



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

4th Session

Day 15

13th Assembly

HANSARD

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1997

Pages 371 - 400

Page numbers reflect printed Hansard

The Honourable **Samuel Gargan**, Speaker

MEMBERS PRESENT

Honourable Jim Antoine, Honourable Goo Arlooktoo, Mr. Barnabas, Honourable Charles Dent, Mr. Enuaraq, Mr. Erasmus, Mr. Evaloarjuk, Honourable Samuel Gargan, Mr. Henry, Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Miltenberger, Honourable Kelvin Ng, Mr. Ningark, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Ootes, Mr. Picco, Mr. Rabesca, Mr. Roland, Mr. Steen, Honourable John Todd, Honourable Maniok Thompson

ITEM 1: PRAYER

Oh, God, may your spirit and guidance be in us as we work for the benefit of all our people, for peace and justice in our land and for constant recognition of the dignity and aspirations of those whom we serve. Amen.

SPEAKER (Hon. Samuel Gargan):

Thank you, Mr. Enuaraq. Good afternoon. I have here a letter from the Commissioner, and it says, "I wish to inform the House that I have received the following message from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. Dear Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, the passage of the Forgiveness of Debts Act, 1996-97; Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 1996-97; and Loan Authorization Act, 1997-98. during the fourth session of the 13th Legislative Assembly."

It is signed, yours truly, Helen Maksagak, Commissioner. I also have here a Speaker's ruling regarding Mr. O'Brien, January 31, 1997.

Speaker's Ruling

I would like to provide some comments to the House concerning a matter that occurred during oral question period on Friday, January 31, 1997. The matter relates to an oral question that was being asked by the Member for Kivallivik, Mr. O'Brien. The question is contained on pages 546 and 547 of the unedited Hansard. The Member, Mr. O'Brien, was asking his first supplementary question and I quote:

"Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell the House exactly what revisions and I use that word, that the Minister is looking at regarding these departments".

I listened to Mr. O'Brien's comments and I thought I heard the word "visions" which in my opinion, made his supplementary question hypothetical so, I reminded the Member of that. The Member then indicated that and I quote:

"Mr. Speaker, I think my question is fairly straightforward."

I would like to point out to the Members that this wording indicated to me that he was challenging my ruling. This of course, is not permitted. I did, after the Minister's response, remind the Members to be a bit clearer when directing questions as what I heard was visions, not revisions. That is why, I made the ruling on the supplementary question being hypothetical. On checking the unedited Hansard, Mr. O'Brien did indeed use the word "revisions". I apologize for the misunderstanding, but at the time, I did hear the word "visions" so I had to base my comments to the Member on that. So, in the future, if Members will assist the chair and Ministers in clearly pronouncing your words, I will listen intently to your every word as I always do. Based on the words and actions that occurred at the time, it was my ruling that Mr. O'Brien challenged the chair. As all Members know, you cannot challenge the chair, so based on the facts at that time, I would ask Mr. O'Brien to withdraw his comments whereby he challenged the chair. Mr. O'Brien.

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with respect to your ruling and your subsequent apology, Mr. Speaker, when I made this statement in the House, it was in the heat of the moment, and also amongst some heckling and catcalls from across the floor. Mr. Speaker, I may have inadvertently challenged the chair. This was not my intention. I have the greatest respect for the chair. Mr. Speaker, if this is the case, I do apologize and withdraw my questionable comments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. O'Brien, this matter is now closed. I have another ruling here regarding Mr. Miltenberger.

Speaker's Ruling

On Monday, February 3, 1997, the Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger, rose on a point of

privilege. In his statement, the Member said, and I quote:

"I rise on a point of privilege to clarify, at the first available opportunity, a concern about conflict of interest on my part."

Mr. Miltenberger then went on to state that it is difficult to know when we (referring to Members) can speak. He said, and I quote from page 566 of unedited Hansard:

"If a Member has a wife who owns a business, can he participate in discussions on BIP, which could benefit her financially? If a Member's wife works for a women's shelter, is it alright for him to question the cuts to funding in women's shelters?"

In response to the Member's point of privilege, the Member for Iqaluit, Mr. Picco, rose on his point of privilege, stating, and I quote from page 567 of unedited Hansard:

"The Member mentioned, in a veiled way, my earlier response last year on a question to another Minister concerning spousal shelter homes. Mr. Speaker, he has infringed upon my rights as a Member, the Member from Thebacha, in his statement, and I would ask the Speaker

Page 372

to rule that he would strike anything from the record infringing on my privilege as a Member."

The acting Speaker, Mr. Ningark, and thank you for yesterday, sought debate on the point of privilege raised by the Member for Iqaluit. In the course of debate, the Member for Hay River, Mrs. Groenewegen, rose on her point of privilege, stating at page 567 of the unedited Hansard:

"If Mr. Miltenberger feels that he said something on Friday that he should not have said, he has every opportunity to stand up and retract those and apologize for them. He does not need to try and implicate everyone else or other Members of this House in his mistake. I do take exception to him referring to the Business Incentive Policy and people who may have a spouse that owns a business. I not only have a spouse that owns a business, I also own a business, and I believe that he is misleading the House, by suggesting that all business deals need to take place in an arm's length fashion."

After citing from the conflict of interest provisions of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, Mrs. Groenewegen went on to state at page 568 of the unedited Hansard:

"I would like to suggest that Mr. Miltenberger, by his comments, not on a territorial basis, but in reference to Fort Smith specifically, and community libraries specifically on Friday, was probably over the line and he can stand up and speak about that and he can retract that, but he does not need to implicate the rest of us..."

In debate on the point of privilege, the Premier, the Honourable Don Morin, rose and asked the Speaker to review the comments of the Member for Hay River when rendering a decision on the points of privilege, pointing out that there is a process available through the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's office for the general public and Members to address the issue of conflict of interest.

Mr. Ningark indicated to the House that he would provide the House with a ruling, following a review of Hansard and the appropriate authorities. I would like to now provide the House with my ruling on the points of privilege raised, as well as to provide the House with some guidance in addressing issues relating to conflict of interest and decorum of Members generally.

The Member for Thebacha, in rising on Monday to comment on the questions asked by him last Friday, was not raising a traditional or normal point of privilege. Rather, his statement was one of clarification or explanation of his conflict and was in accordance with the conflict of interest provisions of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. Rule 20(1) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly permits a Member to, with the leave of the Speaker, to "explain a matter, although not a contempt or breach of privilege, which concerns the Member in his or her capacity as a Member of the Legislative Assembly". Mr. Miltenberger's statement explaining his questioning, and his conflict, was a statement properly brought under that rule.

For the assistance of Members, both our Rules and the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act contain provisions to guide Members in addressing issues in which they may be in conflict. Rule 13 of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly provides:

No Member is entitled to vote upon any question in which he or she has a direct or indirect financial

interest, and the vote of any Member so interested shall be disallowed.

As well, this Legislature passed laws in the 11th Assembly, defining conflict of interest and setting forth the obligations of Members addressing conflicts. These provisions are contained with Part Three of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. For the assistance of Members, a Member has a conflict where:

The Member, or the spouse or dependent child of the Member, has significant private interests that afford the Member, the spouse or dependent child of the Member, the opportunity to directly or indirectly benefit from the performance of any of the duties of office of the Member.

The above definition is found in section 66(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. Many Members have, and will continue to have, conflicts in certain matters. We all have personal lives, whether before we were elected or presently, which will, on occasion, result in us being in a conflict in addressing certain issues. What is most important is how a Member resolves a conflict of interest, not necessarily the fact that a conflict exists.

The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act places serious obligations on Members to resolve their conflicts in accordance with the public interest. Section 67(A) provides that:

Each Member shall perform his or her duties of office and arrange his or her private affairs in such a manner as to maintain public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of the Member.

Section 67(C) and 67(D) places an obligation on a Member to:

Arrange his or her private affairs in conformity with the provisions of this part and act generally to prevent any conflict of interest from arising and make all reasonable efforts to resolve any conflict of interest that may arise in favour of the public interest.

If a Member has a conflict of interest in any matter that is before a committee of this Legislature or before the House, the Member must, pursuant to s.69(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, disclose the general nature of the conflict and withdraw from the meeting without voting or participating in the consideration of the matter. This is

an obligation that must be followed by all Members of this House.

If a Member has a question about whether they are in a conflict, they are able to seek advice from the Clerk's office or from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Indeed, the Legislation specifically authorizes the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to give advice to a Member which will prevent any conflict of interest prosecution against the Member if the Member has disclosed all material facts and followed the advice of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. While it may

Page 373

appear to some that conflicts are a "grey" area, there are very clear procedures to follow in determining what is or what is not a conflict.

A Member may rise, as did the Member for Thebacha, to explain to the House a line of questioning which may have been perceived as a conflict. As long as the statement is limited to providing an explanation of the Member's behaviour, it is acceptable. However, as Speaker, I am not comfortable with the idea that this forum is the appropriate forum for debating and ruling on whether a Member has contravened the conflict of interest provisions of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. There are clear mechanisms for invoking a complaint procedure under our legislation. Any Member who feels that another Member has "crossed the line" is free to file a complaint under the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. The complaint will then be dealt with by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and her decisions, including recommendations for a sanction, if any, will be tabled in this House for decision by this Legislature. Sanctions for violating the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act can range from reprimand, fine to expulsion of the Member as a Member. These sanctions are serious and should not be trivialized in political debate. Given that ultimately this Legislature plays a significant decision-making role in addressing complaints of conflict, I am not comfortable in pre-empting that role and politicizing the issue of conflict of interest. For that reason, I will not entertain an allegation that another Member is in conflict.

With respect to Mr. Picco's and Mrs. Groenewegen's point of privilege, some comments on the nature and function of parliamentary privilege might be of assistance to Members. Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, 6th edition, citation 24, states:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals.

Within the same citation, Beauchesne's goes on to further state:

...The distinctive mark of a privilege is its ancillary character. The privileges of Parliament are those rights which are "absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers".

Traditionally, individual privileges accorded to Members have been limited to issues relating to freedom of speech, freedom from arrest in civil actions, exemption from jury duty and exemption from attendance as a witness. Given that these privileges represent an extraordinary exception to the ordinary laws, it is generally accepted that the category of privileges is closed and cannot be added to without express statutory or constitutional amendment.

Notwithstanding the relatively narrow category of privileges that are protected, Beauchesne's does note, in citation 64, that the House has occasionally taken notice of attacks on individual Members as constituting a breach of the privileges of the House. Beauchesne's, citation 67, indicates that it is always the responsibility of the House to decide if the reflections on Members are sufficiently serious to justify action.

I am also aided by Beauchesne's citation 69, which quotes a Speaker's ruling from 1987:

The Speaker has reminded the House, "it is very important...to indicate that something can be inflammatory, can be disagreeable, can even be offensive, but it may not be a question of privilege unless the comment actually impinges upon the ability of Members of Parliament to do their job properly.

Mr. Picco and Mrs. Groenewegen, in their respective points of privilege, appear to be indicating that Mr. Miltenberger's use of examples in his statement go too far. They suggest that Mr. Miltenberger, in clarifying his questioning in the House, was acting improperly, in that he seemed to be citing examples relating to other Members' lines of questioning in the House and using those examples to illustrate how "grey" the area of appropriate questioning is, so as to

avoid a conflict of interest allegation. Indeed, Mrs. Groenewegen used the word "implicate us all" in her point of privilege. Given that both points of privilege address the same issue, I will deal with them as a single matter.

As stated above, questions of privilege are, and should be, narrow in scope and limited to only those powers which are strictly necessary to permit a Member to carry out his or her functions as a Member. Mr. Miltenberger's citing of examples of questioning which may or may not constitute a conflict of interest is not so offensive as to impair a Member's ability to carry on as a Member. To paraphrase acting Speaker Paproski, the citing of examples may be inflammatory, disagreeable or even offensive, however, I cannot say that the comments are so clearly directed to one Member or Members as to prevent those Members and the House from carrying on its business.

So I note that although Mr. Miltenberger's comments went beyond his declaration of his conflict, and beyond what he is required to do under the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I rule that neither the Member for Iqaluit or the Member for Hay River has a point of privilege.

However, before I leave this topic, I would ask all Members to be conscious of the need to avoid the provocative use of examples which, by their very nature, inspire disagreements within this Legislature. As the Premier very properly pointed out, this Legislature has enacted a process for identifying and resolving conflicts of interest. Raising these issues on the floor of the House ignores the legislative process that this very Legislature has adopted and serves to undermine that process, while trivializing the role of debate in this House. Thank you.

Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Picco.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Decorum and Behaviour
During Question Period

Page 374

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for your ruling. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify some recent statements in this House. First of all, I did not create a housing crisis. Having people still living in

matchboxes without running water or indoor plumbing in 1997 is not only atrocious, but it is a crisis. Mr. Speaker, I did not start a library crisis by laying off regional librarians and not providing that service to small communities. It may be perceived as a crisis by the over 700 people who had signed the petition presented yesterday. Mr. Speaker, I did not start a fuel crisis. The only crisis seemed to be in the minds of those answering my question.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Shame.

MR. PICCO:

Mr. Speaker, I did not start an amalgamation crisis. From the unedited Hansard of Friday, January 31, in response to a question from ...

-- Noise

MR. PICCO:

Mr. O'Brien, the Minister said on page 546, that "the amalgamation proposal as presented is not going ahead". Mr. Speaker, from that, I was trying to ascertain from the Minister if there was a new proposal on amalgamation. Mr. Speaker, I was not starting a crisis. I was asking a question. The proposed amalgamation might have been crisis for the affected employees who were going to be laid off as a result. That should not be belittled.

Mr. Speaker, question period is to provide answers, not to prompt debate, argue or ridicule a Member, or marginalize his or her statements. The decorum in this House has slipped to an all time low, and I will not be party to the baiting of Members for the sake of a sound bite in the media. Mr. Speaker, it would seem that any question on the direction, policies, financial plans, reductions and layoffs are not to be raised by the Members without upsetting the Executive Council.

I ask a lot of questions. I make no apology for that, and by marginalizing my questions or attacking me as a fear monger only demonstrates to the people of the Northwest Territories the pettiness and contempt some of you have for an individual trying to represent his or her constituency. In consensus government the Ordinary Members are here to try to provide the checks and balances to the Executive Council. Mr. Speaker, I will continue that role to the best of my ability. Crisis or no crisis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Enuaraq.

Member's Statement On Clyde River Housing Shortage

MR. ENUARAQ:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good evening, fellow colleagues. Just recently, we spoke on Clyde River housing conditions, as well as what Mr. Picco referred to matchboxes still be used in Clyde River. Today, I will be thanking, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Housing Corporation, Honourable Goo Arlooktoo, who was able to answer our question. The seven units will be replaced within two years in Clyde River. For that reason, I would like to thank the Minister of Housing Corporation. Thank you. (Translation ends)

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Barnabas.

Member's Statement On Dust and Air Contaminants in Arctic Bay

MR. BARNABAS:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker (Translation ends) I would like to speak out a concern of my constituency of Arctic Bay. The constituents have been complaining about the high dust level and the contaminant spillage for a number of years now. In the spring of 1995, there was an oil flow into Strathcona Sound and this has been a concern for many years. As of this result, I have learned Qitirmiut Association filed a formal complaint about the situation. I know that in my constituency of Arctic Bay, we are benefitting from this mine, but this needs to be addressed. Later today, Mr. Speaker, I will be asking question to the appropriate Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Members' statements. Mr. Henry.

Member's Statement On "Bridges" School Program to Aid Transition to the Labour Market

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk today about a wonderful new program developed and being introduced by the St. Patrick's High School here in Yellowknife. The program I am referring to, Mr. Speaker, is appropriately called Bridges. The developmental work and study program is aimed at assisting students in the transition phase from school into the labour market. The new program will be made available to all students, but is primarily aimed at aboriginal youth, young women, disabled students, minorities, and those most at risk of leaving school. Students in the program will attend regular classes in the mornings and will participate in on the job training work experiences in the afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I feel this is a wonderful, practical program. All too often, we educate our youth on an academic level, but forget about providing those who do not choose an academic career a vehicle to move into the work force. This program provides that vehicle. It provides a bridge and makes it easier for our students to move from school curriculum into the real world. Not all of our students in our schools have the ability or desire to pursue academic activities.

I for one, Mr. Speaker, would like to applaud St. Patrick's School for undertaking this initiative and addressing such an important part of our educational system. I feel that this type of initiative will help maximize benefits for our northern students. Later today I will be asking the Minister of Education some questions on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Henry. Members' statements, Mr. Ootes.

Member's Statement On Public Works Contracting System

Page 375

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last few days, I have been asking questions from the Minister of Public Works about the contracting system in DPW. Frankly, I am disappointed and disillusioned with the fashion in which government handles the contract system. Some Cabinet Members may argue that they are trying to be fair to communities and to certain sectors. What is fair to some may not be fair to others. To me, certain parts of the contract system are very unfair.

Let me tell you about a northern contractor who came to see me about some concerns with regard to the construction management proposals. This is a company with many, many years of northern experience. They have handled large projects for the government. They have been complimented by the Department of Public Works for the excellent workmanship that they have done. Now this is their concern. In 1990, apparently this government introduced the contra-construction management proposal system. They bid on a number of these proposals and were not successful. They were asked, how was the criteria established for this, and they said it is done through a rating sheet. They asked to see if they could get the rating sheet, and they were told, no. Consistently no. Eventually, the project officer did, surreptitiously in confidence, show them the ratings sheet. Their rating for northern experience was one out of five. One out of five. This was a company that had done all sorts of work throughout the north.

Since that time, Mr. Speaker, they have not been successful on projects and they cannot get access to the rating sheets. They also are not told how much the successful bids were for, and this has been going on since 1990. Seven years afterwards. How can this closed tender system continue to be? That is my question. A company that is here in the north and many companies can not improve unless they see their ratings sheets, and unless they know how much the successful bid was for. The system is contrary to the philosophy of private enterprise and contrary to the philosophy of open government. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife Centre is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Do I have any nays? There are no nays. You have unanimous consent, Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About 20 to 25 percent of the government contracts are through sole-sourced, negotiated, construction management proposals, and site superintendent services. Those are not publicly tendered, in other words open, in the public, everybody knows who got the contract for how much. That means about \$30,000,000 out of our budget. There are things that appear to be wrong here. How do I know that the government is getting value for its money? These are very tight economic times. If the government is issuing these contracts if they are 10

percent over what they normally would be, then we are losing 3 to 4 million dollars a year. The philosophy of private enterprise and tendering is being challenged here. This is public money, paid for by the tax payers of Canada. Let us not forget that 80 percent of our money comes from the federal government. the tax payers of Canada. We have a responsibility to be open on how we spend that money. When we review the budget of the Department of Public Works, Mr. Speaker, I hope to be asking the Minister a number of questions in this whole area. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Members' statements. Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement On Industrious, Hard-working Northerners

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to rise to briefly speak in defence of the many, many industrious, hard-working, creative people across the north that do not live in Yellowknife,

-- Applause

MR. MILTENBERGER:

...that the Member from Yellowknife South implied do not live elsewhere in the north. I might add, for the second time in this House that I can recollect, I think it is an unfair comment to a vast majority of people in the north that have built the north. I would also like to point out that when you become a capital city, you experience a huge influx of capital, money, government resources, and accompanying businesses and services that set up around capitals. Yellowknife's growth has shown that, and I think as we go with division in Nunavut, that Iqaluit will experience the same thing. I think it is an indication of how big Yellowknife has become, and how used they are to getting the resources they do get, when the Member can say that 12 jobs are trifling, insignificant, and not even hardly worth considering. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, a community like Fort Smith, with 2,500 people, that is suffering greatly, or like the other communities around this table where people are suffering greatly, would be very happy to have 12 jobs with the attending infrastructure and the families that go with it, and the impact it would have on our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to keep things in perspective. Very clearly, Yellowknife has had cuts, but they are doing their share. As I said before, they do have the resources and the ability to sustain those far more than most other communities. I would just like to point out a line from Hamlet, that my good friend Will Shakespeare wrote. If I can steal a page from Mr. Picco's book, "Me thinks thou doth protest too much," may be applicable in some cases when we here people say they are being cut too much. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements, Mr. O'Brien.

Member's Statement On Acknowledgement of Minister's Efforts

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge and commend the Minister of Housing Corporation for his swift action for addressing the very real concern of families being evicted during the dead of winter. It would be valuable for the Members to hear the response from the letter that he recently sent out to the local housing associations as to what options and modifications they will be making to their policies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Page 376

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements, Mr. Erasmus.

Member's Statement On NWT Senior's Society Letter to Social Programs Committee

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Social Programs Committee recently had lunch with the NWT Seniors Advisory Council, and I just wanted to read a brief note that they sent us following that meeting.

The NWT Seniors Advisory Council would like to thank you for the luncheon and the opportunity to meet you and the committee. We appreciated the open and candid discussions. As promised, I am enclosing a copy of a letter the Advisory Council addressed to Minister Dent, regarding the fossil fuel

program. The Advisory Council agree that the fuel program is very valuable and still much needed and wanted. We passed a motion to recommend to Minister Dent that no further reductions be made to the 1997/98 fuel program. The Advisory Council also passed a motion supporting Minister Ng to have the social envelope review all programs available to seniors and elders. The Advisory Council would want to have representation in this process from the beginning, and not consulted after the draft. The Advisory Council also recommended to Minister Ng to look at the feasibility of having one department responsible for all seniors programs and benefits. We hope that you will support us with your recommendations.

This is dated February 3, 1997, and it came from the NWT Seniors Advisory Council. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Erasmus. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Mrs. Thompson.

ITEM 4: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Return to Oral Question 150-13(4): Municipal Liabilities Through Empowerment

HON. MANITOK THOMPSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a return to oral question asked by Mr. Picco on January 28, 1997, on ability contingencies community empowerment.

As our major partner, it is essential that the NWTAM's concerns be heard by MACA, and this government. I have directed my staff to investigate the liability issue raised by the Member from Iqaluit, and further detailed in correspondence from Mr. Bevington. If our review indicates that any liabilities have been inappropriately transferred to communities, I will ensure that steps are taken to rectify the situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Returns to oral questions. Mr. Kakfwi.

Return To Oral Question 143-13(4): Monitoring Colomac Mines

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Mr. Speaker, this is a response to a question asked by Mr. Rabesca on the 28th of January regarding the

monitoring of Colomac Mines. As the honourable Member correctly noted in this Assembly on January 28, when work is finally completed next summer at the Rae Rock Mine, it will have taken over three decades to clean up wastes left over from the mine's operation. Times have changed however, and so have the means by which governments regulate mines, including the Colomac Mine.

The land upon which Colomac Mine operates is controlled by land leases administered by the Land Resources Branch of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Operation of the waste treatment and disposal facilities are licensed by the federal NWT Water Board. In the case of Colomac and other mines operating on federal land, the Government of the Northwest Territories does not have a direct regulatory role over their land and water use activities. The role we take is one of advisor to the appropriate federal regulatory agency and, just recently with BHP, partner to the Environmental Agreement.

With respect to eventual closure and abandonment of the Colomac Mine, when Royal Oak Mines received approval from the federal Water Board to operate a mine, a condition was placed in their water licence which required the company to submit an abandonment and restoration plan. The plan presents the scope of activities that Royal Oak Mines will undertake at the time of final mine closure. At the same time, the Water Board also required Royal Oak Mines to post and maintain a security deposit in the amount of \$1.5 million to ensure the necessary work was undertaken upon closure.

Mr. Speaker, all governments must continue to learn from the mistakes of the past. When it comes to the closure and abandonment of mines, it is hoped that we have learned enough so that the mistakes made at Rae Rock are not repeated. For our part, we remain committed to ensuring closure and abandonment of mines occur in a timely and safe manner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Returns to oral questions. Mr. Morin.

Return to Oral Question 137-13(4): List of Deputy Ministers in the GNWT

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a return to an oral question asked by Mr. Krutko on January 27, 1997. He asked for a list of the deputy ministers. Mr. Krutko asked for the number of deputy ministers and how many of those deputy ministers were hired from southern Canada.

The 11 departments and the NWT Housing Corporation are managed by 12 deputy ministers. With one exception, all the incumbents have been staffed through northern appointments. The one incumbent hired from southern Canada was a former resident of the Northwest Territories recruited for his extensive experience in the area of aboriginal education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Ng.

Page 377

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. KELVIN NG:

The Yellowknife and Thebacha campuses of Aurora College, in conjunction with Northern Addiction Services, is conducting the first in a series of joint training programs for drug and alcohol workers in the Northwest Territories. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome these people to Yellowknife and to the Assembly, who are involved with the training programs: Joe Beaverho, Lac La Martre; Irene Betsidea, Deltah; Fred Kuptana, Tuktoyaktuk; Eileen Liske, Dettah; Tootsie Lugt, Tuktoyaktuk; Anna May McLeod, Tsiigehtchich; Tony Rabesca, Fort Rae; Charlie Soupay, Aklavik; John Wannecke, Yellowknife and, last but not least, two of my constituents from Kugluktuk, Judy Hayohok and Julia Topilak. Welcome to the Assembly.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Enuaraq.

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is not very often that I get to recognize anybody up in the gallery, but today, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize my

wife, Elisapee, my daughter, Janet and my boy, Andrew. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Rabesca.

MR. RABESCA:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize some members from my constituency in the gallery. Mr. Tony Rabesca, a well-respected member of our family, and also respected by youth organizations within our region, along with his friend Joe Beaverho from Lac La Martre. Welcome to the Assembly.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Enuaraq.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 216-13(4): Sale of GNWT Staff Housing

MR. ENUARAQ:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask a question to the Government Leader, Honourable Don Morin. We were aware, in the past few months, that the GNWT staff housing was for sale. I would like to ask the Government Leader, were the communities informed when the GNWT staff housing was for sale? That is my question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Translation ends)

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Premier.

Return To Question 216-13(4): Sale of GNWT Staff Housing

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been public knowledge that the Government of the Northwest Territories has been attempting to sell all staff housing that we own throughout the Northwest Territories, for the past number of years. It has been in the papers, as well as through news reports, as well as through direct letters to all employees, that we do offer staff

housing for sale. So, it should be general, or public knowledge. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Enuaraq.

Supplementary To Question 216-13(4): Sale of GNWT Staff Housing

MR. ENUARAQ:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to ask the Premier, I was informed by some of the members in our community that they were not informed when the units were for sale. The people that approached me regarding this, obviously were not written to. Could he tell me if all the members had received letters, members of the public? (Translation ends)

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Premier.

Further Return To Question 216-13(4): Sale of GNWT Staff Housing

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I defer that question to the Minister of Finance, Mr. John Todd. He is in charge of selling staff housing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Mr. Speaker. First of all, I will just step back a little bit, each individual house owner or, I should say tenant, was advised and given, as I said on a number of occasions in 1996, the first option to purchase their house. They were given a significant period of time to decide on that. We also indicated, at that time, that if they were not prepared to purchase the house, we were prepared to put them out to the communities at first, and give the communities an option to purchase. Then after that, we would go into the regions. I am pleased to say, in Mr. Enuaraq's riding for example, in Clyde River, a development corporation owned and operated by aboriginal people has purchased the homes in that community, and other aboriginal organizations in Pangnirtung and Broughton Island are doing the same. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

Question 217-13(4): Winter Road Openings

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Transportation in regards to the winter roads, especially in the Mackenzie Valley, and exactly what the problem seems to be in relation to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Why is it taking so long for those roads to be open? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Transportation. Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 217-13(4): Winter Road Openings

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to the winter roads, the roads hopefully will be open by February 10, about a week or so. The reason for the late opening is the section between the community of Pedzeh Ki, or Wrigley, up to Tulita, the Fort Norman section. There is a lack of snow and we need snow to build the ice

Page 378

crossings on the numerous creek and small river crossings in that section of the highway, winter road. As a result, we waited as long as we could, and there is still very little snow in that area, but we are going ahead. We are using all precautions to try to accommodate the Department of Oceans and Fisheries in respect to the way we build these ice roads. Thank you.

HON. SAMUEL GARGAN:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 217-13(4): Winter Road Openings

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and also in regards to the Fisheries Act, has the Minister or the department considered challenging the legality of that

Act in relation to the Northwest Territories? Or meeting with the appropriate ministers to amend that Act to allow us, in the north, to be able to maintain the transportation systems for those isolated communities in shipping goods into those communities, which is possibly the only time of year that a lot of these goods can get into those communities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 217-13(4): Winter Road Openings

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Transportation officials have been meeting with the officials from the federal Department of Oceans and Fisheries, and are trying to come to a resolution in regards to the Act that we are trying to abide by. Yes, we are trying to meet with the federal Minister responsible for that department, Mr. Mifflin. At this point in time, I have not been able to meet with him personally but the intention here, in the future, is to try and arrange some sort of a meeting so that we can sit down and go over some of these problem areas. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 217-13(4): Winter Road Openings

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the cost of goods shipped in and out of the communities. air versus road transportation, has the Minister's department done a study on that to see exactly the cost, to this government, of shipping goods in versus trucking them in? Is the cost to this government higher because of the road closure to date? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 217-13(4): Winter Road Openings

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the winter road system north from Wrigley to the communities of Tulita, Norman Wells, Good Hope and Deline, is a very vital link to all of us here. As we know, we have to resupply these communities with the fuel so that they have enough fuel to run throughout the year - those communities that are not reached by the tugboats. At the same time, we try to use these roads to provide resupply of building supplies, dry goods and so forth, to these communities. Yes, it is a substantially lower cost if we were able to truck all these goods in on the winter roads. As we wait for these winter roads to open, the costs are very high for bringing in the supplies otherwise. The department has not really sat down and analyzed the cost breakdown of what the honourable Member is seeking but we understand that, generally, the cost would go down if the winter roads were open and we were able to resupply these communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 217-13(4): Winter Road Openings

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regards to the question about the road being opened and closed. Could the Minister make a commitment to people in the Sahtu region, to allow the traffic and goods to be shipped prior to the date which was set up, I believe it was March 19th? Could the Minister commit to possibly extend that date in regards to allowing those goods to be shipped into those communities?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 217-13(4): Winter Road Openings

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I cannot commit to the honourable Member to extend that time of March 19th, the honourable Member mentioned for closure of the road. The intention of the department is to try to contact all the communities and all the different truckers that intend to resupply these communities. As soon as the road is open and the weight is allowable, then whatever resupply

regarding these communities, should be ready to roll. We intend to pursue that and make sure that the five communities get resupplied in the time space that we have available to us. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 218-13(4): H&SS Strategic Planning Initiative

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services. It is in regards to his statement when he announced the major strategic planning initiative for Health and Social Services. Could the Minister indicate the scope of this particular strategic planning process? Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I am interested in some of the underlying issues that have been raised in this House over the last year and a half, in regards to things like, our exploding population, the housing crisis, the education of our people in the Territories and, of course, unemployment, all of which affect the health and the requirement for social services of the people. Could the Minister indicate if there will a time that those other more fundamental issues that drive the need in our society? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Ng.

Page 379

Return To Question 218-13(4): H&SS Strategic Planning Initiative

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the scope of the strategic planning process that the consultants are undergoing is very broad. It would take into account some of the problems that we are facing in respect to the exact same issues the honourable Member has identified in respect to our population growth, which is higher than the normal standards throughout the country. Our poorer health status indicators, and all those factors that contribute to some of the problems that we are facing in the Health and Social Services system throughout the Territories, Mr. Speaker. I would like to reiterate that there was a written question for tabling the terms of reference of the strategic planning process with the consultants, and I

will be providing that as soon as possible to provide as much detail and information as Members want on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Ng. Oral questions. Mr. Ootes.

Question 219-13(4): Funding the Western Constitutional Process

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the honourable Jim Antoine. It has to do with the constitutional process. The working group has had several meetings since December. The concern has been whether we are going to be able to get some federal funding to be able to support the process. Could the Minister update us on whether the federal government is contributing towards this? With the understanding that the federal government had some concerns to be addressed prior to funding, could the Minister give me an answer on that, please?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister responsible for Northern Constitutional Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 219-13(4): Funding the Western Constitutional Process

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the western constitutional process is still under way. The Constitutional Working Group has had a series of meetings. In fact, we had a meeting last night and we intend to have another meeting again tonight. I would like to report that this government has committed to put some funding into a consultation process, as well the federal government has also made a commitment to fund this process. Jointly, we should have some funding to go ahead and start a consultation process into the communities. In fact, the Constitutional Working Group has been working on a work plan, and we still have to sort some of that out, but the intention and the direction is to go ahead and begin consultation between now and the end of March, and hopefully into April, May and June. Like I said, we still have to sort out some of the work plans and the scheduling, timing and so forth still has to be agreed upon. Generally the direction is to go ahead.

There is concern by the federal government in regards to the Partners document that we tabled in the House in October. Their concern was with the content of it which was a model that we put forward. Throughout the last couple of months, since we tabled that document, the officials of the Aboriginal Affairs have been meeting with the federal officials trying to see what kind of commitment the federal government would have towards this document. I would like to say officially that there is support for the principles of the document from the federal officials which is a good sign.

They are concerned about the model. We said all along that this package was for public consultation and once it was out people would have opportunity to comment on it. We have heard a lot of comments on it and now with the funding that is in place, we intend to go ahead and go into the communities and explain the document and get feedback from people. The intention here is to revise this document as we get the feedback from people. That was the intention all along. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 219-13(4): Funding the Western Constitutional Process

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister for the explanation. Could you tell us who will be doing the consulting in the communities? Who will make up the consulting committee?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 219-13(4): Funding the Western Constitutional Process

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the ideal situation would be for the MLAs of the particular constituency to be involved in the communities that they represent. However, as we know, we will be in session until February and by the way we are going maybe we will be going until March. That does not allow us much time for MLAs to go into our communities. We are still formulating a plan. The plan

is to try to get a page of different individuals, facilitators to go into the communities, some of the staff that has been working with us all along, to go into the communities and explain the package to the people in the communities. If time allows, any MLA who could make themselves available should do so, once the teams are in to the communities. Certainly, if I have the time, I personally would like to do that for the areas that I represent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 219-13(4): Funding the Western Constitutional Process

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was originally envisioned that the process would be completed by I believe, July, so that it could make the House of Commons and involve the federal government by the fall. The reason for the timeframe was because it would take two years to get through the House of Commons, so that we could amend the federal Act. I wonder if the Minister could tell us what timeframe we are now looking at, with regard to a new constitution or proposed changes?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Page 380

Further Return To Question 219-13(4): Funding the Western Constitutional Process

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, like I said, we are still sorting out some of the work plan, the timing and so forth. Ideally, we would like to get the consultation done as soon as we can in the next two months or so. If not, then we will have to maybe extend that. We know realistically that it is impossible to do it by March, so we are going to have look at maybe as far as June, or even into the fall. We are still having meetings with the Constitutional Working Group. We are looking at the times, and ideally we would like to try to get the consultations done as quickly and as thoroughly as we can, so that as the feedback comes in, we will revise the document.

Hopefully we will have a revised document by some time late summer or even early fall. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 219-13(4): Funding the Western Constitutional Process

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister knows the document was not well received initially in my community, and some other communities. There were a lot of comments. I wonder if the Minister could tell us what will be put before the general public during the consultation process?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 219-13(4): Funding the Western Constitutional Process

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the document was first tabled in this House and went to the public, there was no opportunity for myself or Members of the Constitutional Working Group or team, to properly put a package together and present it in a way where all elements that were put into this document were explained in a very acceptable way by all the participants. To this point in time, the staff have been able to put a package together that will incorporate all the different input that was put into the document. As you know, we are in partners with the aboriginal leaders in putting this package together as elected MLAs. It is a partnership kind of arrangement. To put the package forward we need to have input by different people that participated. I think we have a fairly good package together that incorporates the history of constitutional development in the North, along with the different elements that are there already in the Canadian constitution, the different sections that cover the different rights of everybody in Canada as well as in the north. Once the package is presented in that way, I think people will see it in a different light even though it was received quite negatively by a few people with very strong opinions in Yellowknife.

There are other people than those in Yellowknife throughout the north. I think even the reactions that I have heard personally are quite favourable now as people understand the package more. Hopefully the people that had very negative reactions at first, if they see a package that is well presented, will see it under a different light. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Barnabas.

Question 220-13(4): Environmental Concerns at Nanasivik Mine

MR. BARNABAS:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I stated that there was concern in my community of Arctic Bay. I would like to ask the Minister, Mr. Kakfwi. (Translation ends) ... practices at Nanasivik mine, have prompted Qitirmiut Association to ask for a full review of its operation. Is the Minister aware of this situation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Kakfwi.

Return To Question 220-13(4): Environmental Concerns at Nanasivik Mine

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Mr. Speaker, under the Environmental Right Act, any two members of the public can file an application in writing, disclosing their names and the full nature of the concern and file with this government requesting that, as a Minister, I take some action to have an investigation done should there be some substance to the concern raised in the application. As of today, although I am aware of the concern that was raised, there is not yet an application made. Once an application is received, we will decide how to proceed in response to the application. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Picco.

Question 221-13(4): Sale of DEW Line Sites

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Renewable Resources and the Environment, Mr. Kakfwi. Mr. Speaker, there has been much concern regarding the recent tender issue for the sale of 11 DEW Line sites by the Department of National Defence. Recent environmental studies show that many of the buildings on these sites contain paint with high levels of PCBs. Canada's chloride biphenyl regulations prohibit the sale of material containing these substances. However, the Department of National Defence are asking to be allowed for exemptions for these sales. My question to the Minister is, has his department been following this issue and what is being done to address this situation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister responsible for Resource, Wildlife and Economic Development. Mr. Kakfwi.

Return To Question 221-13(4): Sale of DEW Line Sites

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Mr. Speaker, at a recent Environment Ministers' meeting, the federal Minister, Sergio Marchi, asked that a total ban be placed on any waste landfill sites with waste that contained PCBs to a certain level. Now the Department of National Defence is asking the same federal Minister to provide an exemption, so that the buildings and equipment at the DEW Line sites which contain a very high level of PCBs in the paint to provide an exemption, so that these buildings can be disposed of in landfill sites in the Northwest Territories.

Page 381

We are following it. We are aware that the Department of National Defence is also speaking to aboriginal associations requesting landfill sites be made available to them for the purpose of disposing some of these wastes from the DEW Line sites. That is the information that I have to date. I am not aware that the federal Minister has responded to his counterpart in the Department of Defence. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Picco.

Supplementary To Question 221-13(4): Sale of DEW Line Sites

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister is correct when he says that it is not acceptable for PCBs from these DEW Line sites to be buried in the Northwest Territories. My supplementary question to the Minister is, will he write the Minister of Department of National Defence, Mr. Sergio Marchi, the federal Minister for the Environment, to let them about the concerns we have in the Northwest Territories regarding the sale of the 11 DEW Line sites? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return To Question 221-13(4): Sale of DEW Line Sites

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Mr. Speaker, just from a technical point of view, there is no scientific information at this time that says disposal of these buildings without crumbling them or cutting them into little pieces, will result in leeching of the PCBs into the environment. That is to say, if they are taken intact and put into wastefill sites, the way they are, technically we do not have any information that says we should be concerned. It seems to have been demonstrated that leaving them intact will, in fact, not cause any leeching of it into the environment. But, on the other hand, if the federal government is taking such a hard line on it, or willing to take the buildings and ship them out of the Northwest Territories and dispose of them, for instance, through the Swan Hill's facility in Alberta, and pay for the entire operation, then we have absolutely no objection with that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Picco.

Supplementary To Question 221-13(4): Sale of DEW Line Sites

MR. PICCO:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the concern, here of course, is that it is a public tender. If Ed Picco, for example, buys a DEW Line site, it would not be, probably, cost efficient for me to bundle the site up and ship it out to Calgary, ship it out to Montreal, wherever. What they would like to do, the person who would buy this, is take off whatever they

want in the buildings and then get rid of the rest, and that I guess, is why DIAND is asking for an exemption so that they could actually bury this in the Northwest Territories. My concern here would be, and the concern that has been raised is that they not be allowed to do that, and my question was to the Minister, would he write DND explaining our situation here in the Northwest Territories? Under no circumstances, no circumstances should these DEW Line sites, these buildings, this refuse, the paint, the PCBs be buried here in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return To Question 221-13(4): Sale of DEW Line Sites

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Mr. Speaker, I take the point that the Member raises, of course. We are presently awaiting to meet with officials in the department in order to decide what the best course of action should be in regard to these recent activities taking place at the Ottawa level, regarding contaminants here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Picco.

Supplementary To Question 221-13(4): Sale of DEW Line Sites

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister will be following this very closely. Will the Minister commit to this House, and the people of the Northwest Territories, that as this situation develops, he will address it here in the House, so that the people of the Northwest Territories can be updated on what is happening with the sale, and the possible burying or not burying of these contaminated DEW Line sites. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Further Return To Question 221-13(4): Sale of DEW Line Sites

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Mr. Speaker, yes, I will do what I can to keep the Members informed. I thank the Member for raising it

and providing an opportunity for myself to respond to him in this forum. As well, I would expect that the Reform Party, and the Bloc Quebecois in their usual high standard of being the official opposition, vying for that position, will be asking their usual precise questions, protecting the interests of the public in issues like this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 222-13(4): Benefits Owing to Seniors

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Education, Culture, and Employment. This government provides a monthly supplementary benefit to seniors in need in the amount of \$135 per month. I understand that a number of seniors in my riding still have not received their cheques, which normally they would get by the end of January. Can the Minister please tell me why these cheques have not been issued as of yet? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Education, Culture, and Employment. Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 222-13(4): Benefits Owing to Seniors

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the amount that the Member refers to is paid to low income seniors each month and is tied directly to the Federal

Page 382

Old Age Security Benefit. Apparently, difficulties occurred when the Old Age Security office in Edmonton tried to input the new postal codes for Hay River. The computer rejected the new postal codes and as a result dropped 65 seniors off the mailing list.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 222-13(4): Benefits Owing to Seniors

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is unfortunate that this has taken place, but I do appreciate the Minister's explanation. I would hope that seniors in Hay River would be understanding, Mr. Speaker. This \$135 per month payment is very important to many senior citizens who do not earn high income and have recently experienced reductions in support. Can the Minister tell me when the seniors in Hay River will be getting their cheques exactly? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 222-13(4): Benefits Owing to Seniors

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the cheques will be printed tomorrow and will be couriered to Hay River, and will be available in Hay River on Thursday. The Post Mistress has been contacted and has agreed to treat the cheques as priority items, so that seniors will be able to pick them up on Thursday at the post office. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Steen.

Question 223-13(4): Timeframe for a Western Constitution

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to Mr. Antoine, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Mr. Speaker, we have a board out in a part of the building here in the main lobby, identifying the amount of days left until we arrive at April 1, 1999. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister could indicate to the House what the timeframe is for this House to have a constitution ready, to present to the federal government, what that deadline date is?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 223-13(4): Timeframe for a Western Constitution

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to develop a constitution for the west in the NWT here, we still have a long way to go. We are only now looking at going into the communities. We finally secured some funding from this government and the feds to put teams together and go into the communities and explain the package, and get some feedback. Hopefully, have a revision of the package by the spring, perhaps this summer. The idea here is to have the package for ratification in the fall sometime.

In the meantime, the Constitutional Working Group has been working with the federal officials, because we need them to be involved if ever we are to put changes to the NWT Act into the federal legislation. They have to be involved from the very beginning. They are involved now, and they are willing to participate as we look at revising the package. That it will be acceptable first to people in the North and it has to also be acceptable to the federal government before they agreed to go ahead and develop the legislation that will go through their Parliament.

As we all know, the federal government is going to be going into a federal election fairly soon. Maybe, as early as this spring, maybe in the fall we are told. We have to take that into consideration. If we say that there is a federal election by the fall, let us say October, I am not saying that is going to happen, I am just saying that it could happen. If we have documentation, that will have to be ready by then, and then once a new government gets in, we will be able to hopefully work with the new government that is in place to move ahead with legislation.

It is going to be sometime before, it will take about a year or so before we get through that process. We do not know. I have to tell the honourable Member that at this point and time, although we have discussed it quite thoroughly, it is still very much an unknown at this point in time. But we can only speculate that we look at some timeframes and we try to aim for that. Hopefully, we will have something in place by the time division happens. That window of opportunity is very narrow, and it is closing very rapidly. There are so many different players involved that it is going to be very hard to say right now that we are going to have a legislation ready to go for acceptance by division time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Steen.

Supplementary To Question 223-13(4): Timeframe for a Western Constitution

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for that long response. But what I wanted to know, Mr. Speaker was, what is the deadline we have to achieve in order to ensure that the federal government has time to process the legislation in the House of Commons? In other words, if we put forward a new NWT constitution, what is the timeframe required by the federal government in order to process that piece of legislation, so it is in effect? That was the question I had.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 223-13(4): Timeframe for a Western Constitution

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do not have a timeframe. I do not know. It is a real unknown at this time. I am told by the people who are

Page 383

aware of these things that it usually takes a minimum of two years for a legislation to go through the federal Parliament. Like I said, earlier, we do not have a legislation yet. We are still developing a package which will eventually become legislation in the federal government. DIAND will probably be one of the key players in the federal system to develop a package. So at this point of time, it is a unknown to us. We can only go by what we are told by people who are experts in these things, and they are telling us that it takes about two years before legislation goes through the federal system. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Steen.

Supplementary To Question 223-13(4): Timeframe for a Western Constitution

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe last summer over the course of the summer in some of the meetings we had with Aboriginal Affairs

Department, we were advised that it takes roughly 17 to 22 months for the government to process legislation. In other words, DIAND would have to introduce the legislation at a certain timeframe. It would have to go through the House of Commons, Senate, the whole process, in order to be an Act. Therefore, what I am trying to find out, if we want a new constitution by 1999, have we already passed the timeframe that would allow us to properly hand this in, so the federal government can do this?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 223-13(4): Timeframe for a Western Constitution

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I only could tell the honourable Member what may possibly happen. It is unknown at this point in time, but if the feds agree to speed up this legislation, then I think they have the capability of doing that. But, if it is going to go through a normal process, I am told that the honourable Member is correct. It would be about 22 months, which is two years, for legislation to go through. If you factor in the federal election that may be coming, perhaps we have already gone past the time before we are able to have a package by 1999. It might be 1999 that we have a package. So I could only speculate at this time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Steen.

Supplementary To Question 223-13(4): Timeframe for a Western Constitution

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister is, is there any point in holding on to these community tours and we are going to have a suggestion here of a revised constitution by fall, and I presume more community tours. Is there any point in all this if we do not have time to introduce the legislation before 1999? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Can I ask the Member for Nunakput to maybe rephrase his question because you are seeking an

opinion on the government's position, when you should be asking what is the government's policy regarding constitutional development or the timeframe policy, if they have one. Mr. Steen, could you rephrase your question?

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try to rephrase my question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister indicate that he feels confident that we still have time to do the community tours, have the amended legislation, and still have the legislation introduced and passed by the federal government by 1999?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 223-13(4): Timeframe for a Western Constitution

HON. JAMES ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am a very optimistic person and I think that with the amount of work that has been put into this whole constitutional effort, over all these years, we are finally coming to something that is actually written down and we are working from it, I would like to say that we are prepared to move ahead with it. Like I said earlier, the timeframe is very tight and it is going to get tighter and, perhaps by 1999, if everything works out okay, I think we may have a package by that time. However, it is still subject to a lot of unknowns, such as the amount of work we still have to do, the different parties that we have to all have on board in the north, along with the federal election that is pending sometime this spring or throughout the summer into the fall, and the time that it requires for a new government to get on stream. All these different factors are put into place, and like I said the window of opportunity is closing very quickly. Optimistically, I think that we still have a good opportunity here to develop the constitution that will reflect all the different people in the north. We are putting together a very important document that will eventually outline the way we all live together here in the north and into the future. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Roland.

Question 224-13(4): Tax-based and Non-tax-based Municipalities

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question at this time will be directed to the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs. I would like to know if the department has done any work in the area of balancing out the difference between a tax based, non-tax municipalities when it comes to raising revenue? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mrs. Thompson.

Return To Question 224-13(4): Tax-based and Non-tax-based Municipalities

HON. MANITOK THOMPSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue has been raised by different Members, especially the Infrastructure Committee and Members of this House, concerning the disparity in taxes and burden on individuals in tax base communities and those that reside in general taxation area communities. For these reasons, the department has decided to undertake a comprehensive review of its financial relationship with the communities. We have invited NWTAM to participate. This review is scheduled for 1997, this year. The draft terms of this reference for this review are being

Page 384

developed. We are aware of the concerns that the Members are bringing forward in this area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary To Question 224-13(4): Tax-based and Non-tax-based Municipalities

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You will be bringing forward a package to the committee at what time? Is there a package after the review going forward to the committee? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mrs. Thompson.

Further Return To Question 224-13(4): Tax-based and Non-tax-based Municipalities

HON. MANITOK THOMPSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been talking to the Infrastructure Committee on the municipal financing review, so the draft terms of this reference, for this review, are being developed and I have committed to provide the review terms of reference to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary To Question 224-13(4): Tax-based and Non-tax-based Municipalities

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister be a little more definite on the timing? Sometime this year, next three months, can she be definite on the timing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mrs. Thompson.

Further Return To Question 224-13(4): Tax-based and Non-tax-based Municipalities

HON. MANITOK THOMPSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not know the definite time, but I do know that we have already been talking with the Infrastructure Committee. It should be in the very near future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions, Mr. Erasmus.

Question 225-13(4): Results of Student Achievement Tests

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture, and Employment. Mr.

Speaker, recently students in the NWT participated in national science achievement tests, and I understand that the results are now available. Would the Minister indicate how the students in the NWT did in those tests, in comparison to the rest of the students in Canada?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Education, Culture, and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 225-13(4): Results of Student Achievement Tests

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the assessment results the Member refers to are the Scholastic Achievement Indicators Program Science Assessment. The preliminary data suggests that the students of the Northwest Territories ranked overall below the Canadian average. However, NWT students were at par or exceeded the Canadian average at the higher levels of scientific competency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 225-13(4): Results of Student Achievement Tests

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is there any way that we can determine if all the students were at the same levels, or I guess what I am trying to get at is, can we determine, like for instance, if all the students in a certain area may be low, and if another area may be high, or whatever.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 225-13(4): Results of Student Achievement Tests

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the results are not separated out by school or by community. The results are only separated by jurisdiction, so we can

not use the results to indicate a difference between, say Iqaluit and Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 225-13(4): Results of Student Achievement Tests

MR. ERASMUS:

Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure when the Minister is indicating jurisdictions, does he mean total jurisdiction like Alberta, or does he mean the different regions, like Baffin Region, South Slave Region, that type of thing?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 225-13(4): Results of Student Achievement Tests

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The results are given to us separated by political jurisdiction in Canada. We have comparisons to Alberta, Ontario, and the Yukon, but there are no comparisons within our boundaries. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 225-13(4): Results of Student Achievement Tests

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister be kind enough to make a statement on the results and to table the results in the House please?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Page 385

Further Return To Question 225-13(4): Results of Student Achievement Tests

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this point in time all we have are very preliminary results - little more than a press release. In April, a detailed technical report will be released, and following that, I would be happy to table some information in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Item 7, written questions. Mr. Picco.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 11-13(4): Community Libraries

MR. PICCO:

My written question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. It concerns community libraries. Can the Minister provide the House and this Member the following:

1. The funding allocated in 1997-98 budget for training and ongoing support services for libraries and library staff in the Baffin and Keewatin regions.
2. The number of training workshops provided by the headquarters staff, the headquarters staff in the Baffin and Keewatin, and the regional librarians in the Baffin and Keewatin.
3. Confirmation that the Baffin region is the only region where all library holdings are completely documented in the system.
4. Identification of the contract or contact position available to consult with community librarians in the Baffin about local issues such as relations with hamlet councils, education authorities and school principals.
5. Confirmation that community libraries in the Baffin and Keewatin will be able to recover all expenses from his department for additional long distance charges for telephone, fax or computer to headquarters or Yellowknife, rather than the regional centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. We will take a 15 minute break.

-- Break

ITEM 10: REPLIES TO BUDGET ADDRESS

MR. SPEAKER:

Item 10, replies to budget address. Mr. O'Brien.

Reply 6-13(4)

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am taking the opportunity today to respond to the Minister of Finance's budget address. The focus of my statement will be on the youth of my constituency. Mr. Speaker, when we need examples of explosive population growth, Arviat comes to mind as one of the communities that rates in first place with a population growth of approximately six percent. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, when I look at this budget I will be very mindful of our youth. Are they better off now, or will they be better off in five years, or in ten years time? In that context, what I am looking for in this budget is the foundation for growth that will secure the future for our children. What are the foundations and what has this budget done to address them? I have identified four major areas which I believe constitute the basis for economic growth in the region. The first one being a sound fiscal environment, ie: a balanced budget; second, a motivated and well-educated work force; third, economic potential for long-term, sustainable jobs; and lastly, reasonable cost of doing business.

A sound fiscal environment. On this first point, Mr. Speaker, because of the government's success and efforts in balancing the budget, I will give the budget a B plus. This score would have been higher had there been more balance between growth and maintaining the existing social programs. The fact that more and more of our dollars are going into the non-discretionary social programs and to creating temporary jobs, means there is less going into building for growth through long-term employment. The desperately needed job strategy is long overdue. We must ensure that it will provide for the development of long-term, sustainable jobs, not just six week make work projects.

Second point is a well motivated and capable work force. In this area I will give the budget a C. There is nothing like the potential for jobs to motivate people to

try and find work and to continue in their schooling. I understand there is major potential in developing mining reserves within my region. If so, are we preparing our children for jobs in the mining industry? We are spending lots of money, but are we putting it where it is most needed?

The next point I address, Mr. Speaker, is economic potential for creating sustainable jobs. In this area, I will give the budget a C. You do not have to be an economist to know that you can not create long-term growth by slashing government jobs. The government has done a good job through the BIP to maximize the impacts of government expenditures, but unfortunately the BIP does not create sustainable jobs, and we will also lose jobs when cutting the capital budget. The real growth for the future of the Keewatin must be from the mineral industry. The mining industry is excited by the mineral potential from the latest results of the geophysical surveys taken in the region. It takes a minimum of five to seven years to go into mine production after the basic economic tests have been completed. Can we shorten that time by building partnerships with mining companies by helping them go through the regulatory process by creating a positive investment climate and by eliminating uncertainty? After the amalgamation of Energy, Mines, and Resources, I sense that a lesser priority is being given to mining development. Mr. Speaker, I hope that I am wrong in this area. Mr. Speaker, I also believe that we have to do more to attract new money to the region through tourism. I recently had the opportunity to meet with a delegation from the province of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier of Manitoba reminded me of this government's commitment to cooperate on the economic initiatives to benefit both Manitoba and the Keewatin. With the recently announced privatization of the rail line and the

Page 386

pending rejuvenation of the Churchill port, we can expect new export opportunities. We should aggressively pursue these initiatives.

In reducing cost of doing business, I give the budget a B plus. I am anticipating an announcement that this government will be implementing recommendations of the Keewatin resupply committee and the realignment of the petroleum products division to make it operate more on a businesslike basis. Both initiatives will reduce cost.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, I understand the difficulty that this government has faced in trying to build an economy with less money. However daunting the task, we must continue to lay down a foundation for a self sufficient society. A society in which northerners with access to productive, sustainable jobs will not have to depend on government for housing, income assistance, and other social programs. A society in which northerners, through wellness and early intervention programs, can live the healthy, productive lifestyles of their forefathers. With the budget presented last week, there are some worthwhile initiatives in this area.

With respect to the economic initiatives, these include commitments to foster trade and investment, as well as the proposed development of a labour force strategy. For the social envelope, these include funds to implement community wellness activities and early intervention programs. But, Mr. Speaker, can we do more?

For example, enhancing education and training programs to enable individuals to acquire the skills needed for jobs in the mining, construction, and service industries. One easy way of doing this could be to expand the current training programs, such as the building learning strategy, to include training for mining related jobs. Also, more accessible business programs, targeted to provide the necessary one stop assistance to small businesses, such has been carried out in the Keewatin region. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am confident in the ability of my constituents and the residents all across the north to respond to the economic opportunities that are facilitated by this government.

Mr. Speaker, as an example, Jeannie Aikut is now the proud owner of a small bakery in Arviat. George Kuksuk is the owner and operator of a small construction business. Martha Aupaluktuq, of Baker Lake, currently runs her own electrical business. In the short term, such initiatives may add to the expenditures and reduce the small surplus that this government is projecting. However, I believe that these are worthwhile investments that will ultimately reduce the need for government expenditures in the future.

Mr. Speaker, when the deficit is discussed we often hear the line that we should be compassionate and we should be careful as to what debt we leave for the children of future generations. Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, we also have to be careful that we do not compromise our children's future by not providing

them with the tools for these individuals to lead a more healthy and productive life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. O'Brien. Replies to budget address. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Reply 7-13(4)

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first time that I have responded to a budget or opening address and I understand that there is a record that has been previously set of three and a half hours, and I am wondering today if I can beat that. Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make my reply to the budget address. I would like to focus on one area that pervades and threatens our ability to meet the needs of our constituents both now and in the future. That, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of how we as a government are going to address our social problems, the contingent issue of forced growth and expenditure of the monetary resources of this government in the social envelope.

I was out for dinner last week and the topic of the government came up. One individual, a Yellowknife businessman enquired of me: where do you see yourself making a difference and having input in this government? Where do your interests lie?, he asked me. Without hesitation I stated, as I always have right from the first interview that I did on election night, that I want to apply my energy and experience in the area of social problems. That does not mean that I do not have interest or do not want to contribute in other areas. Unless effectively addressed, these issues while drive the agenda this government in an ever increasing way, to the exclusion of other important issues.

If people are upset about the reductions to capital dollars for community infrastructure now, the future can not get any better if we do not get a handle on our social problems. Every one of us came to this House wanting to make a difference, and for quite a number of us there has been a quick learning curve to manoeuvre. Rules of the House, oral questions, written questions, points of order, points of privilege, and of course, never challenge the Speaker. And we are still learning. This is a beautiful building, but the

setting in the House was a little intimidating as we stood to make our first presentations. I asked myself, am I talking to the Speaker, am I talking to other Members? I think I am, but they are too far away and I can not see their eyes. And some of them, Mr. Picco, were obviously speaking to the TV camera.

At first, I felt like my words were just going about 50 feet in the air to the top of the dome up there, but Hansard brought them back down again for everyone to carefully scrutinize. If it were not for the understanding, supportive, and encouraging expressions of the Speaker, I would have surely wondered if anyone was listening at all. I am going to expound on what I truly believe should be the benchmark by which we should judge ourselves and be judged as a government.

I have heard said, over and over in the House, our youth are our most valuable resource. Your children and my children. Our children are our future. We want to create a hopeful and promising future for our children. Mr. Speaker, it is time to stop talking about our children being our most valuable resource and put action to our words. This is the youngest group ever elected to this Legislature and every Member around this table has children. So what I am talking about is going to be easy for them to relate to.

A sure way to stir compassion for our youth is for us to think of them as if they were our own. We have heard some very disturbing news over the past two weeks, of tragedy in at least

Page 387

two families involving young people. As a mother, my heart goes out to the Rabesca and the Murphy family. I am sure, when Rufus Rabesca's mother held him as a baby, she, like every mother, wondered what the future would hold. From a little baby to a little boy going off to school, to a young man leaving to further his education.

And then, one night everything changed. The protective parent in us would like to run out to that snow bank beside that trail and do something, anything, to prevent or reverse such a needless loss, but it is too late. How many more youth will be snatched away with us never knowing what they should or could have been? Since then there has been controversy over the decision to remove four other students from the home boarding program. I am all for accountability and consequences because bearing the consequences of our behaviour is a

reality in life, whether we like it or not. If I personally lived in Fort Smith and I had the opportunity, I would be inclined to take those four students in to my home. I realize, Mr. Speaker, this would not be a task for everyone.

First, I would get their attention. Then I would lay down the ground rules which would include imposing strict boundaries until such time as they felt self-esteem and respected themselves enough to impose their own boundaries. Then I would make a commitment to consistently hold my end of our relationship by telling them that nothing short of world catastrophe is going to pre-empt my commitment to them, and what they did to uphold their end of the relationship was entirely up to them. We perpetuate and compound the effect of failed relationships when we discard people and write them off. Mr. Ng announced last week that the Adolescent Solvent Abuse Treatment Program is going to be expanded, and that is good. But programs are not enough. We need to, as we always say, lead by example. Part of leadership is also to motivate.

Here in the House, we work together everyday. Our interaction as colleagues becomes common place. But to the public out there, specifically children and youth, they are looking to us as leaders. It is easy to become disconnected from the perceptions that we portray to the electorate. But they know who we are and they are watching us. One day I was driving up the driveway to the Legislature and I had my seven-year-old with me. She saw a man walking along the driveway up ahead and she said, "Mom, is that John Todd?" I said, "No, but how do you know John Todd?" "Oh, I have seen him on TV," she said. Little kids really like John Todd for some reason. I am not sure if it is because he has an easy last name, or he is just around their height, eye-level.

-- Laughter and applause

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Even little kids are watching us and looking for leadership, substance and example. As a side note, I have noticed in some of the previous replies to budget address that there have been some shots taken at our Finance Minister. Contrary to what is portrayed in the media, no one person bears responsibility for the budget reductions. The lucky 13th Assembly inherited the fiscal challenge we are struggling with. Listening to some, you would think that John Todd derived some sinister, personal pleasure for making cuts to the budget. On the contrary, he should be applauded

for taking on such a daunting task and putting forward a responsible budget.

-- Applause

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

The truth is, it is a budget that any reasonable caring steward of the public purse would have brought down. We have better things to do with our federal transfers and revenues than allowing them to be consumed by interest in what could have been an ever compounding burden of debt. Returning to the focus of my remarks.

In my opinion, it is more than population growth that is causing 40 percent forced growth in the social program costs. In some areas I believe the problems are getting worse, not diminishing. It is not the job, the mandate or even within the ability of this government to solve all of the problems. It is possible to live in a community like Hay River or Yellowknife and be relatively unaffected by, or immune to the social problems afflicting our people. For many years I went my happy way quite oblivious to another side of my community until one day I got the bright idea to manage the Hay River group home. That brought me right up close to the affects of dysfunctional relationships, alcoholism, abuse, neglect and so on. Incidentally, those were the happiest and hardest two years of my working life.

Ironically the fiscal restrictions might present opportunities for people to return to the kind of community that had to address social issues before there was a government program and resources to address every problem. Maybe it will necessitate the renewal of community and individual empowerment, the kind of sharing that was required for basic survival. Although lives may not be threatened by starvation today, the threat to survival from suicide and substance abuse is just as real. There are unlimited opportunities to participate individually or collectively in an effort to meet the needs in our communities. Meals on wheels, classroom assistants, service clubs, sponsorship or coaching minor recreation leagues, block parents and the list goes on and on.

My colleague for Yellowknife North tirelessly makes it his duty to participate in fund raising causes which require our participation by sponsoring him with our pledges. These things are all good, but I dare say we could all do more. By example and encouragement, perhaps we could tap as yet an untapped resource

out there who could help us address our social problems. Helping others is a great cure for boredom, loneliness and lack of purpose. We need to take a look at how we treat and perceive people in our society who are on the front lines. Do we say that is the teacher's job, that's the social worker's job, that is the women's shelters worker's job?

Addressing all the needs in our communities is not the sole responsibility of our women's shelters, foster parents, social workers, drug and alcohol counsellors and teachers. Do we offer support and encouragement or do we just load them up with cases, work them hard, burn them out and throw them away? How many people have experienced opening their homes or extending their families, like my honourable colleague from Yellowknife South, to have people look at them like they have taken leave of their senses? We should be putting them on a pedestal, holding them up as examples of leadership. It would behoove this government to recognize the ones who are in the trenches so to speak a little more than what we do.

Page 388

We all need to become activists in our community, visiting our schools, correctional facilities, and hospitals more frequently. We need to recognize the profound impact that we could have on the lives of future leaders. It does not take much to show that we care about our youth. Let us find little ways of showing our frontline workers as well that we as a government appreciate what they are doing.

Call me an idealist, but I believe there is a bright future for the north. We are a small group by any standard. We as political leaders must do our part. But what we make of our lives, our communities, our schools, our work place, our home is not up to the government. It is up to each one of us. Everyone can contribute in their own way.

If you are a teacher or an inmate in a correctional facility, you can make a choice to make a difference where you are. It is a matter of choices. When it comes to our social problems, you are either part of the solution or you are part of the problem. Our budget this fiscal year, and in years to come, cannot continue to cope with our social challenges unless changes are made. But if we, as leaders, can lead by example and motivate others to do the same, I do believe there is hope. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Replies to the budget address. Mr. Rabesca.

Reply 8-13(4)

MR. RABESCA:

Over the next number of weeks, we will be discussing and lobbying to get more for our communities as well as interest groups. We will work hard to ensure our communities will not feel the brunt of the cutbacks that my honourable colleague, Mr. Todd, has presented to us. It is our responsibility to fight for every dollar we can but still show this government that we do believe and are intent on bringing our House in order.

In reviewing the budget address, I must congratulate the Honourable Minister for his efforts to ensure this House will have a balanced budget within the next year and possibly realize a slight surplus. I know he has taken the brunt of criticism for the action that this government has implemented over the last year, and I am sure he along with the rest of the Cabinet will be criticized further. However, we must get our finances in order to meet the ever changing climate that we are operating in and still provide the necessary services our people require.

With the possibility of a surplus we are now seeing Members of this House lobbying for their fair share. This, as we all know, is only a budget. We will not know if we have an actual surplus until later in the year. We should not spend what we do not have today and hope we have it tomorrow. We must continue to be aware of our commitment to our constituents. It is our children and grandchildren that will feel the effects of our decisions in this House.

Mr. Speaker, during my review I found many areas that are encouraging. For example, the Community Action Fund which will provide badly needed dollars to communities for family wellness programs with the goal of providing early intervention support services to children and families in need. I feel this one initiative alone will have a major role in the lives of our future generations. By providing this service it will assist families to work towards a better life for all and thus reduce dependencies on this government. Other initiatives dealing with social programs in communities will assist the communities to look after their own, will also be helpful for this government. For years communities have expressed interest in dealing with

offenders of the law through local communities instead of sending these offenders to an institution that in most cases is far from home and quite often too harsh an environment to provide any substantial assistance. For it is the communities know these people and know how to deal with them. I would also say that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and this government seems to be attempting to provide that prevention.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that this government is showing a commitment to our business sector, by providing support and assistance to our local small businesses in order that they can expand and employ local residents. The need for our smaller communities to develop a stable economic base is what will also assist in reduction of dependencies on this government and make these communities prosper. There is a need in all communities for the local businesses to know that the availability of funding sources is there and that investors are out there ready and willing to support our local people.

The Community Futures Program is another example of how this government is supporting local business. It has long been recognized that most small communities do not have the necessary resources or expertise to assist their residents in establishing businesses. Through this program I would hope we can see societies grow and provide services and support to many interested parties.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this budget is heading in the right direction and hopefully it can stay on track. It will take all our efforts to ensure we can provide our people with the best possible services and support program that we can. It is also our responsibility as Ordinary Members of this House to ensure that this government is as fair and equitable in all cuts that come forward as they possibly can be. As well as provide the best possible action to our constituents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Rabesca. Replies to budget address. Item 11, petitions. Mr. Enuaraq.

ITEM 11: PETITIONS

MR. ENUARAQ:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition, Petition No. 6-13(4) dealing with the matter of proposed

reduction of Nunavut library services. Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 29 signatures from the residents of Pangnirtung and Mr. Speaker, the petitioners request that all Members should work to preserve the public library services which currently exist to cancel the layoff notices which have been issued. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Petitions, Mr. Evaloarjuk.

Page 389

MR. EVALOARJUK:

(Translation) Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition, Petition No. 7-13(4) dealing with the proposed reductions to Nunavut library services. Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 377 signatures from residents of Igloodik, and Mr. Speaker, the petitioners request that all Members should look to preserve the public library services which currently exists, and to cancel the layoff notices which have been issued.

Mr. Speaker, the other petition I would like to present, Petition No. 8-13(4), is dealing with the matter of proposed reductions to Nunavut library services. Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 102 signatures from residents of Pond Inlet, and Mr. Speaker, the petitioners request that all Members should work together to preserve the public library services which currently exists, and to cancel the layoff notices which have been issued. (Translation ends)

MR. SPEAKER:

Petitions, Mr. Barnabas.

MR. BARNABAS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition, Petition No. 9-13(4), dealing with the matter of proposed reductions to Nunavut library services. Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 27 signatures from residents of Nanisivik, and Mr. Speaker, the petitioners request that all Members should work to preserve the public library services which currently exist, and to cancel the layoff notices which have been issued. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Barnabas. Petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports

of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Mr. Todd.

ITEM 14: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, Tabled Document No. 35-13(4), the Public Accounts 1995-96 for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the year ended March 31, 1996. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Tabling of documents. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter, Tabled Document No. 36-13(4), signed by Doreen Kelly, secretary of the Hay River Seniors Society, dated January 21, 1997, regarding increased price of wood for seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Tabling of documents. Ms. Thompson.

HON. MANITOK THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, Tabled Document No. 37-13(4), the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Nunavut Lands Claims Agreement for 1996-97. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Tabling of documents. Mr. Evaloarjuk.

MR. EVALOARJUK:

(Translation) Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a package of two letters, Tabled Document No. 38-13(4), that I received in support of Nunavut libraries, outlining concerns with proposed reduction to Nunavut library services. The letters are from Philippa Ootoowak, the local librarian in Pond Inlet, and Mireille Mathieu of Igloodik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Evaloarjuk. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motions for first reading of bills. Mr. Todd.

ITEM 16: NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FIRST
READING OF BILLS

Bill 9: Forgiveness of Debts Act, 1996-97

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three notices of motions for first reading of bills, Mr. Speaker. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I give notice on Thursday, February 6, I will move that Bill 9, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 1996-97, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 10: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 1996-97

Mr. Speaker, I also give notice that on Thursday, February 6, I will move that Bill 10, Supplementary Appropriation Act No. 3, 1996 be read for the first time.

Bill 11: Loan Authorization Act 1997-98

Mr. Speaker, I give notice on Thursday, February 6, I will move that Bill 11, Loan Authorization Act, 1997-98 be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Notices of motions for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Motion 9-13(4). Mr. Ningark.

ITEM 17: MOTIONS

Motion 9-13(4): Referral of TD 20-13(4) to Committee of the Whole

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Tabled Document 20-13(4) entitled, Report of the Joint Working Group on the Business Incentive Policy, be moved into the committee of the whole for discussion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Your motion is in order. To the motion.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Question.

MR. SPEAKER:

Question is being called. All those in favour. All those opposed. All those abstaining. Motion is carried. Motion 10-13(4). Mr. Roland.

Motion 10-13(4): Appointment of Conflict of Interest Commissioner

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act contains provisions defining what are conflicts of interest, placing a number of obligations on members with respect to arranging their personal affairs in such a manner so as to resolve conflicts in the public interest and requiring members to make public disclosure of their assets and liabilities;

Page 390

AND WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act provides for the appointment of a Conflict of Interest Commissioner to advise members on their obligations under the Act, to investigate complaints alleging a breach of the Act, to conduct inquiries and make recommendations to the Legislature, and to report to the Legislature on an annual basis on the activities of the Commissioner during the preceding year;

AND WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act authorizes the Management and Services Board to appoint an Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner when the office is vacant and the Assembly is not sitting;

AND WHEREAS the Management and Services Board, pursuant to their authority to make acting appointments, appointed Anne Crawford to the position of Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner on August 1, 1996;

AND WHEREAS it is desirable that a permanent appointment be recommended by the Legislative Assembly.

NOW THEREFORE, I MOVE, Seconded by the Honourable Member for Nunakput that pursuant to section 79.(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, that this Legislative Assembly recommends to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories that Ms. Anne Crawford be appointed as Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Your motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Question.

MR. SPEAKER:

Question is being called. All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried. 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. Bill 8, Committee Report 2-13(4), Committee Report 3-13(4) with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 20: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

I would like to call the committee of the whole to order. We are dealing with Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 1997-98. We are on the Department of the Executive, page 2-16, and I would like to ask the Minister if he would like to have his witnesses join him.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chairman. Possibly later on when they arrive, but I am ready now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you. Mr. Premier. Referring to page 2-17 of your main estimates, total grants and contributions. Total contributions \$439,000. Mr. Krutko.

Committee Motion 8-13(4): Reconsider Elimination of Funding for Metis Nation Community Resource Director

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Madam Chair, I would like to move a motion in regards to the Metis Nation community resource director position,(inaudible) the government reconsider its direction, implement funding for the Metis Nation for the community resource director, and further that the government reconsider amending Bill 8, Appropriation Act 1997-98 by reinstating \$60,000 contribution to the Metis Nation for community resource director.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The motion will be distributed to the Members. We will just wait until everyone has received a copy of the motion with the translation, and once everyone has it, we will recognize Mr. Krutko. The Premier is requesting to have his witnesses come in. Is the committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

We will ask the Premier to introduce his witnesses after we deal with the motion that is on the floor. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Madam Chair. In regards to the motion, I believe that the Metis Nation in regards to the people they represent is in a similar category as the Status of Women, which was established in 1970 in relation to the Dene/Metis claims process, and also are presently in the process of implementing Dene/Metis health benefit package to each membership, in which this organization represents people up and down the Mackenzie Valley and still have recognized Metis locals who are registered under the NWT Societies Act, or incorporated. I believe they should be treated similarly to any other political organization that delivers programs and services on behalf of its membership. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Krutko. To the motion. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. In the 1996-97 revised forecast, the Members will notice that the \$60,000 to the Metis Nation, a community resource director funding was provided to the Metis Nation for community resource director, and that was to honour an agreement that we made as a government with the Metis Nation, a one time funding agreement. This was not an ongoing fund, or anything, it was just a one time thing. We had made a commitment to them, so we honoured it and we helped them with that one time only. It was not an ongoing issue. Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry. And I just give that to Members for background, that it was never intended for ongoing funding every year of \$60,000. And that is why it does not show in the 1997/98 main estimates, or the

1995/96 main estimates. It was a one time grant. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Further discussion to the motion. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO:

I would like to have the votes counted so that the individuals stand and be counted for.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Is the Member requesting a recorded vote?

MR. KRUTKO:

Madam Chair, I call for a recorded vote.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Member is calling for a recorded vote. The

Page 391

question is being called. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Krutko. Mr. Rabesca. Mr. O'Brien.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

All those opposed to the motion.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Roland. Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Henry. Mr. Steen. Mr. Ningark. Mr. Evaloarjuk.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

All those abstaining on the motion.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mrs. Thompson. Mr. Antoine. Mr. Kakfwi. Mr. Ng. Mr. Todd. Mr. Arlooktoo. Mr. Dent. Mr. Enuaraq.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you. For the record the results of the voting on the motion were three for, six against, and eight

abstentions, so the motion is defeated. Total contributions, \$439,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Total grants and contributions, \$529,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Detail of work performed on behalf of third parties. Page 2-20, total department. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want clarification on active positions on page 2-18 of Inuvik, two positions. Can the Minister inform me what those positions are for?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you. The Member for Inuvik is referring to active positions as the information item on page 2-18. Mr. Premier.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. GLOs Aklavik, Tuk.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND:

Was it GLOs Aklavik and Tuk?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Yes, that is correct. That is what the Premier's response was. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Was that transfers or total cuts?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Mr. Premier.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. It was transferred to the communities.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Premier. Any further questions on information active positions? Mr. Rabesca.

MR. RABESCA:

I would like to ask a question regarding the Fort Smith region on the four PYs, what position is that and where is it located?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Rabesca. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. That is the Public Utilities Board that we just took over and that is where those four PYs are located in Hay River. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Any further questions. Information item, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Agreed. Thank you. Detail of work performed on behalf of third parties. Total department, \$65,000. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO:

In regards to the City of Yellowknife's economy, how many other secondments is the department involved in, and is this the only one?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. No, this is the only one we have and it is seconded to the City of Yellowknife. The Mayor requested this position and it is detailed

work performed on behalf of the third party. We are reimbursed for that. We are paid for that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO:

Who is this individual and what was his previous position?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. She was employed in corporate services and her name is Rosalie Power.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO:

Did they look at this in line with the block funding arrangement they have with the city? When that block funding was done, in relation to really looking at this agreement? Because they have received block funding from this government in regards to community empowerment, and why was this not taken care of at that time?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. No, it has nothing to do with block funding or community empowerment. It is a straight across secondment to the City of Yellowknife

Page 392

and it commenced in '95, June 26, 1995, it will go till June 25, 1998. Benefits are administered by the Executive Office and invoiced to the City of Yellowknife. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Detail of work performed on behalf of third parties. Total department, \$65,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Agreed, thank you. If Members could refer back to page 2-11, program summary, Executive Offices, page 2-11. Operations and maintenance, total operations and maintenance, \$10,248,000. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Madam Chair, could you give me direction again where we are?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Yes, Mr. Steen. We are on page 2-11. Program summary, Executive Offices. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I have some questions on the total operations and maintenance figure. If I may, I would like to ask the Premier if he could again identify the amount of time and resources spent on Divisional Secretariat, west versus east?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. On the nine positions in the Divisional Review Secretariat, one position is devoted solely to Nunavut issues. This is the executive director of the Nunavut office located in Iqaluit. It is estimated that the remainder of the staff in the Division Review Secretariat spend an equal amount of time on east and west division issues. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Premier identify whether this is considered incremental or transitional cost?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Incremental or transitional cost leading up to division are taken care of and documented by Financial Management Board. They are putting that together now. It would be a question better asked to that Minister, when he appears.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Steen, the Premier is indicating that could be answered under FMBS. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the chair identify where would this be addressed under Financial Management Board?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. It will likely be covered under Directorate on page 2-30 or audit budgeting and evaluation under page 2-33, but that is a question that could be answered by Mr. Todd, who will be next up before committee of the whole. Would that satisfy your question, Mr. Steen? Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, would the Minister responsible for Management Service Board be able to answer all questions in regard to Divisional Secretariat at that point?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. I do not know if I would be able to answer that question on behalf of Mr. Todd. Perhaps the Premier could address that question. Mr. Premier.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I could only address the question that the Member has asked, and that is whether it be incremental or transitional costs, and if he would direct that question to FMBS about the Divisional Secretariat then he would be able to answer that question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess what I am getting at Madam Chair, is there any hope from this government of obtaining the funds back from the federal government that are being spent on Divisional Secretariat? Could the Premier identify that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again, that would be a proper question to put to Mr. Todd, as FMB chair that takes care of the financial issues of the government, but we are pursuing that issue and there is always hope.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. But once again, I do not in any way mean to take the question just easily or whatever. It is an important question that has to be answered, and Mr. Todd will give it the right answer when his budget comes up.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Program summary, Executive Offices, total operations and maintenance, \$10,248,000. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, could the Premier advise me whether or not this government has an agreement with the federal government, verbal or in writing, that they will reimburse us for transition or incremental costs related to the Divisional Secretariat?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. I believe that part of the middle of Mr. Steen's question would not have been recorded. For the record could I just ask you, Mr. Steen, to please repeat the question?

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, could the Premier indicate if we have an agreement with the federal government, verbal or in writing, that they will

indeed reimburse us for these costs associated with the Divisional Secretariat?

Page 393

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Premier.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. We do not have any verbal or written agreement with the federal government on incremental cost, transitional cost, or any other cost after April 1 of 1999, or any other extra costs at all associated with the creation of two new territories.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, obviously, there is hope to be reimbursed for these costs from the federal government. This is confirmed by the fact that they are keeping track of the amounts of incremental transitional costs. My question to the Premier then is: we are identifying our share of this transitional cost but it is my understanding that the creation of Nunavut is a tri-party agreement. Therefore, is there any indication that the other two parties are contributing equal amounts of funding or resources or time to achieve the same goal? On an equal basis?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe it would be safe to say that the Government of the Northwest Territories has taken on the majority of the costs and the majority of the work. The simple reason is that we have and can look into the costs of running government in the Northwest Territories, because those costs are here and reflected in our budgets. It would be safe to say that we carry the brunt of the those costs. And also we are in the process now in Mr. Todd's office of documenting, and producing a document - what we have spent on divisional issues on east and west, so that we can present that to the federal government. We have raised that with DIAND many times and we are now starting to put our case together to present it

to the federal government on what the incremental and transitional costs will be. We are presently doing that work now and hopefully when we go up to Cambridge, I believe it is, for the Nunavut Summit, people are going to be ready to talk about costs. We hope to hear soon from the federal government on their true commitment on Nunavut. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Would the Premier indicate if the cost we are bearing right now, at what point in time this government feels we have spent all we can afford to spend on this thing, without the parties doing their share, we are going to lay off it and quit spending money on this issue without some help from the other parties?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it would be premature to say, as a government that we are going to set a certain date which without a commitment from the federal government on covering costs, that we could not proceed any further. But it is a very important issue that the Member raises. An issue that we, as a government, still have to talk about in Cabinet and to Members of the Legislative Assembly as well. We have to make sure that the federal government is living up to the commitments they have made not only to the Nunavut people, but to people in the western Arctic. That is our job, to make sure the federal government lives up to those commitments, so that April 1st, 1999, we have two viable Territories. Our Minister of Finance is working on his staff is working on bringing together all those costs, so we can present it to the federal government.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I still would like a clearer response as to how far do we carry these responsibilities? I mean, we obviously can not bear the total cost of creating Nunavut all by

ourselves. But we seem to be doing that at this point without any input from the federal government.

My question to the Premier is, obviously there is a meeting in February, but my concern is that: if we are spending money that should be the responsibility of the federal government, where they do not have money to carry out other programs. That is my concern. It is reducing our ability to carry out other programs. My question, Madam Chair, is at what point can we no longer afford it? We use too many other programs. I would like the Minister to identify for us whether Cabinet is in fact reaching the point of no return, where we get so deep into this thing that we can not quit. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Minister.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I can understand the Member's concern. We have an agreement already with the federal government to start negotiations for transitional and incremental costs in March, next month. That is when we are going to start negotiating those costs. Mr. Todd, the Minister of Finance has met with Mr. Paul Martin, Minister of Finance from the federal government, who has agreed to look at incremental and transitional costs. How long those negotiations will go on for, I do not know. We will have a better idea by March or so. We could see what will happen in the very near future, but we do have an agreement to negotiate this very important issue, and we will keep the Members informed as it unfolds. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to respond to the Minister. That is the clearest answer I have heard yet in this House as to incremental or transitional costs being addressed by the federal government. I appreciate his response and I am sure the Nunavut Members appreciate it too, so we all know that there is going to be federal responsibility identified through the funding coming forth at some point. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Steen. Mr. Henry.

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I think all that is required here is some clarification. I think the public may be a

Page 394

little confused as to the process here. Yesterday there was a motion which carried, regarding recommendations to the government on increasing or reinstating funding for the Native Women's Association and Status of Women's Council. Before we proceed with the program summary, I think an explanation is in order as to what approving this does, and what the process is for the Premier in this case, to bring back comments or responses from his government on the recommendations that were made. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Henry. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe the motion was a recommendation to the government, and we have time to respond to that recommendation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Mr. Henry.

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Does the Premier have the timeframe on his response? On that particular issue?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Henry. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I would take a look at what Members have to say to that motion, just like we took a look at what the committee had to recommend. We give our reasons why we disagreed with it at that time. Take a motion, look at the motion, the recommendation, after we get through every stage of the budget. We see what else kicked out of the cap and we will consider it then. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Does that answer your question, Mr. Henry? Program summary, Executive

Offices, total operations and maintenance, \$10,248,000.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you. I would like, for the record, to thank Mr. Gilmour and Mr. Cates. We did not recognize them or record their presence here today for the record for being here today. Does the committee agree that consideration of program summary, Executive Offices is concluded?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Agreed, Thank you. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I just would like to thank the Members for their review. Mahsi Cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Thank you, Mr. Morin. Thank you to your witnesses, and now, does the committee agree that we should proceed with the Financial Management Board Secretariat?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):

Is Minister Todd prepared to provide opening comments for the departmental estimates for the Financial Management Board Secretariat?

HON. JOHN TODD:

Indeed I am Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am pleased to present the Financial Management Board Secretariat's 97-98 main estimates. FMBS is requesting funding of \$40,820,000, which is 11 percent less than last year, a reduction of approximately five million dollars.

Close to three million dollars of this reduction comes from savings in our staff housing program, as we

continue to implement our policy of removing the government as the landlord to employees. The remaining two million dollars of savings comes from a series of reductions related to delegation efficiency initiatives.

The staff house sale program this year has picked up considerable momentum, with the use of private real estate agents, and I am confident that we will meet our combined '96/97 and '97/98 sales target of \$27 million.

On other fronts, the FMBS is in the final stages of the implementation of user-say/user-pay initiatives, as well as financial and human resource delegations. These actions have allowed significant downsizing of the FMBS for '97/98, and have reduced the administrative burden on departmental managers, while making them more involved and accountable in these areas. Ninety-seven/ninety-eight will also see the completion of the project to integrate the personnel and human resource management systems in government. This re-engineering will yield significant on-going savings in '97/98. Overall, the FMBS will decrease by 30 positions in '97/98.

The final area I would like to touch on is affirmative action. Since the Standing Committee on Government Operations' recommendations on the affirmative action view were received, we have been working on a comprehensive response, however late we have been. Many of the broader recommendations that the standing committee made concerning non-employment strategy, are being addressed by the Department of Wildlife, Resources, and Economic Development, in partnership with the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment. The FMBS is in the final stages of completing a revised, affirmative action discussion paper that we will provide to the Standing Committee on Government Operations, then table in the House. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. The chairperson of the committee, Mr. Picco will make remarks on behalf of the committee. Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Financial Management Board Secretariat occupies a central position in the government organizational structure. As a result, many important and sometimes controversial initiatives fall under its jurisdictions.

The most notable of these is the sale of staff housing. Ever since the plan to sell staff housing on level two and level three communities was announced, concerns have been raised about the availability of suitable housing for government staff. Especially in recent months, teachers and others have expressed concerns that the sale of staff housing will lead to

Page 395

difficulties. Committee Members noted concerns that have been brought to their attention in discussions with the Minister. The committee appreciates that the Minister has undertaken efforts to address the concerns of these employees and to complete the sale of staff housing. The standing committee will continue to monitor this issue and the concerns of constituents and will continue to discuss staff housing sales with the Minister necessary to ensure that those concerns are addressed.

A further concern relates to the sale of staff housing to those not occupying the house. In some cases, the tenant employees are choosing not to buy the homes. The government's plan is then to sell the staff housing to private concerns, who will then lease the house back to the government for the employee's use. Committee Members did not agree that selling an asset, just to lease it back, was a good idea. Therefore, the committee will reiterate a recommendation made following the review of the draft business plans in October. The standing committee recommends that the chairman of the Financial Management Board Secretariat not proceed with sales of staff houses to anyone. Anyone other than the occupants.

Staff housing that is leased from private landlords was also discussed. Some concerns were raised about instances where the government and its employees may be subject to unreasonable lease costs. As well, some committee Members noted the Minister's frequent assertions that the government was getting out of staff housing, yet, still entering into new leases for staff housing units. The standing committee will continue to address these and other concerns with the Minister in the area of labour relations and human resource issues.

The changes to the Public Service Act, the many lay offs and resulting lack of job security and the uncertainties of the future regarding division and possible further cut backs, have led to a situation where the government's most important asset, its employees, are not able to contribute they way they

would if morale were higher. Much of the problem relates to poor communication. Some committee Members noted that when the federal government started major cut backs in their civil service, they gave as much as three years notice to employees, giving them time to examine other options for their careers. The standing committee understanding that the territorial government did not have the luxury of such notice.

However, we seem to have gone to another extreme, with employees often being the last to know about major changes, which will effect their positions. The result is a perception that there is a lack of direction and overall strategy to the cuts. It is critical that the government communicate effectively with employees in order that they might be best prepared for the difficulties that they face as a result of fiscal restraint, division and other massive changes to the way the government operates in the Northwest Territories.

Committee Members were pleased to see that one area where communication was a problem, the issue of pay to Union of Northern Workers over Christmas and the mandatory days of leave without pay, also known as "Donny Days," has been resolved and unionized government workers will now not have to cope with severely reduced pay cheques right after Christmas.

Finally, a new affirmative action policy review is expected to be tabled in the House during the 4th Session and committee Members look forward to seeing this policy debated by all Members. So ends the overview of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, report on the Financial Management Board Secretariat and Minister Todd.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Before we get into general comments, I would like to ask the honourable Minister of Finance if he wished to bring in witness or witnesses. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, indeed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Minister. Do we have the agreement of the committee Members here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Agreed. Please bring in the witnesses. Thank you. For the record, Mr. Minister, would you please introduce the witness to the committee.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me is, as everybody knows, Mr. Lew Voytilla of the FMBS.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Welcome Mr. Voytilla to the committee. General comments, I have Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, at this point I would like to advise Members of a business which is controlled by me, Greenway Realty Limited, which has numerous listings with the GNWT to sell staff housing. As such, I am in conflict in consideration of this program and would like to declare this conflict, refrain from debating this matter, and withdraw from the committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Your point is taken as noted. General comments, we have Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some brief general comments. I would like the Minister to maybe reply to the two concerns I am going to raise. Is the government going to be shrunk by almost 1,900 and some positions in the last two years, consolidating and amalgamating the number of departments down to ten. Will there be a review similar to the one that is being undertaken to regulatory reform within the financial area to review the red

Page 396

tape, the policies, procedures that are there that may no longer be necessary, because the organization has changed its structure? I am also concerned, Mr. Chairman, in regards to the reference to the Affirmative Action Policy. There is no clear mention of the linkage that is supposed to be there between the Affirmative Action Policy and the Northern

Employment Strategy. Can the Minister assure me that there will be a connection? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I believe that it is actually 11 departments, although we have been saying 10, but it is 11, just for clarity's purpose. I think I agree with my honourable colleague that when you do the kind of shrinking that we have done, you need to be able to not only shrink, but to look how efficiently we can do our work. My honourable colleague, Mr. Arlooktoo, had alluded to it in the earlier discussion this week with respect to the on-going direction that I have given to Ministers through the FMB, that it has to be a continuing on-going analysis of how we are doing things.

I am fundamentally of the belief that a decentralized form of authority, and that when you decentralize authority, you put the decision making closer to the issues, therefore, you hope that in the long run, one, the decisions will be more sound, and two, they will be more efficient. There is no audit going on in relationship to the efficiency of government, but there is an overall thrust in our decentralization and delegation of authority, the managers, that in doing that we must run things more efficiently. There is no, I do not have under way right now because our agenda has been so full, I do not have under way right now, any deliberate or direct review of red tape, I think it would be fair to say that.

On the issue of affirmative action and its linkages with the northern employment strategy, I have already said to this House on a number of occasions and apologize to this House for the fact that we have not moved as aggressively as we would like on this strategy. There will be linkages between them both. We are close to bringing the strategy forward. It is our intent to bring the strategy to committee first, during this session. As I said in the House last time, to seek on-going input and direction from it, to move quickly to come to grips with it, try to get approval in general at the end of May and implement as early as June or July of this coming year. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This final supplementary on the issue of reviewing existing procedures, I think it is an issue that we have to red flag given the fact that we have at this point we will have almost 900 less employees basically trying to do the same kind of job and to go through, enforce the same policies, follow the same procedures, and in fact we do not have a plan to address that issue, my concern is that we are going to be burning people out needlessly. If we redesign government, we have to take out some of the internal workings that may not be required any further. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Of course there is a theory, remember we had too many in the first place. I am not being facetious about it. The fact of the matter is, it is 6,000 plus employees for 67,000 people. That is disproportionate in my opinion, the amount of civil servants versus population, but in answer to my colleague, I want to assure him that with the delegation that we have done. I mean we have done enormous pushing out of delegation of authority. We have in fact made some moves. One that comes to mind would be the \$5,000 local purchase authority that used to be \$250 or a thousand dollars. In an effort to streamline and give some authority in delegation to people in the field. It is not something that you can just sort of say, well, we will do an audit and we will move forward to make it more efficient today. It is a general attitude, if you want, and I suppose to some extent, I am responsible for providing leadership and direction and I want to assure my colleague that there is nobody more cognizant of the need to make government more efficient, to make it less burdensome in terms of red tape and bureaucracy than I am and it is a continuing task that I am optimistic we will make it better than it was before, that is not to suggest that it is in an ideal situation. It is certainly our intent to make it easier, particularly of our senior management in the field, more responsible and give them more authority to go with it and I am optimistic with that will come more efficiencies and certainly more satisfaction in terms of staff morale, middle management, senior management confidence, et cetera. So that is sort of the intent, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. General comments. Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad to hear the Minister's concern about affirmative action and other government hiring policies, because I am a bit concerned about some of the recent statements about hiring people, and the fact that the best person for the job was hired. I was not under the impression affirmative action policy indicated that the best person for the job was hired. In fact, it is when you do not have an affirmative action policy that the best person for the job is hired. From my understanding of affirmative action people who have status should be chosen before someone else as long as they are qualified to do the job. If my understanding of this policy is incorrect, could we get the Minister to indicate how affirmative action works and how it is implemented?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I may take a moment and allow my colleague, Mr. Erasmus, a little indulgence. I would like to add one thing to the job strategy that was missed. That is, when we bring forward the job strategy, where there will be an integration of affirmative action program, I want to be sure everybody understands that the job strategy we are bringing forward will be tied to community and private sector partnerships and linkages that the government cannot continue to be the sole creator of jobs. So there will be a partnership there, either with the communities or with the provider sector so we can lever the dollars and get maximum benefit and get maximum impact to the people that need employment, whether it be seasonal or full time or sustainable as Mr. O'Brien has spoken about a number of occasions. I think on the affirmative action policy, and I am speaking for

Page 397

myself, that there is a fine balance here. We have an important affirmative action policy which I support, but we also have a number of non-aboriginal, non-affirmative action people who have been in this country a long time. We have to balance it out. There is no doubt that no situation is perfect, and there may be isolated cases where some Members of the House

and some members of the public field, a particular policy has not been put into place in a manner in which it should. In general, the affirmative action policy of the government is to do exactly as Mr. Erasmus says. That if some affirmative action individual person in the Northwest Territories qualifies for the job, that being in the affirmative action category, gives them priority hiring in relationship to the job.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. General comments, Mr. Erasmus?

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then, if there is an affirmative action candidate who qualifies for the job, from what the Minister is saying, they should get the job and we should not be hearing things like we hired the best person for the job. Is that correct?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

What I said was, if there is an affirmative action candidate who has the qualifications for the job, has part of the criteria for selection for the job, they would be given priority hiring. If that in fact does not take place, that Mr. Voytilla advised there is an appeal mechanism in place, to allow that particular individual to appeal the appointment. I guess, in simple in language, if you have two candidates, both with equal qualifications, and one is an affirmative action candidate, they would take priority over the non-affirmative candidate, provided the qualifications, etc. were equal. I think that is the intent of the policy and I qualified it by saying I am sure like any policy in any environment there are always exceptions to the rule. It would be unfair of me to say there are no slippages through any policy whether it is this one or others, so it is not a perfect situation, but it is clear as to the criteria is set in the selection of employees. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. We are reviewing Financial Management Board Secretariat 1997/98 main estimates. Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister indicated if they have equal qualifications, is it absolute equal qualifications? Or does the affirmative action person have to meet the minimum qualifications?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

I have asked Mr. Voytilla because I want to get this clear. My understanding is that the affirmative action candidate has to be qualified. Period.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So that does not mean they have to have equal qualifications? They do not have to have equal qualifications, they just have to be qualified for the job. Is that correct?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Mr. Erasmus is correct.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, if the person is qualified, how much weight is put on the actual interview? The reason I am asking this, Mr. Chairman is because, many people know how to do good interviews, and people actually take courses. Weekend workshops and that kind of thing to do a good interview, but a lot of people do not and have not had that opportunity to do that. They may have a poor interview, but they may be qualified for the job and may do the job very well. What I would like to know, is how much weight is actually put on an interview if you know from looking at the person's qualifications that they are qualified to do the job?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Erasmus. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you. Of course I think it is important to point out affirmative action and non-affirmative action candidates can take courses on interviews. I think that is an important point item and I am told by Mr. Voytilla that the interview, although I can not qualify it, is an important part of the final selection of the candidate. There may be people who are do take courses in being interviewed, I do not honestly know. Certainly, if there are courses out there, I am sure they are available to all people. I think the interview process is important. I could not qualify it, say on a scale of one to ten, Mr. Chairman.

I want to assure my colleague, because I know this is an important issue with him, and it is understandably an important issue. I know he has spoken to the House on a number of occasions. It is the clear commitment of this government through the Premier and the Ministers where the changes we have made where we fundamentally believe that the overall political responsibility where affirmative action changes from the bureaucracy to the political management of the government will bring about a significant change to the way in which we have done affirmative action.

Each Minister will be held accountable in the House for his or her actions and their departments accordingly. I think it would be fair to say that our net result, on a historical basis nobody, whether an affirmative action client or not, is pleased with the result we have had. The system we have had in place was not as conducive to meeting the targets that are being set. Therefore the Premier, with the support of the Cabinet, changed the system. He has made the Ministers accountable, and at the end of the day I fundamentally believe that this will work better. That is not to suggest it is not without its shortcomings. All policies of the government, especially one of this nature, are going to have problems with it. I would hope that my humble colleague would give us the benefit of some time that a year from now he will hold us accountable. I call that challenge up, and I am optimistic and confident that the numbers will change because there is an overall political and moral obligation to do so. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. We have Mr. Erasmus, Mr. Ootes, Mr. Krutko, and the time has run out. On my list, we have Mr. Ootes first, and then Mr. Krutko. Mr. Ootes. Mr.

Krutko, according to the list, you are going to have to wait until Mr. Ootes has been given a chance to speak. Mr. Ootes, you have the floor.

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was going to suggest we continue with general comments. I appreciate Mr. Erasmus' line of questioning, and it is very important. We will presumably have the opportunity to return to that, and I wondered if we could carry on with general comments?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. In the area of general comments, Members are allowed to ask questions, so yes. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a number of areas I would like to make some remarks on. One is the number of employees we have cut. When we do that substantial amount of elimination of employees, I have not really seen our government eliminate any programs, and it places a great deal of stress, when you downsize by the percentage we have, on the rest of the employees to carry on with the programs. I am concerned we are continuing on with all the programs we once had, and we have not eliminated anything. The other area I am concerned with is employee morale. There is still, and always has been, and it's continuing, an employee morale problem. The employees are facing an unknown. I guess they are saying to themselves, "at what point do we find out whether we have a job or not?" There is job insecurity.

Also, there are the southern hires. Several senior positions have been filled by people from southern Canada, and to me, that does not express a great deal of confidence in our existing staff to be promoted from within.

Now that we have combined departments, how do we know that we are running efficiently? For instance, in the RWED, who is keeping tabs as to whether this is working, whether this is working efficiently.

The item of division has always been of concern to me, and the concern is the speed at which we want to transfer over to Nunavut, all the programs and the people. And I am concerned about security for staff,

and whether they will have jobs, whether the people in Nunavut will have jobs.

Also, the ongoing relationship when division takes place. Affirmative action is an area of real concern to me, because many people in my constituency have raised, week in, week out, question with regard to when we are going to deal with it. There is criticism of the program, and I think it is good that we bring it forward.

And I am looking forward, with enthusiasm, to the job strategy program. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, I will be honest with you, and answer it if I can. You know there have been program cuts, and there are continuing program cuts, and every time we cut, most of you pass motions to put them back in. I am not sure how we will ever satisfy any of the people, or anytime where we may satisfy some of the people some of the time.

Our employee morale, I think, is understandable right across the country from Newfoundland to BC, from shore to shore, where you are cutting and making government smaller, as we all have to do. You are going to have a problem with employee morale. That is unfortunately just one of the situations that prevails in this difficult time.

I thought, in my budget address, we tried to reassure and compliment what Mr. Ootes said, and that was in relationship to our obligation to our staff as it relates to division. I do not want to be disrespectful to anyone, but let me tell you, I am going to repeat again, division is a reality. Mr. Ootes said he was concerned about the damage in terms of the relationship. He should be concerned about the damage to the relationship if he implies that we should slow it down. The bottom line is that you have to get on the band wagon here, and make this thing work in a timely manner, because those who will be the new legislators are watching what is going on, and they may in fact, if I can be so bold, resent any implication that this thing should be held up.

We need to move swiftly, not slowly. We need to reassure our employees, as we did in the budget, that they will be given an opportunity in the Nunavut government. I want to remind everyone, it is two new

governments, not just one. You are obligated through legislation to move on division. I am trying to reassure this House, and my honourable colleague Mr. Steen, that discussions are under way with Mr. Martin and the federal government on the fiscal side of things. But to talk about relationships, we need to demonstrate to our colleagues in the east and the west that we are going to move on a timely, efficient way to put some government in place. I feel very, very strongly about that.

I would suggest to you that there should be no reluctance to move on this issue. We are already, and I have said this on a number of occasions, behind the eight ball, as they say, on the division issue. So, again, on the employee morale, I understand that Mr. Ootes has a large civil servant constituency, so have I. Unfortunately, in the era of cutbacks, we are going to have some uncertainty, and it is just a by-product of the fact that we are sitting with a deficit.

I think over the next short while, once this budget is approved, assuming we get the cooperation of the House, we will be able to bring some stability, and some reassurance to our hard working employees that their jobs are relatively secure. But suddenly, I have to say, for the record, there is going to be a significant shift in jobs, as it relates to Nunavut as we move east and west. That is just a reality. That is not something you have to hide from, that is something you have to confront.

You have to confront it up front, in a productive, efficient way. I intend to do that, and will try to do it as fairly and equitably as possible. So I look forward to the debate on the budget, particularly as it relates to division in the coming months, and I am optimistic that my federal counterpart, Mr. Martin, is sympathetic, and that we will be able to move forward in an orderly way with the official's committee to initiate discussions on financing of the two territories in March. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. General comments? We have Mr. Ootes and Mr. Steen. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to comment on the Minister's comments. I did not say I was

against division, that I am trying to slow it down. I do not think I said that, and that is not what I meant. My point is that the political system will be in place by April 1, 1999. But a lot of planning needs to take place in order to transfer departments and staff and organizations.

I think that should be given a lot of thought and a lot of opportunity to institute properly. Initially, and I go back some years ago, the plan was to have a ten year transition plan and that disappeared because it was too long. Fine. But I think there is nothing wrong with looking at a transition period beyond 1999. And not for the reasons of harming Nunavut, or being against Nunavut. It is just a situation that makes good planning. After all, we only have 790 days. What are we going to do, transfer every employee, every department, every organization, everything that we run over to Nunavut by that specific date? What is the reason for that? Why can we not take an extra year to do that? There is nothing wrong with that. That just makes good business sense.

I am not against the political existence of Nunavut. Far from it. I think the other point I would like to make, which I did not speak about before, was centralized/decentralized. People are going to be sitting here some years from now saying let's centralize, because we are going to decentralize here today. I understand the arguments for that. And I can see the arguments for it. But it will come around again, believe me, and I think we should really, seriously sit here sometimes and say, "all of this decentralization, is that going to pay off?" Yes, some of it will, because you do need to have people in communities making decisions, but we do not need to do it overnight. Let's get some success stories for this before we proceed with 52 communities to have community empowerment, for example, in every area that this government runs. And do that in the next year. That is not essential. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

My honourable colleague is certainly entitled to his opinion, but he certainly has given me the impression over the last 12 months that he wants to keep slowing it down, and has not come forward with any constructive analysis of what we should do. I have already said in the House, and I have said to the point of being repetitive, that we are going to bring in a pre-

implementation plan to move forward in an orderly and efficient manner towards the division of the two territories. And a decision as to whether we decentralize or whether community empowerment, et cetera, should go ahead, should be made by the people themselves. So, I want to reassure him just so he understands that we intend to bring in a paper which he will have an equal opportunity, as others will, to make comment on, with respect to the pre-implementation of an east/west, not just east, east/west pre-implementation division plan and seek the appropriate funding to do it with the federal government.

It is not our intent to turn the lights on April 1 and have, in an ideal world, the whole of the government be sitting in Nunavut, although that would be my obvious personal preference. The reality, both the fiscal and the practical reality of that, simply can not occur. But I am not going to sit back and not move aggressively in putting together some option papers for consideration by this House and other parties, NTI and the federal government, as to how we move forward. And as the constitutional discussions unfold, in the west, as we hope they will, we will then have to meet these requirements on an on-going basis. And I may mean a decentralized regional type of government, I do not know. It is not for me to say, but the reality is it is the will of the people. The people have spoken. Parliament has put the legislation in place. We should just get on with the job and we should do it in a timely, orderly, and efficient way and that is what I intend to do as the Minister responsible for putting together the division strategy. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. We have Mr. Steen. General comments. Your time is up, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I do not recall making any general comments on Management Service Board, Financial Management Service Board Secretariat at this point on either any of these topics, housing or affirmative action. And I appreciate the Minister responding to my comments before I made them. I have not made any comments so I am surprised that I am being identified here, as I have not made comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, it just gave me an opportunity to embellish the discussion, because Mr. Steen had made some comments while the Premier was at the table and I was Minister listening intently to Mr. Steen's position as it relates to division and the formal financing arrangements. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Are there further general comments? Mr. Henry.

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of brief comments to make and I am also extremely interested in the affirmative action policy and I believe a lot of my constituents are on both sides of the fence. I would look forward to the presentation of the affirmative action review and I would also like to ensure that review would be presented to the Infrastructure Committee as the Financial Management Board is a department of that particular committee. I would certainly look forward to the debate that will eventually take place on affirmative action. I think there are many sides that need presenting in this particular area.

The only comment I have in regards to the Financial Management Board Secretariat, it has to do with the Minister's comments in the House. I think the government as a whole have put some effort into reassuring the present Government of the Northwest Territories staff of its stance and position as regards to their future employment with the creation of the two new territories. I am very disappointed and I think there is probably a lot of staff who will feel very disappointed at the position of the government, where they suggest that the headquarters staff should have hiring priority for Nunavut positions and I think there will be many questions that will have to be answered around that situation, if in fact it does not come to pass. The costs that will be incurred and the hardship that will be created on a number of people should the headquarters staff not have hiring priority on Nunavut positions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

Page 400

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, first of all, it was my intent on the affirmative action/northern labour policy to go to Government Ops, but it may be that it does have government wide policy ramifications that I find another method so that everybody is hooked into this so I can seek their advice. I appreciate what my colleague said on that issue, and it is certainly not our intent to circumvent anybody. You know, sometimes when you are in negotiations and when we are talking about division of the territories, these are very sensitive negotiations and it is three parties at the table. And sometimes there is a time to be direct and sometimes there is a time to be diplomatic and my response to my colleague was, well he is disappointed. It is time to be diplomatic because we have not quite got to the need for directness. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Ootes. Mr. Henry, are you still asking questions? Mr. Ootes did indicate he wanted to speak, so are you okay now for the time being, Mr. Henry? Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

I move to report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

There is a motion on the floor to report progress and the motion is not debatable. All those in favour of the motion please signify. Opposed. The motion is carried. I will rise and report progress to the Speaker. Thank you. I would like to thank the Ministers and the witnesses. Thank you.

ITEM 21: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. SPEAKER:

Item 21, report of committee of the whole. Mr. Ningark.

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you. Your committee has been considering Bill 8, and Committee Report 3-13(4) and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the committee of the whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Seconded by Mr. Picco. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All

those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 23: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Speaker, the meeting of the Constitutional Working Group at 6:00 p.m. this evening. Meetings for tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. of the Standing Committee of Government Operations, at 10:30 the Ordinary Members' Caucus, and at 12:00 p.m. of the Management Services Board.

Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 5, 1997:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 1997-98

- Committee Report 2-13(4), Standing
Committee on Government

Operations Report on the 1997-98 Main
Estimates

- Committee Report 3-13(4), Standing
Committee on Infrastructure

Report on the 1997-98 Main Estimates

20. Report of Committee of the Whole

21. Third Readings of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned
until Wednesday, February 5, 1997, at 1:30 p.m.

-- ADJOURNMENT