



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

5th Session

Day 9

13th Assembly

HANSARD

MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 1998

Pages 299 - 332

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 Sam Gargan, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Henry, Honourable Stephen Kakfiwi, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Miltenberger, Honourable Don Morin, Honourable Kelvin Ng, Mr. Ningark, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Ootes, Mr. Picco, Mr. Rabesca, Mr. Roland, Mr. Steen, Honourable Manikot Thompson, Honourable John Todd.

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 the constant recognition of the dignity and aspirations of those whom we serve. Amen.

SPEAKER (Hon. Samuel Gargan):

Thank you, Mr. Roland. Good afternoon. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Todd.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 21-13(5): Pay Equity

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have an emergency statement to make.

Mr. Speaker, the Union of Northern Workers and the government have had mediated talks for the past few months in regard to pay equity. Unfortunately, the mediator has decided to end the talks with the common consent of all parties.

Mr. Speaker, while this news is disappointing and the differences between the two parties remain substantial, I would hope that it provides an opportunity for reflection and realism as we embark on collective bargaining negotiations, scheduled from February 2nd through February 6th. In these negotiations, a wide variety of issues will be addressed, including pay equity, both from a retroactive and a prospective approach with the implementation of a new job evaluation system.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in last week's budget speech, this government, with the help and support of

our residents, has been able to achieve a balanced budget and lay the groundwork for economic progress and growth. This is a major accomplishment for which we should all be proud, but even though our future is bright, our fiscal situation is still fragile.

Mr. Speaker, this government believes firmly and unequivocally in the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. I have expressed this position on behalf of the government on many occasions. The issue of pay equity has been with us for ten years and the residents of the Northwest Territories have a reasonable expectation that we will come to a successful resolution.

In our view this can be done through negotiations. As Minister of Finance, I have continually stated our commitment to a negotiated settlement that is fair to all concerned, that is affordable and that creates for the future a new job evaluation system which is bias free.

I call upon the UNW to join with me in a common endeavour to protect jobs, ensure service levels are not further reduced and commit ourselves to respond to the concerns and needs of the people of the north. As you all are aware, we in the north live in an environment whose priorities are unique. In this context and in our choices, both government and employees must be realistic and responsible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ministers' statements. Mr. Ng.

Minister's Statement 22-13(5): Breast Cancer Screening

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the past two years, there have been many questions raised in this House on breast cancer. Today I would like to provide an overview of the extensive work we are doing to address this problem.

In addition to the funding already in place, Cabinet recently approved a Strategic Investment Fund for boards. This funding could be used to implement critical public health programs, including breast cancer screening. Successful screening is based on regular breast self-examination, annual clinical examination and screening mammography for key age groups. Information and teaching on breast self-

examination and clinical breast examination is part of the well-women

health programming across the north. A module dealing with this has been part of the Advanced Nursing Skills Program for the past decade.

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In 1995, the Department of Health and Social Services issued a set of interim guidelines to help health boards and medical clinics to focus screening services. The guidelines identify ways to improve access for women in the key risk group - ages 50 to 65 for which mammography screening is shown to have the greatest benefit. During the past year, the NWT Working Group on Breast Cancer reviewed and revised these guidelines. The department distributed these guidelines to all boards in December, 1997. Each board will identify issues, related costs and specific actions that need to be examined to ensure that all NWT residents have access to quality breast cancer screening services. The department will provide support to each board in their efforts to establish a cancer screening service best suited to its geographic and cultural situation.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ministers' statements. Ms. Thompson.

Minister's Statement 23-13(5): Consumer Scam Awareness Campaign

HON. MANITOK THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, last September I represented this government at a conference of federal, provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for Consumer Affairs. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has the following consumer affairs responsibilities: consumer protection, lottery licensing, real estate licensing and business licensing.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite concerned about the many problems facing northern consumers. Mail and telemarketing fraud is increasing and finding its way into our homes. These crimes are targeted to our elders and many others who do not understand the wording of contracts. In the north, we have always prided ourselves on friendliness and openness. Sadly, our friendliness can be abused and replaced with the experience of being cheated, which is the business of some of these telemarketers.

In 1994, our government signed an agreement on internal trade with other jurisdictions. Many initiatives resulted from this agreement, one of which was the creation of a National Consumer Measures Committee, which oversees the development and implementation of programs in various consumer related areas. The Government of the Northwest Territories is a member of this committee and we continue to contribute and work with our partners in areas of consumer protection. Mr. Speaker through the sharing of resources we have developed the CANSHARE system. This is a computer data base that allows tracking of telemarketing complaints between jurisdictions. It also provides a way to quickly notify jurisdictions of problem areas by issuing consumer alerts to consumer protection agencies across Canada. This is a significant advantage for a small jurisdiction like ours. We simply would never have sufficient resources to track down and identify all of the scam artists who are operating in the NWT because most of them operate from southern provinces. With CANSHARE we will be able to access and use the data bases of other provinces to help track and identify these illegal operators. As a result, we will provide better consumer protection advice to northerners.

Mr. Speaker, we have also been collaborating with our federal and provincial partners in drafting a Joint Enforcement Agreement which allows jurisdictions to share information and resources while enforcing our consumer protection laws. I cannot stress the fact that the best line of defence against mail and telemarketing fraud is public awareness. Media campaigns dealing with loan brokers and telemarketers, along with a consumer handbook, are new initiatives underway in our fight against consumer fraud.

We are partners in a National Consumer Awareness Campaign. Closer to home, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is developing new partnerships with other territorial agencies and organizations to combat these activities.

Today I am pleased to announce that such a partnership has been established. My department, along with members of the RCMP, the NWT Association of Municipalities, the Yellowknife Seniors Association, the NWT Seniors Association and the NWT Chamber of Commerce have formed a task force to develop and implement a Consumer Scam Awareness Campaign. Through this partnership, we hope to protect the interests of all our northern consumers. I look forward to providing more details

on this awareness campaign in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Ms. Thompson. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Steen.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement 79-13(5): Tuktoyaktuk/Inuvik Highway Committee Report

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, later today I will be tabling a document entitled the Tuk/Inuvik Highway Study, which was jointly sponsored by the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk and the Town of Inuvik. Mr. Speaker, both of

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these municipal organizations have put a considerable amount of time and effort in producing this report. Funding to cover costs of retaining an engineering firm to undertake the study was obtained from the Department of Transportation and the municipalities concerned.

Mr. Speaker, in summary this document is a feasibility study on the costs of constructing a service road between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk rather than a full scale all-weather highway. It is hoped the service road would be up-graded to all-weather highway status at a later time.

In the opinion of the engineering firm, Ferguson Simek Clark, who were retained to undertake the study; it would be possible to construct an all-weather service road from Tuktoyaktuk to Inuvik for approximately one quarter of the cost identified by previous studies. As an example, the GNWT Department of Transportation estimated it would cost in the nature of \$160 million to construct an all-weather highway between Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik. Comparably, the Tuk/Inuvik Highway Committee Study estimates the cost of constructing an all-weather service road at approximately \$40 million. The major cost factor difference between the two quotes to complete this project is the route proposed and the class of highway to be constructed. Mr. Speaker, the study has the backing of the well known and highly qualified engineering firm, Ferguson Simek Clark, whose engineers took the trouble to actually

view first hand the route and the potential quarry sites along the route.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize the efforts of members of the Tuk/Inuvik Highway Committee who worked hard to bring this report forward with the hope this government will consider funding this project in the near future. In particular, I wish to recognize the deputy mayor of Tuktoyaktuk, Mr. William Nasogaluak, and the Major of Inuvik, Mr. George Roach, past town counsellor, Mr. Eddy Kolousok. These people co-chaired the Tuk/Inuvik Highway Committee and were instrumental in pursuing the completion of this study. The Mayor of Tuk, Eddy Dillon, and hamlet counsellors, Russell Newmark and Mervin Gruben, and Inuvik town councillor, Vivian Hunter, were also members of this committee, and I would like to recognize their efforts as well. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude this statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Nunakput is seeking unanimous consent to complete his statement. Are there any nays? Mr. Steen, you have unanimous consent.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, my honourable colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I should mention here that both the Premier, the Honourable Don Morin, and the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Jim Antoine, were presented with copies of this report during their recent visit to Tuktoyaktuk in November of this past year. I believe both Mr. Morin and Mr. Antoine were impressed with the professionalism of the report and the determination of the people involved to see the project through.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize my honourable colleague from Inuvik, Mr. Roland, for his support on this project. I hope the rest of my honourable colleagues in this House will indicate their support for the funding of this most worthwhile project which, in effect, would serve as the missing link connecting the Dempster Highway to the Arctic Ocean. Mr. Speaker, we believe the completion of the Dempster Highway to the Arctic Ocean would benefit all residents of the NWT and Canada as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Ningark.

Member's Statement 80-13(5): Overcrowding in Pelly Bay's Kugaardjuq School

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the Christmas holidays, I had the opportunity to tour the Kugaardjuq School. I had the opportunity to have a discussion with the principal at that school, and he indicated to me, and I was there when I say the interior of the building had a serious need for space. There is already over-crowding, within the Kugaardjuq School in Pelly Bay. We do not have the proper space facilities to do many programs in the community that are delivered within the policy of this government. They are using the shop for Agetamik programs. They are using the kitchen for the library, on top of that the senior one class is having their regular classes in the ecology centre in that community. Normally, it should be done in the school. We are expecting 25 more kindergarteners to be recruited this coming year. On top of that, there may be other preschoolers that may need a space in the classroom. I think we have a serious problem, and this serious problem, Mr. Speaker, deserves serious consideration by this government. At the appropriate time I will be asking the Minister of Education a question. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Ningark. Members' statements. Mr. Roland.

Member's Statement 81-13(5): Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board Traditional Knowledge Project

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board on the completion of the traditional knowledge book, Gwich'in Words About the Land. Mr. Speaker, for aboriginal people the importance of our land does not mean the ground that supports our feet. Our land includes all beings and elements. The Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board encompassed these aspects in its comprehensive project on a traditional knowledge of 22 wildlife and fish species used by the Gwich'in people. With the commitment of the elders and the board, it took two years compile and finish this project. Their dedication reaffirms the importance of the collection and use of traditional knowledge of renewable resources management. Robert Charlie,

chair of the board, has provided copies of the book for the Government Leader, the Speaker, the Minister of

Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and other Ministers. If any Member would like a copy of the book, please contact myself or the board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Roland. Members' statements, Mr. Krutko.

Member's Statement 82-13(5): Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board Traditional Knowledge Project

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to congratulate the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board and the elders of the Mackenzie Delta area on successful production of their traditional knowledge book. The board has

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shown that it can be done in the area of collection and use of traditional knowledge. The Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board was recently selected as a successful example of how traditional knowledge can be used in renewable resources management at an international workshop on traditional knowledge in Spain. This government has had several problems and concerns from the public on traditional knowledge. I would like to recommend that the Minister of Renewable Resources and Economic Development, which is the lead agency for the collection and use of traditional knowledge in the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, ensures that the government continue to provide support and finances to these groups and organizations that can actively collect and use the traditional knowledge of our elders. In concluding by reading a quote from a Gwich'in elder, "Passing our knowledge about the land and animals to our children is the best gift that we can have given to them." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Members' statements, Mr. Enuaraq.

Member's Statement 83-13(5): Passing of Leelee Qarpik

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to send my condolences to the Qarpik family in Pangnirtung. Leelee, the son of Joanasie and Ida Qarpik, died tragically last Friday, as a result of a skidoing accident in Pangnirtung. Mr. Speaker, the municipality of Pangnirtung is a small close knit community. Leelee Qarpik will be missed. Again, I would like to send my prayers and condolences to the Qarpik family. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Member's Statement 84-13(5): Private Meetings with Bank Officials

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we had occasion to have a number of banking officials and high power business people in the Legislative Assembly for the Budget Address. The MLAs were informed that after the Finance Minister's address we would have a break in order to meet and socialize with these bankers and business people, who would likely be involved in the Public/Private Partnership detailed in the budget. The MLAs and those in the gallery would enjoy this opportunity to speak with the power brokers.

Imagine the surprise of the MLAs and ordinary folk in the gallery when we left for the Great Hall with no one in sight from the banking community, the business community or the Finance Minister himself. Several MLAs and members of the public determined that there was a private meeting in the upstairs meeting room. When we attempted to join the meeting, we were advised that it was private. My way was blocked by the Minister's staff and one of his hired consultants. So we were left to socialize amongst ourselves in the Great Hall. Strange things are done in the land of the midnight sun, Mr. Speaker. I never did get a chance to meet these so-called bankers, and a leading local banker is quite furious because he was not even made aware of this meeting, and yet he is one of the ones, or his bank, who will ultimately have to deal with this issue. To me, the emotional debate in the House following the public/private

reception was symbolism at its finest. You see, we extra-ordinary Members on this side of the House are partners in consensus government. We were not given access to those who are going to be players in the \$200 million Public/Private Partnership, and that was what the great shrimp and kool aid debate was all about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Member's Statement 85-13(5): Yellowknife Mine Layoffs

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. Mr. Speaker, the history of the north is filled with people working together and helping others in times of need. In fact, much of our culture is based on our sense of community and on our reliance on each other in order to survive. I believe that as a community, Yellowknife must now, more than ever, embrace the rich northern tradition of relying on each other. Yellowknife has taken its fair share of hard knocks in the past few months. The decrease in gold prices has hit the city hard, as it has resulted in layoffs at Giant Mine and Con Mine, and it is having an economic impact on individuals and businesses with ties to the mining industry. Mr. Speaker, the recent layoffs at local mines represent more than just a job loss for individual families. There is also a loss to our community, as a whole, as these workers and their families are valuable not only for their economic contributions, but also for their contributions to the quality of life in our community.

Therefore, I believe that it is vital we do all we can to help keep these skilled workers and their families in the north. Mr. Speaker, as a Member for Yellowknife Frame Lake, I have asked Mayor Dave Lovell and city council to give serious consideration to the proposal put forward by some of the mine employees who live on mine property to ensure they can keep their homes. I have also spoken and written to the Honourable Manik Thompson asking that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs cooperate with the city in this process. Mr. Speaker, I have also written to Yellowknife bank

managers to ask them to take into account the circumstances faced by these laid off workers. I have urged them to consider each individual situation and to exercise as much flexibility as possible. As well, Mr. Speaker, I pledge to do whatever I can, as a community resident, as well as in my position as the Member for Yellowknife Frame Lake, to help support and keep these skilled workers and their families in our community and plan for brighter days ahead. I urge every other resident of Yellowknife to also help in any way they can. Mr. Speaker, while there is nothing we can do as a community to make the price of gold rise - although I must say, that the news this morning was positive - we can look to and get ready for future opportunities in the resource development sector. Mr. Speaker, by pulling together, we can help these individuals and make a difference in our community and in doing so, prove yet again that when the going gets tough, northerners stick together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

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MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Members' statements. Mr. Rabesca.

Member's Statement 86-13(5): Internet Service in Smaller Communities

MR. RABESCA:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the course of this Assembly, myself along with a number of my colleagues have expressed our concerns over the lack of Internet service for the important knowledge that is not available within a number of our smaller communities. Today we live in an age where, if located south of the border or in Yellowknife, a person can sit on a beach, take a walk around town or be in a car. You can still be contacted by the outside world. With today's technology you can even be on-line with the Internet doing the task I mentioned; but still in the communities a person does not have the pleasure of cellular phones. I have a cellular phone to ensure that I keep in contact with my constituents. However, as soon as I go outside the 35-kilometre radius of Yellowknife, I lose my signal and I cannot communicate until I am back in this area. In Rae-Edzo, the largest Dene community of the Northwest Territories, we cannot communicate by cellular phones. The reason for this, I understand, is because NorthwTel does not feel it necessary to install the needed equipment. We are no different than any

other community. We all want the ability to communicate with our neighbours and the world, just like the rest of the world can. The worst of it is a safety factor. It has been proven countless times that people with a cellular phone can react to emergency calls faster than the people without. Every year we have a number of accidents on our highway. If you are outside the 35 kilometre range of Yellowknife, it takes at least 30 or 40 minutes of life saving time to get in touch with the RCMP or ambulance services. I hope by bringing this forward, NorthwTel can see the need to move towards the 21st century. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Rabesca. Members' statements. Mr. Picco.

Member's Statement 87-13(5): Family Planning

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, previously in this House, I have raised the concern of family planning. This past summer in Pangnirtung, the Baffin leaders passed a motion to the effect that we would address the topic at our next meeting, later this year. This subject, by its very nature, is very sensitive and should be addressed with much care. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that the government has no family planning or awareness programs. Again, this is left to the discretion of individual boards of health to implement. I do not think that this is acceptable.

In the Nunavut region as mentioned by the Baffin leaders, we have and are experiencing a baby boom. Most people are being born to younger mothers and this has increased pressure on the social envelope. The government should implement a territorial-wide family planning awareness campaign and provide extra resources to communities and boards of health to address this need. Mr. Speaker, it is a sensitive issue and a serious one. The GNWT should take the lead in this area and demonstrate by way of a plan of action that it takes the matter seriously. Our health care professionals have repeatedly mentioned the increased birth rates and what it means down the road. I will not get into statistics, like a birth rate of 23.4 per thousand. That is the highest in the western world, but it illustrates the depth of the concern. Mr. Speaker, later today, I will ask the Minister of Health questions on this matter.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Member's Statement 88-13(5): Diamond Sorting and Valuation

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 22nd, CBC Radio interviewed Mr. David Cohen, a third generation expert on diamonds. I listened with interest as Mr. Cohen endorsed the viability of the north and the diamond industry and, more importantly, northerners providing the necessary services for diamond valuation and sorting. Mr. Cohen indicated how well-suited many northern and aboriginal people would be to the various positions, given natural artistic abilities, as well as how this industry could be well-suited to seasonal work. Mr. Cohen has gone on record indicating his lobbying efforts for secondary diamond industries in the north. I would hope that Mr. Cohen's expertise, his statements and findings are consistent with the objectives with the Department of RWED relating to diamond valuation and sorting in the north. I hope the Minister will give consideration to adding Mr. Cohen's name onto the list of consultants assisting his department. Mr. Cohen's comments will, I hope, add credibility to what Members of this House have been saying for many months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Member's Statement 89-13(5): Northern Nursing Program Graduation Ceremonies

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the privilege and honour along with some of the other Members from this House, both from the west and from the east, to attend a ceremony here in the Great Hall to honour the graduates from the Aurora College Northern Nursing Program, Class of 1997. The graduates received their pins in advance of the actual graduation ceremonies because many of them will not be able to attend graduation. At this ceremony I was proud to see one of the graduates was a member of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Mary Jane Tsetta. She is one of the first members of the Yellowknives First Nation to achieve this.

Mary Jane is a wife and a mother of one son. She and her family live in Yellowknife. She has been totally committed to her studies. She, as an example, had to first take upgrading and then the nursing program which was a total of three and a half years. Also during her studies, she unfortunately lost her father and one of her brothers, but she continued in her commitment. I am pleased to announce also that she will be starting a job at Stanton Hospital very soon. Mary Jane is a non-drinker. She supports wellness and she is certainly a source of inspiration and good role model for her friends, her family and the rest of her people. I am sure we all wish her congratulations on a job well done and good luck in the new job. Thank you.

--Applause

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MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Erasmus. Members' statements. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Member's Statement 90-13(5): Privatization of the Petroleum Products Division

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I will speak on the issue of the privatization of the government's petroleum products division or POL, as it is sometimes referred to. Mr. Speaker, I have stated my concerns in this House and in public on numerous occasions about the inadvisability of proceeding with privatization at this time. The infrastructure committee made previous tabled recommendations to this House that any further work on the privatization of the petroleum products division be delayed until after division. It was felt there were more pressing issues worthy of the government's efforts and fiscal resources at this juncture in time.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of the recommendation made by the committee that any further work on privatization be delayed until after division, I understand that a contract was issued for further recommendations on privatization.

I have stated previously that the GNWT and subsequently, the future Government of Nunavut and the west are the primary consumers of petroleum products in nonmarket communities. It should be of paramount importance to the two future governments

that the pricing of petroleum products for other consumers and ourselves remain as low as possible.

Mr. Speaker, there are also serious concerns with the product quality control, environmental liabilities and whether an independent owner could have the financial wherewithal to deal with the enormous costs involved in set up, purchase and

distribution of fuel and other costs associated with this venture.

Mr. Speaker, two previous reports had been commissioned by this government on price controls and cost effectiveness of privatization. In spite of the committee's recommendation, a third report, I understand, is now complete. I will be surprised if this new report contains any information that was not in the previous two reports or available to the department.

Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister responsible for details of the future plans the department has for petroleum products division in question period today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Mr. Todd.

ITEM 4: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Return to Oral Questions 75-13(5): Transparency in Public/Private Partnerships

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a return to an oral question asked by Mr. Picco on January 22nd, with respect to transparency in Public/Private Partnerships. In response to Mr. Picco's question with regard to transparency in Public/Private Partnerships, I want to assure my colleagues once again, the government is committed to transparency as we proceed with implementation. That Members of this Assembly will have full opportunity to participate in finalizing the proposals as members of standing committees.

As promised, I am pleased to announce I am tabling the policy document, guidelines for implementing Public/Private Partnerships later today. Financing capital projects through partnership initiatives means the government will be able to accommodate more community priorities faster within existing spending

limits. I have asked each Minister with responsibility for infrastructure to review his or her department's capital forecasts and to provide me with recommendations for priority projects that we would add to the 1998-99 capital plan, if additional funding were available.

This review will take into consideration the input that Mr. Morin received from the communities last summer in response to his request for the priority of capital requirements. The list of additional priorities will be reviewed to identify those that have the greatest potential for payback either in the social or economic terms.

When combined with the products already included in the 1998-99 capital plan, we will have a list of some \$240 million worth of projects. We will review all of these projects to determine which would be most appropriate to apply P3 approaches.

We will also do extensive cost benefit analysis on each project and determine what level of overall investment will be affordable. I will be seeking the input of Members of this Assembly during this review process, through the standing committees.

In response to Mr. Picco's question, I will table the final list of P3 initiatives for 1998-99 in this Assembly, along with any changes to the current capital proposals that may require approval of the Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Jeff Colburne, a local reporter with the Yellowknifer. I would like to point out that Jeff left Yellowknife prior to Christmas as a single man and returned married, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Ms. Pat Thomas, the President of the NWTTA in the gallery and with her today is Mr. Barrie Chivers, who is legal counsel to the NWTTA, and an old family friend. In fact he was once my father's campaign manager.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

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MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize the other half of me, my wife, Elisapee and beside her is Sarah Kooneeliusie, originally from Broughton Island, now living in Yellowknife. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 93-13(5): Privatization of Petroleum Products Report

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Public Works and Services.

Mr. Speaker, in spite of the Infrastructure Committee's recommendation not to proceed with the procurement of the further report, would the Minister please enlighten the House what the rationale was for proceeding with the securing of this report? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Public Works and Services, Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 93-13(5): Privatization of Petroleum Products Report

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the government has decided to shelve the privatization of the petroleum products division. However, we still have to do some work. At division time, we have to look at the petroleum

products division after division because at the present time, there is cross-subsidization between the east and west, and following division that will no longer be the case. We will have to continue to do further work and look at how these changes are going to affect this division. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 93-13(5): Privatization of Petroleum Products Report

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister suggesting then that the recommendations regarding privatization contained in this document will be used to make decisions regarding division? Are they outside of the realm of privatization? Is that the understanding, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 93-13(5): Privatization of Petroleum Products Report

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the study that was done for the government in looking into the privatization of petroleum products contains a lot of information that is relevant to looking at the future plans of this division. Although we have shelved the initiative which privatizes this division, we are going to be having all these reports and recommendations that were coming out of these reports be available to the next governments for both east and the west, so they will look at this privatization after this government is finished. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 93-13(5): Privatization of Petroleum Products Report

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the request for proposal was responded to by several consultants. Could the Minister please tell us what the name of the company was or the name of the firm was that provided the report. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 93-13(5): Privatization of Petroleum Products Report

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the last request for proposal that was issued, the successful consultant firm was the firm of Mr. Bailey and Associates. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 93-13(5): Privatization of Petroleum Products Report

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary today for the Minister is could he please inform us what the cost of this most recent report was. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 93-13(5): Privatization of Petroleum Products Report

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Bailey and Associates firm was the successful winner of this competition for request for proposal and the cost of the study was \$223,000. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Ningark.

Question 94-13(5): Pelly Bay School Overcrowding

MR. NINGARK:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. As I stated in my statement, we have a serious problem providing adequate space for the students in Pelly Bay. The original design for the addition was much larger, but was scaled down, according to my understanding, because of the total cost involved. To the contrary Mr. Speaker, there had been an increasing number of students and potential students to attend school in Pelly Bay. Mr. Speaker, we talk about a brighter future. We talk about in this government, education working society, but we have not planned properly. We also know that we have a very high birth rate in the territory. Will the Minister of Education

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communicate with the Kitikmeot District Education Council and the community education council to address the problem determined by the community to be a serious problem.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 94-13(5): Pelly Bay School Overcrowding

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that when the addition was first proposed, it was for three classrooms. In the planning year, it was discovered that because of the population growth in the community, the project needed to be increased to four classrooms, so I am a little surprised today to hear the Member say there is still going to be a space crunch after the four classrooms are built. I will undertake to have my department contact the divisional education council and check with Public Works to determine the status of the construction project and just how full that school will be on completion of the addition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ningark.

Supplementary To Question 94-13(5): Pelly Bay School Overcrowding

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the same Minister. In the process of communicating will the Minister start communicating with the Kitikmeot District Education Council and Public Works. Will the Minister also instruct his officials to consult with the community education council, in this case, where I got the information from? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 94-13(5): Pelly Bay School Overcrowding

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Picco.

Question 95-13(5): Proposed Amendments to the Public Service Act

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Several times in this House over the past couple of months, there have been questions and comments raised concerning a change in the Public Service Act. Can the Minister inform this House, will he entertain the proposal on the changes presented by the UNW or the NWTTA to the PSA Act? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Minister of Finance.

Return To Question 95-13(5): Proposed Amendments to the Public Service Act

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have had several discussions with the president of the NWTTA, Ms. Pat Thomas, with respect to some of the changes that she and her ship would like to see within the act. I did write to all Members early in December indicating that

we are in intense negotiations right now with the UNW, with respect to pay equity and with respect to a new collective agreement. I also said in that letter that once we finalize and come to an agreement on those issues that I was prepared to meet with both Ms. Thomas and Ms. Simpson to see if, in fact, there was some compromise that could be reached and some changes that this government could live with and could be achieved in the act that Mr. Picco speaks about. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 95-13(5): Proposed Amendments to the Public Service Act

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago we heard from the Minister an emergency statement regarding the breakdown in talks on pay equity. So

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 95-13(5): Proposed Amendments to the Public Service Act

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, like most negotiations, occasionally, they break down. Mr. Speaker, I am fairly confident we will still come to an arrangement, and I am certainly pushing for it, by the end of March on those issues, one that is both negotiated and affordable. Once we have done that, we will get on to constructive dialogue between the two organized labour organizations and attempt to look at some of the changes they want to make. Assuming we can live with them and we are satisfied with them, I would be prepared to bring them forward to my Cabinet colleagues and this House for the change. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Picco.

Supplementary To Question 95-13(5): Proposed Amendments to the Public Service Act

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, indeed that is good news. Based on that timeline, if everything is settled by March 31st, would the Minister look at proceeding with that type of implementation by May? The reason for my questions, Mr. Speaker, is that, indeed, any act or law on the books of the Government of the Northwest Territories would be grandfathered into Nunavut and this is a concern that the legislation be brought forward, so I wonder what timeline would he be looking at?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd

Further Return To Question 95-13(5): Proposed Amendments to the Public Service Act

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HON. JOHN TODD:

I have indicated a willingness, and will say again for the last time, a willingness to come to the table both in writing and orally to the president of the NWTTA. I will do that once we have concluded the difficult pay equity issue that we are currently in, and I will be talking to that later next week. I have made a commitment here publicly and in writing and I am prepared to do that. I am not going to set timelines here when these things have to be negotiated. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Enuaraq.

Question 96-13(5): Future Baffin Polar Bear Studies

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question will be directed to the Minister of RWED, the Honourable Stephen Kakfwi. Mr. Speaker, for the past several years there have been polar bear studies conducted in the eastern Arctic, especially in the Baffin region. We, the people from Nunavut or the Baffin region, benefit from those polar bear studies. My question to the honourable Minister is, does his department plan to do more polar bear studies in the eastern Arctic, especially in the Baffin communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. Mr. Kakfwi.

Return To Question 96-13(5): Future Baffin Polar Bear Studies

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year there was a study done in the Grise Fiord Kane Basin with the polar bear program, and that study is completed for that area. So this year, this spring we will have the first of a three-year program. The program will work to estimate the population size of the polar bears in the Gulf of Boothia, so hunters from Repulse Bay, Pelly Bay, Igloodik and Gjoa Haven will be involved in this study this spring. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

Question 97-13(5): GNWT Office Leases

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Public Works. It is in regard to the office space this government presently owns or occupies. The number of surplus office space that we have at present, there are some 76,000 square feet of surplus office space in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, I find it mind boggling how at this time, with all the vacant office space that we have, that this government can get into a long-term contract in regard to selling off public assets and exactly how that has been done. I am talking in regard to the Lahm Ridge Tower and in regard to how that process took place. My question to the Minister is, exactly what process was used in the selling of this public asset and was it a public tender process and were all organizations, companies involved in putting bids through this process?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Public Works and Services, Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 97-13(5): GNWT Office Leases

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Lahm Ridge Tower is not a public building. It is not owned by the Government of the Northwest Territories. It never has been. It has been privately owned, and in fact the owners were Lahm Ridge Investment Ltd. and they have sold their asset to another company.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 97-13(5): GNWT Office Leases

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the long-term leases that are required by this new company, are there other opportunities for say, aboriginal organizations to get into these type of tenders where there is now an opportunity to open up all leases and allow for a long-term tendering process to take place where you can re-open all contracts to be renegotiated with extensions on these contracts?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 97-13(5): GNWT Office Leases

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the question in regard to the Lahm Ridge Tower lease is that it was a ten-year lease, and that lease had expired a couple of years ago. The department had not exercised the extension provision to the lease but had committed on a month-to-month basis. In late July, the then owner of Lahm Ridge Investment Ltd. asked the regional superintendent for a ten-year lease extension consistent with the lease terms that they were operating under. The landlord had proposed some fairly good reductions in the operation and maintenance cost, which was estimated to be about half a million dollars over an eight year period and they have agreed to upgrade and renovate some of the heating and ventilation system. The regional superintendent then, according to the lease, had agreed to an extension that was limited to eight years. So, under the provisions of the lease arrangements with Lahm Ridge Investment Ltd., this was under the regional superintendent to go ahead and make some further arrangements for extending the life of the lease because of the favourable financial arrangement they were able to reach. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 97-13(5): GNWT Office Leases

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister table in this House the arrangements of this lease for all Members to see?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 97-13(5): GNWT Office Leases

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you. I will table the relevant information with regard to this lease arrangement. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 97-13(5): GNWT Office Leases

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister also make us aware of any new leases that may have come

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forth under similar arrangements where there has been extensions or selling, renegotiating these leases; if there are any new leases presently under review and exactly if there are any such arrangements being done elsewhere? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 97-13(5): GNWT Office Leases

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, yes, Mr. Speaker. There is some Yellowknife office space planned that the Cabinet just approved. It is going to be information that will be going to the Ordinary Members in their standing committees. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. O'Brien.

Question 98-13(5): Addressing Keewatin Health Care Issues

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services. In reference to Keewatin health care, Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that as of today there have been no meetings or discussions that have taken place regarding the negotiations with the Northern Medical Unit in Winnipeg to provide interim medical services to the Keewatin people. Can the Minister confirm whether this is the case, and if it is, why it has taken so long to arrange these meetings? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 98-13(5): Addressing Keewatin Health Care Issues

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm if it is or is not the case. As I advised the honourable Member last week, I believe I said the management team had gotten on the ground early last week and had to evaluate the situation, I guess, to find out exactly what the status was. I said that the human resource issue was one of the priorities and the provision of services would follow shortly after that. So I cannot say right now what the delay is in starting negotiations, but I will check into the matter and report back. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. O'Brien.

Supplementary To Question 98-13(5): Addressing Keewatin Health Care Issues

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr Speaker, can the Minister give us an update as to what changes or what additional medical services have been provided since the crisis or the near collapse of our medical

services in the Keewatin? What changes have taken place since the issue was raised some ten days ago? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 98-13(5): Addressing Keewatin Health Care Issues

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cannot report today on what changes have taken place. As I had indicated, I have not had the chance to get a report back from the team that was in Rankin Inlet. I can commit to getting that report today from them. I know the first thing they had to do, as I

indicated, was an assessment of what or was not happening and what had to be done in terms of steps of action to put things in place, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. O'Brien.

Supplementary To Question 98-13(5): Addressing Keewatin Health Care Issues

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just assume that a lot of this work had been done with the report that the Minister asked for a number of months ago. I am sure that the Minister can appreciate that there are many nervous people in the Keewatin regarding their health care. I would ask the Minister if he could give us a date when we could expect to get his report as to the status of health care in the Keewatin, the number of doctors, nurses and so on, and when he can deliver this report to the House?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 98-13(5): Addressing Keewatin Health Care Issues

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I indicated I would get the report from the department today, and I

will provide the status as soon as possible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. O'Brien.

Supplementary To Question 98-13(5): Addressing Keewatin Health Care Issues

MR. O'BRIEN:

Mr. Speaker, I think what I am asking for is fairly straightforward. The Minister has already indicated that he is aware of how critical the situation is in the Keewatin and the fear that exists within the Keewatin people. I am asking the Minister for a date as to when the people of Keewatin can hear results of the report and what has been accomplished to date. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 98-13(5): Addressing Keewatin Health Care Issues

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I said I would try to do it as soon as possible. I will commit to trying to do it before the end of this week. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 99-13(5): Pay Equity Negotiations

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Finance, and it is in regard to the pay equity issue in his statement today which was somewhat

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vague but ominous. I was wondering if the Minister could clarify the process that is going to take place now that the

mediator is in the talks and what time lines are we looking at in the process? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Minister of Finance, Mr. Todd.

Return To Question 99-13(5): Pay Equity Negotiations

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it is ominous because if we cannot come to a negotiated arrangement and we let third parties mediate the decision, and if the decision is not affordable, there will be more employees in this government laid off and more services that are cut back. It is just that simple. What I have consistently said to everybody, to the public, to this House, we want to negotiate an affordable settlement. I am hoping that all parties will come to the table with the realization that is what we expect, nothing more, nothing less. I am hoping that the UNW will be back to the bargaining table, as they say, on February 2nd. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 99-13(5): Pay Equity Negotiations

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister indicate whether February 2nd is to discuss the collective bargaining process or is that still tied in with pay equity? Are they now two separate issues? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 99-13(5): Pay Equity Negotiations

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have indicated to our parties that I would like to see the issues dealt with and dealt with as quickly as possible. One is outstanding from ten years ago. At least I have said consistently I have made the overture to try and negotiate an affordable settlement. I would hope that on February 2nd, both issues will be on the table again. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 99-13(5): Pay Equity Negotiations

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has concurred that, in fact, yes this situation has many ominous implications. Is the Minister in the position to indicate or can he indicate, at least within a ball park figure, the gulf that separates the two parties? What is the government offering, and what is the union demanding so that people can be clearly aware of the magnitude of this particular issue? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 99-13(5): Pay Equity Negotiations

HON. JOHN TODD:

Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate for me to indicate the dollar value in terms of the gulf, but I would describe it as equivalent to the Grand Canyon. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 99-13(5): Pay Equity Negotiations

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns that I have heard in regard to pay equity is, in fact, there are a lot of hints and implications that things are not good, and this is very serious. Would the Minister commit to providing the public, on an ongoing basis, with as much information as he can that will give some level of comfort and awareness as to the magnitude of this problem because now all we get are these kinds of statements that get everybody's levels of apprehension up and promote and foster the rumour mills, which is not in anybody's benefit? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 99-13(5): Pay Equity Negotiations

HON. JOHN TODD:

Mr. Speaker, we are under negotiations right now between two parties, and in fairness to the two parties, it may be wishful thinking, but I am still optimistic that we will make some kind of negotiated settlement. I would like to avoid, if at all possible, and I suggest, if at all possible, of it becoming a public discussion and we can come to some agreement. Should it come to an impasse, I want to assure my colleague that both this House and the people of the Northwest Territories will know the position of this government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Roland.

Question 100-13(5): Funding Formula for Breast Cancer Screening

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question would be directed to the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Ng. Mr. Ng made a statement today regarding breast cancer screening, and that was an issue that was discussed at some level here in this forum before we broke the last time. In his statement he says each board is free to deliver its services including breast cancer screening. He says that the Department of Health and Social Services provides each board with funding to offer the full range of services and goes on to speak of the Strategic Investment Fund that is available. I would like to know from the Minister, is there a certain formula that has to be followed, cost-shared program, that the health boards can plug into to try and achieve some of this breast cancer screening? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

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Return To Question 100-13(5): Funding Formula for Breast Cancer Screening

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The honourable Member, I believe, is referring to the Strategic Investment Fund, and yes, there are criteria to plug in to meet some of the parameters of the program to access funding by all boards. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Roland.

Supplementary To Question 100-13(5): Funding Formula for Breast Cancer Screening

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister inform us if there is a formula in place? Is it cost shared 50/50 from a health board funding perspective to the strategic investment dollars that are available? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 100-13(5): Funding Formula for Breast Cancer Screening

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Strategic Investment Fund came about as a result of some of the deficiencies in health care funding throughout the Northwest Territories. I think it is fair to say that the department recognized that some boards were better off than others in respect to some of their core funding for programs through the department. So there is an intent to try to balance that off with this initiative. Some boards that have a bit more flexibility would be asked to put in more of their share of investment towards accessing funds in the strategic program dollars, and other boards that may have a more limited ability because of historic shortages in some of their funding would be asked to put in less to access some of these funds. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary To Question 100-13(5): Funding Formula for Breast Cancer Screening

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the next question I have is in regard to the investment fund. The Minister seems to be saying that it be looked at between one health board to another. Can the Minister inform me if the amount that was invested was \$4 million, and \$2 million of that was given to the ones that were considered to have low numbers? Now I think we are referring to two different amounts, but the \$2 million that is left for all health boards, is that the portion we are speaking of and will it be viewed as you have just mentioned? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 100-13(5): Funding Formula for Breast Cancer Screening

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of the \$4 million identified and approved for the Strategic Initiative Fund, \$2 million has been targeted, if you want to say that, to the three specific boards that have the greatest need, that being the Baffin, Keewatin and Dogrib boards. The other \$2 million would be targeted to all the remaining boards, the Kitikmeot, Inuvik, Yellowknife, Deh Cho, Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e boards and give them access to some of these strategic initiatives funding as well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 100-13(5): Funding Formula for Breast Cancer Screening

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a long way of getting about trying to get an answer. From the \$2 million left over, is that money going to be used equally amongst the health boards and for proposals that are put in or is it going to be looked at if one health board seems to have lower or considered to have lower funding? Will they receive 75 percent of the funding and put in their own 25? Is it going to be viewed that way or is it going to be a cost shared formula of 50/50, 75/25? Is there going to be a formula that can be used? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 100-13(5): Funding Formula for Breast Cancer Screening

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe there is a formula within the program criteria that will be used for allocations of these funds. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Steen.

Question 101-13(5): Responsibility for Departmental Performance

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the honourable Premier. I would like to welcome him back from his trade trip. Mr. Speaker, last week I was trying to establish whether or not Cabinet was involved at all in assisting the Minister of Health in regard to the problems with the health boards in the Keewatin and to some degree, in the Baffin. The last response, I believe, was from Mr. Todd, who advised that Cabinet, chaired by the Premier, is responsible for the overall performance of the departments. So, therefore, I would like to address the question to the Premier, is there a policy or a procedure in place whereby Cabinet does, on an ongoing basis, review departments' performance? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Premier.

Return To Question 101-13(5): Responsibility for Departmental Performance

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government is constantly under review and reviewed by Members of this Assembly day-to-day in the House. As far as any government department is concerned, we do review the performance of the deputies of those departments on a yearly basis. We evaluate it and then pay them accordingly. Any Minister in this government that at any time has need of any help or has any concerns, that time is open to them to have an agenda item on Cabinet for the Members concerned. We do go in camera to discuss issues through Cabinet. So, there are processes

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available to Ministers, if they had concerns with their department, as well as if any Minister has a concern with another Minister's department. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 101-13(5):
Responsibility for Departmental Performance

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, it would be safe then, Mr. Speaker, to come to the conclusion that Cabinet was, in fact, involved in the decisions to delay any action as far as the Minister of Health, in regard to the Keewatin health problems over the summer?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 101-13(5): Responsibility for Departmental Performance

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said previously, we do have items on our Cabinet agenda that are open to Cabinet Ministers, as well as myself. If we have any concern with how any Member of Cabinet is handling any issue, whether it be health, economic development, transportation, finance; there is an opportunity to vent, and there is opportunity to raise those concerns in Cabinet. The Member mentions health specifically. I myself, have had personal dealings with Mr. Ng on the whole issue of health in the Keewatin. I feel quite satisfied and he has my full support, as the Premier of the Government of the Northwest Territories on how he handles the situation in the Keewatin.

I believe the health care in the Keewatin is quite adequate and does its purpose. I believe the Minister handled it well and he does have, once again, the full support of myself and his Cabinet colleagues. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Steen.

Supplementary To Question 101-13(5):
Responsibility for Departmental Performance

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I could come then to the conclusion that the MLAs for the Keewatin ridings were, in fact, involved in a decision to delay any action on the part of this government to resolve the issues in the Keewatin.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, two MLAs would be part of Cabinet because they are, in fact, MLAs for that particular region. I

wonder, Mr. Speaker, if other Ordinary Members, who have had problems in their particular region, would have opportunity to sit with Cabinet and review whatever decision is possible in order to resolve the issue?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 101-13(5): Responsibility for Departmental Performance

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have always encouraged Ordinary Members to raise issues and raise issues of concern in their riding. That is one of the main reasons we took the door off Cabinet, the entry, the hallway between the Ordinary Members and the Cabinet Members. I, again, will restate that if Members do have concerns in their ridings and they would like those concerns addressed, walk through that door, knock on any Cabinet Minister's door and they will meet with you and discuss those issues. That is what they are there for. They will try to help you solve them. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 101-13(5):
Responsibility for Departmental Performance

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the House is sitting, it would be quite convenient for Members to raise issues in their ridings. What I am

referring to, in particular, would be times like in the summer, when the House is not sitting and critical situations are arising in the areas or regions and Cabinet, through the Minister, has an opportunity to meet and assist the Minister to resolve the issue. What my question is, is would Ordinary Members have an opportunity? For instance, as an example, the Keewatin region health problem. Mr. O'Brien, would he have an opportunity to sit in on Cabinet, while Cabinet is discussing a solution to the issue? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 101-13(5): Responsibility for Departmental Performance

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, Mr. O'Brien would not have the opportunity to attend a Cabinet meeting. He would have the opportunity to pick up a phone and phone the Minister of Health, or myself, or any other Minister in this government to relay his concern to the government. So, then we, as government Ministers, whomever he may be talking to - or yourself if you have an issue in your riding - would bring forward your concerns in Cabinet. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Erasmus.

Question 102-13(5): Timeframe for Pay Equity Resolution

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Finance and the subject matter is the Grand Canyon or better known as pay equity.

Mr. Speaker, I have never seen the Grand Canyon, but I understand it is pretty wide and it is pretty deep. Considering the fact the two positions on the pay equity issue seem to be fairly wide and mediation has fallen apart; is there a new timeframe that we are looking at now? When do we anticipate this may be concluded?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Todd.

Return To Question 102-13(5): Timeframe for Pay Equity Resolution

HON. JOHN TODD:

Yes, well let us be clear, Mr. Speaker. I indicated the Grand Canyon on a serious note to give some reference to the Members of how far apart we are in relationship to the numbers. I cannot speak to the numbers

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publicly when we are in negotiations. I was never more serious in my life by saying that to illustrate how far apart the parties are. As I said to an earlier question, I am confident and I am optimistic we will get back to the table on February 2nd, for the second round. Hopefully, at the end of the day, we will be able to look at each other's positions and see if there is a meeting of the minds and see if we could come to - what I have said before and I will continue to say - negotiate an affordable settlement. If there is not, the ramifications are significant.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 102-13(5): Timeframe for Pay Equity Resolution

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week, Mr. Henry identified the fact that many of the people involved in this particular issue no longer live in the north. Is that one of the stumbling blocks that is holding things up here?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 102-13(5): Timeframe for Pay Equity Resolution

HON. JOHN TODD:

It would be fair to say that retroactivity is an issue. In response to Mr. Henry's comment, I believe he asked to what degree are people no longer with this government living in the south. I, at the time, indicated to him I thought it was substantial. I am working on that right now to be able to demonstrate to this House

and to the public at large just how substantial it is. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 102-13(5): Timeframe for Pay Equity Resolution

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister indicate what timeframe he thinks it will take before we have this information, which he so graciously has indicated he will put before the House?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 102-13(5): Timeframe for Pay Equity Resolution

HON. JOHN TODD:

I would be reluctant to put a time line on it right now, Mr. Speaker, given that we are trying to get back to the bargaining table. We are putting our position forward. As I said, I do not want to circumvent the negotiating process. I just want to be clear on what this government's position is, very clear, and an affordable song is the only way to go. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 102-13(5): Timeframe for Pay Equity Resolution

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister at least commit that we will get this information before this session ends at the end of February?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 102-13(5): Timeframe for Pay Equity Resolution

HON. JOHN TODD:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Henry.

Question 103-13(5): Cost of Baby Medevac for Transplant

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in early December I had the opportunity, probably, as many people did, to listen to a good news story on CBC Radio. It involved the medevacing of a premature baby from Cambridge Bay to Calgary. The story subsequently went on to describe that the baby went on to the US. My question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services. Can the Minister give a little background as to the costs associated with this treatment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 103-13(5): Cost of Baby Medevac for Transplant

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not have the details of the costs, except to say, I understand they are significant in respect to having a lung transplant on the infant. I believe it was the first time it was done with a child of that age. There are costs, of course, in getting the child down there, of getting the parents down there before the transplant took place, to have them prepared and after the operation as well in respect to some of the counselling they would have to undergo in training to look after the child once she comes out of the hospital. So, there are quite a few factors involved, but I will find out what the costs are, or anticipated to be, and get back to the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Henry.

Supplementary To Question 103-13(5): Cost of Baby Medevac for Transplant

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Minister is, is this procedure available to all residents of the Northwest Territories if the need arises? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 103-13(5): Cost of Baby Medevac for Transplant

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe it would be available to all residents in the Northwest Territories in order to sustain individuals and make the necessary actions for their health care. Thank you.

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MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Henry.

Supplementary To Question 103-13(5): Cost of Baby Medevac for Transplant

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Minister is, is this procedure on a list of procedures that are available to the public of the Northwest Territories? Also, if the Minister could comment on the costs? I had heard estimates of between \$2 and \$5 million as an estimate for these costs. Is this procedure on the list of acceptable procedures? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 103-13(5): Cost of Baby Medevac for Transplant

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I cannot say if it is on a list of procedures per se because I believe I indicated it was the first time an operation on a child this young had been undertaken. I believe it is in the millions of dollars in respect to the total cost. Like I said, I cannot quantify right now because the treatment continues to be ongoing in respect to this

individual and the support of the family, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Ootes.

Question 104-13(5): Mammogram Machine for Stanton Hospital

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. I was pleased to see his statement today on breast cancer screening. I have several areas that I would like to ask him about. This is a subject I have raised before in the House, Mr. Speaker, about breast cancer screening and early detection programs. The Minister, in his statement, speaks about the fact that each board will identify needs and that the government will provide support. In the case of Yellowknife, Stanton Regional Hospital has a mammogram machine, but the public sector has a fund raising campaign to raise money for a number of machines here at Stanton. Could the Minister tell us if the plans are to financially support buying a new mammogram machine for Stanton Regional Hospital?

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 104-13(5): Mammogram Machine for Stanton Hospital

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, not at this time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 104-13(5): Mammogram Machine for Stanton Hospital

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This machine is ten-years old and the hospital does have a need for many areas that need to be upgraded. The Minister in his statement says that screening against cancer is something the ministry considers a core service.

Could you tell us why he will not then financially support the mammogram machine purchase for Stanton Hospital?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 104-13(5): Mammogram Machine for Stanton Hospital

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, primarily as it stands now, because there is a mammography unit here in Stanton, they have chosen to upgrade the existing one as a result of newer technology. Right now, as the honourable Member knows, there is a concern outside of Yellowknife and in other areas that do not have routine access to mammography services. That is one of the things we are trying to resolve in putting together the impediments to establishing a territorial program that is going to be supported by the boards, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 104-13(5): Mammogram Machine for Stanton Hospital

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his statement, the Minister mentions the Breast Cancer Working Group has revised guidelines and they have passed it on to each of the specific boards for feedback. Could the Minister tell us if a date had been established to provide that feedback to the working group? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 104-13(5): Mammogram Machine for Stanton Hospital

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the CEOs and the working group had a conference call last week, specific to some time lines. I believe the plans are now to try to get, through the NWT

Health Care Association, the possibility of a workshop with the CEOs and the working group trying to put together and finalize a proposal or a plan to try to implement breast cancer screening services, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 104-13(5): Mammogram Machine for Stanton Hospital

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The statement further says that in addition to funding already in place, Cabinet recently approved strategic investment funds for the boards. Could the Minister outline for us, what those strategic investment funds are and how much they are?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ng.

Further Return To Question 104-13(5): Mammogram Machine for Stanton Hospital

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HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that was the one announced last fall in respect to the answer I had to the honourable Member for Inuvik for some of the strategic planning initiatives that we planned to provide some dollars accessible to boards throughout the Northwest Territories to try to focus on some major areas, such as mental health, public health, healthy children, supported living and human resources in those four or five specific areas, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Picco.

Question 105-13(5): Strategy for Family Planning

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I spoke about the concern with the increase in births and the burgeoning population. My question is for the Minister of Health, I wonder if the Minister will commit to looking at the GNWT

implementing a plan to focus a strategy for family planning to be implemented here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 105-13(5): Strategy for Family Planning

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in light of some of the recent publicity surrounding the demographics of the Northwest Territories, particularly the high birth rates; I have already directed the department to put together a Minister's statement in respect to the birth rate issue and the family planning initiatives this government has undertaken. That statement, unfortunately, is not ready yet so in order to provide a detailed response on that issue, I will take the question as notice. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The question is taken as notice. Oral questions. Mr. Ningark.

Question 106-13(5): NAV Canada Fee Increases

MR. NINGARK:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was inclined to direct my question to the Premier since my question relates to the government's overall operations, something to do with NAV Canada, talking about new user fees to come into effect within 12 months. We all know, this is going to have a subsequent impact, Mr. Speaker, on the air travellers in the NWT, especially in the Nunavut area. I will direct my question to the Minister of Transportation, who is the related Minister in this case. When we travel within the Nunavut area for medical, education, court travel, et cetera; we travel mainly by air. We do not have any highways in the Nunavut area. My question to the Minister of Transportation is, what are we doing in this case to ensure that the northern travellers are not negatively impacted? Are we trying to slow down the process? Have we communicated with the federal government on behalf of the residents of Nunavut and the Western Territory? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Transportation, Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 106-13(5): NAV Canada Fee Increases

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regard to NAV Canada's introduction of new air navigation fees, which they first announced last summer, I believe, we, as the Department of Transportation started communicating with all the stakeholders in the north and tried to keep yourselves, the honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly informed. We talked to the air carriers that are operating in the Northwest Territories as well as the federal government, the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable David Collenette, and we raised our concerns that any changes that were anticipated by NAV Canada are going to have a big effect on all of us because they are talking about increasing the rates quite substantially. The initial response by NAV Canada is that it is an overall Canada-wide change that they are implementing throughout the whole country, and we in the Northwest Territories make up a small percentage of the total percentage of the whole country. They have indicated that they overlooked us when they were making their original plan. The position that we have taken is they should have consulted with us a lot more and taken into consideration the northern realities of high costs already. They have not done that. So, there are two phases to their new plan.

First, is that they are going to introduce it April 1st of this year for the larger aircraft, then starting in the fall, on November 1st,

will be the second part of their plan. In the meantime we have been consulting with them quite a bit. In December their president of NAV Canada, Mr. Crichton, was in the north and myself and some of the MLAs had an opportunity to meet with him and express our concerns on the increases in the fee structure. As a result, he is committed to consult with us and work with us closely. However, the decision has already been made and the changes to the air navigation fees have already been signed off by the federal Minister, the Honourable David Collenette, and this new fee structure changes will be instituted in the next three months or so. In the meantime they are also going to be reducing their air transportation tax which is currently applied to air transportation in the north and that will maybe offset the increases in the air navigation fees a bit. There is going to be some increase in the north. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 106-13(5): NAV Canada Fee Increases

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary to the honourable Minister. Did the honourable Minister, during his communication with the officials of the federal government, transportation in this case, indicate the unique position we are in, in the north? He implied that it costs more to live up here, but also that we cover a vast area and a population much smaller than the other jurisdictions in order to go from one area to the next - so we have to cover a lot of land to travel. I wonder if the honourable Minister had indicated the uniqueness of the north. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 106-13(5): NAV Canada Fee Increases

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, myself, along with my officials in the Department of

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Transportation, we argued the case that the honourable Member has mentioned here, that we are indeed unique from the rest of southern Canada and the distances that we cover and the high usage of aircraft in the High Arctic and in the Nunavut communities. So yes, we have used the information that the honourable Member is stating here in our arguments to try to convince the NAV Canada Corporation that they should look at us differently than they do in southern Canada. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Mr. Speaker, I had a question on pay equity. Unfortunately, I am going to be unable to ask that question. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Erasmus.

Question 107-13(5): Mobile Breast Cancer Screening

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services on the breast

cancer screening. In the Minister's statement, he had indicated that boards in the South Slave have been advised that it may be possible to share mobile mammography services with Alberta. I was wondering if it might be wise to implement a mobile service throughout the Northwest Territories so that people do not only have to make good usage of their travel to Yellowknife in order to get these types of services? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 107-13(5): Mobile Breast Cancer Screening

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is an issue that I asked about as well. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that this mobile unit is in fact a permanent unit that is mounted in a van and with the unit is a team that supports it. A radiologist and a technician go around with the unit as they provide the mammography screening. So it is basically a unit that Alberta health uses for their northern part of the province and they access it of course, by road. It is not practical in that respect to look at that type of a unit for the whole territories, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Question period is over. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. We will take a 15 minute break.

--Break

MR. SPEAKER:

I would like to call the House back to order. Item 10, replies to the budget address. Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 10: REPLIES TO BUDGET ADDRESS

Reply 1-13(5): Mr. Miltenberger's Reply

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am lucky I already got applause. I have not said a word. Maybe they are telling me something. Mr. Speaker, this budget is quite significant for a number of reasons. It is the first budget of this Assembly that does not have to deal with deficit reduction and, of course, it is our last and only budget that we are going to do together as a combined Assembly looking after the entire interests of the Northwest Territories as we now know it. I was very happy to see that there are many good things in this budget. There is, for example, one of the big ticket items of proposed new money for infrastructure that could amount to as much as \$240 or \$250 million generated mainly through the P3 initiative and the money for housing. My one concern about this particular area and that amount of new money, of course, with the imminent division, I believe, 332 days away, is the ongoing concern about balance and fairness and equity between east and west as we look at dividing the pie. No, Mr. Speaker, very clearly, we are moving from a negative restraint mode to more of a positive development mode. This has to be done in a very careful, thought-out way. As the MLA for Thebacha, I am interested in this budget as a way to set the ground work for further strategic direction that is necessary in the west leading up to division and beyond. Now that we are looking at development, rather than reductions, it is going to

be critical for us to support the private sector and harness the creativity and ideas that are there. Very clearly, it is going to be up to the communities, to business and to the regions to identify the areas of strength and build on them. We cannot just focus on the budget that is before us. That has been, I think, one of our unfortunate shortcomings over the years is that we tended to look mainly at the short term and not at the longer and midterm.

Mr. Speaker, for the west the long view is critical, especially when you consider the development that is now before us. Having said that though, we cannot forget the needs of those departments and agencies covered under the social envelope where we have been holding the line or cutting. It is time for us to start looking at ways to reinvest in those critical areas. One of the ones, of course, that comes to mind is education. We have to find ways to start putting money back in, from kindergarten up to university. In the west we are faced with a problem that can be seen as a positive one, and that is going to be that we

are not going to have enough trained people to fill the jobs that we are going to have and that we now have. While it may be sort of positive, and it is much better to have this problem than having no jobs, it still is a problem nonetheless, and it is going to have to be addressed. Here we talk definitively that we are not looking just at the short term in this particular budget. We are talking about the ground work for the next 20 to 30 years. It is going to be critical to provide resources to education, to do the planning, to meet those needs.

An example that I would like to use is the fact that over the years we have phased out or downed our investment in vocational programs and high schools. Now as we try to gear up for all the jobs and development, there is a shortage of trained journeymen and technicians, and the school system is no longer able to be the starting point to feed into those professions and into the colleges and apprenticeships. Clearly strategic planning is going to be needed in this area which leads, of course, to the need to continue to invest in the college system and the whole area of mine training where we have hundreds of jobs coming up and open that require tickets, diplomas and degrees. It is going to be up to us, as I have indicated earlier, to build on our strengths. For Fort Smith, Mr. Speaker, this means the college, tourism, the renewable resource sector and the energy and service

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sectors. It will be up to other communities and regions to identify their strengths and build on them.

The issue of community empowerment and community control of programs is going to come up as part of this budget process. To my mind, Mr. Speaker, while there may be rough spots on this road as we move towards empowerment and community control, we have to always remember that we are moving from decades of centralized control and decision making by people in Yellowknife and, prior to that, in Ottawa. We cannot expect communities and regions to overnight be able to pick up the ball without occasional stumbles. We cannot ask people, in two years, to reverse a mindset that has been built for generations.

I would just like to comment briefly as well on the P3 initiative which I see as very positive and with tremendous potential, providing we have the proper checks and balances in place to ensure it is sustainable, affordable and, of course, politically

tamper-proof. The capital planning process, as part of this, will have to be adjusted to continue to meet the legitimate needs of communities and governments. We have made significant changes in how we do capital, in the past, recently, where we have changed the FAA and things we are now proposing with the P3 initiative.

For Fort Smith, Mr. Speaker, this will be an opportunity for us to look at projects that, up to this point, were down the list on the government capital priority list. It will enable us to look for ways to make them doable in the next few years. In addition to the renovations at the PW Kaeser High School, Mr. Speaker, which is already on the books, there are three projects that come to mind with potential under the P3 initiative. There is a delayed renovation to Trail Cross, which is a child care facility. There is the accommodation for married students at the college, which I believe, is also an issue with my colleague in Inuvik, and there is going to be potential, down the road, for replacement of the renewable resources offices and infrastructure in Fort Smith.

So, I am very pleased overall with the direction of the budget, but we have to keep in mind that this is a short-term exercise. Though it is very important for the west and, of course, for Thebacha, that planning for the future and division, which will soon be upon us, has to be a critical component coming out of this exercise, we have to look at planning beyond division.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Fort Smith, in the last two years, have done their part in the deficit reduction program in helping put our financial house in order. We are very eager to move on to a more positive, proactive future that this budget and division will bring us. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Replies to the budget address. Mr. Roland.

Reply 2-13(5): Mr. Roland's Reply

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on January 22nd, a third budget of this Assembly was presented by the Honourable John Todd. This budget brings long overdue good news to the residents of Inuvik and the north as a whole. Mr. Speaker, I look at this budget not as the planning of one year's

expenditures, but as an accumulation of two years of reductions felt by everyone, everyone in the community I represent, as well as the north. On many occasions in this House, we have heard of the hardships endured by many of the residents of the north. We have heard of the concerns of parents, teachers, health care workers and businesses who all have struggled to make it through the economic downturn. We know of many who have had to make do with less. I am sure we all know of someone who has either lost a job or closed the doors of their business. It is not to say that we did not know that the reductions were necessary to ensure the future of the north would be somewhat secure. This has not made it any easier to accept the changes that have occurred as a result of the deficit that

was growing at an unacceptable rate. If unchanged, we would be paying interest on the debt, and we would have ended up using operating dollars to pay down that debt. As a government, we must ensure that we do all that we can to not repeat what the 13th Assembly has had to do. We must work to ensure that no other government has to focus on reductions.

Mr. Speaker, the third budget of the 13th Assembly is definitely one of good news. I, for one, know that I can go back home to my community in Inuvik and finally be a bearer of good news. I can say that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that it is not a train coming to run them off the tracks. This is not to say that overnight, things will change. But instead, we now have a foundation that we can build on. Mr. Speaker, we heard Mr. Todd in his budget speech speak on the issues of a stronger economy, of the Northwest Territories Investment Tax Credit Program and the continued support for the Northern Employment Strategy. On the resource side, we heard the government commit to try and achieve a fair share of royalties from the nonrenewable resources that leave the north. On the public infrastructure side, this government has committed to addressing the needs of the people when it comes to housing, hospitals, health centres and, yes, new roads.

Through changes in how we fund projects, for example, a new way of doing business comes with the introduction in the north of Public/Private Partnerships, as well as the introduction of the Accelerated Home Ownership Program Delivery. On the family side of things, we have heard of a new Northwest Territories Child Benefit and enhancement of the Income Support Food Allowance. Mr. Speaker, these are all great initiatives, and time will be the test in looking at the direction this government has

chosen. As we go through this budget, we must ensure that the changes we make and the new initiatives we undertake add up to sustainable, affordable and accountable growth.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a long journey to get to where we find ourselves today, and by no means, is it over. There is much that still needs to be done. As I said earlier, I see this budget as a foundation that we can use to rebuild from. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Roland. Replies to the budget address. Mr. Henry.

Reply 3-13(5): Mr. Henry's Reply

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MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there have been many initiatives proposed in this new budget for all sectors of the NWT and for all of the population. I will restrict my comments to one of the new initiatives, the P3 initiative, as 70 to 80 percent of the budget numbers are already committed to projects. Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my endorsement for the new and promising initiative of the government, the development of the Public/Private Partnerships. This concept, also known informally as P3, means that the private sector will be encouraged to take part in initiatives, which traditionally have been carried out by the public sector in the north. Public/Private Partnerships have been carried out in other parts of Canada frequently over the past several years. A dramatic example is the newly constructed Confederation Bridge between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, infrastructure financed, built and operated by the private sector, with ownership to revert back to the public at the end of a fixed term. There are many different kinds of partnerships that can be considered, and I am pleased that Minister Todd and the Cabinet are committed to exploring a wide variety of these options. In some cases, where new public facilities are needed, the private partner might finance, construct, own and operate the facility with no requirement for capital funding from the GNWT or the government and the private partner might reach an agreement for the private partner to finance and build a facility, sell it to the government and then operate and maintain the facility on behalf of

the GNWT, or again, Mr. Speaker, the private entrepreneur might finance, build, operate and finance, but transfer the ownership to the government after a reasonable term, say, 20 years. In some instances, requiring renovation or expansion of these existing public facilities, the private partner might buy the facility from the GNWT and then finance and carry out the additional construction with the government leasing the facility for an ongoing delivery of the public program or service. In all these cases, as well as other public/private partner options, the GNWT would realize financial benefits in the form of reduced yearly requirements for capital expenditures including a lower level of borrowing. The territories, the west and Nunavut alike, will continue to be pressed to address the severe trend lines of population growth, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse far above Canadian averages. Meanwhile, we depend year-in and year-out on federal transfer funding at a flatline level.

The gap between the GNWT supply of capital funding and the program needs of the NWT residents is widening. We must save public funds for programs and provide opportunities for private sector investment in financing and construction of facilities and other infrastructure which will accommodate those programs. In addition to the direct fiscal savings to the public purse, P3 properly implemented, would generate economic benefits in the north, through increased employment of northern residents by participating firms and of course, fair investment returns to northern business. As we all know, employees and businesses pay taxes.

Public/Private Partnerships are based on the premise that there is a real and open competition in the marketplace. Private sector operators can generally provide goods and services more efficiently than can government. As a businessman in the north, I believe that is the case, as long as the marketplace is truly free, open and competitive. Some people may have concerns about whether the private sector in the north is ready to undertake the kind of risks and responsibilities entailed in P3 or whether entrepreneurs will just focus on the perceived financial rewards. P3 are not suited for every government infrastructure project or every business. They carry rewards, risks and responsibilities for both partners. There should be no misunderstanding there. Therefore, the first principle in the government's policy on P3 should be transparency.

The principles, provisions and rules of the policy should be made known to the public as widely as

possible and as quickly as possible. The government should provide comprehensive workshops on the policy for northern businesses on a regular schedule in every region. The P3 policy must actively encourage fair competition. Requests for proposals must be widely displayed through the business community, and the criteria for evaluating and weighing all bids must be clear and fully described to everyone at the time the request for proposal

is issued. Sole sourcing of P3 arrangements should not occur. If a private partner is selected, the partner should have little discretion to negotiate any fundamental aspects of the partnership, without reopening the whole bidding process. Under P3 arrangements, whether or not the private partner owns or leases a public facility, the government partner should retain the full public authority for the delivery of public programs within the facility. Examples of this principle are schools and hospitals.

Public/private partner agreements should also include provisions to ensure the continuing operation of the facility in the event of a business failure or other contract interruption to ensure continued public access to the facility and the public service provided there. Performance bonds and contract interruption insurance are among options that should be considered.

I believe that P3 offers the private and public sector exciting opportunities to work together, to learn together and in the process to build a more self-reliant northern economy and society. Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say that most communities in the Northwest Territories do not have an active economy. I believe that the P3 is one way for some of these communities to get some semblance of private ownership. It may cost a little extra, so the critics of this program promote. Yes, it may, and I stress, it may, cost more; but I believe it is a small price to pay by this government to ensure there is some semblance of an economy created in some of our smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

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MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Henry. Replies to the budget address. Mr. Picco.

REPLY 4-13(5): Mr. Picco's Reply

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my response to the 1998-99 Budget Address of the Minister of Finance by reviewing some of the statements made by the Minister in his Budget Address. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Todd announced that the deficit picture has shown improvement. Mr. Todd is forecasting an annual surplus for the second consecutive year and the 1998 budget forecast also indicates that another \$2 million will be put against our accumulated deficit. Like many of my colleagues in this House, I had wanted to try and balance the budget in the first year of the government, but realized that a timeframe of two years was needed. We are now beginning to see the efforts of the downsizing and reductions. Mr. Speaker, I have not been a fan of many of the reductions and cutbacks. I was against the closure of Personnel. I was against the elimination of the regional directors and voted against the Public Service Act. Mr. Speaker, because territorial revenues only account for 20 percent of our revenue, we are at the whim of the formula financing grant. Our revenue is forecasted to decrease again this fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, the 13th Assembly has had many difficult decisions to make, many as a result of the spend-free attitude of previous Assemblies. At the end of the day, this must be remembered. Mr. Todd said that we cannot afford to expect funding levels to grow annually from Ottawa, as in the past.

The budget initiatives focused on investment, job creation and improving social conditions. Mr. Todd announced two new tax initiatives, the NWT Tax Investment Credit and the NWT Child Benefit. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mr. Todd on these initiatives. I had asked Mr. Todd to look at some type of tax relief for low income families and was a member of the task force that looked at increasing private business expenditure, through an investment tax credit. Mr. Todd's earlier release of information on the P3 also received much play in his budget. Mr. Speaker, I support the P3 in principle. I see it as a way to follow through on the 1988 agreement with the federal government to replace the Inuvik and Baffin hospitals. However, the P3 have to be affordable and transparent as I have stated earlier. The principle is sound, but the lease cost in the long-term is a concern. As an example, the NWT Construction Association noted that the P3 projects should be transparent, selection of projects and awards should be competitive, known to all parties and be fairly evaluated. The projects selected should also be affordable and sustainable. Mr. Speaker, in other

jurisdictions where the P3 principle has been used, the projects were and are, in large part, the bigger projects. An example in the Northwest Territories would be the Inuvik and Baffin hospitals. The P3 in my knowledge has not been used for a new \$800,000 building or a \$1 million rec centre. More information and the prioritization of projects within the current capital plan has to be the key to the transparency of the P3. Mr. Speaker, the announced increased income support food allowance is also a step in the right direction. This, again, was a good move by the Finance Minister and Minister Dent.

Mr. Speaker, the Accelerated Home Ownership Program is welcomed but will not address the shortage of new social housing units. The federal government abandoned the funding of new social housing and this government has tried various

ways, with some degree of success, to increase home ownership; but what is missing is the almost saturation of low income families eligible for home ownership and the void of new social housing. This has to be addressed. Mr. Speaker, the budget did not address the continued government policy of holding the line on forced growth. As an example, we are now beginning to see major concerns voiced by parents, education boards and the NWTTA with the funding of education in general. Increased pupil/teacher ratios, and staffing shortages, as well as general O and M funding for schools, has not been addressed. Our employees last had a pay increase of a paltry 1.8 percent four years ago, and then suffered the indignity of more than a six percent rollback in 1996, with the elimination of VTAs, Donny Days and other fiscal rollbacks.

Mr. Speaker, the public service has done its fair share for deficit reductions and a signal by the Finance Minister of some gains in collective bargaining would have been well-received. Mr. Todd emphasized a need to start the two new governments, after division, off on the right financial footing. He also stated that the vision would have a very positive economic impact on both new northern governments. Many of the reductions in the first years of the 13th Legislative Assembly, amalgamation of government departments and the elimination of departments like Personnel, have a legacy that may take some more time to fully evaluate. Mr. Todd put into place, starting shortly after the election, so many key deficit and priority spending plans that many thought were not possible.

Mr. Todd has weathered the attacks, criticism and questions in this House, while all the while keeping

his sense of humour. I infrequently agree with Mr. Todd, but respectfully submit that few northern individuals or politicians could have changed in such a short time the deficit reduction strategies put in place by Mr. Todd. He has balanced the budget, and again, forecast a small surplus. It will take time to evaluate the impact the achievement of the surplus and balanced budget has had. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Todd's third budget will try and deliver the second annual surplus in several years, but the acid test will be at what cost to the services, programs and people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Replies to the budget address. Mr. Steen.

REPLY 5-13(5): Mr. Steen's Reply

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to put forward my overall impression of the last budget of this Assembly. First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the Finance Minister and Cabinet as a whole for presenting once again a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see there will be more funds available for the children of the NWT in this budget. However, I am not convinced that expanding on the Federal Child Tax Credit initiative is the best way to proceed if we want to assure the needy children in our communities benefit directly. I believe the challenging part of this program will be, how to

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ensure the increased revenue actually reaches the children we are trying to help. Perhaps, we should be considering funding programs that assist people collectively, rather than individually. Mr. Speaker, care must be taken to ensure we are not just increasing pocket money for bingo games and other addictive gambling games. We must also make some effort to ensure these dollars will be spent on high protein and vitamin rich foods, rather than on fast foods and junk food. Consideration must be given to the fact that kids have no control whatsoever on how their parents spend their child tax credit funds. Unfortunately, there will be cases whereby this increased funding will end up with a bootlegger or in a dope peddler's pockets rather than the children's

stomachs. How to address this problem, I do not think anyone has the full answer. Some people have suggested the savings the government realizes through the federal tax credit increase should be applied to existing school lunches and bussing programs. Needy children would then be assured of a proper breakfast to start the school day. Perhaps lunches could be served in school as well. Mr. Speaker, it has been proven beyond a doubt that feeding children in the schools in the mornings improves classroom attendance and student performance dramatically. Perhaps, we should create employment for those women who were trained as cooks through Arctic College over the past two years by hiring them as cooks and cooks' helpers for the school lunch program. A steady supply of country foods could be made available to local schools by obtaining the services of local hunters and trappers through ECE's Income Support Programs.

Mr. Speaker, others suggest that some of this funding should have been made available to municipalities to supply bus services to students, at least during the long, cold winter months. Mr. Speaker, I, for one, favour these proposals because I know there are many children who go to school hungry and cold. No doubt the argument will be put forward that we are trying to concentrate on assisting low income families, rather than on the public at large. Mr. Speaker, regardless of income levels, NWT children should be assisted on an equal basis. This government should not discourage those people who work, by once again, subsidizing only those who are unemployed. Mr. Speaker, others have suggested that if we really wanted to help all children on an equal basis, we should make this extra funding available to our health and education boards to assure these boards have sufficient funds to pay decent salaries and benefits, and subsequently, attract qualified teachers, nurses and doctors. These too, I believe, are very worthwhile suggestions and this government would be wise to consider them.

Mr. Speaker, still others propose we use surplus funding to reinstate full RCMP services in the small outlying communities such as Sachs Harbour, Holman, and Paulatuk. Concern has been expressed that crime, in particular crime involving fire arms, has increased considerably in the small communities since the reduction in police services. The community constable program is commendable. However, these community constables should be seen as supporting and not as a substitute for fully qualified RCMP officers.

Mr. Speaker, the second part of the Budget Address I wish to comment on concerns the Public/Private Partnerships proposal, or the P3. Mr. Speaker, I support the P3 proposal and agree this initiative would serve to address the reduction in much needed capital works. I note the Finance Minister stated capital funding was reduced from \$200 million to \$140 million over the past two years. This may be true. However, I notice capital spending by previous Assemblies was, in fact, up to \$400 million a year. In fact, these Assemblies had a special budget session just to deal with capital expenditures.

Mr. Speaker, this Assembly has had to reduce capital expenditures in order to meet the forced growth in the social envelope. I believe the P3 financial proposal would help to bring existing capital expenditures closer to historical levels. Mr. Speaker, the P3 should not be considered as a totally new way of financing capital infrastructure. In fact, as far back as the early 1980's, the hamlet of Tuk financed the water pipeline system to fill the reservoir on an annual basis through a form of Public/Private Partnership. A local contractor proposed to the hamlet to purchase, build and maintain the pipeline system and fill the reservoir on an annual basis with the hamlet lease purchasing the facilities over a ten-year period. The hamlet council agreed to the proposal and now owns and maintains these facilities. As another example, in 1990, the Hamlet of Paulatuk contracted the local community corporation to supply them with a residential staff unit to house their imported staff. The hamlet was able to lease/purchase this unit from the community corporation over a five-year period.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the major difference between existing contracting policies and the P3 financial proposal would be, in some cases, the successful contractor would own outright the public facilities in question. This would mean the contractor would be fully responsible for all O and M on the facility, including security of the building and grounds, as well as insurance. The government would only lease the facilities. I see this as being very beneficial to this government as the public in general seems to have more respect for privately owned buildings than they do for publicly owned.

--Applause

For instance, public school buildings in some communities are covered with unsightly graffiti. If a school building is financed through the P3 proposal, it would be the responsibility of the owner to ensure these buildings are kept in good appearance.

Mr. Speaker, I also see the P3 financing proposal as a golden opportunity for aboriginal land claims groups to invest their respective claims funds in the construction of public infrastructure within their respective region. Again, this is not something new. As we all know, the birthright groups in Nunavut have been contracted to construct and maintain public infrastructure for the new government. I understand the arrangement is working to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, although there is some concern raised as to the amount of business opportunities left for the small aboriginal business person. This concern could be addressed, however, by assuring the birthright or land claims groups subcontract as much of the overall work as possible to these smaller businesses and allow everyone a certain amount of profitability.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Inuvialuit in my riding are very keen to take the opportunity to invest in public infrastructure, and I encourage my honourable colleagues to support the P3 financing proposal brought forward by the Finance Minister in his budget speech. No doubt, as with any new initiative, a certain amount of fine tuning will be required as we go along,

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but in general, Mr. Speaker, I certainly support the P3 proposal.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Replies to the Budget Address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Mr. Todd.

ITEM 14: TABELING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 17-13(5): Government of the Northwest Territories Business Plans 1998-99 to 2000-01

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three documents to table today. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, 17-13(5) Government of the Northwest Territories Business Plans, 1998-99 to 2000-01. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabled Document 18-13(5): Formula Financing Agreement, April 1/95 - March 31/99

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I have a second document. I wish to table the following document 18-13(5) Formula Financing Agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabled Document 19-13(5): Guidelines for Implementing Public/Private Partnerships

I want to table a third document, Mr. Speaker, one of interest to my colleagues. I wish to table the following document 19-13(5) Guidelines for Implementing Public/Private Partnerships. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Tabling of documents, Mr. Steen.

Tabled Document 20-13(5): Tuktoyaktuk/Inuvik All-Weather Highway: Alternatives for Funding and Construction

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, 220-13(5) Tuk/Inuvik All-Weather Highway: Alternatives for Funding, and Construction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Mr. Ootes.

ITEM 15: NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 11-13(5): Referral of Tabled Document 19-13(5) Guidelines for Implementing Public/Private Partnerships to Committee of the Whole

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Wednesday, January 28th, I will move the following motion. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife North, that Tabled Document 19-13(5) entitled Guidelines for Implementing Public/Private Partnerships be moved into committee of the whole for consideration.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motions for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Mr. Ootes.

ITEM 17: MOTIONS

Motion 10-13(5): Referral of Tabled Document 15-13(5) Budget Speech to Committee of the Whole

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS, the Minister of Finance has presented the 1998-1999 Budget of the Government of the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS the Minister of Finance has given his Budget Address;

AND WHEREAS the Budget Address is a significant document that requires detailed consideration by the Legislative Assembly;

NOW THEREFORE, I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Iqaluit, that Tabled Document 15-13(5) entitled, Budget Address be moved into committee of the whole for discussion.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Your seconder is not here, Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to change the seconder of the motion to the Member for Yellowknife South.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The seconder of the motion has been changed to the Member for Yellowknife South. The motion seconder has been noted. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. 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, Appropriation Act, 1998-99; Committee Report 2-13(5); Committee Report 03-

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13(5); Committee Report 04-13(5); Committee Report 05-13(5) and Tabled Document 15-13(5). We have Mr. Steen in the chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

I would like to call the committee to order. For consideration of the committee of the whole, we have Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 1998-1999; Committee Report 02-13(5); Committee Report 03-13(5); Committee Report 04-13(5); Committee Report 05-13(5) and Tabled Document 15-13(5), Budget Address. Mr. Ootes, could I get some direction how to proceed?

MR. OOTES:

Yes, I suggest that we consider Tabled Document 15-13(5), Budget Address.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Does the committee agree we proceed with Tabled Document 15-13(5), Budget Address?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Does the committee concur we invite the Minister of Finance to take the witness chair? Agreed. Would the Minister of Finance like to take the witness chair? The floor is now open for questions on the Budget Address. Does any Member wish to make comments or questions on the Budget Address? Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr. Chairman, in the Budget Address on page 15, Mr. Todd indicates the fiscal position and then gives notes to the fiscal position of this government. I understand that in 1994-1995 the \$1.2 million and the actuals was the fiscal position at that time of budgetary revenues. For 1998-1999 we are actually looking at about a \$60 million decrease. However, it would seem from the notes in the Budget Address that, indeed, Mr. Todd is hoping to receive extra revenue from the sale of assets of this government. I am wondering, has he identified the assets that are for sale and are those, indeed, en-factored into his fiscal position?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Todd, would you like to respond?

HON. JOHN TODD:

I surely would, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, if you remember, when we undertook to sell off the staff housing it was a two-year exercise. We are anticipating there will be a revenue with the remaining sales of the staff housing out there. There may be some, I made provision within the budget for that. There also may be some assets this government over and above that, will sell that are coming into review by Cabinet. So that is what the provision is for there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the recoveries included in the pie graph on page 21 of the Budget

Address, on bullet 3, indicate the sale of government assets. I would assume that indeed when we last looked at the staff housing sales, he had almost reached the saturation point on the sales. So I am wondering if he has identified other items of this government for sale, for example, buildings, office complexes, warehouses? Is that, indeed, what he is talking about during the recoveries?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

No, Mr. Chairman. The reality is it was a two year exercise to sell the staff housing. There is still a considerable amount of housing that has to be sold. I am optimistic that most of it will be going and there is no massive sell off of other government assets besides this government's policy to get out of staff housing. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, then is there any program or proposal being put forward by this government to look at selling off warehouses, office buildings, et cetera? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

The government is, as my honourable colleague knows, looking at possible options, particularly for Yellowknife because of the surplus office facilities that are here. There is no major evaluation of the sell off of government assets across the territories. No.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am indeed aware of some talk of the sell off of some assets. I wonder when Mr. Todd will be presenting those to the public or when they will be brought up here in the Legislative Assembly, mentioning what assets in buildings, and so on, will be available for sale and put into the consolidated revenue fund of this government? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

As I said, Mr. Chairman, there is no strategy or policy with respect to the massive sell off of territorial-wide assets that belong to the government. There is some consideration being given within the Yellowknife constituency because of the overabundance of office facilities that the Minister of Public Works and others are looking at, at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, no, I did not say at any time there would be a massive sell off of any assets. What I did ask, in my previous question, I was wondering when Mr. Todd would make available the items, the assets that you are contemplating

selling off so that, indeed, we would have a chance to look at them, that the people of the Northwest Territories would have a chance to see what assets we are speaking about. So, that was my question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well as I said, Mr. Chairman, I believe the Department of Public Works is currently looking at the office facilities in Yellowknife. I would imagine when that comes forward it would be available to the Members. I could

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check with the Minister of Public Works when he expects that document to be finalized, so the Members could have access to it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Questions and comments on the Budget Address. Mr. Enuaraq.

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question to the Minister of Finance regarding staff housing. When the government started selling staff housing, there were about 562 units to be sold, if I remember correctly. Can the Minister tell me how many houses have been sold to this date? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Enuaraq. I would like to caution Members to assure that the questions you are asking, you will not have the opportunity to ask them later when we deal with these specific departments. Mr. Todd, would you like to respond?

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well I do not have the specifics here. If my memory serves me correctly we would have sold somewhere around 60/65/70 percent. I have got to be a little careful of the inventory, and we are optimistic we will get rid of most of the balance of the housing over this next year. There will be some that will not get sold for a variety of different reasons that could be land issues, could be nobody wants them, et cetera. We have already

agreed, in keeping with that, actually Mr. Chairman, your advice to us early last year that these houses be turned over to housing associations for public housing. So at the end of the day, where housing is required, and where it has not been sold, for staff housing that is, we will turn over the remaining balance of those housing units to the housing associations for the badly needed requirements of public housing as Mr. Picco and others spoke earlier in their reply to the budget.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Enuaraq.

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another question regarding staff housing. We expected revenue from staff housing around \$20 to \$24 million. How much money have we collected to this date? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Enuaraq. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

I do not have that number here, Mr. Chairman. I could provide that to my honourable colleague if he asks me the question in question period, tomorrow. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Todd, would that be one of the questions that will be addressed as well in the budget when we review FMBS.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Yes, I would be able to answer all these questions under FMBS because they are responsible for the sale of staff housing. We would have no problem answering those very detailed questions at that time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Questions and comments on the Ministers' Budget Address. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for the Minister regarding the NWT Investment Tax Credit Program. I wonder if he could tell us who will

administer this program? Will it be someone in the private sector or will it be done within government? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

It will be done by the Department of Finance.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

I am sorry, I missed that, Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

It will be done by the Department of Finance, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

A different subject, Mr. Chairman. We have had - and the Minister has spoken on it frequently and it is of great concern to him as well as others - our population growth of 4.7 percent which is the largest, I believe, in Canada, and perhaps in North America. I note the social envelope will consume 63 percent of our O and M of the total budget. We have cut the capital. We have cut the number of people we employ. In all likelihood the level of service starts to deteriorate as a result as well. There is no doubt, that in the social envelope, the pressure because of forced growth will continue to be there. It is a frustrating problem for all of us.

I am wondering if the Minister is in a position to perhaps address this with the federal Minister of Finance through the formula financing agreement. After all, is not that where this kind of problem should be taken? If we keep going, soon we will find ourselves in a position with less and less dollars and more and more going into the social envelope area and less into other areas. We are already discussing heavily the whole problem of having to create programs like the P3 program, which as I say I think is a good program. I just have other concerns with it. I just wonder if the Minister could comment a bit for us about his views and outlook to addressing this whole issue and can it be done through the formula financing system? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Todd, do you wish to comment?

HON. JOHN TODD:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I mean nobody is more aware of where our money is being spent than I am, Mr. Chairman. The last two years we have gone through a great deal of anguish trying to protect, if you want, the social envelope to the best of our ability, based on the revenues that we both generate and get from the federal government.

I think the federal government is very much aware of the dilemma and the difficulties we are currently in. In our formula financing discussions right now for two new territories, one of the big arguments that all parties are making to the table is the adequacy argument. That is to talk about where we spend our money, the kind of factors that determine where these expenditures are coming from and the impact they will have if we do not keep up a certain level so we can address this. We are talking about addressing the essential needs of people, housing, education, health care, et cetera.

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For me, from a very personal level, I think the most difficult task we have had over the years and certainly the last two or three and one that consistently, in my opinion has not been addressed as well as it should, is on the revenue side. You cannot continually go to the federal government, cap in hand, and continue to ask for more and more money in a time when all other jurisdictions are being cut. We have to take our lumps, if you want, the same as everybody else did across the country.

I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that what I have been trying to do the last little while is to look at areas where we can increase our revenue base and the nonrenewable resource sector is certainly one that we must become, in my opinion, more aggressive in, not only in this legislature but in future legislatures.

I think at the same time, parallel with that, you have to demonstrate to Ottawa, who as others have said, give us 74 percent or 75 percent of our revenues, that you can prudently manage your dollars. I think that is what we have done. You cannot continue to pour money into the social envelope at the rate we are doing without trying to address the root causes of why

we are in this situation we are in. That is not without a great deal of risk. My colleagues, particularly my colleague Mr. Ng, and Mr. Dent and others, have the unenviable task of trying to live within their means and meet the new demands that have been placed upon them because of the population explosion. So, it is not an easy task. It is a combination between trying to convince the federal government that we have an arguable case, and that is what we are doing right now as we speak particularly on the adequacy side, and looking at how we spend government dollars as we are currently spending them and can we spend them better. We have to constantly take a hard look at that. The third part, to me, anyway, looking on the revenue side, where can we increase our ability to be less dependent on transfer of payments? I am certainly working very aggressively on that side. It is a combination of all three, Mr. Chairman, I think. At the end of the day, you never get everything that you ask for, but I am confident that we will get reasonable and adequate levels of funding to sustain the level of services we have become accustomed to from the federal government in our negotiations. I feel, certainly, from a western perspective, if you look at the development that is going on, there is certainly an inordinate opportunity there in the tax window, particularly as it relates to the nonrenewable resource base. I think, in the future with Nunavut, similar things could happen, particularly with some of the exploration that is going on in gold and other minerals across the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to just address the question of the revenue side. Just going back, I think we are doing a good job on our expenditure side. I think it is prudently spent. I think we have all had some input into the process and we are dealing with it, I think, in a fairly efficient and proper way. It is a frustrating process because we just cannot seem to identify how to solve our problems socially in the territories, and it just requires a lot of money in order to be solved, it seems. But on the revenue side, I wonder if the Minister could tell us if he is in negotiations with the Minister of Finance, as well, regarding the age-old question of the Northern Accord and can we get more royalties from the resources because, for example, the diamond mines, we really are not getting a lot of benefit from that from a royalty

side. I wonder if the Minister could elaborate a bit for us on that end?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Todd, do you wish to respond?

HON. JOHN TODD:

I think I would respond in two ways. One I would say that this legislature, myself included, really was left with a challenge of trying to balance the books and bring some fiscal order to the day, and, I believe, despite some of the criticism and some of the concerns, that we have done that. If we put as much energy into looking at new revenues in certain areas as we did into doing the difficult task of cutting, I think we could be reasonably successful. Mr. Ootes is correct. The one area that does bring promise is on the nonrenewable side. As early as last week, I was in discussion with Mr. Martin on the tax window and I have spoken to this House about this before. Mr. Morin is aggressively pursuing the devolution and the transfer of federal employees in the oil, gas and minerals industry. So, there is a fairly aggressive strategy on our part to move expeditiously and aggressively in trying to get the federal government to move some of these responsibilities, to give us the tax window that we require to generate more revenues to be less self-sufficient. I do not know, I am an optimist. Maybe it is because we are moving into, hopefully, optimistic times. I think, with a good solid argument, we will be able to demonstrate to the federal government that this is both good for them and good for us. I would hope that, particularly, if you look on the diamond side, these are what we call incremental revenues. These are revenues that were not expected, revenues that the federal government is projecting. I think somewhere, if my memory serves me right, there is \$4 billion in one mine alone in terms of tax revenues. We just want in that tax window, and if we get there, and that certainly would be my hope, if nothing else, set the stage. If we do not achieve it in the next twelve months, something to set the stage for the new legislatures to get there. I think it bodes well for new revenues, the size and magnitude that it would require to continue to deliver services to the people. But at the same time, again talking personally, when you look at the social envelope, we have to address the root causes. You just cannot keep pouring money in there. You have to address the root causes, and that is what, I believe, my colleagues, the Ministers who are charged with this task are trying to do.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Questions or comments on the Budget Address. Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, on page four of the Budget Address, the Minister states that our staff represents our most valuable resource. With these new source revenues that the Minister talked about earlier, I wonder, is there anything that we are going to be able to do, as I said earlier in my reply to the Budget Address, to help our employees fiscally? As the Minister says in his Budget Address, our staff represent our most valuable resource. I think a valuable resource should be helped out fiscally, and when I say fiscally, I guess I mean in the wallet, and right now it is a great time to address this because, indeed, we are under negotiations. So, I am wondering if Mr. Todd has looked at any way of these new source revenues mentioned earlier to Mr. Ootes about helping our much valuable resources, as he says. Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

My point I was trying to make with respect to the staff was the difficult task that they all had to endure over the last two years, and I applaud them for the support they gave us, and also, of course, some of the difficulties and some of the hard work they are going to have to put in, in the next twelve months as we move towards division. Mr. Picco knows full well that we are in current sensitive negotiations with the union with respect to the collective bargaining agreement, so it really would be inappropriate for me to make any comment as to the degree of compensation, if you want, that will unfold as we move forward through these negotiations. What I will say is, I have given direction to the staff to negotiate a reasonable agreement that is affordable with respect to the collective agreement and an affordable, sustainable agreement on the pay equity side. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the buzz words of sustainability and affordability have come up many times in debates and in the Budget Address as Mr. Todd has said, especially with regard to the pay equity situation. I have mentioned it many times and have had private conversations with the Minister on pay equity which have been quite interesting. I am wondering, when the Minister says sustainability, what does he mean by sustainability?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

You have to be able to afford it, Mr. Chairman, and be able to sustain the affordability. I mean, whatever it is going to cost, you have to be able to know that you have the money in the bank to pay it over a long period of time. I am one of these politicians who does not look just for today but looks down the road. I believe, in this budget, we have tried to look into the next millennium, as we have said. It is an issue that, quite frankly, haunts me right now. I am talking very personally. I want to make an arrangement that is fair to the employees. But I am not prepared, and I do not think the people are prepared, if it is not fair and affordable, to lay off any more people and cut programs. We do not sit in the House talking about spending more money. We do not have the capacity to spend money. It is just like the bank account or your Chargex card. There is only so much you can put on it or take out of it. Really that is what we are trying to do here. We are trying to be fair, reasonable, and I hope at the end of the day, we can reach a settlement, as I said, by the end of March. I am optimistic that level heads, and reasonable and fair negotiations will prevail and common sense, at the end of the day, will prevail as to affordability, common sense, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Picco.

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I do agree with the analogy presented by the Minister of fair minded, level heads and your credit cards and your mortgage. That has always been my point on this issue, Mr. Chairman. That after ten years of dragging this through the courts, that it was never addressed properly by the 12th or the 11th Assembly. Mr. Todd

is stuck with a situation, a fait accompli, as it were, where we lost our last challenge in court and now we had to sit at the negotiating table. Mr. Todd has tried to work out an arrangement at the table, and rightfully so. Mr. Chairman, when we look at the employees, we are looking at 98 percent being the female employee in mostly clerical and administrative positions who have been underpaid based on their classification in a gender neutral environment. Basically, what that means, Mr. Chairman, is that, indeed, a woman doing the same job as a man was being paid less than a man. There is no one in this House who would say that was fair. We went to court and we lost the case. Sometimes I feel there is a revision of history going on. I do not know what the amount is that would be retroactive and owed to 1,000 employees, 600 employees, 100 employees. It is very difficult to ask the appropriate questions on sustainability and affordability. However, after saying that Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance must have a figure in mind, and it is not fair for him to say what that figure is because they are in negotiations. All I am saying, Mr. Chairman, is I agree with the Minister that we had to pay the bill, like a Visa bill or a mortgage bill. It does not matter to me if that person is living in the territories or now has left. To me, that is a red herring. We still owe a debt. What the affordability factor is, is something that has to be played out. If the territorial government does not have the ability to pay the bill as presented, I would ask the Minister, you know, would the federal government, who is the 80 percent funder of this government, step in and help us out on that bill because we all know, and as the Minister of Finance knows, the federal government is also in the case now, before the courts, of their \$1 billion pay equity situation. I think that a fair minded person like Mr. Todd would probably have already approached the subject with our Finance Minister. All I am saying is that we do not have the fiscal ability to pay. We have to pay something. Has he looked at other alternatives like asking the federal government for help here because as Mr. Todd knows, when he fought in the courts as the territorial government, we were ruled that we did not have jurisdiction that, indeed, human rights laws for Canada fell into place and that is why we lost our court case? If that is the case, I would see federal regulations having to incur us in that debt. So, I would ask the Minister, has he looked and talked to the Department of Finance about this issue and indeed, how much money are we looking at? You heard \$70 and \$80 million. I do not expect the Minister to tell me because he has a bargaining position to take. So my question to the Minister is that

indeed we have a debt to pay. He has acknowledged that because we are at the negotiating table because we lost the last court case. So has he looked at other avenues to pay out this money? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco. Mr. Todd, do you wish to respond.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, Mr. Chairman, the federal government will not pay the bill. Let me repeat that for clarity purposes. The federal government will not pay the bill. The responsibility lies within the fiscal capabilities of this government and I am going to keep to my theme because I think it is the right one. We want to negotiate an arrangement. We do not need a third party telling us what to do and it has to be fair and it has to be affordable. I hope at the end of the day that everybody will see that it is necessary and where that money goes at the end of the day is irrelevant to me. I agree that there is a bill that has to be paid, we have all said that. I have said it consistently. How much more cuts and pain can

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we inflict on the people of the territories? I mean, I defy anybody, including the people at the bargaining table to show me where we are going to pay for this. I am not going to talk numbers because I think it is completely inappropriate. I believe we have got a good defensible position for the position that we have laid before the union. I think it is fair and I hope at the end of the day this Legislature and others will see that, as the negotiations unfold. I do not want to at this time circumvent negotiations.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Picco, could you repeat your last question for a summarization?

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am not trying to be antagonistic with the Minister. I am not trying to bait him into saying something that he does not want to say and I would not be able to do that, anyway, with his skill. Mr. Chairman, on the negotiations that are currently underway, it is my understanding from the Minister's questions answered in this House over the last couple of days that the

negotiated settlement is at the table now because the Union of Northern Workers, who make up the major component of the pay equity situation, are negotiating their current contract. I hope, and I would like clarification perhaps from Mr. Todd, that he is not hanging the sword of damocles over the pay equity on one hand saying if you do not get a negotiated settlement on this hand I cannot do something on the other hand. To me that would not be fair negotiations. So, I would like a confirmation today from the Minister that indeed that is not occurring. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Picco and your time is up. Would the Minister like to respond to that last question?

HON. JOHN TODD:

Yes, I never saw Mr. Picco's questions as being confrontational, I just thought they were ones of clarity of information and I am dealing with that accordingly. I think it would be fair to say that my strategy is to try to negotiate both arrangements so we can put some money into the pockets of our employees, that we can afford. As I said, negotiations are underway and it would be imprudent of me to make any kind of comment as to how the negotiations are going but to say, again, you are going to hear it and hear it, we want to negotiate an arrangement that is affordable. We have placed our offer on the table and let us see how it unfolds in the coming two or three weeks. For all of our sakes, I say this in all sincerity, I genuinely hope that we can negotiate an arrangement because the consequences are far greater if we do not. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Questions or comments on the Minister's Budget Address. I recognize Mr. Roland, followed by Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will keep my comments to the Budget Address that is before us. Mr. Chairman, there are a number of good initiatives within the budget speech that will positively impact many residents of the north. As I said in my reply to the address, that has not come from one year. It has been an accumulation, I believe. I have a number of interested areas within the budget speech. The Minister spoke of the Northwest Territories Investment Tax Credit Program and in his Budget Address he

talked about eligible investors. Now, you can use for example \$10,000. I guess my concern is over the last two years I do not know if we will find very many individuals who have that kind of room or dollars to invest. Could the Minister inform us on the eligibility of investors. Is there a certain category how low of an investment is required? Is it very flexible? What would be the room in there?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me address the availability of investment capital. I think my colleague would be surprised just how much disposable income is out there, even in these difficult times. I mean, I am told, and I stand to be corrected there is somewhere between \$20 and \$30 million a year going into RRSP's for example in the territories. That is a significant amount of investment income if we can tap even into a fraction of that. So that is on the one side. There is still a fairly healthy investment community out there and I think, I hope, they will view this very favourably. The reasonable minimum, I think we have a maximum of up to \$100,000. So, I mean, if somebody formed a small company, three guys got together needed \$15,000 putting \$5,000 each into it, I think we would consider that the same as anything else. I only use the \$10,000 just for clarity purposes to demonstrate the value of the credit. Of course on the RRSP side you have to have the window to be able to access the RRSP, but this is what I am optimistic about, it could bring about a fair amount of investment. You will notice we are pretty conservative in the way we are approaching this thing. I am saying 98/99, \$1 million in tax credits up to \$5 million. I think, in the year 2000-2001, gives us somewhere in the region of \$35 million in new equity. So, you know, it is pretty conservative. In my discussions around, I am fairly optimistic that we will get some of this cash flowing and moving, and I hope that people in the territories will invest in their country as southerners have done and others have done. This way we get the small tax credit in to encourage them as an incentive to reduce that risk. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As he went on he sort of leads me into my second question. For the first year, as you say conservatively you have mentioned \$1 million in tax credits and hoping to generate, what did you say, \$35 million in equity. So, this is a graduated scale, the first year, 1998, \$1 million; the next year \$5 million in tax credits. We are up to \$5 million in 2000. Your department obviously has looked at the possible amounts of revenue that can be generated. Is that what is used in this? Is this achievable within the first year or do you think it will be maxed out? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, we have to make some assumptions and based upon where we think some of the economy is going. A lot of what we looked at, you know, because I think when we talk about the economy right now it gets a little skewed because of the price of gold. There is an assumption, and do not misunderstand me, we are very sympathetic to what is going on up there in terms of the gold industry and the mines, that is why Mr. Kakfwi and others are working hard with the mining companies. There is a small business community out there that will have an opportunity with Public/Private Partnerships, with development in Nunavut,

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CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Moving on to another area of interest would be the continued support for the Northern Employment Strategy. I am wondering if it is possible if the Minister could inform us as to, would there be any changes in what was done in the previous year under the Northern Employment Strategy? Would we be looking under new initiatives within that? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, the Northern Employment Strategy, I think, really did not get the kind of, if you want, political play

it should have last year. Certainly I hope it does this year because if you look just at the first brush of the return on investment that has occurred with that Northern Employment Strategy it is really quite significant. Mr. Kakfwi's office, of course, played a very, very senior role in that along with Mr. Dent's and Ms. Thompson's, but my understanding is that we are going to continue with the program as is, maybe some minor changes, but as is. Both Mr. Kakfwi and Mr. Dent are going to provide a more detailed return on investment paper to this House before it ends. Mr. Kakfwi's office put \$9.5 million, they cost-shared projects the value of \$34 million. That is pretty good leverage. They created 48,000 part and full-time jobs, sorry, work weeks of employment. You know, I mean, to me that was money well spent, and I do not think there will be much change to the program that we had last year. I know there was some federal money in there and, if my memory serves me correctly, that may be not there now, but certainly we are optimistic that this program will roll out soon and hopefully we will actually do better in the coming year in terms of the target set for employment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In this area of the Northern Employment Strategy, I think that is definitely good news, especially in the smaller communities in the outlying regions where jobs are scarce. This is a valued initiative and I would see it proceeding. In reference in your Budget Address to new roads, I think that can work very well together if we are a little creative and maybe taking up some of the examples that we can see in eastern Canada with some of the programs and the way they run it. I think we can help out and alleviate a lot of the financial burden of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Roland. That is a comment? I have Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Ningark in that order. Mr. O'Brien.

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page nine of the Minister's Budget Address it refers to a new initiative, the Accelerated Home Ownership Program. This certainly is a welcomed initiative, especially for the

people of the eastern Arctic. Mr. Chairman, I note that the figure that the Minister referred to was an additional \$40 to \$50 million over the next two years for this program. My question to the Minister is why is there such a variance in these figures? We are talking a \$10 million variance. I realize the budget is just a measuring tool, an approximate, but why is there this much of a variance? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, I could have said up to \$50 million. I think when we were writing this part of the budget speech we

were looking at what the uptake might be in this period of time, and it really depends on how well we do in finding the appropriate clients again to lever the mortgages through the EDAP expansion, et cetera. So, you know, it is not intended to show the variance, it is just intended, I think, if my memory serves me correct, to indicate what we thought the uptake may well be. It certainly will not be any more than \$50 million at this time because that is what we think we can manage. Really, the intent of this program, which my colleague the Honourable Goo Arlooktoo has been almost a rabid advocate of, is to try to get about 1,000 houses on the deck as quickly as we can and to target people that are in both staff housing and social housing and who can move out so that we can get a greater degree of home-ownership. There is, of course, a huge economic side to it in terms of jobs on the construction side, the purchasing of goods and services. We are hopeful that with the Housing Corporation's targeting of people in social housing who can move out that it will free up much needed social housing that Members have said, I believe, some Members, maybe it was Mr. Picco or some others that said we have not been able to construct over the last four or five years because of the cuts at the federal level. So, it is nothing more than that. Thank you.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. O'Brien.

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One final question in this area. The Minister speaks of approximately 1,000 homes in this program. Without going into a lot of detail, can the Minister give at least some general

information and background as to how this is going to take place and how the program is going to work?

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Of course, the Minister responsible, Mr. Arlooktoo, can speak in much more detail as to how he intends to put this program on the ground, but in general, it really is an expansion of an existing EDA program. There might be some slight changes to that because I think it would be fair to say that there was some slippage in the last program. There may have to be some changes. I believe Mr. Arlooktoo is working hard on that right now. It is targeting, if you want, as I said earlier, people who we can move out of public housing, who are in there right now and who have the

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capacity to pay for a mortgage. If my memory serves me correctly, because it is a detailed question, but my understanding is, we may also be looking at, in the past, we have looked at stand-alone buildings. It may be a necessity to look at multi-plexes and stuff like that because we need to get some cost efficiencies to housing. At the end of the day, we are, as I said, hopeful. While this is not a be-all, end-all, there is no question about that, but it will bring about some relief to a very difficult and critical housing shortage we have across the territory. When you get to the detail, Mr. Arlooktoo will be able to answer as many questions as he can, Mr. Chairman, in answer to Mr. O'Brien's question. Thank you.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. O'Brien.

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On another matter referring to the P3, we have heard examples and comments made about the program which could be used, in Iqaluit for example, with their hospital, Inuvik, Cambridge Bay, and I realize the Minister indicated that the policy or the regulations have not been provided to the House as of this date. I wonder if the Minister can at least provide some information as to how he intends, generally, to make sure that programs or projects are delivered and the allocation of these funds on a regional basis to make sure that what we are doing is fair, and that all the regions we

talk about, the large communities, but the smaller communities, that they benefit also in this area? Thank you.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

I did table today and, of course, you have not had an opportunity to read it, but some of the guidelines, and now I would go back to what the Chairman said earlier in his comments to the Budget Address. You have to give us some flexibility and latitude as we develop the policies, if you want, regulations, because it is new. We do not have all the answers today, but we will get some of the answers as we move along, which is the first thing I have to say.

I think when we recruited Mr. Coles, we were fortunate because he has an inordinate amount of experience and he understands some of the issues that are before us. I think, I have to say again, that from my perspective, while there has to be transparency and there has to be fairness, I want to keep coming back to affordability too. We have to be able to afford it. We cannot put the government back into debt that it cannot afford over the long term.

I would caution everybody, and this gives me an opportunity to get my two cents in here, that I do not see the Public/Private Partnerships as some huge panacea at the soul of all our infrastructure problems. I see it as a one small step in trying to alleviate the difficulties that we have had because of the cuts we have made to the capital budgets. It is not like we are going to go out there and spend millions and millions of dollars. The reality is, if you do two hospitals - I was going to say Arviat, pardon me, in Iqaluit and Inuvik - you could be looking at a \$50 million bill right there you know, a \$60 million bill. Mr. Chairman, I think that Mr. O'Brien and the others will have full exposure and full clarity on ultimately what comes down through the pipe and we will have lots of time to influence and give direction on where we are spending and where we are moving on the P3 I look forward to that debate. I mean, I know it is important. I know that our critics are saying there could be some other hidden agenda. I can assure you, there is no hidden agenda on the P3. The only agenda is to try to get the infrastructure back up to where it belongs, and I would hope that we would be able to reassure Mr. O'Brien and others that the concerns he has with respect to his riding or other ridings are going to be

addressed in the next, hopefully, two to three weeks. Thank you.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. O'Brien.

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess that is my concern, when you indicate that between Inuvik and Iqaluit we could have up to \$50 million in capital. We want to make sure in the smaller communities that they are treated fairly and their needs are addressed, because to me, to spend \$50 million in two communities and nothing in the other small communities, I do not think is what I would consider fairness. We have to look fairly closely at the needs of the smaller communities, and if it means that we do not spend \$50 million, we spend \$30 million and spend the other \$20 million in the small communities, that is something we should be considering, if it comes down to dollars and cents and we find ourselves short.

Moving on to another issue that is related to this in reference to the bankers and business people who were at the great shrimp meeting last week. Those people were invited guests, and that is fine. My question is, how does one get invited or brought into this particular program to make sure that everybody has a chance and that if there is investment possibilities and potential, these other parties who were not there that they have an opportunity also to take part in this program should it take off?

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, for clarity purposes, I could not agree more, Mr. O'Brien. There has to be some fairness and some equity and transparency to the issue. I do not know how much more I can say about it. I am trying to respond to you. I think we are going to do that. I believe we are going to do that. I mean, it is not only politically expedient, politically smart to do it, it is what the public expects. In any new policy where we are going to put a government into debt, because that is what we are doing here, we need to make sure they see clearly where that money is going and is it affordable and is it the right thing to do. Maybe, I will take some of the blame for the Shrimpgate. You know, maybe that was an error in judgment on my part, in not coming down to speak, not only to the

Members, but speak to the public at large. If that is the

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case, I will say for the last time, I apologize and it was an error in judgment on my part.

The meeting with the bankers really was a private discussion between a Finance Minister and an initiative to see if in fact they were interested in looking at the P3, so that if things do occur in Arviat or somewhere else, that these guys who determine corporate policy for their banks at a local level would, I guess, be receptive to the policy. So, that really was my intent at the time and obviously, I did not do it very well. I would hope that my apology would be sufficient to close the discussion on the bankers issue.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. O'Brien, I know your time is up. I would like to remind Members that I cannot find anything in Tabled Document 15 on shrimp or smoked char. We should keep our comments on the Budget Address. I recognize now, Mr. Ningark.

MR. NINGARK:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I will speak in my first language. So, there is a requirement for an earpiece, Members. Qujannamiik. (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This item we call the Budget Address is a delightful document because it is helpful to the communities within Nunatsiaq, within the NWT, particularly to smaller business owners, as well as to the larger corporations and as far as providing employment, as far as education goes and for people dependent on social programs for families of lower incomes. Also, in the 1998-99 fiscal year, it seems that we will not have a deficit. We appear to have a balanced budget. As well, in preparation, Mr. Chairman, for division of the territories, it is quite predictable that this will become a reality and we will have our own separate governments. Our current government is preparing for division in the coming years and to be well prepared budget-wise. I see this action as being very wise because it will be beneficial for many people that need assistance. Also at this time there does not appear to be, Mr. Chairman, in the budget and in the north, the vital capabilities. Sometimes in the private sector, Mr. Chairman, certainly jobs are created by the smaller businesses, by private corporations and of course we are in

support of the smaller businesses because they create employment.

The mining industry is also another endeavour that we support because, of course, they provide employment. However, in this document I do not see, Mr. Chairman, very much relating to the sale of furs, skins and pelts. I have not seen any mention of the economic potential regarding trapping and private arts and crafts. There has been no mention directly in the budget as far as arts and crafts and fur sales go. This also applies to the fishing industry within the communities. Both over here and within our own communities in the east, there are many people including Inuit and Qablunaat who try to maintain a living by selling fish commercially. As we are most aware, we the government, want to see especially the federal Cabinet support the individual who is providing for himself, who is independent and less reliant on social programs, who is able and willing to try to provide his own income by trapping, selling furs, carvings and by selling fish commercially. This is also another means of providing independence. I do not see very much of this in the budget. Be it hunting, trapping, through fishing commercially, a person can be independent and therefore this results in a happier, more content person or persons.

When Inuit people become of a mature age, too often they end up having to rely on social programs and this causes a low morale. If there are ways we can alleviate these problems by including the sale of furs, the sale of fish, by carvings, many of these people with these types of work are people that have elected us as their MLAs. Whether they are independent fisherman, commercially or hunters and trappers, these are members of the public that have voted us in. I think too often we forget about them. There are many people such as hunters and trappers here in the Northwest Territories and people in the carving industry, as well as fishermen who sell fish commercially. We have to remember these people and the Minister, Mr. Todd, in his own riding of Rankin Inlet and Whale Cove, there are many people who do this type of work as there are in my community, people who are willing to try and remain independent by means of hunting and trapping. Although the furs sales and the prices of pelts have decreased drastically, the same goes with carving sales.

Many people have to travel and remain out on the land for many days to fish commercially. They enjoy this kind of employment, even if they are not educated. They enjoy fishing, trapping and carving. They know how to do these skills well. They are

already knowledgeable in doing this type of work. This is what they want to do. So my question to the Minister is this, in what ways within the 1998-1999 fiscal year, can we as a government, provide some sort of assistance? We should give recognition to these independent people. While not very educated, they are able to provide for themselves by means of hunting, trapping and fishing. They are able to provide for themselves independently. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (Translation ends)

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Ningark. Mr. Todd do you wish to respond?

HON. JOHN TODD:

Well, Mr. Chairman I think it would be perhaps more appropriate when Mr. Kakfwi's budget comes up that Mr. Ningark ask these detailed questions and I am fairly confident that Mr. Kakfwi can clearly demonstrate what kind of resources are available.

I think to make a general comment if you look at the overall budget, Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development get somewhere around 8.5 percent. To make some comparison, Transportation gets 7.4, Housing Corporation gets 8.4, Justice gets 6.4, MACA gets 9.1. So on a ratio basis, it gets its fair share of the budget and I am confident that Mr. Kakfwi should be able to answer that once we get to the department. I just do not have the detail. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Todd. Mr. Ningark.

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I see my time is running out. Mr. Chairman, I recognize what is in the budget statement. It has to be done. It is good. I agree with what the Minister and his staff have put into it, the effort they put into the program, the new policies that they announced on the budget session. I recognize the fact that we will hopefully have a balanced budget. In fact, we anticipate according to the Minister, there will be a small surplus.

I recognize that we are trying to help out the mining industry. This is where we hire people. Natilikmiot people have been very appreciative, the Kitikmeot Inuit Association and other

organizations, that we are able to have people from Natilikmiot working for the mining industry.

We have talked about social program spending. We have talked about a National Child Benefit Program. There are many good initiatives here, but I have not seen in any detail what we are willing to do for the trapping industry, the carving industry, the commercial fisherman within the jurisdiction having those people in their own right, in their own way, earning their own money. In essence, we do not have to spend as much in the area of social programs for them. We do not have to spend too much money in education because they are already educated in those areas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. There was a Member who wished to speak, but we will not mention the name of the Member. I will recognize Mr. Steen at this time.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, my questions to the Minister on the Budget Address are not so much directed towards his overall speech as I am concerned about page 20 of the document. It identifies the pie and what portions of the pie, what revenue comes from each department. I do not see a breakdown where it says grant from Canada 71.4 percent for the overall revenue of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Chairman, I am aware that a lot of our funding comes through transfer agreements, like the health transfer agreement, I presume, forestry is one of the agreements. So therefore, I was wondering, we hear a lot of comments made as to forced growth and whether or not the funding that we get from the government is keeping up to the forced growth that we are experiencing. For instance, can the Minister tell me whether or not we receive enough education money to fund education, do we receive enough health money under the health transfer to pay for all the health costs or are we funding health and education for instance, from the money we receive from forestry? I have also been told that monies we received really for capital, we have had to turn around and use for social programs. I think it is an advantage to everyone, including the general public, you know, what does the 71.4 percent consist of? Is there some simple, easy way to describe what that is?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Steen, Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

I will certainly try, Mr. Chairman. I think maybe I can try by asking another question in a sense. I think what my honourable colleague is saying, if hypothetically, we had \$200 million transferred from medical services x years ago, and was put into our pot, does that stay as health expenditures. I think that is where he is headed with the discussion. Over a series of years, the governments have negotiated formula finance arrangements with the federal government, and some of it has been transfer payments. For example, the last one was the Arctic A airports that the Department of Transportation transferred over. You know, that goes into a pot. Governments determine the pie. In another question by yourself, Mr. Chairman, I tried to indicate by percentage, where the money goes. This government has to make adjustments based on the conditions of the day, whether it is shifting money to the social envelope, taking money out of another envelope to move to the other envelope. So over the years, there has been a variety of specific transfers health, forestry, highways, airports, et cetera. The target is set money that comes in, and over the years the government, the previous and this Finance Minister along with his colleagues, makes the appropriate adjustments as to what

our collective needs are. At the end of the day, if you want in simple language, the formula financing to some extent is determined on a per capita basis, et cetera. The way it is right now. So, I do not know if that answers my colleague's question or not. I hope it does.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As an example, the Minister gave for instance the Arctic airport transfer. What do transfer agreements include as negotiated? I presume that we were addressing x number of employees to do certain jobs. I presume, that when we got the transfer from the federal government, we received x number of dollars for employees and I presume it was based to some degree on what it cost the federal government to provide the same service

previously. So my question is, if we were, is there some way we can get copies of these transfer agreements so that I know what was actually transferred, what dollars were transferred for what purpose? Another example would be, Mr. Chairman, how do you calculate the amount of money we receive for highways? How was that negotiated? Are we using highway dollars for highway purposes? That would be what I am trying to arrive at here.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

I think I understand where my honourable colleague is coming from. I mean I only go back two governments. There was a number of negotiations that took place prior to me taking over the mandate certainly of this portfolio. I would consult with my two deputies tomorrow, Mr. Voytilla and Ms. Melhorn, to see if I could give my honourable colleague as much clarity as I can on some of the transfer payments that took place and how we, in fact, at the end of the day, used those monies. You will have to give me some time to look at that. I know where he is heading, I understand what he is saying and I will see what I can do. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Well, Mr. Chairman, that would be very good, but I do not know how the public is going to get to read what he gives me unless I read it here. What I would like to see, for instance, is this information available to be tabled for the public, not just for me individually. I would like to see that information provided to the committee, so to speak. I would also be interested to know, like the Minister said, he was not the Finance Minister at the time, when the previous formula funding agreements were signed. He brings out an important point because I notice that the formula runs out pretty soon. The agreement runs out pretty soon. Therefore, if I knew what was in the previous one and where we might identify shortfalls, then I could tell whether or not we are, in fact, going to be able to negotiate a good one in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. I do not think we can relate to, refer to, or blame, the previous Finance Minister when he is not here to defend himself. Mr. Todd.

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HON. JOHN TODD:

I have never blamed any previous management. All I have done is compliment them. Mr. Chairman, I think I should be clear to my honourable colleague. I think I know where he is going with this line of discussion. I need to be sure of what I can provide and what I cannot. Once I have done that and have some clarity on that, I will be able to report back to the House later on this week, and if it is required for public disclosure and we can do that, I would be only too happy to do that. I want to qualify today by saying I need to talk to my staff as to just how much work this is. This government has been around for a long time. Formulas have changed in terms of the way we negotiate them. Arrangements have been done, et cetera. I will see what I can do and report back to my honourable colleague through the House later on next week. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. I have Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to use my last 36 minutes, seconds

--Laughter

to congratulate the Finance Minister, again for his successful balanced budget and I thank him for his effort to bring me that information. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Mr. Todd, would you like to respond? We have about four seconds.

HON. JOHN TODD:

My only response would be, I would hope we have concluded the general discussion on the budget, and I do not know how the rest of the Members feel, but at some point we need to move along. Do we not? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. I have, on the list here, before I took the chair, Mr. Henry has his name on the list and Mr. Ootes. Mr. Henry.

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I spoke earlier, and a number of Members spoke earlier today on the P3 initiative. I still support the initiative. Something I would like to point out, which has been mentioned and used as an example a number of times, a couple of hospitals would be ideal projects. Much as I think they probably would be ideal projects, I think there is one significant obstacle that has to be overcome before we get anywhere down the road to constructing facilities that we may not be able to employ personnel to operate. As much as the initiative is good, there are many questions that have to be answered, and that would be a large one, to me. We have all heard about the difficulties all the regions, including the capital city, have in attracting and keeping medical staff. I would not want to see facilities built where we could not get the personnel required to operate them efficiently. The overall issue, I would like to talk about is the question of budget secrecy. I note in the weekly bulletin provided by the Northwest Territories Construction Association, in the January edition, they have a project in for the PW Kaeser School renovations in Fort Smith. I do not mean to pick on that particular project. I want to use it to emphasize a point. We, as Ordinary Members and I guess, all Members of the Legislature have a convention of secrecy. This particular situation does not really hold an awful lot of water. From the perspective of it is already out for tender and a number of organizations and construction companies have been asked to go to a great deal of expense to put in prices, which involves an awful lot of work. Why are items such as this being advertised as projects that are going ahead, number one, before they are approved in this House? If I could have some response from Mr. Todd on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

I do not have the details before me that my colleague is talking about. If my memory serves me correctly - my favourite start - I believe that we do provide to all the industries across the territories subject to legislative approval, some preliminary information on projects that are coming forward, but it is always

qualified with subject to legislative approval, I believe. I can check with the Minister of Public Works to clarify that. It is not budget secrecy.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. I think Mr. Todd has indicated that the request for information we were talking about was specific information that requires detail. Mr. Henry.

MR. HENRY:

Mr. Chairman, thank you. I guess the point has been missed here. The point is, Mr. Speaker, if even the Member for Thebacha, if he follows the convention that has been laid down here and is asked questions on that by his constituents, he cannot comment on it. He cannot say, it is in the budget, or I do not know anything about it. The point I am trying to make is, there is no ability for Ordinary Members, especially, to make any comment on stuff that is in the public domain. I understand what the Minister says about there is always a proviso that it is not approved in the budget, but I would suggest for any contractor to put a price together to put this cost together is significant, and I would suggest that contractors would be anticipating that the project would definitely go ahead, but still it has not been approved in this House. I realize with our short construction season the difficulty that contractors and the government run into, but there has to be some way of putting this information out into the public, getting the public more involved in the process and stop restricting Members from receiving input from their constituents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

It is very difficult to answer the question in a concise way when I do not have the information before me, Mr. Chairman. I will consult with the Minister of Public Works and have him respond in the House later this week. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Henry.

MR. HENRY:

Point made. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. I have Mr. Ootes and Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Ootes has made a motion to report progress. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is defeated. We will continue. Thank you. I have Mr. O'Brien.

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MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question. Following up on Mr. Henry's comments, my question would be at this point in time, are there any projects that are being worked on or designed as they relate to this proposal or to this initiative? Yes. Are they presently being worked on by DPW or whomever would be involved in this process? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. The honourable Minister, Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

The only projects that I know that there has been considerable discussions on from a non-government perspective, if you want, and we have been asked to attend meetings, has been with the public development corporations and the health boards with respect to the medical facilities. That has been going on now for close to a year, I believe. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you, the honourable Member for Arviat, Mr. O'Brien.

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to make sure that I have this straight. You are saying that there have been medical facilities that have not been approved yet, but there is design work being done as we speak? Is that correct?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOHN TODD:

Not that I am aware of, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. I have Mr. Steen on the list. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Mr. Chairman, thank you. Just to kind of assist the Minister with the type of information I was trying to arrive at, Mr. Chairman. I know for instance that we receive only very little money from the federal government to cover, for instance, the constitutional talks. I know it is not near enough for what the budget is, for instance, Mr. Antoine's Department of Aboriginal Affairs. So, therefore, I would like to know and I am sure the public would like to know is, what transfer agreement or what department is getting short changed in order for us to pay for these constitutional talks? That is what I was trying to arrive at.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. Mr. Todd.

HON. JOHN TODD:

I will not get into a long discussion today. I will get a more detailed response to Mr. Steen, but as Finance Minister I have had to reprofile dollars, for example, some time ago through our supplementary appropriations to Mr. Ng in the Department of Health. We have had to reprofile dollars to Mr. Dent in the Department of Education. They have to come out of general revenues and those general revenues are generated through a series of agreements that we have with the federal government over a number of years. So, I understand what Mr. Steen is coming to and I will endeavour to, as to the best of my ability, answer the issue that he raises. As I said earlier we will report back, hopefully, early next week on how we are going to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ningark):

Thank you. With a couple of seconds to spare I will recognize the clock and report progress. Thanks again, Mr. Todd.

MR. SPEAKER:

The House will come back to order. We are on Item 21, report of committee of the whole. Mr. Ningark.

ITEM 21: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 15-13(5) and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of committee of the whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Seconded by Mr. Arlooktoo. 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. Item 23, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 23: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Speaker, there will be an all Members briefing at 10:00 tomorrow and a meeting of the Ordinary Members' Caucus at 11:00 tomorrow.

Orders of the day for Tuesday, January 27, 1998:

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. Replies to Budget Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act, No. 2
 - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act
 - Bill 9, Loan Authorization Act, 1998-99

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19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 1998-99
 - Committee Report 2-13(5), Standing Committee on Government Operations, Report on the 1998-99 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 3-13(5), Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Report on the 1998-99 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 4-13(5), Standing Committee on Resource Management and Development, Report on the 1998-99 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 5-13(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs, Report on the 1998-99 Main Estimates
 - Tabled Document 15-13(5), 1998-99 Budget Address

21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, January 27th at 1:30 p.m.

--ADJOURNMENT