



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

5th Session

Day 45

13th Assembly

HANSARD

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 1998

Pages 1543 - 1572

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 Kakfwi, 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. Rabesca. Good afternoon. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Point of Order

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a point of order concerning the comments made by the Premier in his Minister's statement on June 1, 1998 entitled, Statement of Conflict of Interest Commissioner's Decision, as this is my first opportunity after reviewing the unedited Hansard of June 1st. Mr. Speaker, my point of order is contained on page 2470 of the unedited Hansard. The words that concern me and give me cause to raise this point of order, Mr. Speaker, are, and I quote:

I, Mr. Speaker, look forward to the public inquiry proceeding as quickly as possible and I invite the Member from Hay River to make herself available as a witness at the inquiry and to submit herself to cross examination, under oath, from my solicitors. I am confident that the truth will be revealed to all those who wait.

The rules that I considered on which the Premier should be called to order are rules 23(h) and (j) which state that a Member will be called to order if the Member:

23(h) makes allegations against another Member, a House officer or a witness;

23(j) charges another Member with uttering a deliberate falsehood;

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has indicated that he now looks forward to the public inquiry to clear his name. His comments infer allegations that in bringing the conflict of interest complaint forward that I am lying and that under cross-examination, under oath, from his solicitors the truth will be revealed. Mr. Speaker, without getting into the substance of the complaint, I feel that I was only the means by which the complaint was brought forward and not necessarily a witness who would be required to justify the substance of the complaint. Mr. Speaker, the complaint was laid and is now in the hands of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner where the process of inquiry will take its course. I hope I will be called and even granted standing as a witness with respect to any information that I can provide.

Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to use the rules and House time on this issue, but I would submit that my point of order would have support under Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, 6th edition, and I quote from citation 487(1) and (2) under unparliamentary language:

"487(1) Threatening language is unparliamentary

487(2) Words may not be used hypothetically or conditionally, if they are plainly intended to convey a direct imputation..."

Mr. Speaker, one could conceivably interpret the honourable Member's invitation to submit to cross-examination by his solicitors under oath as an implied threat whereby he implied that under oath I would be forced to reveal information contrary to statements previous made, which implies that I previously lied and only under oath would the truth be revealed.

Mr. Speaker, I would request that you rule on this matter as to any infraction of parliamentary rules and practices that the Premier has infringed upon in his statement of June 1st. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. I respect the Member's point of order and I agree that the comments made by the Premier yesterday justifiably provoked her point of order. I must state that the comments being made in this Chamber by the

Premier, the Member for Hay River, and comments that may be made by other Members on this matter cause me considerable concern. In light of the calling of a public inquiry into the conflict of interest complaint, I will not allow any more questions or comments made in statements that directly or indirectly deals with the conflict of interest matter. In the interest of fairness, I will not allow this Chamber to be used as a forum that might influence the Conflict of Interest inquiry.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 120-13(5): Strategy for Teacher Education in the Northwest Territories

Page 1544

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that a new teacher education strategy has been developed and will be in place when the current Teacher Education Program ends in 1999. Mr. Speaker, I provided each Member of this Assembly a copy of the strategy earlier today.

The territorial government first committed to significantly increasing the number of northern aboriginal teachers in 1993. This strategy focused on qualifying teachers for elementary schools. One of its major initiatives was to make Teacher Education Programs available in communities, not just at the major college campuses. The strategy has been very successful in increasing the number of aboriginal teachers in the school system. In 1992, there were 146 aboriginal teachers in the school system. By the year 1999, when the current community-based Teacher Education Programs are completed, over 355 aboriginal teachers will be working in NWT schools.

However, more work is needed to make sure the number of northern teachers continues to grow. Grade extensions and stay-in-school initiatives have resulted in more students staying in school longer and, as a result, more teachers are needed. The new Education Act and Regulations also require teachers

to continue working toward their Bachelor of Education degrees.

A Strategy for Teacher Education in the Northwest Territories for 1999 to 2005 sets new goals to increase the number of aboriginal teachers in Nunavut and the western Arctic. Right now, 36 percent of the teachers in Nunavut are aboriginal, while 18 percent in the west are aboriginal. The new strategy will help us move toward having 85 percent aboriginal teachers in Nunavut and 47 percent in the western Northwest Territories. This will result in a teaching force that is truly representative of the population in the two new territories.

The new strategy will build on the successes of the previous one. For instance, Teacher Education Programs will continue to be delivered in communities and not just at college campuses. The strategy also calls for a full-time Bachelor of Education Program to be established in the western Northwest Territories. It further proposes that Bachelor of Education courses be delivered part-time, so teachers can continue their studies while they work.

Mr. Speaker, the strategy also calls for the delivery of the Aboriginal Language Certificate Program to make sure our schools reflect local culture and language. Well-qualified teachers are essential to the success of our schools. I am confident, Mr. Speaker, the new Strategy for Teacher Education will help develop a teaching force that represents the populations of Nunavut and the western NWT, help develop schools that reflect local language and culture and encourage teachers to continue their education. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ministers' statements. Mr. Antoine.

Minister's Statement 121-13(5): Encouraging Future Engineers

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the years, students in engineering have found considerable support from the Department of Public Works and Services. I would like to tell you about two of the ways my department encourages these students.

At the junior high level, Public Works and Services and Transportation presents awards to the best math

and science students in each school. These awards show students that math and science are important.

Among high school students, we want to increase awareness of the career possibilities in engineering. This is the eleventh year for the program called Introduction to Engineering, Architecture and Computer Careers. Over the years, 186 students have taken part in the program. This year 57 students applied for the program. Twenty were chosen - eight students from Nunavut and 12 from the west. Seven of the 20 students are young women. Twelve of the students are aboriginal. We especially want to encourage these two groups to pursue engineering careers.

The summer program includes an orientation week in Yellowknife. For Nunavut students, there is an orientation week in Iqaluit. This is followed by a project in the student's home community with assistance and supervision from a government employee or sometimes from an engineer from a private company. At the end of the six-week program, the student makes a written report and an oral presentation on the project. The summer program helps these students make education and career choices. Almost 70 percent of the students in the summer program go on to post-secondary education.

Public Works and Services is not the only government agency to encourage engineering careers for northerners. The Housing Corporation, Municipal and Community Affairs and my Department of Transportation are also partners in these programs. I feel this is a good example of how we can work together to encourage northern students and eventually to fill jobs with NWT residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Ministers' statements. Minister Thompson.

Minister's Statement 122-13(5): Search and Rescue Public Awareness Campaign

HON. MANITOK THOMPSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, up to 50 people are reported missing every year in the Northwest Territories. The cost for a search conducted by the territorial or federal government can range from \$100 to over \$100,000.

This government spends over \$100,000 on search and rescue operations every year. This amount does not include what the communities or the Canadian Forces and Coast Guard spend on searches.

Mr. Speaker, there is room for much improvement in this area. I am pleased to report that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has introduced a public awareness

Page 1545

campaign aimed at reducing the number of search and rescue incidents. The Search and Rescue Public Awareness Campaign is designed to educate and encourage northerners to always be prepared when travelling on the land or water. The campaign is based on the national theme of sharing the responsibility. The key message is that people must share the responsibility for caring for themselves by avoiding risk. They must take reasonable measures to minimize their personal risk and maximize their ability to survive, if they are lost or stranded.

Mr. Speaker, search and rescue incidents are often due to mechanical failure, weather changes, failure to tell anyone of travel plans or a lack of survival equipment. This campaign will educate and encourage Northerners to always be prepared. This includes:

- making a trip plan and giving it to family, friends or the RCMP;
- packing emergency equipment and supplies;
- taking a tool kit;
- checking the weather;
- ensuring your equipment is in proper working order, and
- being prepared for the worst.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the RCMP for their cooperation and active participation in search and rescue prevention and training. Through initiatives such as this, I am confident that we can make a difference and reduce the number of search and rescue incidents in the north. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ministers' statements. Mr. Antoine.

Minister's Statement 123-13(5): CRTC Regional Hearing

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week Members of this Assembly referred to the upcoming CRTC hearings on high cost serving areas, which will take place in Iqaluit on June 25th. I hope I can clear up any confusion about this hearing. For a long time, NorthwesTel has a monopoly on all phone services in the north. The CRTC allowed this position because of the extremely high cost of providing quality service to remote locations with few residents. Times change. The CRTC recently approved the introduction of competition for long distance services in the north. There is still some concern, however, about full and affordable access to telephone services in all communities.

Mr. Speaker, in the NWT, it costs about twice as much to provide basic services as it does in other parts of Canada. Without long-distance revenues, those higher costs would have to be reflected in higher local access rates. As we move closer to full competition for all telecommunications services, including local service, there is a danger that the quality of service to remote communities will decline because of the high cost of maintaining that service. Yet, it is the remoteness of our communities that makes good telecommunications critically important. The CRTC has recognized the problem and is currently holding regional hearings to consider whether a fund should be established. This fund would not subsidize NorthwesTel and other phone companies. The fund would, in fact, assist those who live in remote areas so that high-cost telecommunications services will be affordable.

As I mentioned, the CRTC will hold a regional hearing in Iqaluit on June 25th. There will be a video hook-up to the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife and telephone hook-ups to Arctic Islands Lodge in Cambridge Bay, the Ptarmigan Inn in Hay River, the Mackenzie Hotel in Inuvik and the Siniktarvik Hotel in Rankin Inlet.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the House that the Deputy Premier, the Honourable Goo Arlooktoo, will represent the government at the Iqaluit hearing. I will be providing each Member of the Legislative Assembly with a copy of the government's preliminary submission to the CRTC, and I encourage them to

share it with constituents who are interested in these issues. It is extremely important that northerners speak up at these hearings to indicate:

- the importance of telecommunications to life and business in the north,
- the high cost of phone services on top of an already high cost of living, and
- the north lacks services that are available in other parts of Canada.

I hope that there will be active participation in this hearing and I encourage all of you to take part. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Krutko.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement 482-13(5): Resolution of the UNW Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement today is regarding a meeting that was held over the lunch break with the Union of Northern Workers dealing with the negotiations which seem to be at a point of settling with the government's final settlement offer. The union was disputing the process that was used and exactly what legalities are associated with the settlement. Mr. Speaker, the people of the north would like to see an end to this long outstanding issue settled once and for all, and for myself, I feel it is an obligation to the employees of this government that they do settle this dispute as soon as possible. I would like to also state that it is pretty hard to draw the line between what we hear

Page 1546

in this House and what we hear from the union. One group states they were bound by a legal decision with regard to the Human Rights Commission with regard to pay equity. On the other hand, you hear from the union who states that if they proceed with allowing their members to vote, they are stuck in legal ramifications where they may be sued by their members because of the situation they find

themselves with the question about pay equity as to whether it is fair and reasonable.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to, hopefully, find a solution to this problem before the end of this sitting so we can give comfort to the Members of this government, our employees and the people in the community who serve the people of the Northwest Territories. For myself, having been involved in the negotiation process in the past, I feel it is in the political best interest to allow the membership to have a vote on this matter and to resolve it based on their own ethical belief as to whether this is a good deal or not. I do believe that there has to be a mechanism in place to allow for the government and the union to sit down and deal with the whole question about process. I do not believe there is a problem in relation to the agreement. I believe it is a question of what the process led up to and exactly how the outcome of that is. At the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister a question on this matter. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Henry.

Member's Statement 483-13(5): Fraser Institute Survey on Mineral Potential and Government Policy

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to share some information in this House on the results of a survey which was conducted by the Fraser Institute. The survey was given to Canadian mining companies operating in Canada to evaluate each province and territory in the areas of the industry, including mineral potential and government policy, then combine these results and provides an overall rating for attractiveness for investment.

Mr. Speaker, results of this survey are very important if we are to nurture and promote the mining industry in the north. Not surprising, the mining companies surveyed indicated the NWT has the highest mineral potential in Canada. Of course, Mr. Speaker, we already knew that. So how do we rate with our policies and attractiveness to investors? Mining companies rated us second to lowest in terms of our government policies on attracting new exploration investment. Unfavourable policies are increasingly threatening new exploration, even here in the north, where we have the most attractive mining potential in Canada. Alberta, on the other hand, has the highest

government policy rating with mining companies. These companies believe policies of the Alberta government encourage new exploration and are also considered neutral. It also indicated that anti-business policy climates deter investment and reduce economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, how attractive is the NWT for investment by the Canadian mining companies? When we take into account, our government policies and our mineral potential, the NWT is sitting second from the bottom of the heap. What can be learned from this, Mr. Speaker? I suggest that we look seriously at our current government policies and regulations with the intent of simplifying the process mining companies must go through in the north. We must also eliminate the uncertainty that companies have about investing in exploration and any future investment prospects by providing clear and solid means in which we can allow these private companies to grow and prosper in the north. We must act now if we are to hold our position with mining companies, who see the potential of the north as the best in the country. It is no good, Mr. Speaker, if we have the resources which we know provide a positive outcome for our economy if we cannot or will not provide the means to access them. Mr. Speaker, my comments sound like I am critical of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Not so. The Government of the Northwest Territories does not have responsibility... Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife South is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Do we have any nays? Mr. Henry, you have unanimous consent.

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you, colleagues. The Government of the Northwest Territories does not have the responsibility for mining in the Northwest Territories. My comments are meant for the ears of the federal politicians, particularly, Minister Stewart, the Minister responsible for Indian and Inuit Affairs. You need to work more with the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement 484-13(5): Resolution of the UNW Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, as well, attended the meeting at lunch time, along with some other MLAs to listen for the first time, for myself, the UNWs position. I indicated to them at that meeting that I, like the employees and probably most people in the north, am sort of stuck in the middle as the government and the UNW are squared off, eyeball to eyeball on this particular situation. Neither side is wanting to blink at this particular time because they do not want to move off their positions. I have read the information from both sides. When I read stuff from the government, it makes sense to me and is very clear. When I listen to the objections and concerns raised by the UNW, look at some of their literature, it seems to me as if they have concerns. I do not know, at the end of the day, what is accurate. I have no reason to disbelieve the government. I have no reason to disbelieve the UNW. Is it a question of what is right and what is wrong or is it just a question of perception? Is the system gender neutral? Is it discriminatory? Is it illegal? Can they take it to a vote or can they not take it to a vote? I do not know. It seems to me the only people who can resolve this and hammer out an agreement that is understandable are the GNWT and the UNW. All northerners and employees, people like ourselves, stand, wait, watch and wonder. How will this situation be resolved? How long can it be at an impasse? How long can the gridlock last? It has to be solved. There is money on the table. Employees' benefits are at stake. I think labour

Page 1547

peace cannot be achieved until this deal is signed off. I would encourage both parties to come to the table and, at the end of the day, we have to give the membership the opportunity to cast their vote on this particular issue. Until then, we wait to see, will anybody blink. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Roland.

Member's Statement 485-13(5): Support for the NWT Training Centre in Inuvik

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NWT Training Centre is an important educational institution in Inuvik. The adults in my community who have a low level of education need a place where they can learn. The students that attend the training centre learn basic literacy, life skills and basic job readiness. The majority of students who attend the training centre are single mothers who left the school system before graduating. The students' education levels vary. Most are at the elementary school level? The NWT Training Centre is the only educational institution in Inuvik that serves adults who do not have their grade eight. This means that if a single mother aged 30 only has a grade five education, this is the only institution she can attend. If the training centre runs into funding problems, as it has in the past, then she does not have anywhere to go. The training centre is not being fully utilized this year and only 12 students are attending. They can accommodate up to 22. Each year the training centre is flooded with applications. It is disappointing that there are adults in Inuvik who cannot access the Visions and Dreams Program at the training centre because of lack of funding. If the training centre was operating at full capacity there would be another ten individuals in Inuvik who could have been working toward a better education.

After completing the Visions and Dreams Program, most of the training centre students go on to the Aurora College Adult Basic Education Program, the Aurora College ABE Programs accept applications from students who are at grade eight level. Mr. Speaker, the training centre opened in 1983 and has never had core funding. The funding that they receive comes from a myriad of sources that vary from year to year in amount and application procedures. I will follow up my Member's statement with a letter to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to request the establishment of core funding for the NWT Training Centre in Inuvik. Inuvik needs the NWT Training Centre, Mr. Speaker, and the NWT Training Centre needs core funding. Quyanini.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Rabesca.

Member's Statement 486-13(5): Dogrib Community Service Board

MR. RABESCA:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to address a concern of the recently formed community services board. As you may recall, the community services board was established as a result of our community empowerment initiative. The board will enable the Dogrib Treaty 11 Communities to work together to govern education, health and social services. The board will give the Dogrib people an opportunity to identify their own priorities and integrate the delivery of services in communities in a manner which reflects Dogrib culture and traditions. Mr. Speaker, this board was formed on May 22, 1997, with the territorial government and the Dogrib Treaty 11 Chiefs signing the agreement, which was pursuant to the Territorial Hospital Insurance Act. We all felt that this would be the start of a new and different approach to serving our people. We thought it would give us the legal ability to integrate programs and to set priorities among programs. However, this is not the case. We need to draft legislation specifically for the CSB. Mr. Speaker, I currently have draft legislation that I am preparing to bring to this House as a Private Members Bill. However, after some thought and advisement I have decided to wait and see what the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment and Health and Social Services are doing to ensure this board will be able to do what it was originally intended to provide. Mr. Speaker, I will, later on today, be asking the departments about this in order to facilitate this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Erasmus.

Member's Statement 487-13(5): Proposed Road to Resources

MR. ERASMUS:

Mr. Speaker, while we wait to see who blinks, I would like to make a statement on the proposed road to resources and diamond mines, which currently uses the Ingraham Trail. Mr. Speaker, this road was originally used to supply Echo Bay Mines, but recently with the addition of diamond mine exploration, there has been a substantial increase in the amount of usage, with trucks constantly going back and forth on the Ingraham Trail. I have many constituents who live on the Ingraham Trail. I also have constituents who use the Ingraham Trail to get to their traditional hunting areas. These constituents are concerned with first of all, the road being narrow. There are a lot of curves and it is dangerous when you meet a large

truck. This has already caused accidents and there have been some fuel spills, possibly damage to the environment. There is also concern that the road is being damaged. Last year, Mr. Speaker, I asked the Premier about the road to resources, if we would be pursuing that. He indicated that he was looking at it. I also asked about the possibility of having the mines to actually pay for using the roads. Perhaps, a toll per truck. I know that we are currently doing an environmental study into the issue as well, as other transportation routes. However, that is looking toward the future. My constituents need to know what is happening now if there is legitimacy to their concerns. At the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister questions in this area. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Ningark.

Member's Statement 488-13(5): Addressing Concerns of Income Support Applicants

Page 1548

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from time to time I have received complaints from clients or others who have applied for income support and were turned down. Mr. Speaker, I am not encouraging anyone to depend on the Income Support Program for assistance unless other options are exhausted. I am merely and respectfully endeavouring to find out what the criteria are with respect to the Income Support Program. I am sure some of my honourable colleagues have received such complaints from Members of the communities as I have reported. Mr. Speaker, I am never comfortable in telling bureaucracy what to do. I have never done that and I am not about to begin to do so. In order for the complainants to have the answer, instead of going through MLAs, I am suggesting that the Department of Health and Social Services endeavour to create a handbook outlining what the criteria are for those people who are legible or ineligible to receive income support assistance. Mr. Speaker, such a handbook should be translated into other languages to make it easier for people to understand. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Enuaraq.

Member's Statement 489-13(5): Severe Shortages of Nurses in Clyde River

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring to the attention of the House and in particular, the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Baffin Regional Health Board the very severe shortage of nurses in Clyde River. There are not enough nurses in my home community, Mr. Speaker. We have a year round population of 780 and there are only two nurses in town. During certain times of the year the population may increase substantially. Throughout various times of the year, we have visitors, tourists and transient construction workers. Just based on the year round population alone, we have only one nurse for every 400 people. This ratio is unacceptable and unsafe, Mr. Speaker. The shortage of nursing staff compromises the health and safety of the residents of Clyde River. It also puts undue stress on the nursing staff. Mr. Speaker, imagine trying to take care of a community of 800 with only one other qualified person to help you. Importantly, I cannot imagine what may happen if one or both of the nurses are sick or on leave. We need more nurses in Clyde River, Mr. Speaker. This is clear. It should not be a matter of funding. The only issue here is the health of my community. The nursing staff is strained and they need help now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Barnabas.

Member's Statement 490-13(5): Rescue of Snowmobilers in Resolute Bay

MR. BARNABAS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize heroic events that happened in the community of Resolute. I will read a brief synopsis of events regarding the rescue of Emily Ulayuruluk and Connie Pudluk who are the grandchildren of my predecessor Ludy Pudluk and Lallie Pudluk. On September 19, 1997, between 7:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., two girls, Connie Pudluk and Emily Ulayuruluk, were snowmobiling on the ice near Resolute Bay. The ice was thin and the snowmobile went through the ice. This left the two girls in the water between 10 and 30 minutes. The water was extremely cold and the air temperature was below zero degrees.

Matthew Nungaq, resident of Resolute Bay, was driving by the area and his daughter noted the two girls in the water. They drove to get help and located Nathaniel Kalluk. Nathaniel took his boat to the scene and then went out across the ice in the boat to get the girls. He pulled both girls into the boat then came back to shore. Nathaniel was alone in the boat when he went to get the girls. The boat had to be pushed across the ice and then into the water to break through the ice. The girls were taken to the nursing station after they came off the boat. They had to be supported because of the numbness. They were all right, to date. I would recommend that the people who rescued these two girls be awarded with an Award of Bravery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Arlooktoo.

Member's Statement 491-13(5): Concerns with Competition in Long Distance Telephone Services

HON. GOO ARLOOKTOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today, I would like to make some comments on the issue of long distance competition as it relates to services in smaller communities. Across Canada, there has been a reduction in long distance costs where competition has been allowed to take place. No one can argue against cost reductions. We would all like to see a reduction in our phone bills. However, we have a unique situation in the north. Long distance service is profitable in some areas but is not in others, depending on population and remoteness.

NorthwesTel has made the point that in a competitive environment, if revenues are significantly reduced in larger centres, services to small communities will be jeopardized. This causes me great concern. To give you a real example of what the implications may be if a multinational corporation like Sprint or others were to introduce very low cost long distance service to one of our larger communities such as Hay River, phone services could either be cut off and non-profit making communities or prices could go through the roof and become unreachable for residents in these small communities. This is because revenue from larger communities subsidize the cost of providing service in smaller communities.

Mr. Speaker, the other day it caused me concern to hear the Member for Hay River call for immediate and open competition in this area, without regard to the implications this may have for smaller communities. We need to recognize; however, that one of the reasons these larger centres are able to make long distance services profitable is because they are regional or territorial centres that service the small communities. To be more specific in this example, in Hay River, the Power

Page 1549

Corporation, NTCL, territorial correctional facilities and the liquor board are based in Hay River and it serves smaller communities. Mr. Speaker, I ask what is the message then if unmanaged competition may well mean the loss of phone services for smaller communities like Pelly Bay, Hall Beach, Grise Fiord, Clyde river, Kimmirut, Chesterfield Inlet, Paulatuk and other communities in both the east and west? I believe that we must be careful in sending the message that we do not want savings at any cost. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Baffin South is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Do we have any nays? Mr. Arlooktoo, you have unanimous consent.

HON. GOO ARLOOKTOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you, colleagues. Due to our geographical situation, cross-subsidies are a part of life in the north, we have it in fuel subsidies, power subsidies, housing subsidies and many other programs. It is part of our reality in living in the north. If we live in a large community, we are sometimes frustrated that we do not benefit from the cost-savings our population should provide, but then we have to remind ourselves that we also benefit from serving smaller communities because government and industry institutions are based in larger communities. Finally, Mr. Speaker, the proposal to have a national fund for high-cost regions will benefit greatly all of the communities of the north because we, more than any other jurisdiction in Canada, understand how our geography and population can benefit both large and small communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Ootes.

Member's Statement 492-13(5): Gender Neutrality of Hay Job Evaluation System

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, Members spoke about the meeting of the Union of Workers representatives. I, also, attended that meeting. We had our presentation from Jackie Simpson, the President; Ben MacDonald, as well as, Margaret Bertulli. A number of areas were discussed, but one I would like to make a little more detailed reference to and that is the question of, is the proposed job evaluation plan, in fact, gender neutral? I would like to put forward the information that was provided for us today at this meeting. The government says, yes, it is gender neutral. The union disagrees with that. The question, of course, becomes, how do we get out of that quandary? The union has suggested a three-member panel. The government says, that is a delay tactic by the union. The government also says that we need a made-in-the-north solution. The union replies that the parties have, through the three-member panel, 20 hours to consider this and one week in which to come to some resolution on it. With regard to the made- in-the-north the government argument uses, that is contradictory unto itself because the government has gone south for its legal counsel to represent them on the pay equity issue.

The implementation of the proposed job evaluation plan, the union is convinced because the plan is not gender neutral that the union could be held jointly liable for the deficiencies especially if it has stated that it knows that it is not bias-free. They do not have the same liability, Mr. Speaker, with the current plan. They feel the pay equity issue should not be on the bargaining table. It should be taken off. There were also discussion and clarification on the briefing session that had been scheduled for March 30th to April 3rd which was cancelled.

The issues in all of this, Mr. Speaker, are complex and there are two sides to this story. The union presented us with their side of the story today. We have had briefings from papers and from the government's side. We need to get on with resolving this issue. Many of our employees are affected by it and we do not need a summer of undecidedness. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Picco.

Member's Statement 493-13(5): Recognition of 795 Royal Air Cadet Squadron in Iqaluit

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 795 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets in Iqaluit, held their annual inspection recently. The 27 out of 28 cadets that participated are sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion in Iqaluit. Mr. Speaker, the principal aim of the cadets is to teach leadership, citizenship, physical fitness and interests in aeronautics. Two weeks ago we were honoured by having members of the Army Air and Navy Cadets Service Air as Pages in this Assembly. One of those cadets was Sergeant Edward Arreak from Iqaluit. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the 795 Squadron of Iqaluit, its Captain John Graine, and the Royal Canadian Legion, who have continued their sponsorship and long affiliation with this, and other community-minded causes at home in Iqaluit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Enuaraq.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the mayor of Broughton Island, Lootie Toomasie, and beside him is his deputy mayor, Kooveeyok Natsiapik. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to recognize Ms. Pat Thomas of the NWTTA.

--Applause

Page 1550

MR. SPEAKER: Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Barnabas.

MR. BARNABAS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize the mayor of Broughton Island, Lootie Toomasie and deputy mayor, Kooveeyok Natsiapik, and also John Quirke, future Clerk for Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Welcome to the Assembly. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Ningark.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 609-13(5): Income Support Handbook

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Ng. Mr. Speaker, I never try to get involved in the local politics of a small community or the local resolution of problems, providing the solutions to problems. Many times I am asked to do such, and there are times when I am unable to do so or to provide any solution at all. As I indicated in my Member's statement, there are times when I am approached by individuals in communities regarding social assistance or income support assistance criteria. In many cases, I am unable to provide answers. My question to the honourable Minister is, is there a handbook available in the communities to learn what the criteria are with respect to Income Support Programs? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The question is more appropriate to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent. Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 609-13(5): Income Support Handbook

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any handbook available to a community which outlines the Income Support Program. The intention is for the residents of the community to work with the income support worker to go through the form which sets out the areas in which the individual might qualify for income support. The intent of the program is to deal with people on an individual basis because everyone's circumstances are different. People are encouraged to deal directly with the income support worker. The income support worker is also, Mr. Speaker, supposed to advise people who are refused income support about the appeal process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ningark.

Supplementary To Question 609-13(5): Income Support Handbook

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I apologize for addressing my concern to the Minister of Health and Social Services. I should have realized that it was for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. My supplementary question for the honourable Minister is, could he explain to me what the whole process is? Is there a local appeal body in each community that looks after the complaints from clients? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 609-13(5): Income Support Handbook

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, typically, there is a local income support appeal committee. The first step is to file a written appeal which would then be reviewed by the income support worker's supervisor. I should point out that when I answered previously that there were no booklets available, there are, in fact, some booklets which set out in general terms what might be available through income support, but not in

great detail. This is why it is important that every individual work with the income support worker. The other option is the complete Income Support Worker's Handbook is now available on the Internet. People who can access a computer can access the detailed workbook for workers.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 609-13(5): Income Support Handbook

MR. NINGARK:

As I indicated in my Member's statement, in many cases we are approached about the conveyance, about the problem in the community by the individuals. Will the Minister endeavour to ensure that there is, in fact, a booklet translated into the local language outlining what the criteria are so that the client or potential client will know exactly what he is getting into? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 609-13(5): Income Support Handbook

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it would be difficult to publish a booklet which outlines the program in detail for everybody because individual circumstances vary, family circumstances vary, and the program looks at the circumstances of the family. The Member raised the issue that we have to find some way to deal with communications in a better way, and we will certainly look at that. With the changes to the program that take place, it would be difficult to publish a book on a regular basis that would accomplish this effectively. For instance, we just announced a change to the food basket rates. The program is constantly under review and being updated. It is difficult to put out a booklet that would not be outdated very quickly. The answer is that individuals need to work with the income support workers and perhaps we need to find some way to improve communications within the smaller communities between the workers and the clients. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Ningark.

Page 1551

Supplementary To Question 609-13(5): Income Support Handbook

MR. NINGARK:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for the positive response. Will the Minister encourage the staff at the community level to communicate with the clients or potential clients what is expected of them if they want to receive social assistance or if they are turned away, explain exactly what is in the system? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 609-13(5): Income Support Handbook

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is what is expected of the workers and we will work to ensure that is happening across the territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

Question 610-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance, Mr. Todd. It is in regard to a meeting that was held with the Union of Northern Workers. It seems as if there is a real misunderstanding or difference of opinion on exactly what has been negotiated and what the process was that was used to negotiate the final offer. I would like to ask the Minister, are there any attempts to consider looking at a mediator to try to resolve this issue? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Todd.

Return To Question 610-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate my honourable colleague's question, and it was asked by a number of other Members earlier in the Session. Let me say again. We have put what we consider to be a fair and final settlement before the bargaining unit for the UNW. Right now, the matter is in the hands of the UNW and its employees. If they wish to go to an arbitrator or to a mediator, I have already said yesterday, and I will say again today, we are prepared to go to that process. The next step is in the hands of the membership and the UNW. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 610-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the Minister or the department made an attempt to do a letter to the union to inform them that you are open to mediation at this time?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 610-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They are well aware that we are prepared to take that next step. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 610-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the Minister or the department put this government's position in writing and delivered a letter to the union clearly identifying that you are open to mediation? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 610-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

The union is as equally knowledgeable of the process, Mr. Speaker, as I am. As I said, and will say again today, we are prepared to go to mediation if that is what they request, but it has to come from them. We have laid the final settlement on the table which we think is fair. It is now really up to the UNW executive to determine what the next step is. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 610-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason I am asking the question is if the government have made an attempt to approach the union in writing clearly identifying they are open to mediation as one of the avenues to resolve this outstanding issue is that if we are looking at trying to conclude this issue and move it forth, I think it might be the interest of all the people in the north and this government to make the effort to send a letter to the union clearly stating that this government is open to mediation and get on with the process so we can conclude this issue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 610-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

All of the negotiators of the UNW (inaudible)

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Erasmus.

Question 611-13(5): Traffic Concerns on the Ingraham Trail

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for Transportation. Mr. Speaker, in my statement earlier today, I had indicated that constituents had raised concerns about the Ingraham Trail, the fact that it is narrow and windy and that there have been accidents due to the increased traffic from large trucks going to the mines. My question to the Minister is, did the large truck actually cause

Page 1552

damage to the existing road of the Ingraham Trail? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Transportation, Mr. Antoine.

Return To Question 611-13(5): Traffic Concerns on the Ingraham Trail

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the short answer is the normal winter traffic when the road is frozen solid does not directly cause the road to fail. The majority of road failure is associated with environmental factors, springtime and so forth. What we do is, during spring time we put road beds on the Ingraham Trail along with other highway systems to ensure any heavy truck traffic does not damage the roads during the sensitive time of the year when the roads are thawing out. The department finds out, generally, not only on the Ingraham Trail but other highways. We dig, take them up and we examine them during the normal winter traffic when the road is frozen solid, so there is no damage to the road. Usually damage happens just when things start to thaw out. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 611-13(5): Traffic Concerns on the Ingraham Trail

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the course of the last year, there have been a few accidents on that road, fuel spills. Can the Minister indicate whether there has been extensive environmental damage that has occurred due to these spills? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 611-13(5): Traffic Concerns on the Ingraham Trail

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

There have been some specific incidents on the Ingraham Trail, highway and on the winter roads during the winter. However, all of the environmental concerns have been addressed. We do this in coordination with the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 611-13(5): Traffic Concerns on the Ingraham Trail

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Other concerns that have been raised are the narrowness, windiness and the many curves on that road, which causes accidents and causes dangerous driving to occur. It is pretty hard to pass those huge trucks sometimes when you meet them. Does the Minister know if there is going to be some work done soon to alleviate the narrowness and the many curves on that road? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 611-13(5): Traffic Concerns on the Ingraham Trail

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department had received approval from this Legislative Assembly during the 1998-99 main estimates to begin highway improvements on the Ingraham Trail. About \$500,000 was approved for this fiscal year. Surveys will also continue to prepare for work in future years. Mr. Speaker, construction on the specific section of highway to improve the alignment and to deal with the narrowness of the road at kilometre 6.5 will begin in the fall. There is work planned on the Ingraham Trail this summer and fall. Also, normal maintenance will continue and proceed over the summer in trying to

deal with visibility. We are going to be clearing brush to improve visibility. There are some road surface repairs scheduled in the normal course of operations and maintenance. Dust control material will be applied on the gravel surface. These are the different programs and plans that the department has for the Ingraham Trail. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 611-13(5): Traffic Concerns on the Ingraham Trail

MR. ERASMUS:

Mr. Speaker, I know that the residents of Ingraham Trail, as well as my other constituents, have similar types of concerns and obviously are a lot more knowledgeable on what happens there. Would the Minister commit to meeting with some representatives of Ingraham Trail, along with, perhaps, some of his senior officials, so his ministry can indicate what will be happening to alleviate some of the concerns that are being expressed? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Antoine.

Further Return To Question 611-13(5): Traffic Concerns on the Ingraham Trail

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to meet with the honourable Member, his constituents and the residents along the Ingraham Trail. I just want to add that departmental officials have met with the residents of Ingraham Trail regularly over the past years to discuss a variety of highway issues. Senior departmental officials are available as well to meet with the residents to discuss plans and other concerns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Ootes.

Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for Mr. Todd, the Minister for the Financial Management Board. We met today with the Union of Northern Workers and out of that came some detailed information. One of the concerns that the union has is, in their opinion, which the Minister well knows, their argument that the job evaluation plan is not gender neutral. In order to resolve this situation, they had proposed a panel of three members. The Minister has replied

Page 1553

that the government is of the opinion that it needs to be a made-in-the-northern solution. Additionally, it is felt that this is a delay tactic on the part of the union. Dealing with the delay tactic, I wonder if the Minister could tell me if parameters of a timeframe are set, which would it be regarded as a delay tactic?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Finance, do you want to respond?

Return To Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

I do not understand the question. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Your first question, Mr. Ootes.

Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The union has suggested that 20 hours of negotiation take place and that this matter be settled, for example, within a week. If the Minister states that the union is using this argument as a delay tactic, does he see that as a delay tactic? Could he tell us, does he see that as a delay tactic?

MR. SPEAKER:

I do not know if the Minister can respond. As far as the delay tactic goes, it is not within his responsibility. The question is rhetorical. Mr. Todd.

Return To Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

I simply do not understand the question. I wonder if my colleague could perhaps elaborate. Is this something that came about from the discussions in the speaking notes that Ms. Simpson alluded to today at noon which she organized and coordinated, and if it is, could he be perhaps more explicit, so I can give an appropriate answer? I honestly do not know what my honourable colleague is saying.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Ootes

Supplementary To Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister tell us why he will not go for a three-member panel review?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to point out to my honourable colleague and to my other colleagues that the UNW's issue with respect to it now claiming that the Hay Plan Evaluation System is not gender neutral is contradictory to the position they took at collective bargaining. During collective bargaining, they conceded that the Hay Plan Evaluation System is gender neutral. Given that is what they conceded, what I was saying in previous questions was, if there are problems within the Hay Plan Evaluation System and we agree it is gender neutral, that there may be some glitches within it, then let us work it out as the two parties responsible for doing that, UNW and the government.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. OOTES:

We understand the difference of opinion between the government and the union. The union is stating they

cannot state that this is gender bias free because if they do so, later on they could be held liable for any deficiencies, if they state it is gender bias free. They are prepared to go to a three-panel membership, one from the union, one from the government, and one from an independent as chair. I do not understand why the government will not go for that, and I wonder if the Minister could tell us why they will not consider that?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

Mr. Speaker, I had just indicated in my earlier response that the union in their collective bargaining had conceded that the Hay Job Evaluation is gender neutral.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. OOTES:

The Minister keeps saying that, but we get a different answer from the union. I guess this is where the difficulty arises. The union keeps saying it is not gender bias free. Obviously, this impasse is difficult for them and it is obviously a difficult position for you. Previously, the Minister stated that he was not interested in a three-member panel because, my recollection is, he stated he wanted a made-in-the-north solution to this. My understanding was that he wanted the representation from the north. Well, Mr. Speaker, the made-in-the-north solution, why can the government not accept to go for a three-member panel, if it can be settled within two or three weeks? Could the Minister tell us if he can find representation here in the north? Will he go for a three-member panel with qualified people in the north?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 612-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

As Mr. Ootes said, there are always two sides to a story. He has obviously chosen to side with one side. I am telling you categorically that at the collective bargaining, the UNW said that the Hay Plan Job Evaluation System was gender neutral, and because it is gender neutral, why do I need a third party to determine whether it is gender neutral. They

Page 1554

conceded that. What we need is for the partnerships, the people who are responsible, the UNW bargaining group and the management team from the GNWT to work through the difficulties that the UNW should identify within the Hay Plan Evaluation System. Pardon me, the answer is still no. It will not go to third party at this time.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Picco.

Question 613-13(5): Motion to Increase Education Base Funding

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House passed a motion overwhelmingly in favour of additional funding for education. I wonder now, will the Premier direct the Cabinet to address the considerations of that motion yesterday about rebasing education? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Premier.

Return To Question 613-13(5): Motion to Increase Education Base Funding

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the motion from the Legislative Assembly that was passed yesterday. We will consider it and give it due action and we will talk about it in Cabinet. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 613-13(5): Motion to Increase Education Base Funding

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Premier will talk about it in Cabinet. There was a Cabinet meeting this morning. The motion was passed yesterday. I wonder when the Premier expects that the Cabinet will be acting on this motion? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 613-13(5): Motion to Increase Education Base Funding

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion, like I said, is appreciated from the Members of the Legislative Assembly. We as the Government of the Northwest Territories have to consider that motion, along with the rest of the priorities that the Members have said are major priorities to them. There have been many issues raised in this Legislative Assembly. Education is a major issue. Health care is a major issue and so are the other programs and services to the people of the Northwest Territories. Housing is another major issue, and a lot of people do say that if you are not properly housed, you will not be able to get an education, so we will consider that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 613-13(5): Motion to Increase Education Base Funding

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, we have several priorities, but few of those priorities were actually voted on in this House and passed in motion form. Again, my question to the Premier is, when will the Premier and his Cabinet be acting on the priority of education to rebase the education department, as outlined in the motion from yesterday? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 613-13(5): Motion to Increase Education Base Funding

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member is well aware, we do not have any money trees, whether it is on our side of the House or theirs. We do not have those in the Northwest Territories. We have a limited amount of monies available to this government. We will consider the motion made in this Legislative Assembly. We will consider it with the needs of the people of the Northwest Territories. We will try to address it the best way possible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 613-13(5): Motion to Increase Education Base Funding

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think we all are aware of the fiscal restraints on the Government of the Northwest Territories, but I do recall that a few weeks ago, the government stated they would buy \$50 million worth of rough cut diamonds but because of their BHP agreement, that has fallen through. Maybe the Premier could identify that \$50 million and rebase education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. That was a comment. There was no question there. Again, I would like to remind the Members with regard to the rules. A question must not repeat an earlier question which was answered, taken as notice or to which an answer was refused at that sitting. I will caution the Members on those repeated questions that have been answered. Oral questions. Mr. O'Brien.

Question 614-13(5): Multilateral Agreement on Investment

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance in regard to the multilateral agreement on investment. Mr. Speaker, the MAI, as it is known, is a new international economic agreement to negotiate the organization for economic cooperation and development. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of agencies across the country that are against it and have concerns with this new agreement. For example, the Assembly of First

Nations passed a resolution demonstrating their concern. There are approximately 560 organizations in 67 countries that have concerns and that will not support this new agreement. Can the Minister provide this House with some information as to what impact he foresees this having on the two new territories? Thank you.

Page 1555

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Todd.

Return To Question 614-13(5): Multilateral Agreement on Investment

HON. JOHN TODD:

Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of the concerns that have been raised both nationally and internationally with respect to this agreement. We are examining the agreement as we speak. The government, at this time, does not have a clear position. I did indicate earlier, last week, that we do have some concerns with respect to it because it could impact on some of the preference policies that we have, negotiated contracts, business incentive policy, et cetera, and it could have an impact on how we do business in the future. I appreciate my colleague's question. It is an important one. It has long-term ramifications for the way this government and the Canadian governments do business. There is a significant amount of concern being raised out there by a variety of groups from unions to small business. Hopefully, in the coming weeks, we will be able to have a clear position as to what our position is and, of course, advise Ottawa and our provincial colleagues what it is and seek some resolve to it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 614-13(5): Multilateral Agreement on Investment

MR. O'BRIEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister commit to providing a briefing to the Ordinary Members once he has possession of all the information that is required to advise us in a total fashion? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 614-13(5): Multilateral Agreement on Investment

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes, I would only be too happy to. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Henry.

Question 615-13(5): GNWT Mining and Investment Policies

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Earlier today in my Member's statement, I provided some information to the House on how mining companies and Canada view the policies of this government with regard to developing jobs and the potential for investment in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, we are rated as the second worst in Canada as far as having policies that attract mining investment in the Northwest Territories although we have the largest potential for development. I think it is fair to say that Indian Affairs has a responsibility to make this policy or create policies to make the Northwest Territories more attractive to the mining industry. My question to the Premier is, what is this government doing with regard to working with Minister Stewart and her department to make the Northwest Territories a much more attractive place for investment for the mining industry? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Premier.

Return To Question 615-13(5): GNWT Mining and Investment Policies

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member is fully aware that the Government of Canada, through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, is the lead on the majority of the mining licenses and regulations on land in the Northwest

Territories. We have been working with DIAND to develop new, for example, diamond mine regulations. We will continue to work with them to streamline the regulations. We as a government have taken the initiative to try to deregulate and get rid of some of the red tape for our businesses in general, including the mining industry. We have also done the mine training committee in the Northwest Territories and the new college programs to train people to work in the mining industry. We do have tax credits. Mr. Speaker, there is definitely a difference between the Northwest Territories and Alberta, for example. The difference is, the Albertan people are in charge of their own resources and in the Northwest Territories, we have Ottawa in charge of ours. That is the biggest difference.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Henry.

Supplementary To Question 615-13(5): GNWT Mining and Investment Policies

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier is, he has talked about consultations with the Department of Indian Affairs. Has the Premier had any consultations with the mining industry to ensure that he will be mirroring some of the concerns that they have with regard to making the Northwest Territories a better place for development? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 615-13(5): GNWT Mining and Investment Policies

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I have said it once, I have said many times, I believe in partnerships. I believe in the people of the Northwest Territories working together to seeing us move ahead. We have the greatest potential in this country in the mineral development field. Our partners in developing those minerals are the aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories, the mining industries, the stakeholders, and all the people in general in the Northwest Territories. We do have a partnership with the federal government that, hopefully, will move things along so that northerners can finally be in charge of northern

resources. This is the ultimate goal, and when we accomplish that, then I think, we have done our job. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 615-13(5): GNWT Mining and Investment Policies

Page 1556

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is, does the Premier have a formal structure in place to consult with the mining industry on a regular basis to ensure we are going along on the same path? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Morin.

Further Return To Question 615-13(5): GNWT Mining and Investment Policies

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development is the lead Minister on the consultation and working with the mining industry, as well as other stakeholders to make sure that we get our fair share of resource development, to ensure that we do move ahead in a timely fashion, so that we can develop our resources and northerners can make those decisions. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity a few years back to drive south and as soon as you pass the 60th parallel going south, there is very little room on the highways in Alberta. They are all full of oil field trucks, service trucks, logging trucks or maintenance trucks, but the highways are full, the people are working, the hotels are full and the minute you drive north, past the 60th parallel, everything dies. There is a reason for that and once again, I must say the reason for that is Alberta, Premier Klein and the people of Alberta are in charge of their own resources. They make their own decisions and they know how they want to develop. In the Northwest Territories, who do we have in charge? Bureaucrats out of Ottawa. It is a shame. Here we are, 1998 and there are still some bureaucrats sitting in Ottawa making a decision on a diamond mine in the Northwest Territories.

--Shame! Shame!

That has got to change and we have to work together to make sure that changes, so we bring those decisions home as soon as possible, rightfully, where they belong. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Barnabas.

Question 616-13(5): Renovation of Public Housing Units

MR. BARNABAS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question will be directed to the Minister of the Housing Corporation, Mr. Arlooktoo. First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Arlooktoo for relocating the units from Nanisivik to Arctic Bay by road. I understand that there are only three units that will be renovated out of ten. My question is, when will the other seven units be renovated? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Arlooktoo.

Return To Question 616-13(5): Renovation of Public Housing Units

HON. GOO ARLOOKTOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cannot tell the Member off the top of my head when that will happen. The way we have the program set up now, the planning for how NMI repair projects are dealt within the community are now decided by the communities. The Housing Corporation works together with local housing organizations to come up with a budget and we work through a long-term plan with them on when the work will be done. Our limitation always is the shortage of money we have for these types of projects, but I will check with the Housing Corporation, who will check with the LHO to find out when the other seven houses are planned for renovations. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 616-13(5): Renovation of Public Housing Units

MR. BARNABAS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these units are over 20-years old. I am sure they need to be fixed up in order to be used by the public as social housing. Can the Minister assure me there is going to be funding available for LHOs to renovate these units? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Arlooktoo.

Further Return To Question 616-13(5): Renovation of Public Housing Units

HON. GOO ARLOOKTOO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I will need to check with the Housing Corporation to see exactly what the plans are for these units. From what I recall, we did sit down with the community and worked out a special deal to move these units with the close cooperation between the community and the government and the mine. I am sure we can work together again to make sure we go to the next step to ensure these housing units are useable. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Question 617-13(5): Review of Vital Statistics

MR. EVALOARJUK:

(Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. I have received a letter, the same letter the Minister himself has been given. My question is going to have to be answered. I want to find out from the Minister himself with respect to the letter and the question. With respect to vital statistics, I think this is a responsibility of the federal government, but there is a concern as to whether they are doing a proper review of the vital statistics responsibilities. Can the Minister advise me as to whether this type of review is done properly? Has he heard anything to this effect? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Translation ends)

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Premier.

Return To Question 617-13(5): Review of Vital Statistics

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will take the question as notice and I will have the Minister meet with the

Page 1557

Member either today or tomorrow at the latest to get the background information. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The question is taken as notice. Oral questions. Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 618-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister responsible for FMBS and handling the final settlement offer to the UNW. As the Ministers have heard in Members' statements and posed questions in regard to the current stalemate, we are not in a position to resolve that situation where the government as employer and the UNW have to reach some sort of settlement. My question to the Minister is, how long does he anticipate this state of gridlock or impasse lasting before something is going to give? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Can I ask the Member for Thebacha to maybe rephrase his question because the Minister cannot answer on how long it is going to last, but maybe you can ask how long is the government willing to wait?

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister answer as to how long is the government prepared to let this situation last? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Todd.

Return To Question 618-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We fulfil our obligation and responsibility in terms of what we believe is a fair settlement. We placed that settlement on the table. The next step what I was trying to get at earlier, the questions asked by previous colleagues. The next step really lies with the membership of the UNW. If they wish to go to mediation, we are prepared to do that. I have already said to an earlier question this week. If they want to come back to the bargaining table, we are prepared to do that. We have done all we can do at this stage of the game. It is not my responsibility or the government's responsibility to make the next move. I do not mean that in any offensive way. They have to come back to the table. They have to ask for mediation, et cetera. Otherwise, this thing could go on indefinitely. It really is up to the membership and the UNW executive to determine an appropriate course of action. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary To Question 618-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can appreciate the Minister's comments, but to me there is an ultimate responsibility that rests squarely on the shoulders of the government to eventually bring this issue to resolution. I, as well, am interested in the \$40 million. There is good money on the table that cannot be used elsewhere. There are priorities identified by this House like education. Can the Minister indicate or give us some sense of how long, for instance, we have to wait before possibly looking at putting some of that money to better use, if, in fact, it is not going to be used for this particular critical issue? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 618-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

I stated in the House that the offer we put before the UNW in terms of pay equity and the collective agreement, we will maintain that \$40 million, \$25 million, \$9 million and \$6 million. However, given the

emotions in this House and some of the concerns raised by Mr. Picco, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Ootes, et cetera, about the need for us to look for new monies for education and for a variety of other issues, I do not know where we would find these new monies.

Certainly, there is a large chunk of money put aside for pay equity and for collective bargaining. I would hope that we could keep it there until such time as we could reach a resolve. Sometimes I worry about the naivete, I hope I do not offend anybody by saying that when we talk about spending money cavalier, as if there are a money tree and bottomless pit out there. I would think that most people can read a balance sheet and income statement. The reality is there is a limit to the amount of money. There is a limit to the amount of flexibility for this government. I am not trying to be offensive here. I am trying to state a point of view. There is a limited amount of flexibility. We have worked extremely hard to identify what we think is a fair and reasonable settlement. The obvious solution to this, in my opinion, is to take the issue to the membership and allow them to vote. We have had a number of Members, right across the territories asking that to take place. The union indicates, I believe, they are not legally obligated and it would be against the law for them to do this. I say that is incorrect. I am advised by our justice bar that is absolutely incorrect. Take the matter to the membership. Let them vote on this fair offer. Let us get this issue, once and for all, off the table so we can continue to proceed with a balanced budget with a satisfied civil service, with a settlement of a ten-year issue and with planning to reassigning new monies in the new budgetary process, if it is education, health care, housing, pay equity, et cetera.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Supplementary To Question 618-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with the position put forward by the Minister that, in fact, yes, this matter should be given to the membership to vote on. The union seems quite adamant that they are not prepared to do that for their own reasons. There is less than ten months until division. The Minister said that this could drag on indefinitely. Where does that leave us? Ten months is not very long. Summer is coming. Everybody is

going on holidays. Eastern MLAs will be out on the trail in the not too distance future. Where does that leave us with this critical issue, possibly? Thank you.

Page 1558

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 618-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the risk of sounding somewhat exasperated on this issue, I have worked darn hard. I rolled up my sleeves along with my Cabinet colleagues in an effort to try to find, through careful management of the government, some of these dollars for pay equity and to give our employees a fair settlement in the collective agreement. Under difficult fiscal conditions, I want to say that again, I would like to hope we will not have to talk about difficult fiscal conditions again, but I obviously have to.

We have worked very hard to try and achieve that. I feel very strongly that they have an obligation to take it to the membership. This thing has been going on for ten-years. As a Minister responsible, I brought the thing forward. I asked the bargaining committee to try and reach a resolve to this issue. We, through careful management of our money, with the collaboration of the Premier and my Cabinet colleagues, have found the dollars necessary and we are banking that with the hope that we will get an agreement. It is not my responsibility for the agreement to go out to a vote. That responsibility lies squarely in the hands of the UNW executive. I tell you, I have pleaded with them today, that if they want resolve to this issue, during the last eight months of this government, take it to the people and let the people decide whether it is fair.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary To Question 618-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister should get full marks for the hard work that

has been put into this particular issue in trying to bring it to the state it is at, but the reality is it would be unfortunate for all of this hard work to go to waste or be for not, because it is not signed off and there is no agreement, if we go to division and our separate ways with this Gordian knot of pay equity and an unsettled benefit agreement on the table for both territories. Could the Minister indicate, are they looking at any creative solutions or ways to avoid that with sort of a plan B recognizing fully that the union has to take it to the membership and they cannot be forced to do that? It is a situation that we have worked too hard not to try to have a successful conclusion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 618-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

We are obligated by law and by the collective agreement to behave in a certain way. I say to you that I think that we have acted honourably. We have provided in a concise, civilized and professional way all the information that we have brought forward. I cannot for the life of me understand why they are not prepared to take it to the people. We have to work hard to find the funds necessary to conclude this important long-term issue. On top of that, some Members of the House, who have every right to say, have asked that we try to reallocate and find new monies for a variety of other initiatives. There is a limited ability of this government because of its inability to generate revenues to be able to do that. This is a fair, reasonable, affordable settlement. Let the people vote.

--Hear! Hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions Mr. Rabesca.

Question 619-13(5): Dogrib Community Services Board Legislation

MR. RABESCA:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my Member's statement today, the Community Service Board has now been operating since May 22, 1997. Although this organization is operating, it does

not have the legal capabilities to provide necessary programs and services, as a result of this government not having legislation currently in place to provide for this. As I also stated previously, I am prepared to continue with the final draft of a private Member's bill to establish the Community Service Board. However, I would like to get the Ministers of Education, Culture and Employment and Health and Social Services views on this. Could the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Charles Dent, please inform this House as to what his department is prepared to do with regard to this matter? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 619-13(5): Dogrib Community Services Board Legislation

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member raised this issue earlier this session, and I actually have in draft form a letter which should be ready to provide to the Member in the next day or so. Briefly, Mr. Speaker, my department is working in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services to review the proposed amendments that we will be bringing forward to the Social Assistance Act. We expect to have that consultation work done this month. We will also then consult with the Dogrib Community Services Board to make sure, in fact, that the amendments will meet their needs. The amendments should be ready to be brought forward to this House in the October sessions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions, Mr. Roland.

Question 620-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question at this time, will be directed to the Minister responsible for FMBS. We have heard on numerous occasions the concerns with where things lie with, the UNW and the GNWT. There was a concern raised and I need to ask this question. How long will this last? You have said that it is up to the UNW

to make a decision if they want to put it out to a vote. If that does not happen in the next bit, would you be willing to let the offer sit there until at least the fall sitting? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board, Mr. Todd.

Return To Question 620-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

The government is under inordinate pressure. You have heard the lobbying that has gone on by the NWTTA and the teachers, et cetera with respect to the need for more money in education. Nobody, including the Minister, is denying there is a need for it. You have heard Mr. Ng talk passionately about the need for compassionate travel. Nobody is denying there is a need for it. You have heard everybody talk about health care and the need for more money. Nobody is denying the need for it. We have a budgetary process. We have x-amount of dollars we spend. We made a conscious decision through committee and a collective effort to identify where the money is going to go. I am telling you today that unless we get the issue to go to the membership, I do not think it is going to be resolved during the tenure of this Legislative Assembly. I am trying to put it in the context of the overall fiscal framework of this government and all the needs that we have. We need to meet the needs of those who are in the collective bargaining system. We need to meet the needs of those that are not. We need to meet the needs of those who are less fortunate and do not have the capacity to generate an effective lobby. We need to meet the needs of all the issues which have been raised here and that is the responsibility of government. The process that we have dealt with is through the budgetary process. In the overall fiscal framework of the government, we have identified \$40 million. There is no more money.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary To Question 620-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am well aware of the budgetary process. That was not my question. If there is no movement on behalf of the UNW to put this out to its members for a vote, will this offer remain out there until our fall sitting when we would have an opportunity as a Legislative Assembly to review any further work that has been done? Will this offer be out there or will you change as the process allows? At the end of the line of this process, will you change the collective agreement on your own? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Mr. Todd.

Further Return To Question 620-13(5): Resolution of Collective Bargaining Impasse

HON. JOHN TODD:

We have said consistently and my Cabinet colleagues and the Premier have supported the position, we think this is a fair and reasonable offer. It was never identified before in the budget, rightly or wrongly. It was not there. We have identified what we think is a fair and reasonable offer on the retroactivity side, on the ongoing cost side and on the collective agreement side. We are banking that money. We will leave it in place. There are inordinate pressures on all of us. You have heard the Members talk about the need for reallocation of dollars, et cetera. If you are going to reallocate dollars and if Cabinet has to consider reallocating dollars for one particular program versus another, it has to be done in the context of the overall budget and the overall needs and priorities of government. It cannot be done any other way. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Question period is over. The Member for High Arctic is asking to recognize in the gallery Cecil and Jacklyn Marshall, the SAO and EDO in the Hamlet of Arctic Bay. Welcome to the Assembly.

--Applause

Item 7, written questions. Mr. Enuaraq.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 20-13(5): Clyde River Nursing Shortage

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My written question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Honourable Mr. Ng.

1. Will the Minister advise me when will the community of Clyde River be allocated more nurses?
2. Does the Minister believe that a 400 to 1, population to nurse ratio, is reasonable?
3. What is the population to nurse ratio in Yellowknife and other regional centres?
4. Will the Minister tell me if there is a specific recruitment program that will ensure more nurses and doctors will serve and reside full time in remote communities?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Written questions. Mr. Henry.

Written Question 21-13(5): Federal Bureaucrats Working on NWT Issues

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My written question is to the Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs. My question follows up on comments he made earlier today regarding federal bureaucrats in Ottawa making decisions for the north.

1. Can the Premier ascertain for this House the number of federal bureaucrats working on issues that directly impact the residents of the Northwest Territories who live in parts of Canada outside the Northwest Territories?
2. How many of these individuals have visited the Northwest Territories in the past 12 months?

Page 1560

3. How many days did they stay in the Northwest Territories?

4. What means do southern-based DIAND officials use to determine how the residents of the Northwest Territories feel on a particular topic or issue?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Written questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Written Question 22-13(5): Removal of Records from Court Registries

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Justice.

1. Criminal records held in Territorial and Federal Court registries can be searched and accessed when necessary. How long do these criminal convictions stay on a person's file at a court registry?

2. Is there a mechanism whereby a person could seek to have his or her record removed from legal court registries earlier through some type of a pardon process?

3. If so, what body, board or agency would consider requests for the removal of a record of criminal charge or conviction from a court registry?

4. If such a process is accessible, what are the reasons which would be given consideration for a charge or conviction to be removed from a court registry?

5. Is a list of these removed records available through any source?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. On behalf of the Member for Amittuq, I would like to recognize George Qulaut from Igloodik. Welcome to the Assembly.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees, Mr. Picco.

ITEM 11: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee Report 8-13(5): Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Infrastructure is pleased to present its Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. The 13th Assembly's committee structure enables the Standing Committee on Infrastructure to consider the Auditor General's comments and recommendations in conjunction with other relevant issues that have been examined by the committee. The Legislative Assembly requested the Auditor General, on October 8, 1996, to conduct an independent review of how the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs assesses and determines the financial health of the communities through municipal reporting processes. The Auditor General's report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on February 18, 1998 and was referred to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure for review. The standing committee met to discuss the Auditor General's report from Monday, April 20, 1998, to Wednesday, April 22, 1998. The deputy minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and her staff appeared as witnesses before the committee and took the opportunity to present additional responses to the Auditor General's Report.

Mr. Speaker, the committee also received a briefing from the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs on April 22, 1998 on monitoring and evaluating for community development responses. This initiative is intended to ensure that the community development is goal oriented and client focused, states expected results, commits to high quality programs and services, specifically measures performance and allocates limited resources according to priority.

Members of the Standing Committee

Page 1561

on Infrastructure appreciate the cooperation of the deputy minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and her staff in appearing before the committee, responding to the Members' request for information and providing their perspective on the issues being considered. Committee Members carefully considered all information provided. Finally, the committee Members appreciate the helpful participation of the principal Auditor and staff from the Edmonton office of the Auditor General for Canada.

The objective of the office of the Auditor General of Canada was to conduct an independent review of

how the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs assesses and determines the financial health of communities through financial reporting and other processes.

In addition, the office of the Auditor General had three subobjectives:

- to acquire sufficient understanding and information to enable the office of the Auditor General to identify significant issues and management activities pertaining to municipal financing,

- to inform the Members of the Legislative Assembly and others about current and potential issues in municipalities that have financial and accountability issues and

- to provide comments and observations on municipal management from both the local and the departmental side.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the introductory comments on Committee Report 8-13(5), Report of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure on its Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Department of Municipal and Community affairs. I would seek unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, to wave rule 93(4), and have the report ordered into the Committee of the Whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The Member for Iqaluit is seeking unanimous consent to waive rule 93(4), to have the committee report tabled for today. Do we have any nays? Mr. Picco, you have unanimous consent. Committee Report 8-13(5) will be put into Committee of the Whole for today. Item 11, report of standing and special committees. Item 12, report of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Ootes.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 109-13(5): Letter from Constituent Regarding Pay Equity/Collective Bargaining

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a letter from a constituent in regard to the pay equity issue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motions for first reading of bills. We will take a 15-minute break.

--Break

MR. SPEAKER:

I would like to call the House back to order. Item 16, motions. Mr. Roland.

ITEM 16: MOTIONS

Motion 19-13(5): Establishment of Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the residents of the Northwest Territories have voted for division and on the boundary that will divide the Territory;

AND WHEREAS the coming into force of the Nunavut Act on April 1, 1999, will divide the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS the effect of the creation of the Nunavut Territory leaves the Northwest Territories with 14 electoral districts;

AND WHEREAS the Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides for the right to vote in a free and democratic society;

AND WHEREAS these rights include respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, a commitment to social justice and equality, accommodation of a wide variety of beliefs, respect for cultural and group identity; and faith in social and political institutions which enhance the participation of individuals and groups in society;

AND WHEREAS each citizen is entitled to be represented in government;

AND WHEREAS to provide for effective representation in a Legislative Assembly, electoral boundaries must provide for a fair allocation of its electoral districts.

AND WHEREAS the term of the 13th Legislative Assembly expires in November 1999;

AND WHEREAS the residents of the Western Territory should be permitted to make their views known on the matter of electoral boundaries;

NOW THEREFORE I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Frame Lake, that the Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission be established in accordance with part 1 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

AND FURTHER that the Northwest Territorial Electoral Boundaries Commission, in preparing its report, shall take consideration:

(a) the geographic and demographic considerations, including the sparsity, density or rate of growth of the population of any part of the territory and the accessibility, size or shape of any part of the territory;

(b) any special community or diversity of interests of the inhabitants of any part of the territory;

(c) the means of communication among various parts of the territory;

(d) the minimum and maximum number of Members of the Legislative Assembly, authorized by the Northwest Territories Act;

AND FURTHER, the Commission should strive to maintain a balance between urban and rural populations when recommending the boundaries of constituencies.

AND FURTHERMORE the Commission should take into consideration the cultural and linguistic interests of the territories and its present land claim boundaries when recommending the boundaries of constituencies;

AND FURTHERMORE take into consideration any other similar and relevant factors that the Commission considers appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been some time since we have been elected and earlier in our term, we established the Northwest Territorial Electoral Boundaries Commission in October 1996, for Nunavut and the west.

Mr. Speaker, the last time a Boundaries Commission was sent out from the Assembly of the Northwest Territories, was back in 1993-1994, but that was not to create any new seats. The last time seats were created or changed or deleted was in

Page 1562

1983, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, members of my constituency have come forward with a concern of representation when it comes to a 14 Member Legislative Assembly. Some would say we should go for an election even earlier, at the same time as Nunavut. For stability's sake, we carry on until the time that is established, which would be the following year in October of 1999, which would be the normal election time. Without changing what we will have presently after division of 14 Members, the concern would be with representation from an Ordinary Members' Caucus, versus a Cabinet situation, where you would have six proposed Cabinet Members, the Speaker, yourself, would remain and there would be seven Ordinary Members. The accountability is what is being brought into consideration. How can Ordinary Members hold Cabinet accountable from just a one vote majority?

As well, I have my own concerns about what it comes after division, April 1, 1999. There are 14 seats left in the Legislative Assembly after division. When you look at it on the map in the Inuvik region, including the Sahtu, the Mackenzie Delta and Nunakput ridings, there are four seats in the whole northern part of this territory, the Western Territory. There is some concern from members of my community, as well, that needs to be addressed.

I hope this is established and that Members of the Assembly support this in establishing the Commission so it could go out and look at all of these matters, accountability of Cabinet versus Ordinary Members and whether it is fair and equal representation, north and south, throughout the Western Territory. I do not believe this is a move to try and locate power to a certain part of the territory when it is a matter and a way of making sure all residents of the territory have fair representation, not based only on population, but based on the ability to be represented. I have said it before, myself, coming from Inuvik. At times when I have questioned Ministers in this Assembly, it seems like when you are out of sight, you are out of mind. One way of balancing that is to look at your existing boundaries and the amount of representation one regional area would have versus another or one

community over another. I do not believe we need to prolong the idea of a Boundaries Commission. I think it needs to be sent out. We did meet with the Aboriginal Summit. They have concerns with the Boundaries Commission going out. If we establish a Boundaries Commission and have it report in due process by fall, for example, we could, as the Western Caucus of this Assembly sit down with the Aboriginal Summit to discuss what has been recommended. There are a lot of opportunities to continue to work together.

We are aware that existing boundaries after division will bring into question the ability of residents of this territory to be represented fairly. Knowing that, I do not think it is fair that we, as legislative Members, would sit on that and allow that to pass by and wait for a court challenge or anything of that nature. We have an opportunity to speak and make decisions as we were elected to do. To move forward and to make decisions that would be in the best interests of the whole territory and allow residents of this territory, which would be the Western Territory, to tell us what they think about it. In the past, the Western Caucus made some decisions and sent a message out of what we proposed to do. Some would say and ask me why have you changed your mind? Mr. Speaker, I was elected by members of my community to represent their interests. Once the news had come out that the Western Caucus had set out a plan, there were questions raised, concerns mentioned and the calling for the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

For two years the Beaufort Delta Leaders Conference laid out motions to establish a Boundaries Commission. In their motions they were quite specific. They were calling for an extra seat in Aklavik and one for Tuk.

The following year and this past March, there was another motion. It was just mainly to get a Boundaries Commission out. They believed that needed to be looked at and addressed. I would not be truthful if I was saying I was doing this for the best interests of the whole territory. Of course, I have interests for the area I represent. As I stated earlier, we do have concerns. With 14 Members left, if you look at the system, whether it is four or three versus the rest of the territory if it ever comes to that, it is a small portion although we have a large land mass. I hope that Members here would look to moving forward with this and giving the people of this territory the ability to speak on the issue of the Boundaries Commission. The only way that it can be done is by establishing a Boundaries Commission and sending

them out to interview and meet with the people. If we are not going to move with that, then we are saying that although we are elected, we will make the decisions and a few will have input. We will make the final decision and we will wear whatever comes out of it.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I represent my constituency. My constituency and members of it have spoken. They would like to see an establishment of the Boundaries Commission. I do this, Mr. Speaker, in the hopes that others will see the reasoning in letting the people of the territories see the issue and make recommendations. Have all the people of the territories said 14 is too much? Maybe some would say they need more, maybe some would say they need less. We have not given them the opportunity to voice their concerns or raise questions.

For good government, we need to send the message out to the people that, yes, we are willing to listen to your comments and concerns. We are listening and we will, in fact, enable a Boundaries Commission to go forward and receive those. At the appropriate time when the commission comes back and reports to the Legislative Assembly, we could follow the report with recommendations. We have heard so many times in this forum we need to move on, make decisions, get on with the business of government. This is one of the points of government. There are concerns that there are many other things happening within the territory that could confuse this. Those processes will continue. This is not to be established to hinder that process. This is only to establish that the government as we know today, which will change and has changed, is recognizing the potential problems of a new Western Territory in only having 14 Members. I hope that Members of this Assembly would see that, and allow their members of their constituencies to speak to a Boundaries Commission and let their views be known. Truthfully, we can

Page 1563

say that we have allowed the people of the territories, the Western Territory, to express their concerns. Whether some would say, 14 is enough government. Some would say the bureaucracy will continue to run it. The bureaucracy does not come to my constituency. Bureaucracy does not come and tell the elder lady that we have changed the program. They come to our offices as members of the Assembly. They come to us to ask the questions. Many do not feel comfortable with the big wheel of government pulling in a bunch of government

employees or bureaucrats, as we would know them coming off the plane and telling the people how it should be done. They want to ask their Member. We can give them the opportunity to voice those concerns and say if they feel they are under represented. I urge Members of this Assembly to give the people of the territories a chance to voice their concerns and express their views on their representation in the Government of the Western Territory. I hope that with this, it will allow the process to continue. We will allow decisions to be made, and we will show the people of the territories that we do take all things into consideration and that we will move forward with the idea of being a better government or a good government. Let us let the people voice their concerns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Secunder, Mr. Dent. To the motion.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Western Caucus first looked at this issue, I agreed that the status quo should continue. Mr. Speaker, at that time, the timetable set by the Constitutional Working Group saw resolution of the constitutional process taking place a lot more quickly than what we expect now. I felt that for the short period of time, we would have had envisioned before the implementation of a new constitution that we could get by, and we could tie a Boundaries Commission to the implementation of the government that resulted from that new Constitution because it would be for just a short period of time.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Constitution will not be approved before division and that the length of time that the 14th Assembly will govern looks to be longer than what we expected a year and a half ago. I have now changed my mind, Mr. Speaker. I believe that we do need to have a Boundaries Commission. This is why I have seconded this motion. Mr. Speaker, the major reason for me to support this motion is that I believe we need to have the capacity to set up good government. I do not believe we can set up a government that will enjoy public confidence with just 14 Members. Under the current arrangement, Mr. Speaker, Ordinary Members outnumber the Executive Council by almost two to one. We have eight Members of Cabinet and 15 Ordinary Members. The public sees this as a key part of maintaining

government accountability. Cabinet needs to build a consensus to make sure it has the support to move ahead with new initiatives. With 14 Members, Mr. Speaker, we have agreed to go to a Cabinet of six. In spite of the reduced population we will have in the Northwest Territories, we will still have the same departments and government responsibilities. It will be very taxing work for those selected to Cabinet. My experience in the last two and a half years of being in Cabinet, Mr. Speaker, with an eight Member Cabinet, you have to be prepared to put in long hours, and it will get much, much longer if we have only six.

Mr. Speaker, there is another problem, too, with accountability with six on Cabinet, with one Speaker and six Cabinet Members, that leaves seven Members as Ordinary Members. The balance of power shifts significantly from what we have right now. If any one Ordinary Member is travelling or out of the House because they are ill or even just on the phone, Cabinet will completely control the process. To get support for initiatives or legislation, the Cabinet will only have to convince one Ordinary Member to go along with it. The public will not see this as protecting their interests.

Mr. Speaker, I would argue that the functioning of the House will also be extremely difficult with just 14 Members. We now have 15 Ordinary Members. These Members now serve, five each on each of the three standing committees, with the Chair and deputy chair of each committee then serving on Government Operations. With only seven Ordinary Members, there certainly will not be enough Members to divide up into a number of committees, certainly not three committees as we have now without a significant amount of overlap. More likely, we will see one committee of seven Members which would have to oversee all issues now sent to committee. That means that each Member will have an awful lot more to do. It means that they will have less time to work in their constituency and on constituency issues. It will also translate, most likely, into less time for Ordinary Members to pursue information in committees which again will mean that the Ordinary Members will be less able to hold the government accountable. Some suggest that a smaller government could be more responsive. I say, Mr. Speaker, in a smaller government, the Members will be too busy to even talk to their constituents as much as we do now.

Mr. Speaker, I also think that there is a significant liability of a court challenge given the current make up of our seats. A court challenge, Mr. Speaker, I believe, could be based on just the Yellowknife seats.

They do not even have to look at comparing any of the seats in Yellowknife to outside, but just within Yellowknife because the size discrepancy just within Yellowknife has the smallest seat in Yellowknife less than half the size of the largest seat. There is no justification for that kind of difference in size. So somebody going to apply to the courts could allege that the boundaries are not fair right now. Yes, Mr. Speaker, some have expressed some concern about the fact that a Boundaries Commission might result in Yellowknife getting another seat or two. Given the population, Yellowknife probably deserves another seat or two. I certainly think we need to give the Boundaries Commission a chance to have a look at the issue. Mr. Speaker, someone suggested that we should wait for the challenge. I would say that the responsible approach is to be proactive with the debate taking place in this House today and the coverage it will get. I have no qualms about saying, Mr. Speaker, that a challenge is now assured. Rather than put off what we will probably be forced to do and rushing through it, Mr. Speaker, I say, let us do the responsible thing, do it now and take the time that it requires to do a good job.

I have also heard, Mr. Speaker, concerns about the cost of adding extra members. I would have to say that in the grand

Page 1564

scheme of things, Mr. Speaker, the cost is not very big. We are talking about a \$600+ million operation here. To add four Ordinary Members would cost approximately \$1.2 million. Mr. Speaker, I am willing to bet that the reduction in the size of Cabinet from eight to six will more than offset the cost of four additional Ordinary Members. We could add four Ordinary Members without driving up the cost of government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have also heard people say that more MLAs does not mean better government. You know, Mr. Speaker, that is right. More MLAs do not automatically translate into better government. However, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that fewer MLAs, like 14, will mean a less accountable government, and I do not think the public wants that. Let us hear what the public has to say. I personally think that we need 17 or 18 Members for this House to operate in a manner the public will see as accountable. The only way we will find out for sure is by sending this out to the public. Let us vote, yes, for this motion, and let us allow the public to have their say. Let them tell the Boundaries Commission what

they think about the numbers of Members and what the seats should look like in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. To the motion. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting this motion today. I have pondered over the make up of the new Western Territory with 14 Members for some time. My initial thinking was that 14 Members would be a good number to go with and certainly people of the west seemed to want us to keep the number low. However, after having digested and looked at the situation, I have come to the realization that with 14 Members, six of whom will be in Cabinet, plus the Speaker, that leaves seven Ordinary Members. Sitting on the Ordinary side now, I can well appreciate what this role is, what this job is.

I can very strongly state that if we only have seven Members on this side, we will be a very ineffective government. Part of the reason for that is that the Members will be overloaded with work. Right now, we have four main standing committees for 14 Ordinary Members, plus we have two minor standing committees, the Western Caucus and Ordinary Members' Caucus as well. In addition to that, we serve on various committees, such as the Constitutional Working Group, the Western Coalition, and on and on it goes. In order to function, we need some numbers. I am not suggesting that we have to increase it by a lot, but I think it needs to be looked at, Mr. Speaker. My position would be that I am in support. I feel that the situation in Yellowknife also needs to be addressed. We do have 45 to 48 percent of the future territories' population and four Members out of ten at the moment.

I think if the Boundaries Commission is looking at this, they definitely need to take into consideration the Yellowknife situation. Mr. Dent has pointed out the inequity that is there now where the smallest riding in Yellowknife is half of what the biggest riding is in Yellowknife, so there needs to be adjustments. Mr. Speaker, at the time of the vote, I will be voting in favour of this particular motion. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

To the motion. Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be voting in favour of this motion. Originally, I was not in favour of the Boundaries Commission. I had thought that for a brief period of time, it would be okay just to have 14 Members. However, it is becoming increasingly more clear to me that this is not just going to be for a short period of time. Additionally, my primary reason, Mr. Speaker, as sure as I am standing here, if there is a constitutional challenge, we will lose that challenge. Simply looking in Yellowknife alone, the Yellowknife South constituency is more than two times the size of the smallest Yellowknife constituency. I do not think any court would allow that to stand. I cannot vote in favour of a motion that allows us to be in jeopardy of having to perhaps dissolve the House and have a Boundaries Commission and perhaps even another vote. Another reason and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, a person told me today that they would be willing to put their name on a document that would go to a Constitutional challenge. This is not just mere speculation.

Another thing that has been brought forward and certainly has to be considered is the fact that 14 Members are simply not enough to do a good job, Mr. Speaker. If you have 14 Members, you have one Speaker, that is 13 left. You have six Ministers, that is seven gone. This only leaves seven Ordinary Members, and all Cabinet has to do is sway one person or one person to be gone, and Cabinet can do anything they want. It will not be good government, and there is a possibility that this could go on for an extended period, Mr. Speaker. I simply cannot agree to this. I have talked to some Ministers, and they have indicated that with six Ministers, it will be a tough enough job. They could not do with less than six Ministers. If you are going to have a bigger leeway between the Ministers and the Ordinary Members, more than just six to seven and if we cannot decrease the amount of Ministers, we have to increase the amount of Ordinary Members.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a very difficult decision for me. There are a lot of aboriginal people, as well as non-aboriginal people, in my riding and obviously the Aboriginal Summit has indicated that they do not wish to see a Boundaries Commission. However, I have to consider what is best for the whole of my constituency, not just one part. I have come to the conclusion that it is best for the overall constituency of Yellowknife North if there is a Boundaries

Commission. I will be voting in favour of this motion.
Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. To the motion. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak to this motion as well. To me, there are two key issues that have been put to us. One is the legal question, could we face a court challenge if we do not have a Boundaries commission. How many MLAs do you need for good government? I see there the potential for all sorts of incredibly good jokes, like how many psychologists does it takes to screw in a light bulb; more than 14 I think. Mr. Speaker, on the legal

Page 1565

issue, we are presented every day with the possibility of a court challenge on decisions that we make and if we were to respond to every issue we would be totally paralysed. Decisions would be driven by legal opinions which like many other things - every lawyer has one - may have two depending on how much money you have. I say, if there is a legal challenge we will deal with it like we will deal with any other situation where we make a decision as an Assembly and people are not happy with it.

In regard to how many MLAs we need for good government, I think we have had 14 MLAs for the last few years. I think 1983 was the last change in seats, my colleague from Inuvik said. Now that we are dividing, the issue of critical mass comes to the fore. It is easy to create a self-fulfilling prophecy that we need more MLAs to run government. In fact, we have never tried to run with 14. We are going to have a six-month period from April to August to do that. I would suggest that we could, in fact, restructure our operation and our committees and our policies to provide good government with 14. It is easy to say we need more. We say it all the time. We need more money for education. We need more money for pay equity. We need money for health. I would bet you my bottom dollar, Mr. Speaker, that if you ask the people of the Northwest Territories, if you could take \$1.2 million, or whatever the cost is going to be, to reinflate this government to what may be deemed acceptable proportions and if you could ask people, would you rather have money spent on education,

health and housing in your community or would you want to have another truck load of MLAs driving into Yellowknife with their benefits and pensions and put it toward good government. Do you want to make that choice? I can tell you what the people of my constituency will tell you? We have enough MLAs and more MLAs is not a guarantee of good government. I would suggest, from all the debate I have heard and the articles I have read in the newspaper, very clearly, a lot of people see even 24 MLAs as too much.

MR. ERASMUS:

They do not want 24.

MR. MILTENBERGER:

Well, that is good, Mr. Erasmus, because ten are going to Nunavut, so you will not have to worry. Mr. Speaker, we met with the Aboriginal Summit last night, who are in the process of trying to nail down a political accord. They have given us their position on this. We asked them in the winter, when we said we were going to go with 14, would you support this? They said, yes. They continue to say they are not in favour at this time of a Boundaries Commission. Mr. Speaker, neither am I. I do not think this is an appropriate time. We can do this once division happens, once the dust settles, when two territories are up and running, once the Constitutional process, which we have invested millions in, have had a chance to deal with this issue, once self-government talks progress to the next level, which indications are they are going to do that.

It has been brought up that there are many processes already underway in the communities. This, over the course of the summer, would only be another confusing factor. I am suggesting that we take the same approach that has been suggested with the naming of the territory. Yes, it is an issue, but we will do it later, at a more appropriate time.

Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense to me at this time. We are going to be experiencing a loss of 40 percent of the territory. To me, it certainly seems possible that we can continue to function with what we have. Departments have told us as they have come before us with their budgets when we have talked about division and the impact of losing 40 percent on your volume. They are not volume sensitively. Mr. Speaker, I would have to think that as an Assembly and as a government we are volume sensitively. We are going to be getting smaller, but our MLAs and

their number are going to stay the same. Very clearly, this is a political issue. There are legal implications and legal opinions, but as we have heard in this House, Yellowknife thinks they should have more seats. My colleague from Inuvik is concerned about being outnumbered by people south of the Sahtu and they want more seats. Where does this escalation stop? I think we have an obligation to the people to make wise decisions. We did make a decision on 14 and I do not think anybody's abrogating their responsibility if we say yes to a Boundaries Commission, but not now. How much government do we need?

This is a consensus government. We are supposed to be able to work together, to structure ourselves along the traditional ways to do business. Be it 14, 18, 12 or ten, we have never given it a chance. We have people that are buying into the quasi-political party approach where you have to have Cabinet and everybody else in opposition, as opposed to us working together. Which is always what I thought the intent of consensus government was. I can tell you, as well, that I do not think people will say if you had 50 MLAs here the accountability would necessarily be any better or that you would be able to control Cabinet if that is the approach you want to take. At the end of the day if you do not work together, accountability will always be an issue. I think that is a red herring. We have never given this situation a chance. We have those that want to protect the status quo, who want to inflate our central government at a time when we do not have enough money for our people, programs and services in the communities. I cannot believe that we are going to drape ourselves in this kind of rhetoric and flag-waving to say, give the people a chance because we know they want more MLAs. I do not think people want more MLAs and I think it is not the right time. We should recognize what the Aboriginal Summit has said, our partners in what will be a political accord, and let us wait. Let us see what happens and does this at the right time. Thank you, Mr.

Page 1566

Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. On behalf of the Member for Hay River, I would like to recognize in the gallery, Arthur Russell, who is the vice-president of finance of Northern

Transportation, and Klaus Hoffman. Welcome to the Assembly.

--Applause

To the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting the motion. I have also been back and forth on this issue a fewness times, but I think after all is said and done by us here, I think we do need to hear from the people we represent and I think the commission is an excellent opportunity to do that. At that time, they can tell us things like if they think there are too many Members. Maybe they think we can operate with less Members. There is quite a wide disparity in the size of the ridings that we represent. I know myself, I represent one of the larger ridings in the territory and it is a tremendous amount of work and responsibility. Mr. Miltenberger says there are ridings in Ontario with 80,000 constituents, but this is the north. We do things a little differently here, Mr. Speaker, as Mr. Miltenberger knows. I think we do have to have the critical mass, for lack of a better word, in order to run our government properly and with a breakdown of seven and seven I do question whether or not this is feasible. Having said that, we could argue this for a long time. I think the most important thing is that through the commission we will give northerners, the people in the western Arctic the opportunity to speak to the subject. At that time we can then come back and debate it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. To the motion. Mr. Steen.

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I speak to this motion as well. My concerns are in regard to the timing of this particular motion. I realize that my constituents for my communities voted in favour of a Boundary Commission at the Beaufort Regional Leadership Conference. This was the second indication of their wishes, as Mr. Roland pointed out. Mr. Speaker, the only problem I have with this particular request from the Beaufort is that they did not indicate clearly as to when they would like this Boundary Commission to take place. Mr. Speaker, I do have concerns with the timing of the Boundary Commission in that I would hope that the Boundary Commission, or the people putting the Boundary

Commission in place, will take into consideration the facts that there are consultations that are going to be going on in the communities on the constitution. A Boundary Commission touring the same communities at the same time may cause a lot of confusion within the communities. I would hope that the Boundary Commission would go forward after the consultation on the constitution has taken place. I have that particular concern.

However, I have a larger concern in that, as other members have expressed, the ability of government to operate with 14 Members. Mr. Speaker, we already indicated to the federal government that we may be operating with 14 Members as of April 1st, 1999 until elections in October 1999. This would be a timeframe whereby we would get a pretty clear indication of how effective a six Member Cabinet really is. I am also very concerned about the ability for seven Ordinary Members not only to control Cabinet, but to hold meetings and review all the work plans of the government. What kind of a workload are we putting on those seven Members and would they be able to effectively review all that information? We have had, Mr. Speaker, in our own experience in the past three years, a good indication of the amount of workload that is involved in reviewing government work plans. I would be very concerned about that.

I think my major concern is whether or not 14 Members could control the bureaucrats. That would be my major concern. Would we want bureaucrats running the government? Would we be able to have enough information and be well informed enough to be always on top of the bureaucrats, or do we just take whatever the bureaucrats recommend and go with that? That has been one of my major concerns in the past three years, how do we get control and keep control of this particular government bearing in mind that bureaucrats go on from one assembly to the next? They are there all the time. I personally have experience where we came here with the idea at one time that we were going to have a brand new government, a brand new work plan, and a brand new way too, but, in fact, the bureaucrats had quite a bit of say as to what that brand new plan was going to be.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I do not look at a new Assembly, say the first Assembly of the new territory, whatever it would be called, and wish to put a workload on them that they could not operate effectively. Mind you, we still do not know whether it is going to be 14 Members after the commission is

finished. We do not know what those numbers are going to be. Let us hear what the public has to say.

Mr. Speaker, I would recommend strongly that this motion does not indicate a time frame. Rather than suggest a timeframe at this point, I would hope that in deciding when the commission would operate we would take into consideration the fact that there are going to be tours in the communities on the constitution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion as it is.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. To the motion. Mr. Morin.

HON. DON MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we went to the Ski Club in Yellowknife, there were talks of a Boundary Commission. At that time, we had an agreement that we would go talk to our constituents and see what they felt, whether or not a Boundary Commission was needed or not, and we talked to the Aboriginal Summit. I did that. The message was clear. They do not need a Boundaries Commission at this time, not to support it. So I would not be supporting it because I have talked to the people in my riding, and at this time, there is no need for a Boundaries Commission. We can move ahead after April 1st, 1999 as a government. We have already agreed to do that. We have already agreed that there would be some increase in Members of Cabinet, and we can function until the

Page 1567

fall of 1999. We are all willing to take on that responsibility. I think we get a full day's pay; we should do a full day's work. That may mean putting in a few extra hours, but I think we are all willing to do that.

It seems everything is relevant in this world, Mr. Speaker. We have the president of the teachers' union here everyday sitting up in the gallery, lobbying the Members for more money for teachers. We have Members saying that the work increase, the load, in our schools, we need more money for that. We need more money for overworked civil servants. We need more money for overworked people in our communities. We need more money for drug and alcohol workers. A lot of times, we say we can only do things that are within the fiscal operation that we

do have, and that is within the existing dollars we do have. Every MLA that this legislature increases, every number, I think it is around \$300,000 for every Member. Increase it by one or four. It increases the budget. I think we should make a real attempt at working with the 14 Members we have and a real attempt at making it work. It would be good, for once in the history of this country, if a government can do more with less, that is less politicians. I am not afraid at all, Mr. Speaker, of attempting to do that. I do not mind making the commitment to the people of the Northwest Territories to attempt to do that. I do not think that I would want to jump ahead and say we have to increase it by 18 Members or 20 Members just for the simple reason that you need the numbers to keep the government in line or need the numbers to keep the bureaucracy in line. There are systems in place and a process is in place, even now, that can be adopted to do that. I think we can do that.

I think also that you always have to watch the balance of what is happening in this Legislative Assembly. There is no doubt in anybody's mind that Yellowknife is growing. A downturn in Yellowknife's economy is meaning it stays still for a short period of time. It is growing drastically because our constituents come and move to the city to get services. Hay River is growing. Fort Smith and Inuvik are. Those are the big areas in the Northwest Territories. Then we have our outlying communities.

I represent the smallest community in the Northwest Territories, the smallest riding, and we feel sometimes that our capital city or the bigger centres move ahead a lot faster than the smaller centres. We always say that it is a loop type economy, whatever money the government spends ends up coming back. For example, money from Yellowknife goes to Fort Resolution, it ends up in Hay River. Money from Yellowknife goes to Lutselk'e, it ends up back in Yellowknife. That is just the way it is.

As far as increasing the membership in this Legislative Assembly, I think Members should think long and hard on what message that sends to everybody else. We are saying there are not enough dollars when we can spend it on ourselves. Also, the Aboriginal Summit has said to us that if it is so critical to increase the seats, and it is so critical that the workload is too high, then we should look at going for an election by April 1st, 1999, as well. We should really look at that. If it is impossible to work with 14 Members, then we would be doing justice to the public if we have to justify it by saying we need more Members. It may then be possible that we should

also revisit whether or not we should have an election in the fall. Maybe we should move it to the spring because we do not have enough Members to function as government.

--Applause

With that, Mr. Speaker, I encourage Members to vote against this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

To the motion. Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had actually not intended to speak at all for lack of time to prepare some notes. I feel it is important to address it. I have not had time to consult properly with my constituents. I did raise it on a number of occasions in a number of constituency meetings that I have held. One of the first points that I made with all of them is that there was an agreement made with the Aboriginal Summit earlier this year by some of the leaders that said we will leave the number of seats in the western legislature at 14. I felt at that time that, it was not done considering whether or not 14 was a number that could allow us to operate effectively or not and that it may actually compromise the ability of this government to represent the public and that we had, perhaps inadvertently, compromised the ability of the government to do its primary duty which is to represent and to carry out the functions of government on behalf of the public. Nevertheless, that commitment was made, and I understand now that the Aboriginal Summit leadership is still not exactly supportive of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, but that they would probably seek to have some advice on how to be set up, if that was what we wished to do.

I would have preferred that the decision or understanding that was made in January would have not been made at all. I know that the Aboriginal Summit, the aboriginal leadership, is moving toward some sort of an understanding on the type of government that should be set up here in the west in the initial terms of the Government of the Northwest Territories, as we know it after division.

Mr. Speaker, I have been a Minister in the government. This is my third term. Hopefully it will be going for a fourth.

--Applause

Thank you. It is my view, based on my piddly little years of experience, that six is not enough and that 14 is not enough. I think our primary duty, because we are in a public government, is to make sure we can operate as effectively as possible and that, in my view, 14 is not enough, six in the Cabinet is not enough. Although I have reservations about the way in which we have come to make a decision and the context in which it has been made, I have decided not to sit it out, but to join the debate and much to the delight, I am sure, of some Members to support the motion. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. To the motion. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a really hard time trying to support an initiative that I feel is undermining the

Page 1568

distribution of power in the Western Territory through division, especially coming from a small riding where I see a lot of times when I want support on initiatives that I bring forth, I have my eastern colleagues from the smaller ridings who can understand where I am coming from. With the makeup that I see with the formation of the new Western Territory, with the 14 seats and with a call from the larger centres to allow them more seats, I really feel the whole area of distribution of power is being undermined to a state where the smaller ridings and the rural ridings will be undermined by a strong central government who will make up the majority of seats in this House and control the majority of seats in Cabinet. I would say that based on the intention of the Members in this House, now consisting of 24 Members of which nine Members come from large centres, to have 14 Members which will consist of seven Members which are half the seats that make up the Legislature; it will devolve the power and the distribution by almost 2/3 of what it was before. I think for myself, from a small riding, I feel a lot of times we do not get the ear of the government. We do not have the access to the government because of the rural ridings we come from and the location of this government being in Yellowknife, in which Yellowknife, as a large community, has four Members to represent the

community. Yet in our cases, we have three, not four, communities to do the same thing with one Member.

I believe there has to be a better understanding regarding the makeup of the new Western Territory. There also has to be more emphasis put on the rural ridings and the makeup in regard to geographical areas, in which Mr. Steen's riding will include Holman Island. I do not know how they are going to fit with Tuk asking for an extra seat for that riding and having to include an extra community. I do not think that was put in the mix for the makeup of this Legislature. From the majority of concerns I have heard here, especially from the Yellowknife MLAs, it seems it is control of that power base which is presently in Yellowknife, and expanding that power base to have more control and more say over the smaller ridings we represent. As smaller constituencies, we will be more isolated than we are now. I have a real problem with the motion, based on the whole question of should the commission consider looking at that. Also keeps in mind, there is a call from the Aboriginal Summit, who do not support this initiative at this time because of the political ramification it may have the constitutional process and the whole area in regard to the political accord we are trying to work with the aboriginal groups. I believe there has to be more time given to clearly consider exactly the implication of this motion, not just for the sake of expanding the Legislature, but the whole distribution of power in the new Western Territory. I believe this motion will undermine the smaller ridings that are presently in this House and we will not have the say that we had before, with 24 Members.

I strongly feel, Mr. Speaker, that the whole process everybody is pushing that is we have to conclude this motion in order to have it endorsed by the federal government. We can come forward next year to the federal government and ask for amendment or a call for a Boundaries Commission strictly by notifying the federal government of our endeavours. I believe we have to allow the smaller communities to seriously see how they fit into the big picture of the Western Territory because the push for this motion I see coming from the larger centres to build the power base that they presently have. I strongly feel it will undermine myself as a regular Member from a small riding and also the other communities that do consist of small ridings. The makeup will be over 50 percent of the seats if Yellowknife or any larger centres get more seats and no more seats are allocated to the smaller ridings.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the motion, based on my concerns that I feel the smaller communities will be undermined by this process and they will not have due diligence and due process in allowing them to also have a say in how the Western Territory is going to be made up because of the argument from the larger centres where they want to be, based on population. It should be based on geographical area, so that the square mileage that you control, you should have that many more seats for every 100 square miles you control. That is more of a way of distributing power, not by the size of the community but by the size of your land base. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against it.

MR. SPEAKER:

To the motion. Mr. Antoine.

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the motion, on establishing an Electoral District Boundaries Commission, looking at the west. There are merits to both sides of the argument. After division, we are going to be in our own new territory. That is where our focus in the west will be is how we are going to govern ourselves. This is an exercise we have been working on in the west here to the Constitutional Working Group process. There are land claims arrangements made in the west. Self-government negotiations are going on. We are all looking at how western governance is going to look here in the west. There is ongoing process and things are evolving, changing as we go through these discussions. Generally, on this issue there is a need to focus on how we are going to do the work after division. This is what we are looking at in this process. The Electoral District Boundaries Commission will be a commission of three people who will go into the communities and listen to what people are saying in the communities, about this issue. Whether we set it up or not, I guess is the subject of debate here today. In a sense, I think it will be good to go into the communities to listen to what they have to say.

Mr. Speaker, I have made a presentation to the Deh Cho First Nations leadership meeting, last week, in Fort Simpson. I expressed the direction that this may be a possibility during this sitting, that this debate will occur. I did not receive any response from my presentation. Maybe they did respond, but I have not received anything official, yet. Again, the timing is that we knew this might be a possibility for this sitting. We were not too sure until the honourable Member for

Inuvik made a motion late last week that he was intending to put this motion on the floor. We did have discussions in the past, while we were at the workshop, at the ski lodge. We mentioned this might be a possibility. I did mention it to different people in the communities. However, the community leaders, the community people are very busy as well. They are doing their own community government issues they have to deal with, land claims issues and discussions of this nature so perhaps they did not have the time to think about it. I have not received any comments for or against it from my communities. The timing is

Page 1569

a concern here.

On a personal note, as an MLA for the Nahendeh area, I represent six communities. I represent the most communities in this Legislative Assembly. It covers a really beautiful part of the Northwest Territories. It is quite a large distance between the communities. It takes time to go to all these communities. It is not like a Member from Yellowknife where they could walk around their whole constituency in an hour. Mr. Henry could jog around his constituency in less than that, maybe. You compare the size of the territory you represent and the number of people. There are a lot of differences throughout the whole Northwest Territories. Each community is different from each other and so there is a need for good representation. Based on that, and there was a request that came in from the mayor from Liard that we do have an Electoral District Boundaries Commission. Based on that, I would say we should go to the communities and listen to what they have to say. That is from an MLA perspective.

From being in the government for the last two years plus some months, I know the workload that is required by the Ministers to do the work properly. To have good government, you need enough bodies there to do the job right. The present proposal was to keep the 14 MLAs in place and have six Ministers, a Speaker and seven Ordinary Members. I think the workload is going to be quite a bit. To do that for four years is going to be a lot of work. Just based on the reality that we are only human beings and even though you are committed and put in long hours, it still takes a toll on you. For good government, I think we have to consider ourselves, what kind of government do we want to have after division? Based on that as well, I tend to lean toward taking it to the people through a commission and see what we get out of it.

Even if we do have a commission and go to the people and have public consultation, recommendations will be made by the three people who will be in the commission and it will come back here to us. We still have another kick at the can, once we get the views of the people in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. To the motion, Mr. Henry.

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think there are a couple of emotions that are running wild in the House over this debate. I think the emotions are fear and fear. I would like to try and alleviate some of those concerns that people have. We have heard one concern about money, the cost. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion calls for the establishment of a Boundaries Commission. Some of the Members have talked about the cost. I think it is important to note that, as with the Nunavut government, the federal government will pick up the costs to have the people in the west give their opinion to a Boundaries Commission. To start off with, this will not cost the Government of the Northwest Territories any additional finances to find out what the opinions are of the residents of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember this commission will receive input and their responsibility is to make recommendations to the House. It is not their responsibility to increase the number of Members or take away Members from the House. Their only responsibility is to make the recommendations to the House. At that time, this Assembly will, through debate, if this motion passes, decide whether they will increase the number of Members. The Members of this House will be better enabled to have that debate when they have had the input from the commission which will have received input from the residents of the Northwest Territories. I appreciate Mr. Antoine, during his presentation, talking about the number of communities that he represents. I also listened to the Deputy Premier talk about the number of communities he represented. Mr. Antoine represents six communities. I am not sure of the exact number of residents in the communities. For myself in Yellowknife South, it is the largest riding in the Northwest Territories. It took me four months of four evenings a week to go around to every door in my riding. I just got to each door and I went out four

nights a week. I suspect if Mr. Antoine went to his communities, it would not take him that amount of time to get around to each door. There is more at play than whether it is numbers. The ridings are one issue, but it takes a long time to give the same representation to Members in a riding. To me, it is not a valid argument about the number of ridings, but I appreciate the opportunity to talk to that. I think the question we have to decide here today, Mr. Speaker, is about fairness and equality in representation. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. To the motion. Mr. Roland, do you have closing remarks?

MR. ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of the comments expressed by many of my colleagues here are very true in different areas of this territory we represent. As we heard, the concern is the cost. However, the Boundaries Commission is to select and seek information and the cost is covered. If we put the legal question aside, let us just go to the people and ask them. We heard concerns about how overrepresented we are as stated by my colleague from Thebacha. In fact, we are third in that the Yukon and Nunavut are both smaller constituencies than we are. When it comes to reasonable representation, I think in the motion I have tried to address that issue of maintaining a balance between the urban and rural constituencies. As well, I have had members in my community raise their concerns. I do not believe that by sending out a Boundaries Commission we are saying we want more. We are seeking information from the people of the territories we say we represent. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I cannot deny my constituency their democratic right to due process, to voice their concerns and to have participation toward establishing a new Western Territory. Their democratic right to shape the new Western Territory is something which we have to give them. I have been mentally keeping track and I think the majority of Members support this motion. I thank them for that. I also believe the people of the Territories will also thank them for that. The people of the territories will have their democratic right to speak to those who come seeking information from them. With that, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The Member for Inuvik is seeking a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Roland, Mr.

Page 1570

Ootes, Mr. Erasmus, Mr. Henry, Mr. Antoine, Mr. Kakfwi, Mr. Dent, Mrs. Groenewegen and Mr. Steen.

MR. SPEAKER:

All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Morin, Mr. Krutko and Mr. Rabesca.

MR. SPEAKER:

All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Ng, Mr. Ningark, Mr. Evaloarjuk and Mr. O'Brien.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The results of Motion 19-13(5), nine for, four against and four abstentions. The motion is passed.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters. Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Dental Profession Act and Committee Report 8-13(5) with Mr. Steen in the Chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

I call the committee to order. For consideration today in committee of the whole, we have Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Dental Profession Act and Committee Report 8-13. I would like some guidance as to what the committee would like to do. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would recommend that we proceed with Bill 19 today.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you. I will then ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Ng, to introduce the bill.

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to appear before the committee today to discuss Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Dental Profession Act. The Department of Health and Social Services is responsible under the act for registering dentists in the Northwest Territories. We are the only jurisdiction in Canada which still registers foreign trained dentists referred to as part three dentists. The National Dental Examination Board recently announced that no exams would be offered to qualify foreign trained dentists after December 31, 1999. Therefore, there is a need to revise the Dental Profession Act to ensure that we are not granting new part three registrations after the date when a dentist could actually complete their exams. The proposed amendment will cause the registration of all foreign trade dentists from July 1, 1998 onward to lapse by December 31, 1999. Foreign trained dentists registered before the amendment will be registered until the expiry of the three-year period, but will not be eligible for extension past their original term. This amendment is being brought forward because there is a potential liability if the government and Dental Registration Committee registers a foreign trained dentist knowing the dentist would be unlikely to attain national certification. The department advised the Registration Committee, the NWT Dental Association and all NWT dental clinic owners of the proposed change. No concerns with the amendment were raised in discussion with the association last week. The association was previously aware of the NDEB decision and was expecting some change to the registration of part three dentists. Mr. Chairman, I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee might have on this bill. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Minister Ng. I invite the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, Mr. Enuaraq, for the Committee's comments on the Bill.

MR. ENUARAQ:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Social Programs reviewed Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Dental Profession Act at its meeting June 1, 1998. The committee would like to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services and his staff for presenting the bill.

Bill 19 is a response to the decision of the National Dental Examination Board to no longer test foreign trained dentists after December 31, 1999. Presently foreign trained dentists are allowed to register under the sponsorship of a Canadian certified dentist in part three of the Dental Register and practice dentistry under supervision for a three-year period. The foreign trained dentist is then expected to pass the boards to maintain registration.

The NWT is the only jurisdiction in Canada that permits registration of dentists prior to the passing of the Canadian National Dental Examination Boards. There will be no mechanism for the testing of foreign trained dentists after December 31, 1999. As a result, this bill would provide that the period of registration for new applicants expires December 31, 1999. The part three provision will be repealed once the registration period of current dentists has expired.

Mr. Chairman, the standing committee had no difficulty with Bill 19. Committee Members may have additional comments or questions on the bill as we proceed. This concludes the standing committee's comments on Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Dental Profession Act. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Enuaraq. I now invite the Minister to bring in witnesses if he wishes. Mr. Ng.

HON. KELVIN NG:

Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Is the committee agreed that the Minister may bring in witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Could I ask the Minister to introduce his witnesses to the committee, please?

Page 1571

HON. KELVIN NG:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right, Lynn Elkin, Director of Policy and Planning, Department of Health and Social Services. To my left, Shawn Flynn, Legislative Counsel, Department of Justice. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Ng. Welcome to the committee. The floor is now open to general comments on the bill. General comments on the bill. I hear clause-by-clause, does everyone agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you. We will now proceed clause-by-clause. Bill 19. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

An Act to Amend the Dental Profession Act. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Page 1, clause 1. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Clause 2, Bill 19. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Page 2, clause 3. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Clause 4. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Clause 5, Bill 19. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Clause 6, Bill 19. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Now we will revert back to the bill as a whole.
Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Does the committee agree that Bill 19 is ready for
third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Bill 19 is now ready for third reading and I thank the
Minister and the witnesses. We have one other item
on the agenda and that is Committee Report 8-13(5).
Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Steen):

Thank you, Mr. Ootes. We have a motion on the floor
to report progress. The motion is not debatable. All
those in favour of the motion? All those opposed?
The motion is carried. I will rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER:

The House will come back to order. Good evening.
Item 20, report of committee of whole. Mr. Steen.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE
WHOLE

MR. STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your
committee has been considering Bill 19, An Act to
Amend the Dental Profession Act and would like to
report progress. I would like to report that Bill 19 is
ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the
report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred
with.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Seconded by Mr. Evaloarjuk. The motion
is in order. To the motion. Question has been called.
All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is
carried. Item 21, third reading of bills. Mr. Ng.

ITEM 21: THIRD READING OF BILLS

BILL 15, Adoption Act

HON. KELVIN NG:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable
Member for Aivilik, that Bill 15, Adoption Act, be read
for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. PICCO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on the third
reading of the bill, I still have a concern that there
might be a potential challenge to the bill because of

the constitutional status of the legislation, where the NSTC had to be involved in the process. I am wondering if that could be clarified for me that, indeed, there is no constitutional challenge by any outside organization. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

--Applause

Bill 15 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Item 22, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations immediately after adjournment. Meeting for tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. of the Ordinary Members' Caucus.

Orders of the day for Wednesday, June 3, 1998:

1. Prayer

Page 1572

2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion

15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills

16. Motions

17. First Reading of Bills

18. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Committee Report 08-13(5): Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs

20. Report of Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Dental Profession Act

22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. This House stands adjourned to Wednesday, June 3, 1998 at 1:30 p.m.

--ADJOURNMENT