart Hodgson, the first resident Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, and Evan, Eugene's son who travelled from Vancouver, B.C. to be here with us this afternoon for the memorial for Stuart Hodgson. Welcome to the gallery. Masi.

---Applause

Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

QUESTION 16-18(2):
SUPPORTING A LOCAL WORKFORCE

Mr. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents of Nunakput are leaving the region to work in other parts of Canada around the world. Recruiting Northern residents is key to keeping our language and cultures in the workplace strong. I believe that we need to start implementing northern education for northern residents. Land claim agreements and on-the-land programs are important programs that need to be part of the curriculum in everyday life in schools in the North. The NWT is one of the most diverse regions in Canada and around the world. Take a look at the

fur industry. This is a great example. The Junior Kindergarten Program is an effective way to give children in the North an opportunity to assert a good education and I encourage this program to continue. By the tone of my voice, you probably know who I'm going to ask this question. This is towards the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Are there any programs in place to ensure that our new graduates and skilled workers stay in the NWT? Quyanainni.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the department has a lot of programs in place to ensure that our graduates that leave high school do get into the workforce. The main one that we do have is we do have a 10-year strategic framework called the Skills 4 Success. We are looking at developing a concrete action plan to address those that will help improve employment success for NWT residents, and also close that skills gap for our employers and our residents that are looking for work, and help adjust some of those individuals from ages 18 to 24 that are not in the workforce, they're just out of school, so try to get them back into the workforce. So yes, the Skills 4 Success Strategic Framework and the action plan is in place to address those needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: How did Education, Culture and Employment determine which areas of employment to focus their efforts on?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Most recently, the department had developed a comprehensive labour and market information report and it got consultation from people across the Northwest Territories, so that's what we looked at where we needed to address those issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: My second question is: When will the NWT labour market forecast be available to the public?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: The department is happy to release this report so that all residents of the Northwest Territories can see where our actions are and what our priorities are. That report will be released next month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Final supplementary. Member for Nunakput.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: My follow-up question is: how are local people involved in the Skills 4 Success Initiative Action Plan. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I mentioned for the Skills 4 Success 10-year Strategic Framework, we are going to be developing some concrete actions. We

are going to be consulting with our stakeholders across the Northwest Territories, and that includes Aboriginal governments, industry, business, and education, as well as other training programs. We will get out there and we will be consulting with our stakeholders to develop an action plan that is for Northerners and for Northern businesses.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

QUESTION 17-18(2):
ARCTIC WINTER GAMES APPLICATION
PROCESS

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my Member's statement talked about this morning, it was about process. Can the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs please explain the process used to get the Arctic Winter Games application process out to athletes across the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that they do have local and regional trials, and if they make it through the regional trials, if they get to the territorial trials, usually there's some criteria in place. I think if there's an international trip like there is at this particular Arctic Winter Games, there's an expectation that they would have passport applications and the ability to access passports as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I may have not heard the answer I'm looking for. I was trying to find out how in the process that information was getting out to the people.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: There would obviously be information shared with the public as to the trials that are going on. I think the regional trials are normally run by the folks in the region. They have their way of getting the word out there. But again, there's an expectation that, and I believe on the Sport North website, there's also opportunities for knowing which trials are coming up. Being an Arctic Winter Games here, there's an expectation that all the athletes that plan to participate know of the trials coming up. I will review that, though, and see exactly how the call goes out for athletes wishing to participate or take part in the trials.

MR. THOMPSON: I'd like to ask the Minister, at this point in time, what role does the Municipal and Community Affairs staff have in getting this information out as well.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I can actually ask the Member that question in his former role, so I've got to be careful what I say here.

---Laughter

Our regional staff are all very involved in the Arctic Winter Games trials and the selection of athletes. It's actually a part of what they do and it's part of what they believe in, supporting the athletes that are getting out there, so they would play a role in helping to organize trials and working to get athletes to the next level.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: I won't say anything bad about the Minister, if this was his response. I would ask the Minister: With this process of the Arctic Winter Games, will he commit to do a review of the selection process and how the team is made up and the government's role as part of it.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will commit to the Member that I will have a discussion with the sporting sector as to the involvement of all those, including the Government of Northwest Territories, because we want to ensure that our selection process is fair and gives all those athletes in small communities the opportunity to participate in the games. I can say that from experience that two Arctic Winter Games ago we had 27 of the 33 communities that were actually represented by athletes. I think that's indicative of all the good work that goes on out in the regions, in small communities. I think it's also a good indication of the level of support that this government has given to the folks in the small communities. As we heard this spring, we also have a partner now with Canadian Tire who is supplying a lot of equipment to the Northwest Territories that we can give to the small communities. All these partnerships help and I see 27 out of 33 communities as a good indication of the level of support from all forms of those folks that are involved in the sporting sector. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I went on a little too long. Sorry.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Deh Cho.

QUESTION 18-18(2):
RESPONSE TO THE TRUTH AND
RECONCILIATION COMMISSION REPORT

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier of the Northwest Territories. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report has recommendations in terms of how do we address the whole residential school experience in terms of its impact in First Nations communities. The

Government of Northwest Territories has been playing a lead role, which I commend, and I'd like to see the GNWT play a continued role at the national level. My question is to the Premier. There is great work with other partners at the national level and I wanted to ask the Premier if he could update this House as to what residential school survivors can expect in terms of the federal government's response to the TRC report and recommendations in terms of healing and wellness initiatives for residential school survivors. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for the question. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report is probably one of the major reports with regards to Aboriginal people and how residential schools affected them, and as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I'm the current chair of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group. With the new federal government in place, they have placed working with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal governments as a top priority. We have always reached out to the federal government to participate in the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, and I'm very pleased to say that when Minister Bennett, the Minister for Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, was in Yellowknife we had the opportunity to meet. She specifically requested that the federal government be part of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group. I see it as a significant opportunity for all of the provinces and territories, all of the national Aboriginal governments and the federal government working together, not only on truth and reconciliation, but on other important Aboriginal issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NADLI: Thank you to the Premier in terms of highlighting some of the major initiatives that are happening at the national level. The impacts of residential schools are prominently and significantly, of course, felt at the community level, and that's where families that have gone through this experience, from my parents to their parents, generations. The impacts are deep-rooted. What steps is this government undertaking to ensure that the federal initiatives of healing and wellness are brought to the community level?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We have interacted significantly with the commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I met with the Prime Minister; he reconfirmed his priority to deal with Aboriginal people, and we as a government have responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations and we will continue to work in that regard. With regards to the residential schools and the communities, we will continue to look to improve in that area, and as the

Prime Minister has said, reconciliation should be a commitment by everybody in Canada.

MR. NADLI: My final question is just a follow-up in terms of some of the information that the Premier has shared. One of the things that is disappointing is that there wasn't an exercise in terms of working with elders for them to document their experiences. One example in my home community that served the Sacred Heart Mission School, there was a society that was established to help former students to deal with the traumas of the past, but at the same time to guide the process in terms of giving expertise to the federal government. Has this government undertaken steps to ensure that bodies of that nature, like the Sacred Heart's Residential School Society, are consulted? Or else groups at the community level are brought into at least the stream of trying to build frameworks in terms of how these federal initiatives will come to the local level? Has there been work in terms of preparation work, and also, at the same time, a level of consultation with these bodies?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Those would be areas that I would have to follow up on, with regards to some of the specifics that the Member raises, but I do know that the federal government provides \$5 million a year through the Department of Health and Social Services for community wellness programs. Certainly, in my mind and in my view, the examples the Member raised certainly would fit into that area.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 19-18(2):

GNWT SUPPORT FOR 2023 CANADA WINTER GAMES

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there have been many questions over the last while on the level of support the Government of Northwest Territories would provide to the City of Yellowknife should the City decide to bid on the 2023 Canada Winter Games. Can the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs clarify for this Assembly and the residents of Yellowknife, the GNWT's commitment to financing the operations and infrastructure requirements to host the games? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I need to preface anything I say about the Canada Winter Games by stating that I can't speak for the will of the House, its Members, committees, or the actions of future government. It is understood that a games bid by the City of Yellowknife would require the GNWT to support its

share of the operational infrastructure requirements as per the standard Canada Winter Games tri-party agreement. If the City makes a bid, the GNWT will mobilize our departments to come up with potential financing models to meet the GNWT funding obligations. Our initial take was that this is an exercise that was doable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thanks to the Minister for his reply. One of the other complaints I hear is that given the current state of the economy, it will be difficult for the GNWT and the City to come up with the required funding. Can the Minister comment, please, in this regard?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: One of the things we need to remember is that it is seven years until the Canada Winter Games in 2023, and there are seven GNWT planning cycles prior to that. This gives us some time and flexibility to come up with the necessary funding to support our part of the Canada Winter Games.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you again to the Minister for his reply. One of the other concerns I hear is the GNWT's support for the building of an athletes' village. Can the Minister shed some light on the GNWT's role in the construction of an athletes' village?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Speaking as the Minister responsible for Infrastructure, I can tell you that if the City decides to proceed with the bid, and subject to direction from the Financial Management Board, the NWT Housing Corporation is prepared to enter and negotiate a 70/30 split on the construction of an athletes' village that will meet the needs of the Canada Winter Games and the NWT Housing Corporation for public housing. Given the expected increase in the number of seniors, this would also be a project that would benefit the seniors in the Northwest Territories as well. There is a possibility that we can use some federal social infrastructure money to pay for the government's share. We will obviously work with the City to see what they can come up with as far as their 30 per cent.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Final supplementary. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I again thank you for the response from the Minister. I have a sense that most folks do want the Canada Winter Games, but the biggest question continues to be how will the City afford their part. City council is giving consideration next week toward the possibility of a hotel levy, which could have considerable ability to support costs for the games. My question to the Minister is: Will the government support working with the City of Yellowknife to

possibly enact a hotel levy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The Canada Winter Games 2023 is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the city of Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories to those across the country with the national exposure it will get as far as media coverage goes. As far as a hotel levy, I think there are some amendments that need to be made to municipal legislation that would allow the local municipal governments to, through bylaw, create, collect, and administer levies on hotels. Until that legislation is done there is nothing stopping them from creating a destination-marketing fee that would apply only to the city or to each municipality as they decide to do so. It is a priority of Municipal and Community Affairs, and I think the initial work is going to begin during the life of this Assembly, to give the communities the opportunity to enact one, if that was the community's desire.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 20-18(2):
INCENTIVES TO SUPPORT MINERAL
EXPLORATION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've heard of the slowdown in our economy and the decline in mineral exploration. I'd like to ask the Premier what is being done to reverse the course of the slowdown in exploration and what concrete actions we're moving forward on.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment have been working very closely with the Chamber of Mines and we have developed a Mineral Development Strategy that encompasses a number of factors. Exploration is the key to finding new projects, new opportunities for development. One of the areas that we are trying to do is to help stimulate exploration and we have a Mining Incentive Program, which we implemented in 2014 and are again funding for 2015. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: The Mining Incentive Program is very similar to a program they have in Yukon as well. However, the Yukon program is nearly twice as large in available funding and has additional funding for late-stage advancement projects. Will the Premier commit to reviewing the program and possibly expanding it, given the importance of getting exploration back on track in the Northwest Territories?

MR. BOB MCLEOD: The Yukon has a similar program and they spend \$1.4 million in their Mining Incentive Program. We have identified \$400,000 on an annual basis for our Mining Incentive Strategy. It's application-based and this year we received 12 corporate and nine prospector funding applications for a total of \$1.1 million. We have to go through a review process to identify which ones we will fund. Certainly recognizing that mining is the largest part of our economy, it represents 40 per cent of our economy, we want to not only maintain what we have but we also want to find new prospects. Our experience with the Mining Incentive Program is that it has already provided for success in a number of claims that have been discovered using these funds, so certainly, I would want to entertain and look at the possibilities of what we can do to improve on the program.

MR. TESTART: That is exactly why I asked these questions today. We have heard at length of how great the program is and how it is achieving results. Those are the kind of the results we need to move our economy forward and I'm pleased to hear that that the Premier will be looking at expanding the program and the possibility there.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: When we have successful programs it becomes a matter of priorities and with the mandate that will be tabled on Monday and once finalized that will allow us to go forward with our business planning. Certainly, this would be an important area for consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 21-18(2):
IMPACT OF WATER LEVELS ON
HYDROELECTRIC POWER GENERATION

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years it has been well publicized that the Power Corporation has received large amounts of money from this Legislature to keep the costs of power down to the residents of the NWT. I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation if he can tell the House what the water levels look like at Bluefish Dam. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Members of this House will know that in the last couple of years there have been significant contributions, \$20 million one year and \$27.5 million the last year to offset costs related to low water. I have spoken to senior management at the Power Corporation and they are optimistic that no further funds will be required going forward. Their

research indicates that the very low water levels of the last two years were a real anomaly. Going back to 1950, it was the lowest they had seen, and they're optimistic that water levels will be higher this year and going forward, so hopefully, they will not require any more funds from this government. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: That is good news. Good news for the residents of the Northwest Territories. If the water levels are not as high as anticipated by the Power Corporation, is there an immediate contingency plan that can be used, as opposed to just coming and asking for money? Is there another contingency plan that would address the issue if the water levels are down?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I understand in speaking with senior management that they have not in fact used up all the money from past years so there is some left over. Long-term, to deal with this issue, there will probably need to be a connection with the continental grid, which would be, of course, very expensive. But again, their research indicates that the water levels of the last two years are the lowest since 1950, and they are very optimistic that water levels will be higher this year and there will not be a problem in the next few years.

MR. BEAULIEU: Beyond a contingency plan and beyond the fact that water levels look good now, there's still potential for water levels to be down again and us being faced with this type of cost. Are there any other alternatives that the Power Corporation is looking at should the water levels go down again? Alternatives to diesel, is what I'm referring to.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The Power Corporation is always looking at alternatives to diesel. We, of course, want to reduce our consumption of diesel energy and so others such as solar and wind are being looked at as supplement, so that in the future if there are again low water levels, which is likely in the long term, that that issue can be dealt with not by using more diesel but by using solar, biomass, and other alternative energy sources.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 22-18(2):
DESIGNATION OF OIL AND GAS OPERATIONS
REGULATOR

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just noticed that there was a letter that was sent from the Premier to the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning about Minister Sebert assuming the responsibility for the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations. I'm just curious to know, is there a formal instrument and does it have to be

published in the Northwest Territories Gazette? Beyond just this letter, is there any other instrument that's required? A decision of Cabinet? How is this designation actually done? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a decision of Cabinet. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I understand, then, that it's a decision of Cabinet. Well, it's public now that it has been discussed in the House, but I presume then that the website is going to be updated to reflect this change. Is this something that appears in the Gazette? Is there any other sort of formal instrument that is required here?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: There is a media release that is going out and if there is a requirement for gazetting, then it will be gazetted. There did not seem to be an urgency because there is very little oil and gas activity going on, so all of the required processes would be done in due course.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The time for oral questions has expired. However, I will allow two supplementaries. Masi. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the Commissioner's Opening Address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 2-18(2), Interim Estimates, 2016-2017; Tabled Document 3-18(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2016-16; Tabled Document 4-18(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2015-2016, with the Member for Hay River North in the chair.

**Consideration in Committee of the Whole
of Bills and Other Matters**

CHAIRPERSON (MR. SIMPSON): I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee wishes to report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (MR. SIMPSON): I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Chair, may I have the report of the Committee of the Whole?

MR. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report progress. I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Do I have a seconder? Member for Mackenzie Delta. Motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Monday, February 22, 2015, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
 - Motion 9-18(2), Referral of Tabled Document 1-18(2): Proposed Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2016-2019 to Committee of the Whole

18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 2-18(2), Interim Estimates, 2016-2017
 - Tabled Document, 3-18(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2015-2016
 - Tabled Document 4-18(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2015-2016
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned until Monday, February 22, 2016 at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

