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The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Friday, February 3, 2017

Members Present

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

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty): Good morning, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON KOLE CROOK FIDDLE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL JAMBOREE

MR. THOMPSON: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. This past January 6-8, 2017, the Kole Crook Fiddle Association held its 14th Annual Jamboree in Fort Simpson. They've held the Jamboree in Fort Smith, Fort Providence, Hay River, and Fort Simpson over the last 14 years.

Mr. Speaker, Kole Crook was a Metis fiddler from Hay River who passed away at the age of 27 on December 31, 2001. He was flying from Fort Good Hope to perform at the New Year's Eve dance in Tulita when the plane he was on crashed. For the people who had the opportunity to know Kole Crook, they would describe him as an individual who would go into the community, introduce himself, and ask if there was anything he could help them with. He was a very spiritual person who had a lot of respect for tradition and elders.

In February 2002, Lewis Beck and Stella Pellissey decided to start teaching interested students in Wrigley how to fiddle so Kole Crook's fiddle legacy could live on. In March, they were able to bring an instructor, Andrea Hanson, to help, and that winter they played at the Beavertail Jamboree in Fort Simpson. This led to a request for assistance to help set up a club in Fort Simpson. From there, a series of workshops were held in the villages of Fort Providence, Kakisa, Hay River, and Wrigley during the summer of 2002. The Kole Crook Fiddle Association was incorporated as a society in January 2003, with five board members. The first act was holding a camp in March 2003. Volunteers with little or no fiddle experience kept the resulting fledgling fiddle chapters alive.

Mr. Speaker, we fast-forward to this past January, where there were 75 students attending the workshop, with only seven first-timers. Ms. Gerda Hazenberg, who is the president and has been involved with the association for at least 14 years, said this year's event was unusual due to the large amount of intermediate and advanced fiddlers who attended the jamboree. According to the Deh Cho Drum, instructor Calvin Cairns stated that the success of fiddlers in the North and their willingness to keep fiddling is one of the things he loves about the Kole Crook Fiddle Association.

At this time, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to finish my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues. I would like to thank the volunteers, instructors, and organizers for their hard work to keep the Kole Crook story and the love of the fiddle alive for future generations to come. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs for working with the association so they can access funds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TERRITORIAL AGREEMENT ON FEDERAL HEALTH CARE TRANSFERS

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Health and Social Services budget is the largest in the GNWT, at \$414 million for this fiscal year, and, incredibly, it's not enough to meet existing or future healthcare needs. The new healthcare funding deal announced last month isn't going to make a huge difference to the bottom line. Thanks to a decision by the Conservative government, beginning April 1st this year, the Canada health transfer was scheduled to drop to 3 per cent a year.

When the Premiers met in December, they wanted a 5.2 per cent increase, but, in a bilateral deal reached last month the Premier walked away from the coalition and settled for a 3 per cent annual increase for the next 10 years. That's half of what we get today, and it's important to note this is a

10-year deal. Ottawa is offering a continuation of the medical travel and healthcare money, as well as \$7.4 million in targeted money for healthcare infrastructure and \$6.1 million for mental health initiatives for youth. That still leaves a significant shortfall.

Almost a year ago, the Minister of Health and Social Services released the long-term care study. It revealed an additional 259 beds will be needed in the next 10 years. He estimated that it would cost \$200 million to build or provide these beds, and an additional \$33.5 million annually to provide services to those clients.

Mr. Speaker, a \$7.4 million contribution by the feds over the next ten years is literally a drop in the ocean, and spending to meet these long-term care bed needs should be under way already. Where is the money going to come from? Not from Canada, under the terms of the current deal, so that means that GNWT will have to find the money from other sources. That means making cuts or increasing revenue. Anxious Northerners want to know.

Healthcare is a hot-button issue with voters, and rightly so, but information is hard to find. The GNWT hasn't even issued its own media release on the deal. Contrast this approach to the hoopla that accompanied the announced federal funding for the road to Whati. Is the Premier not proud of deciding to walk back his commitment to negotiate with his colleagues on a national health deal rather than participate in a bilateral agreement? Is he not proud of the money he's bringing to the Territories for healthcare?

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. GREEN: Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier told CBC's Power and Politics of the negotiations with Ottawa that "we got what we needed and wanted." If that's the case, Mr. Premier, tell us how this healthcare deal is going to accomplish those goals, because the math that we have now doesn't add up. I will have questions. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHERN FRONTIER VISITORS CENTRE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. In my Frame Lake riding lies the heart of tourism service in our capital. The Northern Frontier Visitors Centre is a physical presence and is an online and on-call

resource for tourism. The centre is the heartbeat of tourism for Yellowknife.

Just look at the numbers. In 2016, 55,233 people visited the centre. This is a visitation increase of more than 400 per cent from 12,230 visits recorded in 2015. The centre mailed out information packages to 7,402 customers last year. Website visits totalled 155,000 hits. The airport gift shop run by the Northern Frontier Visitors' Association was visited by 35,521 customers, and information requests increased from 3,000 in 2012 to more than 8,600 last year. Canadian visitors account for about a third of the centre's business.

The results, thanks in large part to the centre's information promotion activities, for prospective visitors and walk-in guests tourism is a major economic success story here in Yellowknife. Consider aurora tourism alone: since 2008-2009, aurora viewing visitation in the Northwest Territories centred almost exclusively in Yellowknife has jumped 440 per cent, from 5,500 visitations to 24,300 last year. Spending has soared right along, rising from \$10.2 million in 2011-12 to \$40 million last year; a 390 per cent increase. As anyone watching the new parkas knows, visiting the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre is a must for most of these tourists.

As anyone who has visited the centre knows, the building is falling apart. The rear portion of the building has been closed, eliminating display space for visitors. Major renovations or a total replacement is inevitable.

A structural engineering study is under way now, co-funded by CanNor and the GNWT. The study will examine key questions. Is there a long-term permanent fix to the structural instability of the building besides a levelling or other system that requires continual monitoring and adjustment? Can the damaged rear portion of the building be removed and an addition be reconstructed? Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi to my colleagues.

Does the entire Visitors Centre -- is it unsalvageable and is a new facility required? A parallel study is also under way to evaluate and quantify the importance of the centre for Yellowknife tourism, economy, and scoping possible sources of funding for either renovation or replacement.

With numbers like the ones I've cited today, it's hard to imagine how any study could fail to establish that the centre is an essential piece of

Yellowknife tourism infrastructure. I'm raising these accomplishments today to salute the contribution of the centre and its staff to the vitality of the Yellowknife economy. I'm raising the centre's needs to reinforce how continued support and assistance from this government must ensure this economic locus doesn't suffer from a lack of wisely invested new resources. I'm sure all the Yellowknife MLAs are going to be watching closely for the results of the engineering and economic studies as well. I'll have some questions later today for the Minister of Tourism. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
NORMAN WELLS OILFIELDS REMEDIATION
AND RECLAMATION

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my Member's statement is on the Esso Norman Wells reclamation. Mr. Speaker, I produced a discussion paper on this industrial land remediation and reclamation issue last September, and the intent of stewardship responsibilities under devolution.

Mr. Speaker, being responsible and proactive would mean setting up an oversight committee and only show to the federal government, a one third shareholder of the oilfield, and the operator that we take these responsibilities very seriously, but also demonstrate to the rest of the NWT residents.

Mr. Speaker, this reclamation has seen approval of the closure and reclamation permit approved by the Sahtu Land and Water Board issued prior to Christmas. One particular example of oversight is an old, abandoned landfill outside the proven area boundary. This contamination was a disposal site for many different types of industrial waste and containers. I know, because I was paid to put it there.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, later I will have questions for the Minister of Lands and see if I can get paid again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HEATING ISSUES AT THE JOE GREENLAND
ELDERS' CENTRE

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during the last sitting in October I had a few questions for the Minister responsible for the

Housing Corporation about the heating of the Joe Greenland Centre, a home for elders in Aklavik.

We've been through a few ups and downs with the Joe Greenland Centre. Back in 2012 it had closed down, but thanks to the work of Members and government at the time, it reopened in the fall of 2015. The Department of Health and Social Services teamed up with the Housing Corporation on the design. The new facility has many different modern features; all the things that help seniors age in place and maintain their independence, like wide doorways, no step entrances and a main floor bathroom.

Last year, though, there were a few hiccups. I learned that elders were too cold in their new home. They ended up using space heaters to stay warm. Four units and a cost of \$1,440 in the winter of 2015-16.

Still, the Housing Corporation did take action. A contract to install additional radiators was awarded and they planned to finish the work by the end of October 2016. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, my constituents are still advising me that high heating costs are being passed on to the residents, Aklavik elders. Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister and I can get to the bottom of this today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll have questions later today.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess it's my turn to weigh in on the issue of junior kindergarten. Sadly, I'm not sure if discussions this week following the Budget Address have cleared up the many questions people have.

For the record, I've been a supporter of JK through the election campaign and since. I remain a strong advocate of the program. I recognize that families and communities are different, having different needs and resources to apply to their children's education. Many parents have come to me to say that JK must be fully funded. They say it must not diminish other programs or interfere with other successful early childhood education initiatives.

I have urged the Minister and department officials to work closely with those grade education providers, making sure we offer the best possible education programs for all four-year-olds. Adding JK to our education system must not mean that we lose teachers or resources from some other part of the system.

It's also important that we clarify our commitment to inclusive schooling. Our mandate states our commitment to inclusive schooling in grades K through 12. Mr. Speaker, inclusive schooling must be a part of JK as well.

It is a very complex issue, and it is obviously an emotional one. Parents care deeply about the programs and opportunities that will shape their children's lives and future, and JK will not only have an important impact on four-year-olds, it will also affect families. JK may mean that a single mother or father can continue their education sooner, or a young family may be able to add an additional income. Because of these broad implications, let's consider junior kindergarten in its overall role in the education system.

Our goal is to graduate young people from our system prepared to move on to their next chosen level. They must be ready to move on to their next goal, be it post-secondary education, a trade, or a start in a career. Junior kindergarten will become an important first step in the system. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From what I am hearing, we need to get better at sharing information and collaborating on solutions. We have to engage with parents, students and teachers to build trust. We need to work together for our future. We must avoid the trap of divisive politics: communities against Yellowknife, region against region. We must build trust on this issue to make sure we do it right for our children, and for their children. We cannot lose sight of the ultimate goals, Mr. Speaker. We must commit to fully funding junior kindergarten. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NUNAKPUT HOUSING SHORTAGES

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the Nunakput region, an average of 37 per cent of households had housing programs, while an average of 20 per cent of households were in core need.

That means it falls below at least one of the acceptable standards for adequacy, affordability, and suitability, and the household would have to spend more than 30 per cent of its income to achieve suitable housing. While these rates are still too high, I do congratulate the Housing Corporation because both the rates have largely gone down

since the last community housing survey in 2009, but separate from quality of existing housing, we also know there's a big availability gap.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard from the Minister that, in the Northwest Territories overall, there are likely approximately 600 families on the public housing waiting list. That's roughly one third of the number of households already using public housing. We all know that we are staring down the barrel of this huge challenge, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, here in the House I talked about how availability affects Nunakput residents, homes for singles and single-parent families, and housing for emergencies like women seeking shelter from male violence and Northerners seeking respite from homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Housing later on. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RECOGNITION OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FOUR HAY RIVER WOMEN

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, I want to recognize the accomplishments of four outstanding women from Hay River, and to thank them for going above and beyond to serve their community.

Carolyn Carroll is the principal of Harry Camsell Elementary and Princess Alexandra Middle School in Hay River. This week, she was recognized as one of Canada's outstanding principals along with 39 other principals from across the country by the Learning Partnership, a national organization dedicated to publicly funded education in Canada. She's been teaching in the NWT for 30 years, and the last 20 in Hay River. Mr. Speaker, I've seen her passion for what she does, and how much she cares about children. I hope we can hold onto her for another 20 years.

Laura Rose is the driving force behind, and really the heart and soul of, the Hay River Soup Kitchen. For her work with the Soup Kitchen, she was recently awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers from the Governor General of Canada. This official Canadian honour recognizes exceptional volunteerism and is awarded to those who have made significant, sustained, and unpaid contributions to their community. She's been managing the soup kitchen for 21 years, almost from its very beginning, and the enormity of her contribution to Hay River can't be quantified. Our community is truly blessed to have her.

Jackie Milne is the president of the Northern Farm Training Institute in Hay River. She was recently awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by the Governor General of Canada. This award highlights remarkable achievements for exceptional deeds that bring honour to our country. She has dedicated her life to restoring food independence in the North by working to develop food production systems for our unique environment and by training citizens from across the North not only to farm, but to turn their farms into viable commercial enterprises that create local, sustainable employment. What she's created has the potential to change how we think about food in the North.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the other principal from Hay River, Lynne Beck. She recently received the Ministerial Restorative Justice Award from our own Minister Sebert for her significant contributions to establishing restorative justice practices in her school as an alternative form of discipline. She was nominated by her peers to acknowledge the positive difference and change for the better within the school that she's made. She recognizes that punishment does not work, so her policies focus on mediated conversations that result in concrete plans to move forward and restore the dignity of both sides in the conflict, and it's been working. In the last two years, there have been zero suspensions.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this Assembly will join me in recognizing these accomplishments, and thanking these women for their service to the community.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, I want to talk about a program that is a very good program for the community, called the Community Access Program.

Mr. Speaker, that program at this point has about \$1 million in it, and that's distributed to the communities. It seems like a small program, which it is a small program, but I found benefits to that program to be very big, actually. The benefits of being able to access gravel, as an example, is just one benefit that the Community Access Program, I found was something that was very positive for the community.

Some of the communities right now actually bring in a contractor that can come into the community with a crusher, crush gravel, and then they use that gravel around the community for foundations or roads, and so on.

One of the things that I thought ongoing funding for a program like the Community Access Program would provide would be the flow of money each year through that program that will allow a community say, for example, like Lutselk'e to buy themselves a small crusher, something they would need. By using that crusher to continue to build a road to Austin Lake is one of the places the elders thought would be very beneficial to opening up traditional area that, right now, people are accessing in the wintertime by snowmobile, and the summertime by four-wheeler. It's very difficult to get a boat into that area of their territory. One of the things they had asked is that a road be built out that way, and this is an access road program that can do that. It puts people to work. It trains people. Aurora College is putting a shop up for HEOs, heavy equipment operators, and this program can do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF THE SOCIAL WORK DIPLOMA PROGRAM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories is very important to me. I believe it is a way we can bring transformational change to the Northwest Territories and give a real future for our residents, and invest in our young people, allowing them to pursue opportunities here at home in the North and not have to leave to the South.

I've been quite dismayed to learn from constituents and students at the college that they were abruptly told the Social Work Diploma program has been cut from Aurora College and will be phased out by 2019. This has caused a great deal of upset amongst the current students and people who were looking forward to this opportunity.

Social work is, of course, a very important way to support northern communities. It is often difficult to bring a Northern perspective to that work when you learn to do it in a southern institution. The realities of working in a northern jurisdiction, in isolated and remote communities and, of course, with many Indigenous nations here in the North, require a specialized and focused training, something that Aurora College was offering.

This change comes at a time when we have not yet seen the new strategic plan for Aurora College that the Minister has committed to revealing this year. Yet we've seen several other strategic decisions seemingly made ahead of this strategy, a new multi-million-dollar heavy equipment operators' training facility at Fort Smith, and reorganizing the

college under labour development, which ties into the Skills 4 Success Plan. We are making strategic decisions, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister is making those strategic decisions and giving more direction to the college, yet we still do not have this plan.

When these decisions are rolled out, seemingly as and when suits the college or the department, it causes a great deal of consternation for students. We owe it to them to give them certainty about their future and so they clearly understand why these decisions are being made. I implore the Minister to speed up this work and ensure that the strategic plan and the future of Aurora College is known well ahead in advance for Northerners so they can start investing and preparing their future opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Item 3, returns to oral questions. Item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife North.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity today to recognize one of Yellowknife's very strong social community advocates and also a Yellowknife North resident, Arlene Hache. I also want to take this opportunity to recognize a couple of pages from my riding. I would like to recognize Simone Hipfner from Sir John Franklin School, as well as Riley Menard from Sir John Franklin School, both residents of Yellowknife North, and I certainly want to thank all of the pages for what they do for us. We can't do our job without them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Range Lake.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to take a moment to recognize Arlene Hache, who is a strong social advocate not only for the community of Yellowknife but for community members throughout the Northwest Territories. Arlene Hache is also a strong mentor of mine. I've known her as a personal friend over 20 years, and if anyone blames me for tenacity it's partly her fault. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Rocky Simpson, a Hay River resident, my former employer, my landlord, and my father. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Tyler Dempsey. He's the assistant manager of the Northern Frontier Visitor Centre. Staff there are very helpful. They offer a fantastic service. I'm not sure if she's there or not. I think Tracy Therrien might be up there. I can't see her. She's the manager, and I want to salute and congratulate them on all the fantastic work that they do. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to recognize Ms. Arlene Hache, a tenacious advocate for those in need in society and also a member of the Order of Canada. She's brought great distinction to the Northwest Territories for her years of work and great distinction to our House for being here today. Thank you.

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

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would also like to recognize Rocky Simpson, a business person there from Hay River working hard to provide some homes for my constituents. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 498-18(2):
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was asking the Minister of ECE a number of questions trying to clarify what's happening with junior kindergarten. In my role as the Chair of Social Development and in my travels in the communities, we've been hearing a number of concerns raised. So has the department looked at other options in communities with existing options instead of implementing junior kindergarten? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the report that we tabled last year, of course, we go out and we speak with all our stakeholders. As Minister responsible for Education, it is my duty to ensure that all families, all children, have access to the same quality of education and the best start at life when they start their education careers. Currently there are 11 communities in the Northwest Territories that do not have any licenced

early childhood programs. As a government, we have to make sure that we provide services that give every family, every child, the equal opportunity to have the best start in their life, and that's what we're doing when we implement junior kindergarten. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for the answer. However, we've heard from a number of communities that they're saying that they would like the money actually to follow the child instead of going directly to junior kindergarten. Has the department looked at this option?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I want to remind the Member that I did make a statement in the House last year about significant improvements and changes to our early childhood programs for funded daycares and day homes. Maybe I can remind the Member to look at that statement again and speak with his constituents and the people who provide these programs, because they're very significant changes that actually improve the quality of staffing, the quality of funding, and even the curriculums moving forward.

It's not possible for the GNWT to fund both the public education system and private non-profit early childhood programs when we look at delivering junior kindergarten. We can't continue to fund on top of what we're already funding. Delivering junior kindergarten within the school setting is both practical and fiscally responsible, because it utilizes already well-maintained, inspected, publically funded available school space for no additional rental or leasing cost to the GNWT, and it also provides more resources for the children that they wouldn't possibly get in the daycare or the day home.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for his answer. I have read that. I've read all your documentations. I've seen it, but I've got a whole bunch of communities out there that are asking these questions. When we're looking at implementing this junior kindergarten, has the department looked at additional costs such as busing, staffing to make sure that we have proper busing for these children, and the safety and then inclusive schooling with this junior kindergarten?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: In the Member's riding, junior kindergarten has been rolled out over a number of years. We haven't really heard any concerns from them. We're actually hearing really good positive feedback of how junior kindergarten has been implemented in Nahendeh. The department is working with education authorities, as I had mentioned yesterday, to examine the requirements such as busing, such as safety. Of course, safety is the forefront and priority within our education authorities, as well as at the department.

So when we speak with our staff and our education authorities and our superintendents, of course safety is in the forefront of the programs and services that they provide to junior kindergarten right up to grade 12. So, yes, of course we're looking at that.

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

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that great answer, and yes junior kindergarten has been implemented in the Nahendeh riding. I'm glad the Minister recognized that and it does work; however, we're hearing a lot of concerns across the Territories. It's great we're looking at it, but there's going to be hidden costs to it. So instead of asking, that'll be another set of questions later on, but in regards to junior kindergarten will this be voluntary or are the communities going to have to be implementing this? There seems to be some miscommunication and misunderstanding. So will the Minister clarify that it is voluntary or mandatory? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned yesterday when the question came up again, junior kindergarten will be implemented in the 2017-2018 school year. All education authorities will be required to offer junior kindergarten in 2017-2018, and education authorities have that option to offer it half day or full day.

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

QUESTION 499-48(2):
PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF AURORA
COLLEGE SOCIAL WORK DIPLOMA PROGRAM

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I spoke of the Aurora College. The Aurora College has reached the termination of their Social Work Diploma program. I wonder if the Minister can provide some detail on that and why that decision was made, Mr. Speaker?

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

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just recently in the news yesterday and the information I was given the students, as well as instructors for the Social Work Program, historically we've had low admission as well as low graduation rates within that program, although I will say that there have been some successes for the people that did graduate. Aurora College does have the autonomy to make these decisions in where they're looking at moving forward with the programs that

they provide. We support those decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: What direction has the Minister given to Aurora College for its programming offerings and overall direction ahead of the strategic plan being released?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Early on in my position in the role of Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, we had given our board of governors a mandated letter on how we roll out programs within the Aurora College system, and we met with the board chair and the president to make sure that it's reflective of our strategic plan moving forward and the mandate that we, as 19 Members, have mandated our priorities in this government, and that that was the direction going forward.

With the strategic plan, we did make reference to our labour market information report as well as our Skills 4 Success document to make sure that our Northerners get the education that they need to get into the jobs that are in demand across the Northwest Territories.

MR. TESTART: Thank you to the Minister for that. It's good that we're giving more hands-on direction to the college, as they take a lot of our funding and, in fact, nearly all of our post-secondary education funding to provide these services.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister believe that the college is properly resourced? Could the \$3-million reduction that's being proposed in this budget have anything to do with the termination of programs such as the Social Work Diploma degree?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned, the Aurora College does have that autonomy to make the decisions they need. We did give them direction with the mandate on the priorities that our government came up with at the beginning of the 18th Legislative Assembly. We looked at that labour market information demand. We are going through a strategy right now, and that strategy should be available in June. We are working with the board of governors, we are working with the president to make those changes.

MR. TESTART: Does this move by the college fit into the mandate of this Assembly and the direction it has set?

One of the things a Northern Social Work degree can do is help implement the TRC recommendations and help with the stated goals of reconciliation. I know first-hand that one of my constituents would prefer to work with an Indigenous social worker, with recent dealings with the health system. Does this move fit into the mandate? Can the Minister be clear in how it fits into the mandate, to cancel this program?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned, the program historically has had low admission as well as low graduation rates. The mandate that we provided as a government is focused on Aurora College's focus and looking at our mandate when they develop their strategic plan.

I've got to remind the Member that we do have a great student financial assistance program, that we continue to support our students who want to go and get an education in other institutions, and we'll continue to provide that support. We've made great enhancements to that support. Any student who is concerned about this program, we will work with them to have a smooth transition into other institutions that provide the same quality, that will meet the TRC recommendations, and can hopefully come back up North and work and provide services to our residents of the Northwest Territories.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, why are these decisions being made ahead of the strategic plan? I listed a number of them in my Member's statement, but we've seen a heavy equipment operators' facility, the termination of this diploma, aligning Aurora College with the labour market forecasting. These seem like strategic moves, so why are we making these decisions and reducing the contribution to Aurora College ahead of the release of the strategic plan? It seems like we are rushing to make changes without letting the public and Members of this House know exactly what is happening with our most important tool to provide quality post-secondary education in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, we are going to have the new strategic plan for the Aurora College. That's going to redefine how Aurora College runs its programs to provide the program services that our Northerners want to get into, and also for the in-demand jobs.

As I mentioned, this program in particular had low admission and low graduation rates. As I mentioned, again, the Aurora College, they have the autonomy to make the decisions that they want to do in terms of developing their whole strategic planning, and we support the decisions that the Aurora College makes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 500-18(2):
NORMAN WELLS OILFIELDS REMEDIATION
AND RECLAMATION

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned in my Member's statement, my questions will be to the Minister of Lands. My first one here, Mr. Speaker, is: if any, what has the department done on the industrial waste reclamation file for the northern oilfield? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Lands.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Imperial Oil is responsible for the remediation of oil and gas operation at Norman Wells. I understand they've recently posted a \$180-million irrevocable letter of credit. We're continuing to monitor and engage the Sahtu Land and Water Board's closure and reclamation planning process, so I can advise that we are on top of this file. This is a complex matter. Of course, the majority, in fact virtually all, of the assets of Imperial Oil are in the proven area, which is an area of federal responsibility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MCNEELY: I welcome the response. My next question is: will the Minister support an oversight committee? As I mentioned in my previous statements, there's a particular site outside the proven area boundary, so therefore there's a demonstration that oversight is needed outside of the proven area of boundary, which is an obligation to this government. My question is: is the Minister willing to support an oversight committee?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I understand that the MLA opposite also raised this question in September, and the Minister of ITI at the time thought that an oversight committee at that time was premature. I think that's still this government's position.

MR. MCNEELY: Moving forward, and to get some commitment so we have land management to address these issues of contamination, is the Minister willing to support, with my invitation, to have a stakeholders meeting here in Yellowknife, at his office?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, this is of course a very important issue, and I am willing to consider such a meeting. Perhaps it would be best if other Ministers were included, so I will consult with them and get back to the Member opposite on that issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

QUESTION 501-18(2):
NUNAKPUT HOUSING SHORTAGES

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Housing. My first question, Mr. Speaker, is: can the Minister identify the current number of in-use or available public housing and market rental units in Nunakput communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within the region, within Tuktoyaktuk itself, we have 162 public housing units and nine affordable housing units; in Paulatuk, we have 57 public housing units and nine affordable housing units; in Ulukhaktok, we have 90 public housing units and 11 affordable housing units. Sachs Harbour, we have 20 public housing units and five affordable housing units. That makes a total, Mr. Speaker, of 320 public housing units and 34 affordable housing units.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: I appreciate the response. Mr. Speaker, my second question is: how is the Housing Corporation progress in its housing project conversations with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: As some of the Members may be aware, NWT Housing Corporation had originally had money in that region within this budget, this coming budget. We had to do a reallocation of that because the federal government gave the monies directly to the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. So that was \$15 million totally; \$10 million coming up in the new fiscal year.

So the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, which I will call "IRC" from here on, does have the discretion to use their funding as they see fit. However, we have met with them and we both decided that it is in the best interest to the residents of the Northwest Territories to work in partnership. So we have had many meetings with the IRC. We have given them our templates; they have come back. We have signed agreements. They are looking at tailoring some of the projects a little bit more. We gave them a range of ideas. They are liking the seniors' units at this point. So we are willing to work with them on their terms to ensure that the housing needs within the region are met and that we are providing the best services to the residents of the Territories.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: It's good to hear that progress. Mr. Speaker, my third question is: can the Minister provide an update on the corporation's single fourplex projects and how the work may be expanded in the years to come?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Sixty-two per cent of the public housing wait list actually at this point is comprised of applicants needing a single bedroom unit, so we do have a huge demand for single units, and it's really hard to balance that need for singles when we also have needs for families with children. We will be putting a huge emphasis, though, within the coming year on singles. Like I had said in my previous answer, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation also recognizes the need for seniors and are working with us to address this issue within their region.

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

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response from the Minister. Mr. Speaker, my final question is: how is the corporation advertising its survey to Nunakput residents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Previous announcements to the Housing survey were provided through various methods: we did some media campaign; we did a radio campaign. We have our local Housing organizations and our government service officers trying to go work with people; the government services officers, when they're doing their home visits, to actually get the survey done.

It was requested that we extend the survey for one month at the beginning of this session. I have agreed because it is more important for me to get quality work than to just get the work done. So we are, again, refocusing our campaign. We are really being more strategic in our radio campaign so that it is actually hitting the targets of when the community people do listen to the radio more than other times, and the communities that have low response rates we are trying to get out and knock on more doors to be able to have a good representation from every community so that this process will help us develop the community plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 502-18(2):
HEATING ISSUES AT THE JOE GREENLAND
ELDERS' CENTRE

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to my Member's statement I have a few questions for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. I'd like to ask the Minister: has the Housing Corporation fully addressed the heating problems at the Joe Greenland Centre in Aklavik? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would love to be able to stand here on this side and say, yes, the issue is totally taken care of, but unfortunately that is not the reality of it. We have gone into the community; we've done some intensive reviews of the building. We have realized that there are some deficits within the building. We've realized that we need more heaters to be able to address the situation. There are some inequities within the heat that's in the building, so we are looking to address these things. In the meantime, though, every senior has a space heater.

One of the other things that we realized in looking at the building was that not only were there deficiencies within the heat system, but we did have a caretaker that was actually leaving the hallway doors open into the front entrance, which let the heat in. So we've also addressed that and asked him to please close the doors when he's in the building.

So we've spent a lot of time; the issues are not 100 per cent completed at this time, but we are projecting that they will be done. They are going in in February and that they will be completed by the end of this fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: As the Minister mentioned, we have space heaters in our elders' rooms. I'd like to ask the Minister: can the Minister advise me why elders' bills are still being affected by changing heating costs at the Joe Greenland Centre?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: It is really unfortunate to hear that our elders are actually feeling that their heating bills are more expensive. We do expect that it would be more expensive due to the space heaters; however, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has made a commitment that we will be paying for the elders' heat during this time until the units are fixed. So if there are any elders within the centre who do not know that and are paying their own bills, then we will be knocking on those doors and telling them to provide them to us and we will be reimbursing them and telling them that, in future, until the heat is resolved that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will pay for their heat.

MR. BLAKE: That's great news. I hope we could go back to last year when the actual problem started. Our elders have been paying these bills all last winter and this winter. I hope we could fix this problem. The other thing was, I know in our last government we were looking at putting more wood pellet boilers into many of the communities to fix

these sorts of issues. Would the Minister be willing to look at this for the Joe Greenland Centre?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: As said earlier, we have done a study to determine what the heat issues were. We are committed to working with the contractor and making sure that these issues are alleviated. At this point we are not looking at a boiler system in that building; however, if we continue to have heating problems within the next winter then we will then seriously consider this as an alternative.

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

QUESTION 503-18(2):
NORTHERN FRONTIERS VISITORS CENTRE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I apologize, I didn't give him much of a head's up, but he heard my Member's statement, so it's about the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre. I know he's been in there, he's seen the condition of the building. Based on the statistics that I mentioned earlier, would the Minister agree that the Northern Frontiers Visitors Centre is an indispensable facility for capital city tourism? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member had it in his statement today, all the facts that he's brought forward with the increased tourism in the Northwest Territories, which we are totally supportive of to help diversify our economy, we are totally in support of trying to help alleviate the burden on the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre, and I'm sure he's going to have more questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

MR. O'REILLY: It's not often that I actually get to congratulate a Minister, but, hey, that's fantastic. What a great lead-in to my next question. Can the Minister tell us how his department is consulting on and contributing to the completion of the assessment that I mentioned earlier on the condition of the building? Is the department prepared to move forward on the recommendations that come out of that study really quickly?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I guess, to inform the House, there are a couple of things going on. Public Works and Services and ITI are involved in a couple of things on this facility, and so is CanNor.

There are two parallel streams going forward. We've hired an engineering firm to look at and do

the structural investigation on the facility and what can be done and what needs to be done if anything can be done. At the same time, CanNor has supplied some money to do a business case on how do we move that forward for the Northern Frontier Visitors' Information Centre. That business case will decide if the current building meets the needs of tourism in the Northwest Territories, and particularly Yellowknife. It will also address if we need a new space, if that's going to be big enough or not, and the program delivery. So there are two things going on right now. We are waiting to hear back on the engineering firm and the business case.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Minister for that response. He confirms what I said in my statement, where there are a couple of different studies going on. I'm just wondering if the Minister can tell us, though, is there any funding in the 2017-18 capital or O and M budget with regard to additional assistance for the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I would have to double check that with the department, but I know we are waiting to get both of those studies back before we decide the next steps on how we can help with the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre.

There are a number of parties that would be involved in this, depending on what the reports come back. There is ourselves. There is the City of Yellowknife. The Northern Frontier Visitors Information Centre is a standalone organization. When this building was built in the early 90s, there were a number of people that contributed to building this, from the federal government to the territorial government to the City of Yellowknife. Once we get these reports back, we'll be glad to keep the House advised on how the next steps are going to be on this.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister for that response. I'm aware that there are a number of other visitors' centres in the Northwest Territories. We've got one at the border. There's one in Inuvik. I believe there's one in Fort McPherson. These operations are basically run as government offices.

There is significant support for these other centres, so can the Minister give me information about what sort of support is provided to these other centres? One of the models that's being considered for the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre is to basically turn it into a government operation. Can he just tell me a little bit more about what the other support is for other centres and whether he's prepared to look at

that as a model for the visitors' centre here?
Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll get back to the department and pull together how we fund and operate these other tourism centres in the Northwest Territories. I know in particular in Hay River, it's the Hay River Tourism Information Centre, but I believe we actually probably give them some kind of contribution to help offset some of the costs, but I will get that information together and give it to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 504-18(2):
TERRITORIAL AGREEMENT ON FEDERAL
HEALTH CARE TRANSFERS

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier gave some answers on the new healthcare funding deal which was signed with the federal government last month. He repeated, "The new healthcare deal provides what Northerners want and need." The healthcare accord has a 3 per cent cost escalator rather than the 5.2 per cent the Premiers asked for in December. I didn't hear a clear answer to the question yesterday, so I'm going to repeat it today: what is the point of walking away from those talks and then settling for less? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what channel the Member was watching yesterday, but I certainly didn't say that. We walked away because they offered us zero on the territorial health funding, and we obviously settled because they offered more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Premier. What was reported in the news is that Canada offered 3.5 and that the leadership walked away from that deal although they had wanted 5.2. You got 3. You wanted 5.2. There's a gap. Why did you settle for less?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The federal government said, "Take it or leave it." We didn't take it until they came back and offered more.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Premier. The problem is that healthcare costs are forecasted to rise significantly, and I gave some numbers in my Member's statement especially around the provision of long-term care to our aging population. That's on top of home care. What is the plan to ensure that healthcare funding is adequate to meet

our needs? Because I don't see that this deal with \$7.4 million in it will do it?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'm not sure what \$7.4 million she's referring to. I think she's referring to targeted funding of home care that the federal government raised. We spend approximately \$420 million. We also get funding through the Healthcare Act which is provided on a per capita basis, which, on a per capita basis for the Northwest Territories, works out to about \$40 million. This year, because the federal government reduced the healthcare funding percentages to 3 per cent, they offered targeted funding of \$13.5 million over ten years for home care and for mental health. We still have to work with the federal government to determine how they want us to spend that money. Obviously, \$13.5 million over 10 years works out to about \$1.5 million a year. That's not going to help us with the long-term home care, but it was never intended to do so.

Prime Minister Trudeau, during the government election, now Prime Minister, wrote to us and indicated that there was some significant infrastructure funding that would be available, including social infrastructure funding. We are still waiting for details. In his letter, he pointed out that funding under those programs could be used for seniors' housing and other options to raise money to provide for seniors' housing. We are still waiting for that detailed information. We're looking forward to the federal budget, upcoming, where we expect to have more details of those programs.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier. It's my understanding, but this math really needs to be set out, that the reduction of 6 per cent to 3 per cent is not offset by the \$13.2 million over 10 years. Infrastructure funding is good, but the long-term care beds cost \$139,000 each per year to operate. By the Health Minister's own estimate, that's \$33.9 million annually required to provide care to people in long-term beds. I'm still not clear. Where's that money going to come from? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The healthcare funding was not intended to provide for that. The federal government provided \$7.4 million over 10 years from homecare, and we're still waiting for them to tell us how they wanted to spend that targeted funding. The housing for seniors over the long term will have to come out of whatever funding that our government comes up with and whatever federal government funding we can access through the social infrastructure funding.

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

QUESTION 505-18(2):
PEOPLESOFT PUBLIC SERVICE HUMAN
RESOURCE REPORTS

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Human Resources a couple of questions on the PeopleSoft report. I'd like to ask the Minister if the Minister can provide the latest full PeopleSoft report to committee? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Human Resources.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Human Resources, we do have a number of reports that we can access through PeopleSoft. I can work with the Member opposite and see exactly what his requirement is for a report, and I can work with the department to see if we can pull that information together for committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BEAULIEU: I'm not expecting the Minister to maybe give me a definite answer in this, but if I recall the PeopleSoft reports did not identify unfunded positions, so the PeopleSoft report was essentially generated from the main estimates. I'd like to ask the Minister, while providing the PeopleSoft report, if the Minister could also provide a quick one-pager, or whatever it takes, to identify any positions that are not funded in the main estimates.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Again, as I said before, I will work with the Member opposite and we'll come up with exactly what the committee is looking for and then we will work with the department to put the information together to provide for committee. Through the PeopleSoft, as I said before, we can produce a number of reports and find out exactly what the committee is looking for, and I'm sure I'll have that conversation with the Member. We will pull the information together and provide it to committee.

MR. BEAULIEU: Another interesting dynamic about the PeopleSoft report, as I said, essentially it's generated from the main estimates. There is something that is not in report that I would like to also request the Minister to provide, and that is the amount of casuals who we have in the GNWT, long-term casuals. Perhaps any casuals who have been on longer than six months. I'm not referring to casuals where they work for a very short period of time and don't come back, but I am referring to casuals who meet the requirements to a certain degree and then get some break and then get back on, and I believe that there are many casuals who

are in the system for a long period of time. So if in addition to PeopleSoft, which is generally something that's generated from the mains, if the Minister could the additional casuals that the GNWT has also?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Through some of the reports that do come out of the Department of Human Resources we've included some of them, I think, in the conversations we've had with committee. You know, we talk about the number of employees we have, the number of indeterminate employees we have, the number of casuals we have, which is, in the spirit of transparency, we have approximately 852 casuals within the government system right now. So those type of reports I think we've tried to make available. I think some of the information that the Member is looking for, committee is looking for, is in addition to what we already provide. So I've made the commitment before that I will work with the Member and try to provide all the information that they're looking for.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not really changing directions here. I'm trying to more or less talk about PeopleSoft, but at this point on April 1st there's going to be some changes to PeopleSoft as a result of any reductions that may be in the budget. I'd like to ask the Minister when there's reductions that the Minister refers to, and the number was given in here and I don't want to get into the numbers things, but there was an interesting dynamic in there where indicated that many of those positions were not filled. I'd like to know if those positions were actually filled with casuals. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that level of detail I will have to work with the department and find exactly the information that the Member's looking for. So I do commit to working the Department of Human Resources and I will work in providing all the information committee is requesting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 506-18(2):
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to junior kindergarten. There's still a lot of confusion about this program, and I'd just like to try and clear it up for my constituents. I'd like the Minister of Education to just let us know what's the difference between junior kindergarten programming and, say, the programming at daycare and the difference

between junior kindergarten and kindergarten. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The difference is junior kindergarten will be a free play-based program that's offered to all communities across the Northwest Territories. Currently, there are 11 communities that don't have any licensed daycare programming, and we want to fix that. Daycares and day homes, they do their own programming; we also work with them to provide some programs, but junior kindergarten will be one that's offered throughout the whole Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMPSON: So is the level of education going to be higher in junior kindergarten than a child could expect in a daycare, in a playschool, something like that? That's really what I'm getting at.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: The NWT JK curriculum for four- and five-year-old children is play-based and supports children's cognitive, social, emotional, creative, and physical development, as well as cultural. As I mentioned, the EDI results that we've been seeing with the programs that already run in the Northwest Territories, we're seeing a big improvement in the communities that are offering junior kindergarten that are entering into the kindergarten system.

MR. SIMPSON: I realize that there are some communities who have no daycare, no playschool programs, so I'll confine this to Hay River. Can I tell my constituents that, if we're going to put daycare, playschool operators out of business, that it's for the benefit of our children because they're going to be getting a higher education in junior kindergarten?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Mr. Speaker, junior kindergarten is going to be optional to families, and secondly I also mentioned that we enhanced our early childhood programming to daycares and day homes. We see that there's a lot of waiting lists across the Northwest Territories for daycares and day homes that offer programming for zero to five, and the infants we've increased the funding. So I think that those messages need to be put out there for daycares and day homes and that it is optional for families.

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

MR. SIMPSON: The Hay River Playschool takes three- and four-year-olds. It's probably going to shut down after decades. That's an option. That's a real option that could happen. So I just want to make this as simple as possible: are kids coming out of

JK going to be smarter than if they were in a playschool or a daycare program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Any early childhood programming that's offered to our children, we have in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services. We've developed Right from the Start, a strategy, an action plan. Any early childhood programming is going to benefit the children, going to benefit the families, and is going to benefit the communities for the children. Any children that go through an early childhood program are going to see results, whether it's through junior kindergarten, through a day home, or a day program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 507-18(2):

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been some more news on the junior kindergarten implementation as reported by CBC. Department officials in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment have now said that the full amount of funding that the government has committed to over the life of this Assembly will now be implemented this fall, including \$900,000 that has been found internally. The officials are quoted as saying, "The funding will be ongoing, and it's going to be added to the school board budgets each year." Can the Minister confirm if all that information is correct? Thank you.

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

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in answering these questions previously, the \$5.1 million that's going to be needed to implement junior kindergarten is a commitment for this government, and we are meeting with the superintendents and the education authorities to see how we're going to be rolling out this funding, and the numbers are correct. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: This information seems to be very new to both the public and honourable Members of this House. Can the Minister provide more detail? This \$900,000 internal transfer; where is that coming from? What other programs are being impacted by this new money that's being reallocated to junior kindergarten?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: No programs are going to be impacted. The way we fund schools through the school funding system is on enrolments, and we

have been seeing low enrolments lately, and the money that we usually give for students are going into the school system. We're using that money and re-profiling it into junior kindergarten.

MR. TESTART: Maybe I'll be a bit more clear. The money that's being re-profiled to junior kindergarten, where is it coming from within the department? I understand that it may not impact in schools, but what government program delivery in the department is it impacting?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: As I mentioned, we fund education authorities on enrolments. We've seen low enrolments. The funding that we usually give on the previous year's budget, they've been lower, so that funding that we usually get, we're using that, and re-profiling it in junior kindergarten. It's because of low enrolment rates.

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

QUESTION 508-18(2):
TERRITORIAL AGREEMENT ON FEDERAL
HEALTH CARE TRANSFERS

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to resume my questions to the Premier because I didn't feel that I got an answer to the question that I asked, so I'm going to repeat the question. There is going to be an additional \$33 million required for operations and maintenance of long-term beds when they're available. What money will pay for this operations and maintenance cost? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If there is operation and maintenance costs required, it will come from within the government's budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Premier. Adding another \$33 million to the operations and maintenance budget of the Department of Health would be a very considerable increase over what they are spending today. How will the government decide on cuts, efficiencies, taxes, co-pays, to raise this money? Where will this money come from?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The Member is asking me to speculate on future events. Certainly, at the appropriate time, we will deal with the issue.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said to my colleague that the department has been very diligent in finding ways to become more efficient and effective in delivering healthcare. Could the Premier please elaborate on that statement?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'll be pleased to do so. When the previous government negotiated or imposed a 10-year health accord on all of the governments of Canada, the provincial and territorial governments, there was a 6 per cent increase. It would drop to 3 per cent after 10 years. We've reached that point. This new federal government has continued with that. They've accepted what the previous federal government did. The basis for that decrease from 6 per cent to 3 per cent was to provide for more efficiencies, become more effective through innovation and governance.

We had a territorial health investment fund that was negotiated separate from the Canadian Health Act which provided for medical travel, innovation, and other medical services which worked out on an annual basis, approximately \$10 million. Over the last few years, we've been able to reduce our spending in those areas to about \$5.2 million. That's what I was referring to, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier. Despite the efficiencies that may have been realized, the health budget is growing again this year by \$8.9 million, of which Ottawa is paying \$1 million in extra funding to the whole budget. What I still am not understanding, even with forced growth, not new initiatives, the health budget is going up. That's without the big push of taking care of our elders. What additional efficiencies are possible to meet those extra costs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The largest part of our healthcare funding comes through the formula financing, and through that process, we already spend for extended care. We already spend long-term care, and we would have to use that process, whatever success we have in accessing the social infrastructure programs of the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 509-18(2):
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to junior kindergarten again. I understand, and the Minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but in daycares and day homes, there needs to be a ratio of 8:1 when it comes to children to adults, supervisors. Yet, the four-year-olds who are being put into junior kindergarten, that ratio is going to be 12:1. What is the rationale for significantly reducing that ratio when it's essentially the same children that we're dealing with? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier in one of the other questions, that JK will be delivered in the school setting. It's both practical as well as fiscally responsible. It also utilizes already maintained, inspected, and publicly funded available school space. Students that enter the junior kindergarten system will also have access to more support from the JK to 12 system that daycares don't have right now, and that was the rationale behind it.

MR. SIMPSON: The fact is, in the classroom or in the room that these children are in, there's going to be less supervision. Will the qualifications for a JK teacher be any different than our other elementary school teachers because we are dealing with an age with different challenges than any other age in the school system?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: With the consultation that we've had with residents of the Northwest Territories as well as our school boards, we have made those changes to ensure that early childhood educators can be part of instructors within the JK system and doesn't necessarily have to have a degree. It's the flexibility of the school boards to determine whether the JK instructors can be an early childhood educator or have to have that degree in education.

MR. SIMPSON: I thank the Minister for clearing that up. About the capital upgrades, I brought this up before; I was looking for a dollar amount or a percentage amount. The Minister mentioned there's money for the upgrades needed to turn kindergarten or elementary classrooms into JK classrooms. What dollar amount is associated with the monies that ECE has pledged to support school boards with? Is it going to cover all of the capital upgrade costs, and if not, what percentage does it cover and what percentage will the school boards have to cover?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Currently we run junior kindergarten in 20 of our 33 communities. We did go out and do that inventory stock. We did the discussions with all the schools to look at what was needed. A lot of our schools have the utilization available; space, classroom space, that's available. Hay River is one that we do have low utilization rates in some of the schools. There are some infrastructure costs that are associated with implementing junior kindergarten. The number that we've looked at allocating is over \$3 million, and that's for infrastructure needs as well as looking at resource materials that are needed for schools to implement junior kindergarten.

As I mentioned, out of the 33 communities there are 13 right now that we need to work with; work with our education authorities to look at the resources that are needed, plus any renovations that are needed, and that amount, the figure that I mentioned, was just over \$3 million.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be following up with the Minister to get some specific numbers for Hay River. Another issue is that in Hay River the buses are full; there's not room for another 30 kids. So is that factored into the funding for JK or is that something the school board is going to have to deal with either by cancelling busing or buying a school bus or some other means? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Just following up into answering another similar question earlier, that the department is working with the education authorities to address things such as busing, such as school safety and making sure that the implementation of junior kindergarten in all our communities is a smooth transition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Time for oral question period has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's opening address. Item 11, replies to budget address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 7:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE REVOLVING FUNDS ACT

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment has reviewed Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act, and wishes to report that Bill 7 is now ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Reports of the committee on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 263-18(2):
NORTHERN EMPLOYEE BENEFITS SERVICES
PLAN
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED
DECEMBER 31, 2015

TABLED DOCUMENT 264-18(2):
THE INUVIALUIT WATER BOARD BUDGET 2017-
2018

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents entitled "Northern Employee Benefits Services Plan Annual Report for the year ended December 31, 2015" and "The Inuvialuit Water Board Budget 2017-2018." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

TABLED DOCUMENT 265-18(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LAW FOUNDATION
34TH ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 2016

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "Northwest Territories Law Foundation 34th Annual Report for the Period Ending June 30, 2016." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 261-18(2) Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2017-2018, with Member for Hay River North in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I'll now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I'll now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report, Member for Hay River North?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2017-2018. I would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Do we have a seconder? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Board of Management of the Legislative Assembly at adjournment in Committee room A.

Orders of the day for Monday, February 7, 2017, 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. Replies to Budget Address (Day 4 of 7)
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills

21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of
Bills and Other Matters

- Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest
Territories Main Estimates, 2017-2018

22. Report of Committee of the Whole

23. Third Reading of Bills

24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. This House stands
adjourned until Monday, February 7, 2017, at 1:30
p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 11:39 a.m.