



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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Day 2

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The Honourable **Samuel Gargan**, Speaker

MEMBERS PRESENT

Honourable Jim Antoine, Honourable Charles Dent, Mr. Erasmus, Honourable Sam Gargan, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Henry, Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, Mr. Krutko, Honourable Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Morin, Mr. Ootes, Mr. Rabesca, Honourable Floyd Roland, Honourable Vince Steen.

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. Sam Gargan):

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

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 4-13(8): Nursing Compensation

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to report to you today that we have successfully negotiated an agreement with the Union of Northern Workers to provide a temporary market supplement to nurses.

--Applause

In our 1999-2000 budget, the Government of the Northwest Territories identified \$3 million specifically for nurse recruitment and retention. This funding was made available because the government realized that the national and international shortage of nurses is seriously affecting our ability to attract and retain nurses and needed to be addressed directly.

A consultation process with stakeholders was established to decide the best way to use this additional money. This stakeholders group included representatives of the Union of Northern Workers, the NWT Registered Nurses Association, health and social services boards, the Financial Management Board Secretariat and the Department of Health and Social Services.

These stakeholders worked hard to reach an agreement on how best to distribute the nursing supplement. It is very much to their credit that we were able to reach an agreement in such a short time frame and I would like to congratulate them on their work. Having this agreement in place means that approximately 270 indeterminate nurses employed by health and social services boards and related agencies will be eligible to receive temporary market supplements into the year 2000. Full and part-time indeterminate nurses will begin receiving it within the next few weeks. Boards and agencies recruiting nurses will also begin offering their new hires the recruitment incentive this month.

Part of the funding will also be used to hire three full-time nurse mentors who will provide additional support and mentoring to nurses in the field. This additional professional support and salary supplement will certainly help make the Northwest Territories more competitive in recruiting new nurses.

Mr. Speaker, because of the increasing competition for nurses, the Government of the Northwest Territories has reviewed compensation levels for northern nurses. A study of nursing salaries across the country showed that general duty and community health nurses in the NWT receive the highest base salary of nurses in Canada. This does not take into account benefits offered by various jurisdictions. However, when we included benefits in our calculations and adjusted for the cost of living, we found that our compensation levels were still very competitive.

I have spoken before of the vital role that nurses play in the NWT health and social services system. Attracting and retaining competent nurses is critical to the viability of our health care system.

To address this, the department, in partnership with the boards and professional associations, has developed a recruitment and retention strategy designed to attract, and provide support to, health and social services workers. This strategy is being implemented and is starting to yield positive results. In May we were experiencing a vacancy rate among all nurses of 20 percent. Today, I am pleased to be able to report that this rate is down to 10 percent. However, our greatest difficulty still lies in attracting and retaining community health nurses and we will be continuing to focus special attention on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, financial compensation is only one part of the recruitment and retention picture. To retain our

northern nurses, they must know they are valued members of the system and of the community. We can all play a role in retaining nurses by recognizing them, at every opportunity, for the valuable contribution they make in our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement 6-13(8): Concerns of Giant Mine Employees

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night the Yellowknife MLAs held a constituency meeting. About 250 people turned out. I would say that the majority were concerned with the future of Giant Mine. There were probably 150 employees from Giant Mine accompanied by members of their families at the meeting. Mr. Speaker, it was difficult not to

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be moved by the words expressed by Yellowknife residents and constituents, some as young as 13 years old, who do not want to leave the North.

Mr. Speaker, people who spoke at the meeting last night talked about the cost to employees of Giant Mine and their families with the loss of jobs. The cost to other businesses in the North and the cost in lost revenues in transfer payments to this government and the effect that might have on us.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we can find another solution to the Giant Mine situation. One that will better deal with the environmental liabilities. One that will better protect the employees and one that will improve on the total number of jobs that will be offered to Giant Mine employees. Mr. Speaker, I agreed along with others in the meeting to meet and work with the union to see if together we can find such a solution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Ootes.

Member's Statement 7-13(8): Concerns of Giant Mine Employees

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, like Mr. Dent, I would like to speak on the meeting that we had last night. A constituency meeting. There were other concerns, but the main concern was the Giant Mine employee situation and of course it was one where the employees are concerned about succession, pensions and separation pay. Of course the criteria and the important area for them is continued employment. We heard a lot of speakers last night who passionately spoke about their concerns. We were certainly very concerned ourselves as Members of this Legislature about this. Following that meeting, Mr. Speaker, today, it was agreed last night that we would hold a meeting today with a group of people, with union representation and with Members from this Legislature, the Yellowknife MLAs, and the City of Yellowknife. We did come to some agreement to do follow-up work immediately on that and hopefully, from there, there will be some encouraging light at the end of the tunnel.

It is certainly a difficult situation. It is one that affects a lot of employees for our community, close to 300. We can look at it in terms that there will be at least 300 more employees affected. The news is coming at a very late juncture. We are all trying to grapple with the situation and trying to work as hard as we can to reach some solutions to this. Like Mr. Dent, I am hoping that at the end of the day we do find some solutions for families. There were some young people who came forward last night stating that they would like to stay in this community, but if their parents do not have work, they have a fear that they might have to move where there is work. There was a very passionate plea for us to do something about it. We are working on that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Krutko.

Member's Statement 8-13(8): Expansion of Inuvik Natural Gas Conversion Program

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement today is regarding the Inuvik Natural Gas Project that is now on line. I would like to congratulate the Inuvialuit Petroleum Corporation and also the Inuvialuit for taking on such an initiative of enhancing the oil and gas industry in the Beaufort. It has been quite a few years since any development has taken place in that area. It has been some time since we have taken advantage of our natural resources that we do have to better the lives of people of the Mackenzie Delta and also of Inuvik.

Regarding the gas pipeline and the benefits that it offers and the possibilities of converting over from diesel fuel to natural gas, to eventually bringing down the price of fuel in the Inuvik region. In Aklavik, Mr. Speaker, my constituency pays almost a dollar per liter of gas. In other areas that complain that gas prices are too high, like Yellowknife, yet when you pay a dollar a liter it is very expensive for the people in the community of Aklavik and other isolated communities.

I would also like to ask the Minister and this government to expand the program that they deliver to the community of Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Tuktoyaktuk and other communities in the Beaufort Delta, to be able to take advantage of the cheap cost of fuel, especially natural gas. There is talk about expanding the pipeline to Yellowknife. I think before we even think of leaving the Beaufort region, let us do something for the region that is presently finely feeling what it is like to have some economic opportunity, and also benefit the region as a whole, before we consider exporting our natural resources that are making the lives better for the people who live where those resources come from.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be asking questions to the Minister regarding the possibility of expanding the program that is presently being delivered in Inuvik for conversion so that the other communities surrounding Inuvik can take advantage of converting from diesel fuel to natural gas which would mean savings to everyone and improve the lives of the people in the Mackenzie Delta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Member's Statement 9-13(8): Recycling Program for Beverage Containers

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, during oral questions, I brought to the attention of the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development the need for a recycling program for beverage containers in the Northwest Territories. The Minister indicated willingness to do a paper outlining the different elements that would be necessary to start major recycling effort.

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The less we put into the landfill sites, the fewer problems we will face down the road.

Mr. Speaker, the transportation system in the NWT is sufficiently developed to permit the return of recyclable beverage containers. With the exception of a few communities, all are reachable by winter road or the regular highway system. For the exceptions, barge services are usually available. With cooperation from transportation companies and local governments I am sure solutions would be easily realized.

Mr. Speaker, any system we implement for the return of non-alcoholic beverage containers will be better than what we have presently. It may require money now but will save the environment and cost to future generations of Northerners. Mr. Speaker, for the record, I raised this issue yesterday and today on behalf of a constituent in Hay River who is interested in being a proponent for a facility to handle these containers in Hay River. I would appreciate any assistance to that potential proponent from the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Henry.

Member's Statement 10-13(8): Concerns of Giant Mine Employees

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague, Mr. Dent, I noticed talked earlier about the constituency meeting that the Yellowknife MLAs had in the Great Hall last

night and I would like to continue and add some of the points that I noted at that meeting.

The vast majority, as was mentioned, of the constituents at the meeting were Giant employees who were very concerned about the potential of losing their jobs, security and also pensions that they worked so hard for. For about two and one-half hours, the four MLAs from Yellowknife listened to the union officials and family members and concerned constituents about their fears of losing up to 300 jobs in our community because of a deal being negotiated with Price Waterhouse Coopers and Miramar Con Mine to potentially take over the Giant Mine.

Yesterday afternoon union officials were advised by Price Waterhouse Coopers that rumors of Miramar takeover of the Giant Mine are official. Last night we heard the many pleas for help and direction from the people of our community soon to be affected if this takeover proceeds. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we MLAs felt powerless to provide any concrete direction to the employees of Giant, nor were we able to offer any assurances that this government has any jurisdiction to intervene in the negotiating process. DIAND officials should have been the ones hearing the voices of the people here last night. These constituents came to us for help and guidance and we were powerless to offer anything that would reassure them that help was on the way.

How easy it would have been to have officials with responsibility and jurisdiction meet with these employees if these officials were in Yellowknife. Instead, Mr. Speaker, the people in the driver's seat are sitting in Ottawa behind their bureaucracy of the federal government. This again, is another example of why we need to have control and responsibility in the North. As MLAs we are certainly limited in what we can do and this was displayed last night. As much as we may want to help in an economic crisis of this magnitude, our hands are pretty well tied. DIAND had better heed what is going on. Not only can Yellowknife not afford to lose 300 jobs, the entire Territory will surely feel the effects as well, if the fear of those lost jobs come to pass.

Mr. Speaker, I 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? There are no nays. Mr. Henry, you have unanimous consent.

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you colleagues. The meeting last night surely provoked my fellow MLAs, as it did me, to take whatever action we can to assist the Giant Mine workers whose fate is uncertain at this time. We have agreed to explore other options in their favour and I am confident that this government will support any viable solution to this crisis situation. We cannot afford to lose these people from our community, nor can the community absorb the impact of the Giant Mine closing. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time. I certainly will be working toward ensuring that the employees of Giant Mine are as well looked after as this government can possibly do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Steen.

Member's Statement 11-13(8): Commissioner's Awards Ceremonies in Nunakput

HON. VINCE STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents in Nunakput, I take the opportunity to thank the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Dan Marion, for taking the time to tour the riding of Nunakput during the week of September 1, this year.

Mr. Speaker, many elders and members of the public took part in the Commissioner's Award ceremonies in each community. As the Commissioner indicated to this House yesterday, five

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elders were recognized for their contribution toward the betterment of their respective communities and the Inuvialuit culture as a whole.

I wish to recognize and thank the mayors, councillors and recreation staff in the communities of Sachs Harbour, Holman, Paulatuk and Tuktoyaktuk for organizing these events and for contributing the use of the facilities and supplying the refreshments and food for the feast. Finally, I wish to thank the public who came out in support of the Commissioner's

Awards program. Judging by the turnout in each community, the Elders' Awards Program is very popular and I am sure everyone looks forward to future awards of this nature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Rabesca.

Member's Statement 12-13(8): Dogrib Land Claim Agreement-in-Principle

MR. RABESCA:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, on August 9, the Dogrib Nation along with the federal and territorial governments signed the agreement-in-principle. That basically spells out what will be in the final agreement that will be signed in due course. This AIP is very significant for my people. It establishes the perimeters of the final land claims settlement, as well as establishes the framework for continued discussions and the realization of self-government.

To get to this stage in the process all three parties have worked extremely hard to provide the people with an agreement that everyone can live by. For my people it is the realization of many years of work as well as a new hope for the future. This agreement will allow the Dogrib region the ability to govern its own affairs and hopefully provide better services and a better life for the members of my region. It is the first agreement in Canada that combines the stability of the land claim settlement and the idea of self-government into one document. I believe this will be a model for other agreements to come in the future.

Over the next couple of years, while the final agreement is being completed, I hope that all parties will continue to work together and ensure the final agreement is the best possible agreement we could provide for our people.

There will be many important events that take place between now and the signing of the final agreement and through this all, change will happen. However, because we now have four areas of our Territory that have completed the settlement process, it also brings much stability to the NWT as a whole.

To close, I would like to congratulate Treaty 11 Council, the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories in taking this

next step in fulfilling our dream of self-governance and control of our destiny. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Erasmus.

Member's Statement 13-13(8): Concerns of Giant Mine Employees

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like my fellow colleagues from Yellowknife I wish to comment on our constituency meeting yesterday. As has been indicated, the primary topic was the imminent sale of Giant Mine to Miramar and what the consequences of that sale could be. The employees have been given a reprieve of 15 days to put together some type of a deal whereby there could be an alternative to Miramar buying that mine. The thing that people are primarily concerned about is that if Miramar is successful in their bid, the vast majority of the workers would be laid off since a lot of the work would be consolidated and only some of the workers would be kept on, perhaps as few as fifty. Apparently this is a condition of the sale to the mine, that the employees do not come with the sale. The problem is how do you ensure that employees still get their pensions that they have worked so hard for and how do they get the severance pay that they are entitled to in their contracts?

The other thing that was brought up is the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act under which the federal government can implement a minimum rate for gold. This apparently has been used in other instances, I believe at the mine in Timmins, and we should probably be looking at the federal government to utilize this act.

The other thing we need to do is try to ensure that there is enough time for the union to put together some type of a deal to purchase this mine other than Miramar's purchase. Otherwise we will be looking at a lot of layoffs. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I believe that it is incumbent on this government to try to assist the workers in getting an extension on the 15 days that they have been given to put together some type of a deal.

The other thing that was clearly, clearly evident, is that the general public is not really aware of how powerless we are in this situation and in most instances when it comes to the federal government. The federal government, as we know, holds the power in most areas and we most often have to ask them for information to do certain things and if they feel like doing it they do, if they do not, they do not. But the general public does not seem to be aware of this. This is one of the main reasons, as Mr. Henry has indicated, why we have to work on getting our natural resources and the power to control them, transferred to the North. With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence and I thank our Members for allowing me to conclude my statement.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

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Steen.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. VINCE STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a Department of Transportation employee, Mr. Curtis Mercredi. Just a few weeks ago in early August, Curtis won the title of National Grand Champion at the National Airport Truck Rodeo competition held this year at Vancouver National Airport.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you and congratulations. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today to recognize the new president of the Union of Northern Workers, Georgina Rolt-Kaiser. I dedicated my Member's statement to Georgina yesterday. I wish she would have been here to hear it, but it is wonderful to have her here today. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Congratulations again. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Henry.

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize in the gallery today, Mrs. Dolly Ablitt, who is the newly elected regional vice-president of the North Great Slave region of the Union of Northern Workers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a respected senior and an old friend of mine in the gallery, Mr. Ed Jeske. I would also like to recognize Curtis's mother, Audrey Mercredi.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not have an opportunity to recognize my constituents too often here since some of them are in small remote communities. I would like to recognize Ralph Sanguiez from Trout Lake and sitting next to him is Malcolm MacPhail from Yellowknife.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier stole some of my thunder, but I was going to recognize as well a former Fort Smith resident and schoolmate and somewhat older, Mr. Malcolm MacPhail, now a resident of Yellowknife. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Ootes.

MR. OOTES:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize someone who I have worked with when I was in the territorial government many years ago and she has been a dedicated worker with the Union of Northern Workers here in the North, Josie Gould.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council and past member of this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Richard Nerysoo.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 9-13(8): Role of Nursing Mentors

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Honourable Floyd Roland, with his statement today that they have reached an

agreement on how they are going to use the \$3 million for recruitment and retention. I do have a couple of questions in regard to the statement. He said that part of the funding will be used to hire three full-time nurse mentors who will provide additional support and mentoring to nurses in the field. Perhaps he could describe what that role is and what kind of people they will be using in those positions? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 9-13(8): Role of Nursing Mentors

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the three positions the department has discussed are to help some of our nurses that are coming through the program that the college here in the Territories is offering, and provide the necessary training in the communities and prepare nurses for becoming community nurses. We are doing that in order to help some of the nurses that are new to the Northwest Territories and new nurses overall just coming into the nursing career and profession. We are trying to make the transition as smooth as possible to make sure they maintain confidence while in the North and feel that they are supported in doing their work in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 9-13(8): Role of Nursing Mentors

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is where will these nurse mentors be located in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 9-13(8): Role of Nursing Mentors

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information available at this time. I will provide it to the Members once I have that information. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 9-13(8): Role of Nursing Mentors

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in assessing the problem of recruitment and retention, what attention was paid to the issue of housing for nurses in the Northwest Territories? I think that everyone knows that during the life of this Assembly, a move was made to sell off government housing units which were used for teachers and nurses. I would like to know what attention was paid to the issue of accommodation in relation to recruitment and retention? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 9-13(8): Role of Nursing Mentors

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there were a number of areas that were looked at through this group that I mentioned in my Minister's statement, and in negotiation with the Union of Northern Workers, Financial Management Board Secretariat and the Department of Health and Social Services and the boards, we looked at the best way of taking these dollars that were given to us and getting the best benefit from those. We believe that we have done that with the proposal that has been accepted and that will be implemented in a marketing supplement.

The areas were looked at as well, I am sure there were a number of areas, one is housing, one was VTAs, a lot of areas were looked at. As you know, the decision of this government early on in the life of this Assembly was made to remove itself from staff housing. We have not looked at going back into that

area. That is one of the reasons that it has not been included. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

Question 10-13(8): Natural Gas Conversion Project Expansion

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. It is regarding the Natural Gas Conversion Project in Inuvik. I would like to thank the Minister and his department for helping the Inuvialuit and the Beaufort Delta regions for making this become a reality. I would like to ask the Minister if there is a possibility of expanding the program that he presently is assisting to include the outlying communities in the Mackenzie Delta and especially the communities of Aklavik, Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic. Can the Minister see if there is a possibility of also extending the conversion grants to cover the cost to convert to natural gas for diesel fuel? This would allow us to have cleaner burning fuel and also help deal with the problem of the ozone depletion. I would like to ask the Minister, is there a possibility of expanding this program to other communities in the Mackenzie Delta? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 10-13(8): Natural Gas Conversion Project Expansion

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The problem would be the same as it would in other communities, we must ensure that a supply of natural gas could be delivered to the communities at an economical rate. If we could do that, then of course the government would be able then to consider helping with the capital cost of converting to natural gas. My understanding at this time, is that it is not economical to ensure that a supply of natural gas would be available to the other communities in the Mackenzie Delta. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 10-13(8): Natural Gas Conversion Project Expansion

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister if he would consider looking at the possibility of a study to see what those cost savings will be? We are only talking, in case of transportation cost of driving to Inuvik from Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic, which is a two hour drive, in order to require your natural gas either bringing it in by bulk truck. Converting your furnaces to natural gas would be just a matter of converting your fuel system to a natural gas system. Will the Minister consider looking at seeing if that is feasible in light of the pipeline now going into Inuvik and natural gas being sold there? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return To Question 10-13(8): Natural Gas Conversion Project Expansion

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be prepared to look at that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Erasmus.

Question 11-13(8): Pay and Benefits to Medical Professionals

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MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. My questions are in relation to the Minister's statement on paying benefits to medical professionals in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, in the Minister's statement he had indicated that they had put together a group of stakeholders to decide what to do with the \$3 million for the Recruitment and Retention Program. He also indicated that the government, or somebody had done a study which showed that NWT nursing salaries were the highest based salaries of nurses in Canada. Once they looked at the benefits they found that our compensation levels were still very competitive. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that given the fact that we

have the highest cost of living in Canada, it is natural that we should have the highest based salary. Not only the highest based salary, it should be substantially higher than anybody else. Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister to indicate now, when he says we found our compensation levels were still competitive, could he describe that a little bit more fully so we get a better picture? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 11-13(8): Pay and Benefits to Medical Professionals

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of detail accompanied with the answer that I could give the Member, but I know, just in the short of it, when we look at wages dollar for dollar, we were, in most jurisdictions or compared to most jurisdictions, doing quite well, but when you threw the benefits in, then we drop somewhat. It depends on the level of the nurse, how many years experience, if she is working at a community health centre or working at a regional hospital. There are a number of factors taken into that, but I can provide the Member with more of that information if he would like to do so at a later date. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 11-13(8): Pay and Benefits to Medical Professionals

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I could rephrase my question. When you factor in the cost of living in the Northwest Territories, do we still have the highest rates of compensation of the nurses in Canada? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 11-13(8): Pay and Benefits to Medical Professionals

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the changes or the comparison that was done was based on wages and benefits. I do not believe the cost of living in different jurisdictions have come into that. Definitely, we agree that we need to be paying our nurses more and that is what we have done with the program or this market supplement. We see the shortage and we are already facing the difficulty of bringing new nurses into the Territories and we are trying to enhance more northern people to get involved in the nursing program so we know we have to be very competitive. Especially in light of cost of living and remoteness that many of our nurses work in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 11-13(8): Pay and Benefits to Medical Professionals

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister had also indicated in his statement that in May, we were experiencing a vacancy rate among all nurses of 20 percent but that now the rate is down to 10 percent. I was wondering if the Minister could indicate what level of experience do those new nurses have because I understand that, in the past, we have had inexperienced nurses going into communities and they have been medevacing a lot of people that perhaps should not have been medevaced and this was driving up our costs in this area. Could the Minister indicate what level of experience these 10 percent of nurses have that we have hired? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 11-13(8): Pay and Benefits to Medical Professionals

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the present time, I could not give you each nurse that we hired there, their ranking, years of history, work experience, and so on. But I believe that we have tried to recruit experienced nurses. Those that have less experience would not be put into, for example, community health stations, right off the start, we would like to have more experienced nurses in those centres. We know that

there is much pressure put on those. That is one of the areas we are finding difficulties. Most of our vacancies that are occurring are in the smaller centres. So we are trying to attract the staff that has the professional expertise and adequate experience to work in those situations. As mentioned on numerous occasions here and other forums, that we are having difficulty attracting those.

That is why this government and all of us, as well as Members from the other side have worked together to try and come up with a competitive package that will attract nurses to the North. I think we have gone that step and we are trying to show we can support them as much as possible. But as well, in my Minister's statement, I suggested, and I state, and I think we should be clear on that, the wages are one portion of our Recruitment Retention Program. I think we all have duties, right from this level to the community level, to show the nurses, no matter if they are northern nurses or new nurses to the North, that we appreciate the work they do on behalf of us. Until we do that we are going to continue to find that we are going to have a hard time staffing these positions. A lot of times these nurses, whether they are from the north or from the south, have a fair bit of difficulty adjusting to working in the smaller centres and locations, and they need the support from the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Erasmus.

Supplementary To Question 11-13(8): Pay and Benefits to Medical Professionals

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MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to hear that we are doing something to recruit and retain nurses, but equally as valuable, or maybe even more, are the doctors. I know that we are having a problem recruiting doctors here in Yellowknife, so I would like to know if the Minister, if this plan includes anything for recruiting and retaining doctors, as well?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 11-13(8): Pay and Benefits to Medical Professionals

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the area of doctors, we do know, and the department is working with the Medical Association and hoping to start dealing with the forecasting, we know we will run into problems. When you look at it on a per capita basis, there are a large number of doctors in the Northwest Territories, but we know that in the future we have doctors that are getting on with age or looking to retirement. We need to recruit and make sure we have the adequate level of service provided. The department has been working with the Medical Association to try and deal with this issue before it becomes a crisis. Right now, the focus has been on nurses because we found ourselves right at the crisis point. We have had, as many of you have heard over the summer, a number of nursing stations or health centres in the smaller communities go on to emergency level of service because of the shortage of nurses. That is what we focused on with this program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Ootes.

Question 12-13(8): Addressing Potential Doctor Shortage

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to follow up on that question by Mr. Erasmus, in June we heard that there was a shortage of nurses here in Yellowknife to staff the emergency room at the Stanton Hospital. They did not have enough doctors available to staff it for around the clock and the size of the community, of course, demands that. Now Dr. King tells me there is a doctor shortage at Stanton this summer and it is an indicator of a larger problem. Apparently we have 78 physicians for 100,000 population and nationally it is at 98 physicians. That is a 20 percent difference. Dr. King did a survey during the summer and he said that in the two regions of Yellowknife and Hay River, 12 long-term physicians have left the North in the past year and a half. The Canadian Medical Association is warning about a doctor shortage across the country. I heard the Minister's answer to the question, but I wonder if he could tell me if they will look at the situation of the need to address doctor shortages, or potential doctor shortages because, like the nurses' situation, it is a critical problem, but we also need to now address the doctor shortage.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 12-13(8): Addressing Potential Doctor Shortage

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I responded earlier to the previous question, the department is working with the Medical Association to try and come to grips with the growing concerns of doctor shortages in the Northwest Territories. As I stated earlier, we would not want to see it come to the situation we have with the nurses. We are trying to be a bit proactive here in dealing with that and trying to find ways of providing services that would not see a reduction in doctor services. We have undergone a number of areas of work that would see trying to address that in the future. Some of it is working with boards. For example, we have in the Northwest Territories a number of private clinics. There is some discussion as to whether we should be focusing more on staff doctors and working along those lines. There has been some work done in Yellowknife, and I know in the community of Inuvik and I believe in Hay River as well, where there are a number of private clinics just seeing if we can try and come up with a program that is more suitable to the Northwest Territories and would still see us provide an adequate level of doctors here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 12-13(8): Addressing Potential Doctor Shortage

MR. OOTES:

I wonder if the Minister could tell me if that program that they are looking at would include an incentive program that perhaps is offered in other locations. Certainly in the states, they do offer incentives. I am wondering if that has been investigated. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 12-13(8): Addressing Potential Doctor Shortage

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the present time, we have not gone to that level of looking at what we can do for the doctors in the sense of providing a supplement of that nature. I am aware that there was work ongoing within the department and Medical Association through the spring to try and come up with a deal that would be satisfactory to both parties. I do not have that information at my fingertips and if the Member wanted more information as to the results of that, I can provide that to the Member once I have that information from the department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 12-13(8): Addressing Potential Doctor Shortage

MR. OOTES:

Yes, I would appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. Additionally, I wonder if the Minister could tell me if they are tracking the turnover of doctors. I heard him say earlier that he did not think there was a problem at the moment. Perhaps I heard incorrectly, but I wonder if the Minister could tell me if they have a program to track the doctor turnover. My statistics and my information indicate that we did have substantial turnover over the last year and a half.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 12-13(8): Addressing Potential Doctor Shortage

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HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, the department has been working with the Medical Association to keep track of what is happening in the Northwest Territories. On a couple of different levels, again, I mentioned the clinics earlier. On the private clinic side, they seem to be maintaining the level of doctors they had in previous times and as ongoing. We have had some shortages in other areas, but when you throw in locums that are happening working under other doctor's supervision, we are managing to maintain right now an adequate level of service. As I

stated earlier, we are working with the Medical Association to try and ensure that we do not run into a situation as we have with nurses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 13-13(8): Beverage Container Recycling Legislation

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of days I have been speaking about the need for legislation for recycling of beverage containers in the Northwest Territories. My question is for Mr. Kakfwi. We are almost at the end of our term of office here, but it is impossible for any business to set up or to start this exercise rolling until there is legislation in place. Is it too late or would it be possible for the Minister to commit to his department taking the initiative to commence drafting a beverage container deposit system legislation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 13-13(8): Beverage Container Recycling Legislation

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will consider the request and advise Members of the viability of getting into the recycling business, as well as getting some advice, if there is necessary and appropriate legislation that could be looked at and put in place. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

Question 14-13(8): Property Values in Mackenzie Delta

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of MACA. It is in regard to increased values of property in my riding. A lot of people feel that they have basically been over-assessed on their property values and that there is no real mechanism

that was followed for consultation or how they came up with that number. I asked the department and the Minister to look at this and was told that the municipalities were the ones that set the value of those properties. I was unable to find any motions by the municipal councils or anything in public records stating they did come up with the price and value of those properties. I would like to ask the Minister about the problem the people are facing with the increased property taxes and also the purchase of land at a fair market value.

In the place of Aklavik, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of insurance companies that will not ensure any properties in Aklavik because it sits in a flood plain. Also, in order to develop any properties in Aklavik, you have to spend a lot of your own money to develop the pads and whatnot and driveways for those properties yourself. That is left to the individual to bear that cost. I would like to ask the Minister exactly what he is doing to ensure that consultation on this matter has been followed and people are being informed and allowed to state how they can deal with this problem and go through it with his department? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Community and Municipal Affairs, Mr. Steen.

Return To Question 14-13(8): Property Values in Mackenzie Delta

HON. VINCE STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just finished signing off a letter to the Member on this particular issue. The price of lots, in particular to the community of Aklavik, was based on the price of developing that particular lot in 1997. I believe in 1997, the price of developing a lot in Aklavik was estimated at \$13,000. However, the way the system works, is that you work backwards from that number. If your lot is say at ten years previous, you would have been assessed at the price of developing that land ten years previously, so you would not pay \$13,000. What the price of the lot is, is that any time after 1997 if you wish to purchase a lot, that would be the price you would pay, \$13,000. If you had it previous to 1997, you would then also have an opportunity of having your lease applied to the cost of the lots. That would bring the price down further. Mr. Speaker, the department is also, at this time, writing and informing the communities that they are prepared to send staff into the community to put

up on a workshop and explain the process to the people in the communities. This applies to the other communities in the Beaufort Delta region as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 14-13(8): Property Values in Mackenzie Delta

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to how they came up with the value of the property, a lot of the concerns I hear from my constituents is that they have made a personal investment themselves by developing that property. The municipality did not assist on the purchase of the gravel or even development of the site itself. I would like to ask the Minister, if he is willing to also consider the cost to individuals to develop their own property and take that off the purchase price of that property that they are presently occupying?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Steen.

Further Return To Question 14-13(8): Property Values in Mackenzie Delta

HON. VINCE STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, I am not sure if the \$13,000 includes the price of for instance, hauling gravel and putting it on the lot, or whether it is just the development of the lot which would include construction of the road, putting in power, that sort of cost. I am not sure if it includes the cost of actually placing gravel on the lot. I am sure that within the workshop, and the time the

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workshop is being held, all these questions would be addressed by the department. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 14-13(8): Property Values in Mackenzie Delta

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the area of how the assessment took place and what was considered, I would like to ask the Minister if he could also have the information available for the public meetings on how much money has been spent in each of these municipalities to develop lots and properties. If you go through the Main Estimates, in the case of Aklavik last year, I think they got \$30,000 and the year before they got \$20,000. If you divide that up between 700 people, it does not meet the number of \$13,000. I would like to know exactly how they came up with the \$13,000 and if they could ensure that the department has that information available on the funds that have been spent to date within each community on developing property.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Steen.

Further Return To Question 14-13(8): Property Values in Mackenzie Delta

HON. VINCE STEEN:

Mr. Speaker, I will have the department respond to the Member's specific questions and advise him and the community how the department arrived at that particular figure and what it includes.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 14-13(8): Property Values in Mackenzie Delta

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, regarding the department individuals that go into the communities, I would like to suggest to the Minister they can possibly go in there sooner than later so that we could try to resolve this problem as soon as possible. It is an issue that a lot of people have concerns about. Can the Minister make a commitment to get in there sooner, hopefully within the next couple of weeks so that the community could be prepared and ready for these public meetings? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Steen.

Further Return To Question 14-13(8): Property Values in Mackenzie Delta

HON. VINCE STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department will respond as soon as possible.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Ootes.

Question 15-13(8): Tobacco Addiction Among Northerners

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for Minister Roland, the Minister of Health and Social Services. Just recently, we heard some comments by Dr. Peter Bares, the former deputy NWT Chief of Health. He spoke about Northerners being very addicted to tobacco, and apparently we are the most addicted people to tobacco in the world. Apparently one out of every four deaths in the NWT is tobacco-related. This is one of the major reasons for hospitalization in the NWT. I just received a copy of the 1999 NWT Socio-economic Scan and it pointed out that 36 percent of the NWT youths between the ages of 12 and 19, here in the North, smoke compared to a national average of 21 percent, so that is 36 percent versus the national average of 21 percent. There is a lot at stake here, Mr. Speaker, in terms of tobacco usage. There is naturally the physical suffering that people go through later in life, but there is also the tremendous financial cost to this government. It is very, very substantial. If we go back to the statistics I have just given, if one out of every four deaths in the North are a result of tobacco and it is the leading cause for people being in the hospital, could the Minister tell me if we have a program in place to deal with tobacco addiction here in the North? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 15-13(8): Tobacco Addiction Among Northerners

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the information the Member points out is indeed accurate. In the Northwest Territories, unfortunately, we are leading in a lot of the categories that involve tobacco and in tobacco use. The department has been working on a tobacco cessation strategy in dealing with how we

can reduce the smoking rates in the Northwest Territories. We have, and I have been informed by the department, worked with Education, Culture and Employment in this area because we see that trying to address the issue of smoking starts at a young age as the stats show that we have a lot of young people who begin smoking at a very early age. Initially, through the first years, we do not see a lot of problems but, as the Member stated, it is in the later years of life that difficulties come up. A lot of people relate the problems of smoking to such things as lung cancer but, in fact, smoking goes a lot farther than that in the effects on the human body. We are hoping to put a strategy out here in the very near future and start going out throughout the territory informing young people and elders alike with the concerns of smoking. Not only the smoke itself but the second-hand effects of smoke on young children. We need to look at how we can change our attitudes in the Northwest Territories as to how we treat our own bodies and those around us with the impacts of smoking. Hopefully, we will be able to start getting that message out in the very near future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 15-13(8): Tobacco Addiction Among Northerners

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to hear the Minister speak on this. Obviously, he has got a grasp on the problem and it is not just a health problem, Mr. Speaker. I hate to relate it to financial, but it is related financially because if we can reduce that area, then certainly we will be far better off here in the Territories to be able to devote our money to other essential areas. Could the Minister tell me if he is looking at

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coordinating with the Minister of Education to ensure that those students who are in the nursing training program are also educated very well on the effects of tobacco smoking and that we can look at a treatment program or at least that the nurses know how to deal with tobacco addiction if such is available? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 15-13(8): Tobacco Addiction Among Northerners

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to get the particulars of the Tobacco Cessation Strategy and the impacts that we are working with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Our focus initially of working with them are in the areas of reaching the school-aged children as they get into, for example, junior high and senior high when a lot of the young children start meeting with the older groups of youth out there. All we can do is give information out to residents. It is the personal decision that they make on what they take into their bodies, but we hope to be able to provide information to at least give them as much as possible, that they are fully aware of the impacts of the possible conditions that can follow up. With that information or with the concern the Member has raised, I will get back to him regarding our working relationship with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and trying to implement this and get that information into the nursing program too as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 15-13(8): Tobacco Addiction Among Northerners

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It may be small steps at a time, but it will snowball if we do those initial steps such as educating our nurses, for example. There is another factor here, once we have a program in place and we have people responsible for treatment programs, could the Minister tell me if he will enforce a policy of non-smoking by those people who are in charge of the program? Now it has occurred before where they themselves are part and parcel of smoking. I believe that we need to set the role model system in place. As I say, we need to start in small ways here and there, and I think eventually it will snowball. Could the Minister tell me if he will ensure that a policy is in place that those in charge of such a program will be non-smokers?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 15-13(8): Tobacco Addiction Among Northerners

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a little more on that issue in response to the question. I believe Dr. Corriveau put it best when he responded to the question put before him when he was in an interview with, I believe, CBC. The fact is, that we will be supportive to those who are looking to quit smoking but we will not be in a position to discriminate against those who have chosen to take up the tobacco habit. We will be as supportive as we can to our staff and the residents of the Northwest Territories but saying to people they can or cannot work on the attitudes or if they are a smoker or a non-smoker, I do not believe that we can implement that kind of a strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 15-13(8): Tobacco Addiction Among Northerners

MR. OOTES:

I appreciate the Minister's reply and the concern perhaps legally here, but you know, we have to start somewhere and we have to get tough on this situation. There is a tremendous problem here in the Territories. I just mentioned one out of every four die from smoking. Now, that is a tremendous cost to this government, and we have got to stick out our neck here and say those in charge of the program should not be smokers. I am wondering if the Minister could kind of hint at a commitment here that he will look into this and that he will follow up and that we insist they be non-smokers.

MR. SPEAKER:

The question has been asked, and the question has been answered. Oral questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 16-13(8): Recruitment of a Territorial Librarian

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. He is starting to look like the Maytag repairman over there. He is looking lonely, so I have a

question for him. In his role as Minister, he is also responsible for library services. As everyone knows, Hay River does not have the most government jobs, not like regional headquarters and places like that. Recently, a territorial position, we have learned, is going to be vacated by a person who has held it for some time with library services and that is the position of the territorial librarian. Sometimes when these positions become vacant, other communities think that as long as it is vacant, this is a good time to put design on that position, try and get it moved someplace else. For the record and in public, could the Minister today commit that in the recruitment for this position of territorial librarian that, in fact, this position will remain in Hay River? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 16-13(8): Recruitment of a Territorial Librarian

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In public and for the record, I would like to note and confirm a number of things. First, that the issue of libraries is a very important one and how they function and a subject especially dear to my heart. I would be happy to confirm unequivocally to the Member from Hay River that as far as I am aware, there are no ulterior motives, there is nobody with their eye on that position. As Minister, I can say that position will be restaffed in Yellowknife, or ... a terrible Freudian slip, Mr. Speaker, I hope I am not struck down from lightening from my riding. Unequivocally, the position will remain where it is in Hay River. It is unfortunate that it is going to become vacant, but it will be staffed in the community in which it now exists. The

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headquarters for the library is there and will remain there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Ootes.

Question 17-13(8): Projected Budget Shortfall Update

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance regarding our budget this year. Earlier this year, the Minister spoke about the difficulty that we may face with this year's budget, that there could be a potential shortfall and that we might have a deficit. I do not know whether that is correct, but I believe that is correct. Certainly next year we will have problems. It is my understanding that the Minister may have asked departments to economize wherever they can and to seek possible money so that we do not get a deficit. I wonder if the Minister could explain a bit more about his program in that area? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 17-13(8): Projected Budget Shortfall Update

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Members will remember, in the budget this year, we had presented a \$34 million deficit. Our expenditures this year are \$34 million more than what we are bringing in. I have made no secret of this fact and mentioned it in the budget speech in April. We project that deficit amount and if we are not vigilant, it will grow if we try to maintain the same level of services in future years, given what we see coming in for revenue. In presentations to the Chambers of Commerce, to the Dene chiefs and various organizations and groups across the Territories, this government has been quite open about the fact that we face a significant problem in terms of having adequate revenues to cover our expenditures. As part of the normal good business practice, all departments have been asked to look for areas where they might economize in order to reduce the need for future cuts when we may face an even more difficult challenge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 17-13(8): Projected Budget Shortfall Update

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is the projection that the Minister foresees for this particular year? Is he still projecting a large deficit? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 17-13(8): Projected Budget Shortfall Update

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Mr. Speaker, we are still projecting a \$34 million deficit. As I have stated, next year if expenditures or services were to be delivered in the same way, our expenditures would exceed our revenues by an estimated \$60 million.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 17-13(8): Projected Budget Shortfall Update

MR. OOTES:

The departments have been asked to look at possible areas where they can trim. Have they been given objectives as to how much they need to trim from their budgets this year?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 17-13(8): Projected Budget Shortfall Update

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No. Departments were just asked to take a look at all planned expenditures and identify those could be avoided that would not impact on service or reduce the levels of service significantly.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Ootes.

Supplementary To Question 17-13(8): Projected Budget Shortfall Update

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is there such a thing as re-profiling some of the savings into other areas, other programs, that we may not have approved within the budget? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 17-13(8): Projected Budget Shortfall Update

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within each department, the Minister may move funds within certain limits from one program to another, if necessary, in order to undertake projects or initiatives. Any movement over \$250,000 has to be reported to the Standing Committee on Government Operations. This report is provided to the committee on a quarterly basis.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

Question 18-13(8): Mackenzie Delta Forest Fire Concerns

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. It is regarding the large fire that we had in the Mackenzie Delta region, the one around Tsiigehtchic. There was a lot of concerns raised by the community. We heard news reports and also trying to find a mechanism that we can work closer with communities and get them more involved in the day-to-day information that this government has, especially in relation to the forest fire management centre in Fort Smith, where they make a lot of the decisions in light of what community's concerns may be or concerns from the region and how fires should be fought. We have used the concern of the costs to this government as one of the main elements of not fighting the fires this summer. In the long run, we probably would have been better off if we had been more proactive and responded when we had the fire under control to a point where it became out of control and burned some 170,000 hectares. I would like to ask the Minister what is his department doing to

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improve the consultation with communities, other departments, people in MACA, emergency measures, which were called in? We had to shut the Dempster Highway. I would like to ask the Minister exactly what

has his department done to try to improve the situation we had in the Inuvik region regarding the Tsiigehtchic fire?

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 18-13(8): Mackenzie Delta Forest Fire Concerns

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department is prepared to review the work that was done in the Inuvik region regarding fires this summer, once we have wrapped up this fire season. We know that communication issues critical and a vital part of any strategy and there is always a need to improve that and to review. We will try to do that. We are prepared to discuss with the Gwich'in leadership ways to improve communication within the government itself, within the government's operations for fighting fires as well as with the public and the communities involved.

There is information that will be available that we would like to share as well, such as the chronology of events, the actions taken on the number of fires that were reported, the ones that were actioned, the ones that were not, the reasons why we took the action that we did, why we decided not to act in certain areas and the variables that changed and made the fire into one that was basically out of control in a very short time. There is information that we can share, as well, about the degree of the burn in the area, for instance, some of the areas may very well be reduced to charcoal and stumps, others will be just crown fire, others have probably already turned green again. We will prepare that information and share it with the Gwich'in leadership and the people of the area so that they have as much information as we have about the fire, how it started, its progression, the action we took, the nature of communications that were involved here, as well as the impact that it has had in the very, very large area that the fire consumed this summer. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 18-13(8): Mackenzie Delta Forest Fire Concerns

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the areas of concern that the community raised with me, which I was not really aware of, there is presently a land use plan in place for the Gwich'in settlement region. It identifies areas that people would set as a priority-protected area or area that is sensitive and people want to ensure there are certain mechanisms in place. Under the fire zone concept that your department uses, I am not too sure if the department had an opportunity to look at the land use plan and try to find new ways of restructuring your fire zones to ensure that there are certain areas where there will be priorities put on fire retention and other areas there is not. Can your department also take into account new information that has come to light and review your fire zone priority areas for responding to fires?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return To Question 18-13(8): Mackenzie Delta Forest Fire Concerns

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will be accepting any new and relevant information in our meetings with the communities and the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Gwich'in leadership, when we start having these meetings. There will be a debriefing with the communities in the area that the fire had taken place. The two Gwich'in communities will have meetings set up so that the communities will be properly briefed. It will be done in consultation with yourself as an MLA, as well as the Gwich'in Tribal Council. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 18-13(8): Mackenzie Delta Forest Fire Concerns

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it is important that the consultation does take place, preferably sooner than later, because this is an event that just happened and I think it is important that people try to keep the issue as fresh in their mind as they can. I would like to ask the Minister if he is available to conduct these consultations within the next three weeks or month?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return To Question 18-13(8): Mackenzie Delta Forest Fire Concerns

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always accept invitations to go to the Delta whenever I can. I would be pleased to look at the schedule and the availability of my officials to see if we could do that within the next few weeks or month as the Member has requested. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 19-13(8): Location of Nursing Mentor Positions

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since I had such success in that unequivocal commitment from the Minister of Education on the territorial librarian's position, I would like to direct this question to the Minister for Health and Social Services. Since the Minister is not aware where the three health mentor positions are going to be, this would indicate to me that perhaps this decision has not been made. Could the Minister commit to locating at least one of those three positions in Hay River? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 19-13(8): Location of Nursing Mentor Positions

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I cannot give a concise answer as the Minister of Education provided to the Member earlier. As I stated, I will be getting information as to where these three positions will be, how

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far along they are. At this present time, I could not give you a fair response to say that we are in the position or making the decision as to where they go. I could be giving you the wrong information. They might already be slated in for different communities. As I

stated earlier, I will have to get that information to the Member as to where those three positions will be working out of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 19-13(8): Location of Nursing Mentor Positions

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware if the competition for these positions has been advertised yet? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 19-13(8): Location of Nursing Mentor Positions

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I am unaware if the competition has been out as of this date. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 19-13(8): Location of Nursing Mentor Positions

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware of what qualifications will be looked at for these nurse mentors? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 19-13(8): Location of Nursing Mentor Positions

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have a job description for one of those positions with me but I can get that from the department and forward it on to the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 19-13(8): Location of Nursing Mentor Positions

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's response. He indicated that it might already be decided where they are going. If it has not been decided yet, where they are going, would he locate one in Hay River? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The question has been asked and has been answered. Oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

Question 20-13(8): Wages of Alcohol and Drug Workers

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. It is regarding the alcohol and drug program that is being delivered in the majority of our communities. Mr. Speaker, there is an inaccuracy on how people are being paid. In majority of the alcohol and drug centres, people are being paid different salaries in different communities but they do the same work. I would like to ask the Minister why there is such a discretion between the wages of communities, for example, Fort McPherson and the North Slave Region?

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister responsible for Health and Social Services. Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 20-13(8): Wages of Alcohol and Drug Workers

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the community alcohol and drug workers are not health board staff in most cases. They are with non-government organizations. The non-government organizations are given a certain amount of funding to provide the service of drug and alcohol workers and it is those organizations that would set their rate of pay for those individuals. I am aware of some correspondence with the health board in Inuvik regarding this concern. The information that was provided was to inform the

community organization that was involved with the alcohol and drug program that they could, in fact, raise the rate of pay. That would be taking money out of the rest of the program. Each region and community has worked out a formula what they would they would get in funding for community alcohol and drug programs. Those communities would decide what level of pay they would be paying their workers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 20-13(8): Wages of Alcohol and Drug Workers

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister do a review regarding the discretion between our drug and alcohol workers and our alcohol and drug specialists who may work for the government? We used to carry this program through the department of Health and Social Services out of Yellowknife. Now we transferred that authority to the regional centres. I believe we transferred the resources along with it. People should be paid accordingly to the jobs that they do. I would like to ask the Minister whether he will consider doing a review to compare the different wages, salaries and benefits that the alcohol and drug program delivery agencies are being paid right now?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 20-13(8): Wages of Alcohol and Drug Workers

HON. FLOYD ROLAND:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the area of doing a review, I think we need to have in mind what we are actually trying to accomplish with that review. We know there is concern between different organizations and regions and how they pay their workers, but as I stated earlier, when the programs were developed each region and community was given a formula as to how much funding would be

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transferred. I know we have done quite a bit of review of my previous work as a Member of social programs. We dealt with the department regarding the alcohol

and drug program and initially for the first couple of years, there were a lot of reductions and even the alcohol and drug program was impacted by decisions made at that time. I will look at getting information as to what the differences are in the different areas and to see why if there are outstanding issues, or if there is a great variance why that would be and once I have that information I will provide my response to the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Question period is over. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, return to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on review of bills. Mr. Ootes.

ITEM 12: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I wish to report to the Legislative Assembly that the Standing Committee on Government Operations has reviewed Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act, and wishes to report that Bill 1 is ready for consideration in committee of the whole.

And Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 70(5) and have Bill 1 moved into committee of the whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife Centre is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 70(5). Do we have any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Ootes, you have unanimous consent. Reports of committees on the review of bills, Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report to the Legislative Assembly that the Standing Committee on Government Operations has reviewed Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, and we wish to report that Bill 5 is ready for consideration in committee of the whole.

And Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 70(5) and have Bill 5 moved into committee of the whole today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The Member for Yellowknife North is seeking unanimous consent to waive his Rule 70(5). Do we have any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Erasmus, you have unanimous consent. Bill 1 and 5 to move into committee of the whole for today. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 3-13(8): Workers' Compensation Board, 1998 Annual Report

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled the Workers' Compensation Board 1998 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Tabling of documents. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Tabled Document 4-13(8): Letters from Constituents Regarding School Funding Levels

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table 130 letters received from constituents regarding the level of funding to education. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 17: FIRST READING OF BILLS

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to proceed with the first reading of Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act No. 2, 1999-2000.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife Frame Lake is seeking unanimous consent to deal with Bill 2. Do we have any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Dent, you have unanimous consent.

Bill 2: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1999-2000

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, honourable Members. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik that Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1999-2000, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Questions has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried. Bill 2 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to proceed with the first reading of Bill 3, Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife Frame Lake is seeking unanimous consent to deal with Bill 3. Do we have any nays. There are no nays. Mr. Dent, you have unanimous consent.

Bill 3: Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, honourable Members. Mr. Speaker I move, seconded by the honourable Member of Nahendeh that Bill 3, Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Bill 3, has had first reading. First reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 18: SECOND READING OF BILLS

Bill 2: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1999-2000

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik that Bill

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2, Supplementary Appropriation Act No. 2, 1999-2000, be read for the second time. Mr. Speaker, this bill is to make supplementary appropriations for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The motion is in order, to the principle of the bill. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Bill 2 is to have second reading and accordingly the bill stands referred to the committee of the whole. Second reading of bills. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 3, Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member of Yellowknife Frame Lake is seeking consent to deal with Bill 3. Do we have any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Dent you have consent.

Bill 3: Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, honourable Members. Mr. Speaker I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh that Bill 3, Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is divided into four parts. Part 1 sets out general provisions respecting the electoral districts in the Northwest Territories and the Legislative Assembly and its Members and provides for the indemnities and allowances payable to Members and the expenses for which Members may be reimbursed. It also continues the Management and Services Board as the Legislative Assembly Board of Management and sets out the power and duties of that Board of Management. Further, part 1 sets out general provisions respecting the Speaker and the office of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, part 2 provides for the establishment of the Executive Council and the appointments of its Members and the selection of the Premier. It also provides for the appointment of a Deputy Premier and the Ministers of the Executive Government. In addition, part 2 sets out the powers and duties of the Deputy Premier and clarifies the termination date of the terms of office of the Premier, Deputy Premier, Ministers and Members of the Executive Council.

Part 3 requires Members of the Legislative Assembly to avoid any conflict of interest in the performance of their duties and establishes rules governing the conduct of Members where conflict of interest arises. Special requirements apply to the Speaker and to Ministers including restrictions on a former Speaker or Minister contracting with the department for which they were previously responsible. Part 3 further provides for the appointment of a Conflict of Interest Commissioner who will advise Members, review the disclosure statements filed by Members and prepare public disclosure statements and investigate complaints against Members. After an investigation the Conflict of Interest Commissioner may dismiss a complaint or refer to a sole adjudicator for inquiry. The report of a sole adjudicator will be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly for final disposition.

Mr. Speaker, part 4 consequentially amends the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act, and the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, to ensure that the terminology used in those acts is consistent with part 1 of this bill.

Finally, the current Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act is repealed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. The motion is in order. The principle of the bill. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Bill 3, has had second reading. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive rule 69(2) and have Bill 3 moved into committee of the whole.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Yellowknife Frame Lake is seeking unanimous consent to waive rule 69(2) and have Bill

3 moved into committee of the whole. Do we have any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Dent, you have unanimous consent. Bill 3 will be moved into committee of the whole for today. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters. Bill 1, Bill 3 and Bill 5, with Mr. Krutko in the Chair. By the authority given the Speaker by Motion 1-13(8), the committee of the whole may sit past adjournment until it is prepared to report.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

We are considering in committee of the whole, Bill 1, Bill 5, Bill 2 and Bill 3. I would like to ask what is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Mr. Chairman, I would agree with the order in which you have named those bills and we hope that we can proceed with them in that order, 1, 5, 2 and 3.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you. Does this committee concur?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Agreed. Thank you. We will deal with Bill 1 after a 15 minute break.

--Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

I call the committee of the whole to order. We are dealing with Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for this bill, Mr. Miltenberger, for any opening comments.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the amendment being proposed today is relatively minor in terms of actual legislative change, but will provide significant opportunities in the future for northern residents.

At the present time, the Public Colleges Act does not allow Aurora College to issue degrees. This means that Northerners can begin their studies here at home, but must travel south to

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finish degrees in programs such as nursing, teaching, social work and management studies.

The proposed amendments would allow Aurora College to establish degree programs at the appropriate time. We do not expect to immediately deliver the four year degree programming through the College. Instead, this change will allow the college to undertake the necessary planning to set up degree programs which meet the needs of Northerners and are recognized as on par with other Canadian institutions.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to answering any questions Members might have about the amendment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are dealing with Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act. At this time, I would like to ask the chairman of the Government Operations Committee if he has any opening comments in regard to the bill. Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Government Operations reviewed Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act, at its meeting on September 8, 1999. The committee would like to thank the Minister of Education Culture and Employment and the staff for presenting the bill. Bill 1 will allow Aurora College to issue university degrees when it has developed the capability to do so. The college will continue working with our southern educational partners to develop degree programs that can be delivered entirely in the North. Mr. Chairman, the standing committee had no difficulty with Bill 1. It is a logical step in the development of quality educational programs for Northerners. Committee members may have additional comments or questions as we proceed. This concludes the standing committee's comments on Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you, Mr. Erasmus. At this time I would like to ask the Minister if he will be bringing any witnesses.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Can the Sergeant-at-Arms escort the witnesses in? Mr. Minister, can you introduce your witnesses?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my immediate right is Mr. Mark Cleveland, deputy minister of Education, Culture and Employment. To my left is Ms. Rebecca Veinott from Justice, providing legal counsel.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments on Bill 1. What is the wish of the committee? We will proceed clause by clause. Clause 1. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 2. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 3. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

The bill as a whole. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Does the committee agree that Bill 1 is now ready for third reading? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Bill 1 is now ready for third reading. I would like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. Thank you. We will now deal with Bill 5. The Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today we are considering an amendment to the Workers' Compensation Act. This amendment is to address a problem identified with the section dealing with third party actions in transportation accidents.

The difficulty with the section as currently written is that it allows injured workers to sue their own employers and co-workers in transportation related accidents. This goes against the first principle of workers' compensation legislation - that an injured worker cannot sue his own employer.

The proposed amendment does not affect the ability of northern workers to be treated fairly when they are injured. Workers will continue to be covered by workers' compensation and have access to a series of reviews and appeals if they are not satisfied with the compensation they receive.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 5 is intended to address an unforeseen issue arising from Section 12 of the Workers' Compensation Act. This amendment will ensure that our act is consistent with the principles of workers' compensation across Canada. I am prepared to answer any questions Members may have about the proposed amendment.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you, Mr. Minister. Chairman of the Standing Committee on Government Operations. Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Government Operations reviewed Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, at its meetings on September 7 and 8, 1999.

The committee would like to thank the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board for presenting the bill and responding to the committee's questions.

Bill 5 would amend the Workers' Compensation Act to prohibit lawsuits relating to transportation accidents against the worker's employer or co-worker. Lawsuits for transportation accidents would still be allowed against other employers and workers within the workers' compensation system.

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Members will remember that the Workers' Compensation Act was amended in November, 1998, by a private Member's bill. Prior to the amendment, the Northwest Territories was unique in Canada because not all employers and workers had a general protection from lawsuits for work-related injuries. Under workers' compensation principles, injured workers give up their right to sue employers and other workers covered by the system in exchange for the right to receive benefits under a no-fault compensation system funded by employers. This is known as the "historic trade-off".

However, in the Northwest Territories, an injured worker could sue workers and employers covered by the act so long as the person was not the injured worker's own employer or co-worker.

The original private Member's bill introduced last fall would have amended the act to prohibit lawsuits against any other worker or employer covered by the act. This is consistent with the fundamental principles of workers' compensation.

However, during the public hearings, the then Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board made a submission to the Standing Committee on Government Operations recommending that a number of exceptions be made to the private Member's bill, so that more lawsuits would be allowed.

One of the Workers' Compensation Board recommendations was that lawsuits for work-related injuries should be allowed where the injury was caused by a vehicle accident. The rationale for this

was that the liability would be covered by insurance, since insurance is required by law. Six other jurisdictions have some type of exemption allowing lawsuits for vehicle accidents.

However, there are different approaches to these exceptions.

Some jurisdictions allow injured workers to sue anyone, where the injury arose out of the use of a vehicle. It does not matter if the person being sued is the employer or co-worker of the injured person.

Others allow lawsuits where the injury arose from the use of a vehicle, but not if the operator of the vehicle was the employer or co-worker of the injured worker.

The WCB submission did not specifically discuss whether lawsuits should be allowed against all employers and workers, or only those other than the employer or co-worker of the injured worker.

Several amendments were made in standing committee to the private Member's bill to implement the Minister's suggestions. The amendments as passed allow lawsuits where the accident is caused in the use of a motor vehicle or other mode of transportation. It does not matter whether the accident involved the injured person's co-worker or employer. This is the same approach used in some other jurisdictions.

This bill will amend the Workers' Compensation Act so that transportation lawsuits will be allowed only if the operator of the vehicle is not the employer or co-worker of the injured worker.

Mr. Chairman, the majority of the members of the standing committee have no difficulty with this amendment. However, we would prefer that it go farther. Most members of the committee would prefer that the entire exception allowing lawsuits for transportation accidents be repealed. In members' view, there is little distinction in principle between lawsuits brought by one's own employees or co-workers and lawsuits brought by other workers. Allowing any lawsuits is inconsistent with the general principle of workers' compensation.

This concludes the standing committee's comments on Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you, Mr. Erasmus. At this time I would like to ask the Minister if he would be bringing in witnesses.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Can the Sergeant-at-Arms escort the witnesses in? At this time I would like to ask the Minister to introduce his witnesses.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my immediate left is Mr. Mike Triggs from the WCB legal counsel, and to my right is Mr. Mark Aitkens from Justice.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are there any general comments in regards to the bill? Detail. Clause by clause. Clause 1. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 2. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Bill as a whole. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Does the committee agree that Bill 5 is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Bill 5 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, Mr. Minister, witnesses. We will be dealing with Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1999-2000. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister responsible to introduce the bill. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The 1999-2000 Supplementary Appropriation No. 2 requests authority for additional appropriations of \$4,004,965 made up of \$1,331,965 for operations and maintenance expenditures and \$2.673 million for capital expenditures. Approximately \$1 million of the new

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supplementary requirements will be offset by revenues or other recoveries and will not impact the government's operating results for the year. Another \$1.7 million will be offset by a decrease in the 2000-2001 capital spending. As a result, the net funding requirement included in this supplementary appropriation is \$1.3 million. The additional appropriations have been provided for in the estimated supplementary appropriation requirements included in the 1999-2000 Main Estimates. With the approval of Supplementary Appropriation No. 2, the total supplementary appropriation approved for the 1999-2000 fiscal year will be \$26 million. The major item included in the operations and maintenance supplementary appropriation is \$1.2 million for implementation of the revised Hay Plan job evaluations for nursing and social worker positions. The major item included in the capital supplementary appropriation is \$1.7 million in additional funding for two school projects, which are ahead of schedule -- the Tsiigehtchic School and the Sir John Franklin High School. These additional expenditures will be offset by capital decreases in next year's budget and will result in a total savings of \$50,000. Mr. Chairman, I am now prepared to review the details of the supplementary appropriation document.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, will you be calling any witnesses?

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would like to bring in the witness.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Can the Sergeant-at-Arms escort the witness. Mr. Dent, can you please introduce your witness.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Yes, Mr. Chairman. With me I have Mr. Lew Voytilla, the Secretary to the Financial Management Board.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments? Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister had indicated, in his opening comments, that if this supplementary appropriation is approved, that the total supplementary appropriations for the 1999-2000 fiscal year will be \$26 million. I was wondering if the Minister could indicate how this compares with the total supplementary appropriation from the last fiscal year?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am advised that in comparison to this time last year, we are substantially reduced in our supplementary appropriations.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could we get a better explanation of what substantially reduced means?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess we are \$26 million now. The total last year was over \$60 million, and we are not forecasting that we will exceed the supplementary appropriation set in the budget this year. We are looking at probably \$20 million to \$25 million less than last year, perhaps half the amount in the supplementary appropriations for the entire year as what we had in the previous year.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

General comments? Call for detail. Page 5, 1999-2000 Supplementary Appropriation No. 2, Executive, operations and maintenance, not previously authorized, Financial Management Board Secretariat, directorate, negative \$42,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, negative \$42,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Municipal and Community Affairs, operations and maintenance, page 6, regional operations, not previously authorized, negative \$148,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Emergency services, \$152,600. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, \$4,600. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Public Works and Services, operations and maintenance, not previously authorized, asset management, negative \$49,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Technical support, not previously authorized, \$70,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, \$21,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Health and Social Services, operations and maintenance, not previously authorized, directorate corporate services, \$1.248 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, \$1.248 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

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CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

NWT Housing Corporation, operations and maintenance, not previously authorized, NWT Housing Corporation, \$50,365. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, \$50,365. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, operations and maintenance, not previously authorized, resource, management and economic development, \$50,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, \$50,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Executive, capital, not previously authorized, Financial Management Board Secretariat, directorate, \$625,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, \$625,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Municipal and community services, capital, not previously authorized, community operations, negative \$50,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, negative \$50,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Public Works and Services, capital, not previously authorized, systems and communications, \$197,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, \$197,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Education, Culture and Employment, capital, not previously authorized, education and cultural, \$1.768 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, \$1.768 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Transportation, capital, not previously authorized, airports, \$133,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total department, not previously authorized, \$133,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Bill as a whole. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1999-2000, clause 1. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 2. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 3. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 4. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 5. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 6. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Clause 7. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Schedule, part one, vote one, operations and maintenance, total operations and maintenance, \$1,331,965. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Part two, vote two, capital, total capital, \$2.673 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Total supplementary appropriation in part one and part two, \$4,004,965. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Preamble. Agreed?

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SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Bill as a whole. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Does the committee agree that Bill 2 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Bill 2 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, Mr. Minister and witness. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to correct some of the numbers that I provided to Mr. Erasmus in answering his question. In fact, the total supplementary appropriations for the last fiscal year were \$111 million, not the \$60 million as I had indicated previously. I think it is important to remember that was for the combined Nunavut and Northwest Territories. By this time last year, the supplementary appropriations had already probably totalled around \$60 million. So we are still running well ahead of less than 50 percent of last year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

Mr. Erasmus.

MR. ERASMUS:

Mr. Chairman, I move we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko):

There is a motion on the floor to report progress. It is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. We will stand and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. KRUTKO:

Mr. Speaker, the committee has been considering Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act, Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, and

Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1999-2000. I would like to report that Bill 1, Bill 5, and Bill 2 are 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. Miltenberger. 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. Item 22, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton):

Mr. Speaker, the meeting of the Government Operations Committee immediately after adjournment today, also the Government Operations Committee at 9:30 tomorrow morning and of the Management and Services Board at 12:00 noon.

Orders of the day for Thursday, September 9, 1999

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

17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 3, Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act
 - Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 1999-2000
 - Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act
22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. This House stands adjourned to Thursday, September 9, 1999, at 1:30 p.m.

--ADJOURNMENT