



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

8th Session

Day 4

13th Assembly

HANSARD

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1999

Pages 73 - 92

Page numbers reflect printed Hansard

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 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):

Good morning. Before we get underway this morning, I would ask the Members' indulgence in allowing me to say a few words. Being Speaker of the 13th Assembly was a privilege and an honour. The role of Speaker is at times challenging and rewarding, not to mention confusing and exasperating. Sometimes I felt that I was nothing more than a well paid daycare worker.

--Laughter

I seriously doubt that some of you would have ever played well together.

As Speaker, I have had limited opportunity to comment on the goings-on in this building, with the end of this Assembly and being a Friday, I would like to offer up some humorous comments on you my colleagues, and I hope, my friends.

The honourable Member from Hay River, Mrs. Jane Groenewegen, was one of two women to serve the residents of the Northwest Territories during the life of this Assembly. She may never be a member of the so-called old boys club by virtue of her gender, however she sure made a dent on the clubhouse door.

--Laughter

I have always envied that she does not have to wear a tie.

The Honourable, hello to the wife and family back in Inuvik, Floyd Roland, has survived his first term, and

he is right, it is a growing process, although he is now somewhat grey, he still has the same enthusiasm as he did four years ago. For Mr. Roland, two words, Grecian Formula.

--Laughter

I have been a Member of this Assembly with the Honourable Stephen Kakfwi longer than either of us care to admit. I have seen him crack more jokes and smile in this Assembly than all of the others we have served in.

--Laughter

I no longer think of striking a match off him as I walk by.

You see, Mr. Erasmus, you can get away with things when you are subtle. It probably helps that I am still Speaker and would not think of ruling myself out of order. I would ask the Members to join with me to congratulate our colleague from Yellowknife North on his successful acquisition of a multitude of wardrobes over the last four years. I am sure that the late Mr. Jim Evoy would have been proud of you.

--Laughter

In regard to the Member from Mackenzie Delta. What can we say in regard to David Krutko.

--Laughter

What can we say about David Krutko in this Assembly? He is probably the only MLA in the history of the British Parliamentary system to stop proceedings by virtue of his choice of ties. Keep on trucking, David. And David, I apologize for some of the "Mickey Mouse" rules around here.

--Laughter

My oldest and dearest friend, the honourable Member for Nahendeh, Jim Antoine. Imagine the Premier for the Northwest Territories coming from the Deh Cho. Some might argue its like making Lucien Bouchard Prime Minister.

--Laughter

Work hard and have fun in Japan, we need more tourists. And you are right, the Northern Lights are better in the Deh Cho.

Mr. Henry, the honourable Member from Yellowknife South. It would be very easy to stick in a Dairy Queen joke here. However, I hate standing in lines.

--Laughter

Two scoops for a job well done. You have been a calming influence in this Assembly when tempers ran short. I thank you.

The Honourable Vince Steen, you scared us with that little heart attack you had. I knew, however that you were just too ornery to let a little thing like that set you back.

--Applause

It seemed like two weeks later you did become a Cabinet Minister. Amazing. I thank you for your wisdom, common sense and selective hearing;

--Laughter

we needed them around here.

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The honourable Member from Thebacha, Michael Miltenberger, is finally breathing the rarified air of Cabinet and eating all the shrimp rings his heart desires.

--Laughter

All's well that ends well. I might suggest a flak jacket before you return for the election in Fort Smith. Do not forget the back way out of this building.

The Member from Yellowknife Frame Lake has got his wish and is now in charge of all the marbles. The Honourable Charles Dent as Minister of Finance will work hard to ensure the future of the Northwest Territories fiscal health. He will make the hard choices. No politician down south would have the guts to increase the price of booze three months before an election.

--Applause

A tireless promoter of northern solutions for northern problems, Donnie Morin, worked hard for the people of the Northwest Territories. Tough choices were made and implemented under his stewardship and he deserves our thanks. The teflon Don will be back, I hope, and the North will be better off because of it.

The Member from Yellowknife Centre, or as I like to call him the master of the indignant sound bite, Jake Ootes,

--Laughter

certainly showed the rest of us what a bit of media savvy could do. Vince McMahon and the WWF could use a man like you. Fight the good fight, Jake. Do not eat all the grayling.

The Member from the North Slave, James Rabesca, was another calming influence around here. The only thing phoney about James is his plastic hip. Best wishes always, James.

In closing, I will need a couple of volunteers to help me carry my cowboy boots out to my vehicle, please see me after Session. I thank the Members for their patience and allowing me to thank you and to have some fun.

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

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 12-13(8): Year 2000 Compliance Status

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I appreciate your comments this morning, although I must say I was hoping that nobody would notice the rise in liquor prices. I am sorry that you highlighted that.

--Laughter

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the 9th day of the 9th month of the 99th year, was a date identified as a potential Year 2000 related risk. I am pleased to say that the Government of the Northwest Territories experienced no disruption of its programs or services to residents. This is a good indication that the hard work and diligence of GNWT employees is producing results. We can be confident that the programs and services our residents depend on are not disrupted as we welcome the new millennium.

Mr. Speaker, work continues as departments begin the final phases of their Year 2000 initiatives. To date, 63 percent of the critical systems are completely Y2K compliant. Final testing on another 11 percent of the systems should be done by the end of this month. All critical systems are on schedule to be fully

compliant before December 31 of this year. In addition, 87 percent of the microcomputers and 91 percent of the local area networks, to which they are connected, are also fully compliant.

The GNWT could, however, be affected by Year 2000 implications outside of our own systems and facilities. This threat has not been ignored. Major business partners, service providers, contractors, and suppliers have been contacted and, so far, reported a strong confidence that no disruptions will result.

Mr. Speaker, with the success of the Government of the Northwest Territories Y2K initiative, many may think that the government's Y2K work is complete, this is incorrect. The Y2K bug is a unique challenge, extremely broad in scope, and there is no guarantee that disruptions will not occur. This government is preparing contingency plans to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of programs and services to the people of the Northwest Territories in the unlikely event that a system failure does occur. These contingency plans will be implemented in the case of any infrastructure failure affecting the delivery of government programs or services, regardless of the cause.

In addition to our own plans, the territorial government is also a participant in the Territorial Emergency Response Committee. Residents of the Northwest Territories can be assured that the territorial government is well prepared for the Year 2000. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Ministers' statements. Mr. Miltenberger.

Minister's Statement 13-13(8): Supporting Employment in the Fort Liard Area

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the current oil and gas activity in Fort Liard provides excellent opportunities for Northerners to be trained and employed. I would like to highlight some of the work that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is doing to make sure the employment benefits for Northerners are maximized.

On a recent trip to Fort Liard, senior management of the department had confirmation that Beaver Enterprises, which is part of the local Development Corporation, has over 200 employees working on projects primarily related to oil and gas development.

Their challenge is to continue finding enough workers to meet the demand of industry.

The department has extended an offer to the Development Corporation to help them with this problem. The department is prepared to support an employment officer located in Fort Liard and officials are working with the Development Corporation to finalize details of the arrangement. This officer would help

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connect interested individuals in the region with the Development Corporation and the available jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the department is also actively involved through the Careers Centre in Fort Simpson. The centre is providing career development services to familiarize regional residents with the variety of work opportunities in Fort Liard. This work includes career guidance and support services.

In addition, departmental staff are working closely with industry representatives and communities to ensure that the needs of industry are clear and an appropriate training plan is in place.

Oil and gas development provides exciting opportunities for Northerners in a variety of jobs. If we are to ensure that Northerners get these jobs, they must have suitable training. People also have to understand and accept the challenges and opportunities of working in the industry including the realities of working in camps and on rotation.

It is important to have close cooperation between communities, industry and Aurora College to plan training to meet the requirements of the industry, in the exploration, development and operational phases. Senior officials at the college have been briefed on the situation and the college will be working with the department and industry to meet the training needs for oil and gas jobs in the Liard area.

The school can also be involved in the efforts in Fort Liard. The current activities in the area means there are plenty of jobs for young people. The school will be working with the employers to find ways to let students work part-time while continuing to complete their high school education. The Education Act provides the flexibility for schools to make arrangements which meet the needs of the senior students in Fort Liard and keep them in school. Through school programs such as the Schools North

Apprentice Program and the Career and Technology Studies Program, we are linking school and jobs for these students.

Mr. Speaker, the efforts of the department support the full range of exploration, development and operational jobs in the oil and gas sector. If predictions prove to be true and other development continues to occur in the Liard Valley, there will be more opportunities for people to use the skills they are acquiring now for some time to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ministers' statements. Mr. Dent.

Minister's Statement 14-13(8): 1999 Labour Force Survey

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce that the Government of the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics released today the report on the 1999 Labour Force Survey. This survey is designed to reliably estimate employment and unemployment by communities across the NWT. I will table the report later today at the appropriate time.

Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth labour force survey by the Bureau of Statistics. Previous surveys were done in 1984, 1989 and 1994. The results from these, along with the national census results, give us important information on trends and changes in our labour market. The information can be used by government, communities, business, and industry to develop employment and training programs, or for general economic and community planning.

Other data collected in the survey provides information on the types of jobs people have, whether people who are not working need training, work activity during the previous year, and participation in harvesting activities.

Information was also collected on education, language use, and participation in volunteer and community organizations. Mr. Speaker, the survey was completed in all NWT communities between January and March of this year. Over 6,400 persons living in about 3,000 households responded.

The report is also available on the bureau's Web site which can be accessed through the GNWT's Web site. Mr. Speaker, this report is an excellent example of the information we need in order to plan, to improve program design and delivery, and ultimately, to invest our resources where they will deliver the most effective results.

My colleague, the Honourable Michael Miltenberger, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, will be commenting on the results of the survey also. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ministers' statements. Mr. Miltenberger.

Minister's Statement 15-13(8): Employment Results in the Labour Force Survey

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past four years, one of the areas of emphasis for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has been the important connection between education and employment. We have made this connection in a number of ways.

Career development and planning have become an important part of high school students' course work. As well, the Income Support Program changes in 1995 have supported many Northerners in making productive choices which have improved their ability to find work. Through increased access to Aurora College programs, more Northerners are able to take the training they need for the available jobs.

It is always helpful, Mr. Speaker, to have concrete evidence of whether efforts are making a positive difference. The 1999 Labour Force Survey, which the Minister of Finance will be releasing, seems to suggest that the work of the department, in cooperation with Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and employers, has started to make a difference.

One of the most positive findings from the survey is that the growth in the number of jobs in the NWT has kept pace in the last few years with the growth in population. As well, there has also been a significant improvement in the level of employment among aboriginal people. The employment rate has increased by more than 6 percent to almost 49 percent which is very

promising.

The Labour Force Survey also highlights the areas where we need to find better solutions. In particular, youth unemployment continues to be very high at 25.7 percent. We must continue to focus our activities on improving access to northern employment opportunities for our youth.

Mr. Speaker, Education, Culture and Employment will continue to support the efforts of northern residents to obtain the education and training they need to participate in the labour force. We will use the information in the Labour Force Survey to help us provide programs which address the needs of all Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Ministers' statements. Mr. Antoine.

Minister's Statement 16-13(8): Minister Absent From the House

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members of this House that the Honourable Floyd Roland will be absent from the House today to attend the Official Opening of the Natural Gas Conversion Project in Inuvik. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Ootes.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement 19-13(8): Appreciation of Constituents, Colleagues and Staff

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank you for your wonderful comments this morning, they were certainly very enjoyable. More importantly I would like to thank you for serving in the role that you have for the past four years. My own feelings have been you have been very impartial and ruled with a good hand in the Chair and I think you should be complimented for that role.

--Applause

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few moments to briefly reflect on our four years here and the opportunity I have had to be a representative in this House. It certainly was a very challenging time for us in the first couple of years. We had to deal with the deficit situation, which I think we dealt with. We had to deal with the division issue and finally the other big issue that was on the table was the constitutional difficulties which we were not able to resolve, but hopefully in the next legislature we can make good progress in that end. As I said, it was at times very difficult in here, we did have our problems in achieving our consensus at times, but it is a system that seems to be working and seems to be working very well. I know from personal experience now there are many attributes to that system. Naturally there are attributes to a party system as well, but we seem to have functioned and done things in a proper fashion through our four years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank a number of people. First of all I would like to thank the staff of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Schauerte, Mr. Inch, and, of course, the research staff and the library staff, the financial staff and all the people that work in this building. They have been a tremendous asset to us and without them we would have been lost and I mean that in the true sense. I would like to also, of course, recognize the media. While I appreciate the comment made about me, but the reality of life for anywhere today is that without the media we are not going to have good communication systems. The people will have difficulty to know what we are doing. They should be complimented and certainly patted on the back for those who attend here, day in, day out and we sit here, Mr. Speaker, because while we drone on about many things as perhaps I am now. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. As I said, I think the media, those who attend our Sessions here, should be complimented and patted on the back because at times I am sure I have had

occasion where my eyes shut and I think if you are sitting in a booth listening to some of you guys, now I may be a little different, but some of you guys and ladies have been somewhat on the, I will not say the word. Anyway, I want to thank them. The people that I really want to thank, Mr. Speaker, are my constituents. They have been giving me, over the past four years, good feedback. They have been proactive whenever they felt that there was an issue that I should be concerned with. Additionally, they have come to me with difficulties from time to time and I hope over the past four years I have been able to help those constituents resolve some of their problems, may they have been on a personal problem or as a collective group society type of problem. To me it is the constituents that have been of great importance to, as they are to all of our Members, they are the people that we represent and I know that from what I have seen in this legislature, our Members have been very responsive in all cases, that seems to be the priority and that is the way it should be. Those are the people that put us in here and they are the ones we should thank for putting us in here and work for. Mr. Speaker, I will end on that note and I want to thank the indulgence of my colleagues for giving me the extra time to speak this morning. I thank everybody, it has been a great pleasure to work with all of you and with the Cabinet Members. I personally am of the opinion we have a very good Cabinet and I feel that they do a good job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Krutko.

Member's Statement 20-13(8): Ensuring Equity and Fairness in all Constituencies

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since this is our last day in the 13th Assembly I would like to remind the government and the bureaucracy at who to represent. I think it is important that this government realizes that things are

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different in the smaller communities, in the smaller ridings and also geographically. The riding I represent is in the far west corner of the new Western Territory. We are still part of the new Western Territory. I would like to ensure that we continue to

be represented fully, fairly and also be given the opportunities that every riding and every region in the new Western Territory receives. I am talking about economic and social opportunities. We now have the opportunity on our doorstep in regard to the oil and gas industry with the gas pipeline, which is just being unveiled today in Inuvik.

I believe we also have to strive to ensure that we better the lives of all the people in the new Western Territory and expand our horizon of developing our economic opportunities, developments in the tourism sector, commercial sector in regard to the fishing industry and also the logging industry. It is more important than ever that we improve the lives of the people we represent as to initiatives that come from the people we represent, not from the bureaucracy down, but from the people up.

I find it awfully difficult being here in the last four years where issues seem to take so long to develop. We raise issues time and time again with the understanding that it is a simple process, but yet it takes months and months, if not years, for a lot of these initiatives to get off the ground. I guess you have to start somewhere.

In regard to the issues I am talking about is the water concern in Fort McPherson and also giving the regions more autonomy in developing the regional institutions such as correction facilities, on the land programs in regard to alcohol and drug programs, and also allow the communities to have the resources like you have in any large regional centre. We cannot nickel and dime the resource people we have in our communities where we pay them less than people doing the same job in other government sectors either in Yellowknife or in the other regional centres. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to continue my statement.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Mackenzie Delta is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Do we have any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Krutko, you have unanimous consent.

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I, for one, feel that we have to take initiatives of ensuring that we do have a check list where we can see exactly where the money is being spent, how it is being impacted on communities. Is it meeting the

goals that this government set? I have argued many times in this House about negotiated contracts. The reason I support negotiated contracts is because I see that as a process that ensures the benefits to communities for jobs, for being able to develop their local industries and also being able to develop the local economy of those particular communities and regions. Yet we have policies in place in this government where I feel that is lacking in other areas. I think it is essential that this government ensures that the benefits flow directly to the people in the communities firstly and secondly, that we ensure that it cuts the social dependency on this government in our local communities. At the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Premier questions on this matter.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Erasmus.

Member's Statement 21-13(8): Concerns of Giant Mine Employees

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today in my last Member's statement I will be speaking about the sale of Giant Mine and the federal government living up to its responsibility to employees there. Mr. Speaker, as we all know Miramar Con Mine has proposed to buy this mine from the receiver Price Waterhouse Coopers. One of Miramar's conditions is that the employees do not come with the mine. Ordinarily under Canadian law, when you sell a company the employees go with it and so do the obligations that are owed to the old employees, meaning pensions and severance pay and those types of things. Miramar does not want the employees. Like any good business move they would like to cut their costs when they are purchasing this business. Unfortunately, in this instance, if this happens it will mean that the employees are the ones that are getting the shaft, so to speak. Most of them will lose their jobs and all of them will lose their pensions and severance pay if things work out the way the mine wants. Like I say, usually when you buy a company all of their obligations come with it. Employees, employees pension and their severance pay. But if the receivers lay them off, then the employees simply become creditors to Giant Mine. Meaning that Giant Mine owes them money.

Mr. Speaker, there are two kinds of creditors. Secured creditors and unsecured creditors. Secured creditors are companies that have signed documents indicating that they will receive collateral if they do not receive the money that is owed to them. Unsecured creditors are also owed money, but they have not been smart enough or in a position to get the signed documents saying that they will receive something.

What does this mean? It means that once Giant Mine is sold, the receiver pays the secure creditors first. This means that the workers get what is left after the secured creditors, who are usually people like banks and other loan companies, the workers will get what is left after that. This means that they will get very, very little, if anything, of what is owed to them. 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 we 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, because of the way the system works this likely means that the employees will get very little, if anything, of what is owed to them for their pensions and severance pay. This whole area is governed by the federal government, under the Canadian Labour Code and the Bankruptcy Act. Mr. Speaker, to me and to anybody that I have spoken to, it is unconscionable that the federal government can allow this. It is simple, all they have to do is put it into their act, that workers are the first secured creditors. I have to add, this is not the first time that this has happened. Similar situations have occurred across Canada. The worker is the person that always gets the shaft. It is time, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government lives up to its obligations. In this instance it is to

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protect the workers both legally and financially. The federal government should step in and ensure that the miners receive what is owed to them and secondly, Mr. Speaker, the federal government has to change their act so that all employees become first secured creditors in any bankruptcy. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement 22-13(8): Reflections on the 13th Legislative Assembly

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this the last day of the last Session of the 13th Assembly, I as well would like to make some brief final comments and as I know there are going to be a number of replies to the opening address. Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody can deny that the 13th Assembly was an historic one. We were at the end of an era and we were involved in the start of a new one. We now have two territories. We dealt with a very difficult economic situation and I think when you get away from the hubbub of the Assembly and you look back, you can reflect on things. As my colleague, Mr. Roland, said yesterday we did good work, but we also did necessary work. We passed some very important legislation. We dealt with very difficult financial times and we navigated through the very tricky waters leading to division and beyond. Through it all, by practising the politics of co-operation we were able to succeed to the level that we did. I am very, very optimistic as MLA for Thebacha and a resident of the Northwest Territories about our future. We sit on a tremendous storehouse of resources, we have huge potential and I am confident that if we get our politics right that we should prosper like no other jurisdiction in Canada.

It has been, throughout the last four years, an honour and privilege to serve with all my colleagues through all the interesting times that we have had. For those who are running for re-election, myself included, I wish you all the best. For those that are going to go on to other endeavours, of course, good health and continued success.

No matter what happens, Mr. Speaker, for myself, I also want to acknowledge the support, and as we work here as politicians, the staff have a tremendous role to play, both in this House and in the offices in departments of government. To them I give a heartfelt thanks as well. Mr. Speaker, no matter where I go from here on in, no matter what happens to me, I will always be able to say with pride that I was a Member of the 13th Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Antoine.

Member's Statement 23-13(8): Reflections on the 13th Legislative Assembly

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you. Since this is the last day of the sitting of the 13th Assembly, I just wanted to say that over the last four years it has certainly been a challenge for all of us here in the Legislative Assembly. As the MLA for the Nahendeh constituency, I have had the honour to represent the people in the six communities of Fort Simpson, Fort Liard, Jean Marie River, Trout Lake, Nahanni Butte and Wrigley for the last eight years now, two terms. We have gone through a tremendous historical and memorable four years here in this Legislative Assembly. We have had difference of opinions on certain issues, but overall we have been able to work together to try to meet head-on with the tremendous challenges that were ahead of us. Even though the media has a tendency of looking at things in a very negative way, we have done a lot of good things. We have done a lot of good things for the people in the North and that is what we all came here for. I think we should be proud that we have served the last four years together and I just wanted to say mahsi to all the MLAs here and to the people in my constituency for giving me this honour of representing them in this House. Mahsi.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Rabesca.

Member's Statement 24-13(8): Appreciation to Colleagues and Staff

MR. RABESCA:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give my colleagues a fond farewell. Over the years we have had many battles as well as many good times that, I for one, will remember for a long, long time. This has been a very interesting Assembly, and as I look around at all of you I know you have all grown considerably over the last four years.

I remember travelling with my friend and colleague, Mr. John Ningark, as I call him, brother John. His humour and good nature was always welcome. I have many memories of those years. I thank you all for the privilege of meeting and sharing our lives together. In a way it is sad for us today, but our lives go on and most of us will be hitting the campaign trail, while others will contemplate what the next move will be for them and what it will mean for their future. For myself, I will once again hit the campaign trail and with some good luck and support, I will once again be back here to work for our residents

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish my colleagues that will also be going to re-election, good luck. For those that have decided to venture elsewhere in their lives, I wish you all the best in your private lives wherever they may lead you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Members' statements. Mr. Henry.

Member's Statement 25-13(8): Appreciation to Constituents, Colleagues, Family and Staff

MR. HENRY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I feel a little lost for words. I have many emotions about today. It is the last day of the Assembly and for some people that would offend my Irish heritage. We are supposed to be never lost for words. My Irish heritage also would suggest that we can drown our

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sorrows the odd time in a little alcohol but, Mr. Speaker, with what the Minister of Finance has done three weeks ago, I cannot even afford to do that.

--Laughter

Mr. Speaker, there are a few people I would like to take this opportunity to thank. The first one is my wife, Linda. I would like to thank her very much for the continued support that she has given me. I cannot help but think of a lot of the Members who, when they leave this building after a hard day's work and many frustrations, I can only think of those Members who do not have a spouse or a companion to be with, other than at the other end of the phone. I appreciate the work that those Members have done in

this Assembly without having the support from people they love and care for.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, I think it goes without saying with your impartiality and how you have conducted and regulated the Members in this House through some pretty difficult times. I would like to sincerely thank each and every one of my colleagues. I have learned much from you. Hopefully, I have been able to give you some insights and wisdom also. I know none of us are above learning from each other.

I would like to thank the staff, not only of the Legislative Assembly. I have said a number of times that it is the staff that work for each Member that makes us look as good or as bad as we do. I think they are to be commended on the work they do on an ongoing basis. I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I forgot about the staff that work for this government outside of this building. There are many, many capable and competent people that work for this government and they have always provided information on a timely basis. Nothing was ever too much to provide the information and get it to the committees or to individuals. I would like to thank each and every one of the bureaucracy, both in Yellowknife and around the rest of the Northwest Territories, for their service and dedication to this government. 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. Thank you, colleagues. I would like at this time to also thank the constituents of Yellowknife South, I would like to thank them for first of all sending me to this building to do the job on their behalf. I have received that as an honour and hopefully I have done an acceptable job for each and every one of those constituents. I certainly understand, Mr. Speaker, now what baptism by fire really means. It means coming to an institution such as this and getting into and dealing with the situations that we have had to deal with as a collective. I found the past four years very challenging and very difficult. As I look back on my life to date, I find that the most difficult times in my life were the ones that have got

meaning to me. I am quite sure that I will look back with fond memories on the four years that I have spent with each and every one of the Members here today.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say that a number of times during this Assembly I have had my bubble burst and I think we all know what that means. I would like to, seeing as the closest person to me is Mr. Ootes here on the right, I would like to take this opportunity in closing and sort of give him an understanding sometimes of what it is like to have your bubble burst. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Member's Statement 26-13(8): Level of Commitment Required by MLAs

MR. MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk a little bit about being a Member of the Legislative Assembly and what that means and what type of work does that also include. It is just about 12 years ago, Mr. Speaker, that I ran for office as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Tu Nedhe. Only yourself, Mr. Speaker, has served longer in this House. Mr. Kakfwi has served the same length of time as I have. Mr. Kakfwi served as a Minister for the past 12 years. I have had the opportunity of serving around five and a half years as an ordinary Member in this Legislative Assembly.

What does it mean for people to run for MLA? What does it really mean? When people first run do they have any idea at all of what they are getting themselves into? Do they realize when they wake up the day after election they are no longer just a person, they are now an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly. They now represent people. That is their job. Do people run just for a job or do people run to do a job? I myself, Mr. Speaker, ran 12 years ago to do a job, to come to Yellowknife to change the way the government worked. The people wanted a change and I hope over the past 12 years we were able to create some good change. When you run and when you do become a Member of the Legislative Assembly your life changes. In order to do the job properly you have to be totally committed, 100

percent of your time has to be committed to representing your people. That is what they elected you to do. In a very short period of time some of the Members of this Legislative Assembly will seek re-election. Many others, citizens of the Northwest Territories will also seek election. I urge the voters in the Northwest Territories in every riding to ask the candidates about their commitment to representing them as constituents. What is their commitment or do they have other commitments as well? I seek unanimous consent to continue, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Tu Nedhe is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Do we have any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Morin, you have unanimous consent.

MR. MORIN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When you are a Member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I do not know about anybody else, I can only reflect on things I have done for my constituency. You do everything from fix peoples' toilets to try to get them housing, to get them lawyers, to help with education, help with health problems, you counsel them, you help with deaths and you help with general things that the territorial

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government supply. That is a full-time job. The Member of the Legislative Assembly job is full-time.

Later today, Mr. Speaker, we are going to pass a new Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act that makes it very clear that Members of Cabinet, if you own a business, you have to put it in blind trust. That is the right thing to do. You should have to do that if you are a business person. What about Members of the Legislative Assembly, ordinary Members of the Legislative Assembly? There is no fine line, Mr. Speaker, it must be a big line, a thick line. If you are a businessman, can you walk into a deputy minister's office and say, I need this for my business or I want to do this for my business? You are an elected Member. Can any Member sit across from another Member and not be a Member at any given time? No, they cannot. You are always a Member 24 hours a day. You are a Member of the Legislative Assembly and supposed to be representing your constituency. There are prime examples of that already.

Mr. Seamus Henry, my good colleague to my left, can he walk into a deputy minister's office and talk about business and say I am only coming here as a businessman? What is the public's perception of that? Did he leave his MLA job at the door? I do not think you can do that. I urge constituents in the Western Arctic, ask the question of those candidates, no matter who it is, are you going to work for us every waking moment of your life for the next four years because, if you are going to represent people, you should do it properly and you should do it full time?

We are passing this act today and it clearly states Members get paid 70 some thousand dollars per year. That is what they get paid and this act is good. Now finally people can understand what Members of the Legislative Assembly are getting paid. But is that a part-time job? Is that part-time wages? It is suppose to be a full-time job. Always talk to your candidates and ask them the question, are they fully committed to work for them and also are you fully committed to the North, or do you have a house in BC that you are going to retire to if you lose or retire to right after you are finished, after you make decisions in this House, then are you going to go south and leave the North to live with those decisions? Ask those potential candidates, are you only keeping an apartment in Yellowknife, an apartment and you have your wife and a house down in BC, is that commitment? I do not think so, Mr. Speaker.

Can an MLA, an ordinary Member walk into a Minister's office and say, I have come to meet with you as a business person and I would like you to increase the rent in my apartment buildings or the rent on my leases and extend the leases? Where do you draw the line? You cannot. That is why I would encourage all candidates to put their businesses in blind trusts if they are going to run for an election. I would encourage all voters to ask those candidates whether or not they are going to do that and commit to the people for the job that they are supposed to do.

The election is coming soon, I wish everybody luck that is running. It has been a pleasure working with the Members of this Assembly and with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mr. Steen.

Member's Statement 27-13(8): Reflections on the 13th Legislative Assembly

HON. VINCE STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have found the last four years to be very educating to myself. I have learned much about politics and I suppose, like everyone else, I learned that you do not always achieve what your goals and objectives are. I am sure that we all realize now that after four years that it is not a simple matter when you leave your communities to come forward and represent them. It is not a simple matter that you are going to change the way government thinks or the way government operates. Perhaps in the first year, we are all under an illusion that we can do this, but after a year or so you soon learn that is what it is, just an illusion. Nevertheless we try and we do, I think, obtain some results, favourable. Of the four years I have been here as an MLA and in trying to reflect as to what I enjoyed the most, I think the position I enjoyed the most was when I was actually helping people at home. Individuals that needed to obtain whatever they were trying to get from the government and they were unable to. It was so rewarding to see them happy and thankful for whatever little thing you did for them. I think that you can expand that to include your whole constituency. Hopefully the majority of them are satisfied with the work you have done and the sacrifices that we had to make to come here.

It is not easy always coming here and spending time away from home, but we do it knowing that somebody back home might appreciate it and it helps. I would like to thank all of the Members here for tolerance. I am not always the easiest guy to get along with. I know I am quite persistent if I want something for my constituents. I have noticed that with the other Members too. In the end when it is all compromise and trying to do what is best for the territories in general as a whole.

I want to thank my constituents for allowing me to represent them and I thank the Members for allowing me to represent them on Cabinet and to serve them on Cabinet. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to go over my time once in awhile. With that I thank everyone and I look forward to seeing you in the next Assembly. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Members' statements. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Member's Statement 28-13(8): Tribute to Speaker Gargan

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is Friday, our last day here and I would like to make my Member's statement on the lighter side. Mr. Speaker, I thought I would share a little poetry. Most of you would not know about my compositions in the poetic field. I had to keep some of my talents a secret. I did not want to make everybody else look bad. Something else you probably did not know about me is that I have a wee tad of a rebellious streak in me. I have always wanted to talk back to the Speaker, but, of course, that has been forbidden. This morning I wrote a little poem about the Speaker. I would like to have written something about all of the Members here because heaven knows there would be no shortage of material. I have to confess that not all of them inspire me in that

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way. If I talk back a little bit today, what is the Speaker going to do? Throw me out? Okay. The one and only Speaker, Samuel Gargan early made us very aware, never challenge the Chair and use only parliamentary jargon. Completely loyal to his aboriginal roots in word and deed, in doctrine and creed, except for his fetish for cowboy boots. He gave up his right to speak, being Speaker we are told, but silent he is not, look at what his riding got. What was he doing during committee of the whole?

He fed us on Fridays, Member's Lounge out back, ham, hashbrowns, eggs with cheese, pork sausages dripping and oozing with grease.

I wonder, will he come and see us after the big heart attack. There is a little mischief in those smiling eyes.

His name shows up on a sign, to me seemed fairly benign, but now he is the MLA for Enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, point of order, Mr. Krutko's tie offends me, Mr. Speaker, point of order, Mr. Kakfwi said quibble.

Some may have dismissed our concerns as dribble, but you took us all seriously, a most honourable referee.

He has been around here the longest and that makes him the dean.

We should never bring up colour if we are having a fight, because whether we are yellow, red, black or white, as long as he is here, most of us are just a lovely shade of green.

Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

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

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. OOTES:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of people I would like to introduce this morning. I would like to start with a lady who has been a longstanding member of the Canadian Mental Health Association, NWT division. She has worked tirelessly over the past many years as it's president. She was recently elected as the vice-president of the National Mental Health Association and she is the first person from the Northwest Territories to be on the National Executive. As I say, the first person I would like to introduce, Mr. Speaker, is Ms. Kathryn Youngblut who is in the audience with us today.

--Applause

I would also like to introduce Mr. Mike Mann, who is also with the Mental Health Association and is also the Executive Assistant to our Commissioner, Mr. Dan Marion.

--Applause

Two other people that I would like to introduce, a constituent of mine and former mayor of Yellowknife, Ms. Pat McMahan, and she is with Terry Balta, a Yellowknife resident for many years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Krukto.

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since it is the last opportunity I will get to do this, I would like to recognize Ms. Pat Thomas of the NWTTA. I would like to thank Ms. Thomas for the many days and many weeks she spent in the gallery, most times she was by herself, but I would like to thank Ms. Thomas and I wish her all the best.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Krutko.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 32-13(8): Program Delivery in Small Communities

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement is in regard to a question I raised in my Member's statement. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance just to ensure that he does keep in mind that there are communities and regions out there that sometimes feel alone and out in the dark and all by ourselves way up in the western corner of the new Western Territory. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance exactly how are they ensuring that programs and services are being delivered in regard to contracts that were let go and economic projects that happened in our regions? Also job opportunities within this government, trying to get the maximum benefit of these programs and services in our communities so that we strive to try to cut down on the independence of the social envelope and also trying to meet the maximum dollar value of those contracts so that they do end up in the hands of the people that live in those communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 32-13(8): Program Delivery in Small Communities

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

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the policies of this government are to support local and regional business and we do this through a number of ways. We have a policy to support northern manufacturers. We have the Business Incentive Policy. We do use negotiated contracts and we do look for ways to ensure that benefits for contracts are kept as much as possible in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 32-13(8): Program Delivery in Small Communities

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister what is the process that is used that follows through reports in this legislature or basically, how do you know that these contracts are being fulfilled to ensure that there are economic benefits, there are jobs being created, there are people being trained and also that the business sector in our small communities are ensured that they will be able to access work? What is the reporting mechanism on that?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 32-13(8): Program Delivery in Small Communities

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are various means that we use to try and stimulate northern employment, northern involvement. It can be through setting terms and conditions in an RFP or a tender that proponents must respond to. It can be through ensuring that in order to approve a negotiated contract, for instance, Cabinet has to see what local and northern benefits there are specifically with employment and northern procurement and so on. In terms of follow-up, we would expect that there would be an assessment after a contract or during a contract to ensure that contractors are living up to the terms of the contract. Although I must admit we do not have contract police. We do not have people out there doing this on a day-to-day basis and have to rely in large part on reports that follow the completion of the contract to determine just how well the contract has been fulfilled. We do make every effort to follow up if there is a concern

expressed in the life of the contract and talk to the contractors to ensure that what has been promised is being delivered. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 32-13(8): Program Delivery in Small Communities

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the areas that seem to always arise from these negotiated contracts is meaningful employment, not just the labour jobs, but basically where you can get a lot of labourers, but there are people out there who have qualifications either being certified as carpenters or electricians and who basically are unemployed in our communities. Yet a lot of these contractors that do get these contracts are bringing people in from Newfoundland and elsewhere in Canada. Do you evaluate to ensure that we get the maximum job opportunities staying in our communities and those specialized people remain in our communities to ensure that they will have work in those different opportunities through negotiated contracts or other contracts in this government?

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 32-13(8): Program Delivery in Small Communities

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The criteria used to evaluate, or to consider, or that must be brought forward when considering a negotiated contract in Cabinet, include just that kind of discussion. There has to be some kind of indication of what a negotiated contract would offer. We would then follow up and try and make sure after the fact, that the benefits promised were delivered. In terms of RFPs or tenders there are often opportunities for programs like the Building and Learning Program to be entered into, which the Department of Education, Culture and Employment works with Public Works and Services, the contractor, to ensure that meaningful training is accomplished within the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary To Question 32-13(8): Program Delivery in Small Communities

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister what is the process for penalizing companies that do not fulfil their obligations under either negotiated contracts or any contracts that specifically state that there is an economic proportion of that contract that they have to ensure jobs, ensuring that people are trained and also that there are apprentice programs delivered so that when money is spent by Education, Culture and Employment, it is carried out. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 32-13(8): Program Delivery in Small Communities

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am advised by the Minister of Public Works and Services that the chief mechanism to achieve that is through holdbacks on contract payments. There will have to be an examination before the final payment of just how much compliance there has been with the contract. If it has not been delivered substantially as promised, then the government could hold back a portion of the funds as a penalty.

MR. SPEAKER:

Oral questions. Mr. Erasmus.

Question 33-13(8): Cost Overruns on GNWT Projects

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Public Works and Services in relation to the RFP process and cost controls involved in those. Mr. Speaker, for some time now people have been talking about the fact that accrued projects are approved for a certain amount of money and then they come back and all of a sudden it is almost double the cost or a substantial amount of money more is needed. I

understand that all of these projects or many of them anyways, are done through architectural firms, those types of firms that draw up or produce professional documents, blueprints and things like that. What I would like to know is, do these contracts that go through Public Works and Services, do they have anything in there that would ensure the people who had made the original blueprints and those documents that people go by, do they have to cough up some money or pay a penalty or something if there are cost overruns because of poor designs? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Return To Question 33-13(8): Cost Overruns on GNWT Projects

HON. VINCE STEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to take the question as notice.

MR. SPEAKER:

The question is taken as notice. Oral questions. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 9: REPLIES TO OPENING ADDRESS

Reply 2-13(8)

MRS. GROENEWEGEN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is the last opportunity we have to speak in this legislature and I want to take this time to make a short statement. The lucky 13th Assembly, as I have always referred to us, was an eclectic collection of mostly rookie MLAs from diverse regions, backgrounds and perspectives. Although each others' strengths and talents were not completely obvious to us when we first arrived, as time passed and we worked on committees and issues together, these attributes surfaced. It is regrettable that in the process of trying to find our place in the collective group we did not always afford each other more opportunity to really flourish in the area of our strengths. Individually, I believe, that we all had a lot to contribute. I want to stress the fact that I said we all had a lot to contribute. Collectively, I do not think that we really quite got it together in a way that could

have resulted in accomplishing even more and achieving more of our potential than we did. That is not to say that things did not get done and I do not mean to diminish what we did manage to do.

These were difficult times of restraint and reorganization and responding to realities which were not always within our control. However, I remain very much an optimist about the future of the Northwest Territories, if perhaps not quite the idealist that I was when I arrived here four years ago. The experience of the past four years, in fact, makes me no less enthusiastic about tackling the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, perhaps just a little more pragmatic about the dispatch with which we can proceed. Very little of my previous experience could have prepared me for what I have encountered in this past four years. Being here in living colour is very different from the armchair vantage that I enjoyed on territorial politics before jumping in at the deep end. I would like this term of office to be remembered as being served by me with fairness, impartiality, conviction and sensitivity to the issues of the people. Although I absolutely have no regrets, I hope that the highly publicized and protracted effort on behalf of openness and accountability in government will not obscure many other issues that I attempted to address.

On a personal note, this is a time at which many of us are doing some soul-searching as to our goals and our priorities. I look at my life, which I might add has been very dramatically changed by this foray in politics and I have to take inventory. I am 42 years old, a mother, a wife, a business partner and a 25 year veteran of various degrees of political involvement in the North. I know at this age what brings me genuine satisfaction and pleasure. They are simple things. Watching my children grow up in response to the guidance and love that we give them and seeing the evidence of them adopting the same values and beliefs that our parents taught us. I love the comfort of my home and enjoying the smallest of detail of attending to its atmosphere and its appearance. I love art and good music, I like to write and I would like to have more time to pursue things that interest me.

I have to ask myself, what do all of these simple joys and pleasures have to do with packing up clothes and files every few weeks, travelling to Yellowknife, allowing almost all creative energies to be zapped by the seemingly endless demands and agendas set before us. Agendas created from within the bowels of the elusive and complex government. The offering of

yourself to unrelenting public scrutiny and comment, the sometimes counterproductive and even ruthless rivalry amongst Members to get to the front of the pack, and the patience needed to listen to others viewpoints, while wondering if anyone is listening to yours and if they are hearing, are they understanding.

The next and obvious step in the sole-searching is to determine if the rewards outweigh the sacrifices. The rewards for me, as Mr. Steen earlier stated, so far all relate back to my role that I play in my own community. The interaction with constituents, whether at a community function, one and one on an issue pertaining to them personally, addressing larger issues and initiatives or just catching up with people at the checkout counter at the grocery store. Therein lies the satisfaction and reward for me. To know that you have the ability to speak for, advocate on behalf of and respectably represent the voices of the people in your community and know that they appreciate you for it, is the only thing that brings the measure of sense to this job that would induce anyone in their right mind to come back for more.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues of the 13th Legislative Assembly. It has been a sharp learning curve for most of us. I hope that many of you will have the opportunity to put what you have learned to good use in another term of office.

I know that the staff cannot wait for us to leave today. I thank them for their good work. Enjoy the break and we shall return all too soon I am sure. I would also like to thank many Yellowknifers who have welcomed the out of town MLAs so warmly into their community. We have spent almost half of our time here over the past four years, and I personally needed to have a life while I was here, outside of this building. I have truly enjoyed the kindness and support of the people of Yellowknife.

I also want to thank my husband Rick, my boys, Jordan and Jeffrey, and my daughter, Jillian, and my sister, Janet, who was here with me for a time. As Mr. Roland did yesterday, I too, do

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thank God for providing the wisdom and guidance that we collectively and individually prayed for here everyday.

Last but not least, I want to thank the good people of Enterprise and Hay River for this unique opportunity to serve. To my confidantes, advisors, mentors,

supporters and even my critics, I have done my best under what were sometimes very unusual circumstances and I have always had the interest of Hay River and Northerners at heart. I would not have missed this chapter on politics in my memoirs for anything. I am confident that in some capacity it would be safe to end this statement with the caption, to be continued. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Replies to opening address. Mr. Dent. Reply 3-13(8)

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have good news. This will be a very short reply. Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to have been selected nearly four years ago to serve on Cabinet and it has been an interesting time. There has been an awful lot of learning involved. I know having served for four years on the other side as an ordinary Member and then coming to Cabinet, that it often seems that there are all sorts of conspiracies that abound and that Cabinet, in particular, is leading them. It was a very interesting transition to get on to the other side and find just how few conspiracies there actually are and how impossible it is to do anything in secret and I think this is good. We really have a very open government here and almost all of the decisions and discussions are done publicly. Far more than what would be found in any other style of government, particularly in a government that had party politics. If there is one thing that I have found over the last eight years of being in this Legislature, it is that the public is actually more aware of what is going on than I think they would be in other systems.

Mr. Speaker, four years ago when we got started it was a very difficult time. I think we can be very proud of the fiscal situation that we are leaving this government in. In spite of coming in and having to deal with, in effect cutting our budget because of reduction of \$150 million in our federal transfer payments, we will not be leaving the next Legislature in a sea of ink. I think that is one of the most important accomplishments that we can point to over the last four years. We have not left this territory mortgaged for our children to pay off.

I think we can also point to division of the Northwest Territories, the creation of Nunavut and the new Northwest Territories. The manner in which that took

place, I think, was a credit to all of us who sat in this Legislature. We had a very smooth transition and have two administrations up and running and there was no interruption in the delivery of services to our constituents. There was a lot of concern as to whether or not that would happen. Whether or not there would be some concern.

Mr. Speaker, since becoming the Minister of Finance, I have spoken to an awful lot of community groups and aboriginal leaders talking about our future. There is no question that one of the biggest challenges that is going to be faced by the next Legislature is the fiscal situation. We are going to face a continued challenge dealing with a shortfall in revenues when it comes to necessary expenditures. We know that the projected shortfall will mean that it is going to be difficult just to maintain services, let alone deal with the pressing social needs that we have at Health and Social Services or Education, Culture and Employment. I think we have to look for ways to invest in those pressing social needs. I see it as a particularly onerous challenge coming up.

Mr. Speaker, I am planning to run in the next election and I would not do that if I were not an optimist. If I did not believe that the future does hold hope. I think that if we can demonstrate to the federal government that with a changed fiscal relationship that we will be able to not only improve the welfare of northern residents, but the welfare of all residents of Canada and that perhaps they will be willing to listen to us. Perhaps we can then start to make some progress at developing sufficient revenues from our own sources to deal with some of our pressing problems. It takes a northern consensus though, Mr. Speaker. This government cannot do it on its own. We have to get all Northerners on side, first to move forward, to talk to the federal government about moving ownership of resources to the North.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also take a few moments to thank some people that have given me great support and help over the last few years. I would like to thank all the Members of this Legislative Assembly, especially those with whom I have served on Cabinet, including many of the Nunavut Members. I would like to thank the Legislative Assembly staff under the guidance of Mr. David Hamilton, they have provided all of us with tremendous support. I would like to thank the staff in my office, I have had two executive assistants, Mr. Paul Jones was the first assistant that I had and now Ms. Karen Bergman-Ilnik. I think that they discovered a whole new realm of issues when it came to dealing with problems with student financial

assistance and income support when I was Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I thank them for their patience and their assistance. I would like to thank Ms. Cheryl Meier, who is my executive secretary. Without her organization, I could not get the job done. It is amazing how she can put her hands on a piece of paper that is four years old and get it to me in almost no time.

I would also like to thank the departmental staff that I have had the pleasure of working with. I think this government has a large cadre of dedicated, competent people working for it. I have been responsible for three departments in particular and I would like to single them out for special mention. I could not have been nearly as successful without their support. I would like to say a special thanks to Mr. Mark Cleveland and the staff at Education, Culture and Employment with whom I worked with for three and a half years. Thanks to Margaret Melhorn and the staff at the Department of Finance. To Lew Voytilla and the staff at FMBS for the guidance that they are providing us all these days. I should also mention thanks to Ms. Bertha Norwegian who is the special advisor to me on the Status of Women. Her help has been invaluable since I have taken on that responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I need to say thanks to my family. Without the support of my wife and my son for the hours, for the weekends and for the days that I am away travelling, I could not possibly do this job. I would also like to say thanks, finally, to my

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constituents for the trust that they have shown in putting me here to represent them. I would like to say to them, I will be seeing you shortly knocking on your door. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Replies to opening address. Mr. Erasmus.

Reply 4-13(8)

MR. ERASMUS:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to inform the Members that this reply will not be as long as my previous maiden reply to the opening address, as I am sure you will be happy to

know. Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, I would like to congratulate Mr. Nick Sibbeston, the former Premier of this government and Minister, and, of course, obviously an ordinary MLA. I would like to congratulate him on his appointment to the Senate. I am sure Mr. Sibbeston will do an outstanding job in promoting all of our interests as he has done here in the Northwest Territories. For those of us who know him, Mr. Sibbeston is quite outspoken and I am sure he will inform his fellow Senators of the view points and the realities of the North while they are making decisions that affect Canadians and particularly the North.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of my constituents who supported me during this past term. I would like to thank those who contacted me and voiced their concerns particularly when it was more than an issue that involved only one person so that we could try to do something to help the general population. I would also like to thank the three constituency assistants that have worked with me. Ms. Vi Beck, Mr. Roy Dahl and Ms. Leslie Wilson. With this new system that we are going to be having in the next Assembly, hopefully, Mr. Speaker, no one will be standing up next time saying that they had three constituency assistants because with the new system we will be able to offer them a fair wage and better working conditions I believe, so that you can actually keep a constituency assistant and they will not go off to better paying jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank all of the staff that we work with here who certainly go out of their way at all times to try to ensure that we get all the information that we need. Sometimes we might make the odd request that is on the spur of the moment, but they always try to do their best to make sure we get what we need and travel plans are made and that type of thing. I would like to thank everybody from Mr. Hamilton to the kitchen staff and the whole works.

Mr. Speaker, also the rest of the GNWT employees as well. They have to do a lot of work that makes our work easier, providing us with information and various types of things. Drafting briefing notes and all that kind of stuff. And I am sure that they would much rather be doing the work that they have been hired to do, which is to provide programs and services to Members, people living in the Northwest Territories. I would like to thank them as well.

I would like to comment a little bit about some of the things that other people had mentioned earlier as well. I think the first thing I would like to mention is

the fact that from what I understand, this was the first Assembly that had to make some serious cuts. Before we could even blink, we were told that we had to cut about \$100 million from our budget from previous years. That is not an easy thing to do. Mr. Speaker, people know that when there is a lot of money, it is easy, everybody is happy, but as soon as there is less money, everybody starts quarrelling and trying to get their share. I know from having worked with aboriginal organizations in the past that this is the way it is. When you are working for an organization, when there is a lot of money, it is easy to get things. You may not get everything that you want, but you can get money to do certain things and that type of thing. When I came here, it was the same. When we had to start cutting, man, it was hard.

As Mr. Roland indicated yesterday, we made the necessary decision and we did that because, as Mr. Dent has indicated today, we did not want to mortgage our children's future. We were trying to ensure that the people of the Northwest Territories would not have a substantial deficit when we left. Seeing what is coming, Mr. Speaker, I am certain now, it strengthens my resolve and it confirms that we did the right thing even though many people felt that we went too far because we knew that the crunch was coming. In another year's time, in the following budget, we know that there is going to be another deficit. If we would have left a \$100 million deficit already, that would have been really tough. I think the next Legislative Assembly has to make it a very, very high priority to work with the aboriginal and community leadership to ensure that control of and benefit from our natural resources is brought to the North. It seems like every time we turn around, we get another example, another example of how we are put in such poor positions because we are not in control of our natural resources.

One of the things that we had to go through in the past couple of years was just to get the diamond valuating and sorting facility in the community. I suppose you could say we had to fight, beg, cajole, threaten, everything under our power and every way we could think of to get major companies, major diamond companies, to agree that they would have their diamond valuating and sorting facility here in Yellowknife. I guess the other thing to point out is that it did not necessarily have to be in Yellowknife but at least in a community so that a community can benefit from the jobs and the money that comes along with it.

Another thing that we can look at is this whole Giant Mine issue. Mr. Speaker, we know that if we were in

control all along, I guess it is a mine in more ways than one. It is a mine in the fact that they are mining ore but it is also a mine ready to go off because we have tons and tons and tons of arsenic there. Presumably that would have never happened if we were in control of our resources here, if we could put conditions on people doing their mining, exploration, and mining development. It would also enable us to put other conditions such as having to take on so many employees, trainees, and those types of things. Those could all be put as conditions.

The other very, very important point that comes out also is the fact that from these diamond mines, Mr. Speaker, who is getting the most benefit? It is certainly not us. After the diamond companies themselves, it is the federal government. They are getting what? Ten, 15 times more out of our own natural resources than we are. They are getting all the royalties. And then what happens? We have to go to them on bended knee and say give us a little bit more money.

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We have the highest pupil/teacher ratio in the country. We have people out there, homeless people. We have all these problems and we are not getting enough money, but yet the federal government is getting all these dollars and making it seem as though we are the poor little cousin on the block. But if we were getting all the resources, all the royalties we were supposed to be getting and which we would be getting more of in the future because of the added diamond mines will be coming on stream, the oil and gas exploration and there are going to be all kinds of that being pumped out of here, Mr. Speaker, if we would have access to all those royalties, we would be paying our way a lot more than many of the provinces in the future. All the eastern provinces, eastern Atlantic provinces, some of the others as well. We would be putting more into the kitty ourselves than those provinces are.

Those Members who will be coming back to the next Assembly, and I hope that I am one of them as I will be putting my name forward, that we do make this a priority to get this Northern Accord or whatever it will be called, through. I think that all of the people in the Northwest Territories have to work on this, the aboriginal leadership, the community leadership, the MLAs, we have to put our differences aside, put our differences aside and work for the betterment of all of our constituents so that we can take control of these

resources, get added money and ensure that we get maximum benefits from our resources.

Mr. Speaker, like Mr. Steen, I thought we were going to do all kinds of changes, some of them quickly. But like he said, it was an illusion. Things happen slowly in government and particularly in our form of government because we have a consensus style government and everybody comes from a different area of the Northwest Territories. We all have our own interests. We all have our own concerns that we want to address first. So in order to get support for things, it is very, very difficult. Lord knows, a lot of times you think you have an agreement, all of a sudden somebody else comes up with something new. Hey, we never thought of this, we never thought of that. Many times, although we do not like it, it is our civil service, but that is what they are paid to do is to provide us with the best information possible so we can make the best decisions. Those are the types of things that make government move slow. I know from my friend, Mr. Henry, and other people who are in business who are used to making quick decisions, it has been very, very frustrating not only for them but for us as well.

I would like to thank the Members who had served previously, such as yourself, Mr. Speaker, and several others who had previous experience as MLAs because without them it would have been a lot harder to get things done. They, of course, had been through it before and they helped us a lot with their previous experience in how things are done, that type of thing. I would like to thank them for providing us with advice as we went along.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reflect a little bit on some of the things that we did go through. I think that we were able to, as I had indicated, get a diamond valuation and sorting facility in Yellowknife, but also those are not the only benefits we will be getting from the diamond industry. There are a couple of other polishing facilities that will be happening. I am happy to say that three have been approved, and I know that two of them will be in Yellowknife, the Sirius Diamonds one and Deh Cho Diamonds, which I am very, very happy to indicate will be in the constituency of Weledeh, where I will be running. It is 50 percent owned by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, which will be a tremendous boost for that community which has, for the longest time, been living right next to Yellowknife, which is a large centre but have been unable to fully benefit from the educational services that are available and also from the business advantages that are there.

I think too, that we were able to put forward some new programs for investments, that type of thing, through the Aurora Fund, the Tax Credit Program. Being able to do that by using other people's money, allowed us to save money that we could use for social programs. One of the things I learned too, Mr. Speaker, which I was not aware of before we came here is about motions. Motions that are made in the House are simply recommendations to the Cabinet and I did not know that before I came here. I thought once you fought it through and you can get a motion passed, that was what going to happen, and I know other people felt like that too. And the general public, many of them thought that, and they still think that, many of them. But we did pass some motions and some of them were followed, some of them were not. I was going through the motions and I noticed that most that were passed were for more money in education. Unfortunately, we were not able to put as much money into education as we wanted, but I think it shows to the general public that this Legislative Assembly felt strongly about education and, it is not because we do not want our youth and our people to be well educated that we have not been able to put money into it. It is simply because we have to do other things as well.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things that we could speak about. We certainly had to work with resolving the equal pay issue, and I know that was hard. People took different sides and finally, I think, in the end, I should not say in the end, but today about 85 percent of the people who are owed money have received their money and although the union is still fighting to get more money for the other 15 percent who have not received their payouts, I think that for those who have accepted the offer, it has been good because they do not have to wait, and they have been able to spend their money on various things that they had wanted.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a little bit about working on committees. I would like to thank the people who worked with me in the two committees that I was on, the Social Programs Committee, and I am very, very glad that we, I would like to mention a Member from the east, Mr. Ningark, who had been a long-standing Member in this House. He was a very calming influence in our committee, and he helped us through a lot with letting us know what had happened in the past, that type of thing. It was very, very difficult at times, Mr. Speaker, because we do see the business plans of the organizations, and it is very difficult to be critical of business plans that have gone

through your committee because presumably you have approved them. It does not mean that we approve of everything that is going through there but because it has gone through your committee, sometimes in fact you may receive further information later on than you had when you made the decision or made recommendations. It is very difficult to sometimes be critical. But that particular committee had, I think, 63-65 percent of the budget in its envelope, and we had a lot of meetings. Particularly during Session, those of us who were on the Social

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Programs Committee and the Government Operations Committee, we were here at 9:00 in the morning and many, many times we met right from 9:00 until 1:30 or 1:20 when the House was going to be starting, and we went from one meeting to the next and then we had a lunch meeting as well. If people do not think that is hard, let me tell you, your head is spinning by the time you get to the House. Then you have to try to speak sensibly, asking questions, and making statements and the rest of that. I would like to thank those Members who worked with me on the Social Programs Committee and the Government Operations Committee as well.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that you have to adjust to when you become a public figure such as becoming an MLA is the loss of time with your family. I know that probably, if I wanted to be a better MLA, I could have went to more things such as meetings in the evenings and that type of thing, but I made a commitment to my wife when I was elected that I would try to spend as much time with my family as possible, and that may have brought some criticism to me, but I have a 13-year-old son and I have tried to spend as much time with him taking him to his various sporting activities or to his school activities as possible. Along with that as well, is the loss of privacy. You cannot even go to the corner store for a loaf of bread, someone may want to talk to you, but you have to take the time to speak to those people. That is a simple fact of life. It does not matter where you are, people will come to you. It does not matter, even if you are out of your community. I have often travelled to Fort Smith, Hay River, Edzo, anywhere, and people still come to you and talk to you. So I guess the loss of privacy and the fact that you are no longer just an ordinary person on the street. You are not able to do many of the things that you previously used to do. A lot of things, government programs and things, are no longer available to you not because you are no longer a member of the Northwest Territories

or a person living in the Northwest Territories, but simply because it looks bad that an MLA would participate in the same programs that other people participate in. That was a big adjustment. I guess we all had to learn to live with it, but I must say that it took a while to get used to it.

When I was campaigning four years ago, a couple of people asked me about promises I was going to make. I cannot promise anything because I do not know if I will be able to get what I want. There are a lot of things I want. One of the things I wanted to do was to improve the affirmative action, but I am sad to say that today, as we sit and stand here, that it is in a worse situation than when we got here. That is one of the reasons why I wish to run again to try to get some improvements to this program that has been with us for so long but which really does not seem to have done that much.

As I was saying, people had asked me, when I was campaigning about my promises, and what I had told them was that I could not make promises but what I would do when there was a problem or a situation, an issue, whatever you want to call it, I would get as much information as possible, I would look at both sides as fairly as I could and make the best decision that I could. I think that I have done that. I think that is the most that people could fairly expect of MLAs. I know that it does not matter what decision you make, you are going to get criticism from one side and praise from the other side. The next time you make a decision, it could be the exact opposite. The people who praised you the last time will criticise you, but that is just the way it is.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am just about finished. I would like to thank my family. As my good friend, Mr. Miltenberger, knows, I have a very large extended family in the North, not only in the North but I would particularly like to thank my parents who stood beside me through this, my brothers and sisters and, of course, my wife and my children. As I had indicated earlier, you lose a lot of your privacy when you become an MLA and it seems as though the people who feel the most are members of your family particularly when you are being criticized in the press or by the general public, and members of your family often do not say it, but they feel badly as well, and many times more than us because we get used to it and we can deal with it. So I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my wife, my children, and the rest of my family for all the assistance that they provided me with in the last four years.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing you and the rest of the Members who will be running again here in the 14th Assembly. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

We will take a 15 minute break.

--Break

MR. SPEAKER:

I will call the house back to order. We are on item 9, replies to opening address. Mr. Krutko.

Reply 5-13(8)

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to thank the people of the Mackenzie Delta for allowing me to represent them in the 13th Legislative Assembly for the last four years. I look forward to continuing to serve them for another four years. It has been challenging at times and it also has been fulfilling at times. We have had to make some crucial decisions in regard to the deficit and also the cuts in this House, especially in the areas of education in regard to the teachers and also in our schools in regard to our language specialists and also the effects on special needs students. There has been some improvement in the education system in my riding, especially in the area of developing the infrastructure in regard to the brand new school, Chief Julius School in Fort McPherson, and the renovation of the Moose Kerr School in Aklavik and now the construction of the school in Tsiigehtchic. Along with that we have to improve the delivery of education in our smaller communities and ensuring that in the future that the resources be put where they are needed. We have passed motions in this House directing the government to access more funds and put it into the area of education.

The other area that I would like to touch on is the area of economic development and enhancing the road to Tuktoyaktuk and also improving the road conditions on the Dempster Highway and expanding the oil and gas industry in the Mackenzie Delta region. I have raised many questions in regard to the area of economic opportunities and raising the economic portfolios of all regions of the Western Territory and finding new ways of taking advantage of what we all

have with the natural resources, the beauty of the land and also the people that live here.

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Areas that I have also raised many questions on in the general area that I specialized in before I came here were the land claims area and promoting and ensuring that those land claims agreements are implemented fully and, the rights in those agreements are carried out by this government who is a signatory to those land claim agreements.

The other area that I have touched on is the area of the inherent right of self-government for aboriginal peoples and the job that is being done in the Beaufort Delta region, who are presently in the process of negotiating a self-government agreement on behalf of the residents of the Beaufort Delta in which their goal is to establish a regional government for the people of the Beaufort Delta.

Other issues that I have raised time and time again in this House was the whole aspect of the Northern Accord and transfer of natural resources to the Government of the Northwest Territories. In particular, the 1988 agreement which was signed by the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories to ensure there will be a negotiated process which will allow aboriginal peoples and aboriginal governments to negotiate that transfer with this government. With very little progress in that area I would like to direct the 14th Assembly and this government to ensure that more effort and energy is put in that area and also, completing land claim agreements in all areas of the Northwest Territories, and also continuing to ensuring that treaty rights are fully implemented and economic rights in land claim agreements. in my riding especially in regard to the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in, are fulfilled and carried out to its fullest.

The area that I probably had the most difficulty with in this legislature and for the people that I represent in the Mackenzie Delta was the area of health and social services. That was probably one of the most sensitive issues that the delta had to deal with because of increased cases of cancer of the residents of my riding and what is being done to try to deal with that problem. Also, for the loss of my mom to cancer.

With that I would like to take the time to thank the many people that supported me through my hard times. I would like to especially thank the residents of the Mackenzie Delta to raising this portfolio and

profile of this crucial issue to where it is now in the form of a ministerial forum which is travelling to all of our communities. I would like to especially thank the residents of the Mackenzie Delta who took the time and effort to develop petitions, motions, and also raise the portfolio through the media and through public meetings in their communities. I would like to at this time acknowledge that we did table petitions in this House calling for a public inquiry into Health and Social Services because of the problems that my riding has seen in that area. All has not been lost, we did not get a public inquiry, but we probably got the next best thing to it, which is a Ministerial Forum on Health and Social Services. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents of the Mackenzie Delta, that all has not been lost and that we do have an opportunity to raise your voices, raise your concerns and now for this government to carry out the recommendations that come forth through this report.

At this time I would like to take the opportunity to thank the staff of the Legislative Assembly and the dean of the House, Mr. Hamilton, and not least, the lady at the Legislative Assembly who people do not hear much about, but who is always there for the Members, Ms. Betty Low, who as a mother has made an effort to ensure that we were always on time for our meetings, made sure we got to where we were going with our travel arrangements and also amazingly enough, she was always able to track us down regardless of wherever we were. I would like to thank Ms. Low, the staff, the Legislative Assembly, the research staff, the clerks and also everyone working in this building. I would like to take this time to thank the Members of the House for electing me to the deputy speaker's position, Chair of the resource committee and sit on several other committees on behalf of the Members of this Legislative Assembly. I have had the opportunity of your friendship and of working with you for the last four years and would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart, especially, Mr. Speaker, yourself. On behalf of Mickey Mouse and myself, I would like to wish you all the best wherever you may go, God be with you and hopefully I will see you back here next year. Thank you.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Replies to opening address. Mr. Antoine.

Reply 6-13(8)

HON. JIM ANTOINE:

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given that this is the last sitting day of the 13th Legislative Assembly, I would like to make a few brief remarks. Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure to have been selected to Cabinet during the 13th Assembly including the last nine months as Premier. Mr. Speaker, during the first four months of my term as Premier, we concentrated to a great extent on finishing the job of dividing the Northwest Territories. I often believe that because we were so close to this process that we do not recognize the magnitude of the job that we have done. Often when I travel, people tell me that they are amazed that this process seemed to have gone so well. I cannot remember any meaningful disagreements during the entire process. I believe that the people of both territories should be proud of this accomplishment.

Mr. Speaker, after we had finished the job of division, the past six months have been spent developing a vision for the Northwest Territories that all of our residents can share. This vision is incorporated in the Agenda for a New North which we have recently finalized. The agenda deals with five key and interrelated elements such as governance, our fiscal capacity, economic potential, control of northern resources and our many social challenges. Mr. Speaker, the past five or six months have been spent trying to explain the key elements of this agenda and to build support throughout the North for the process to deal with these issues. Whenever I had the opportunity to speak about these issues I have said the same thing. These are the issues facing the Northwest Territories and it does not matter who is elected into the next Legislative Assembly or who represents aboriginal governments in the future. These are the issues that must be dealt with.

It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that we have been trying to build support for an intergovernmental process that will allow for governments in the North, both public and aboriginal, to come together to discuss how we can work together to deal with these issues. We often focus on our differences. However, over the

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past six months of meeting with organizations and individuals in different regions, these differences seem to be more rhetoric than substance. In fact, what strikes me the most is the similarities of the positions on many issues. It is my belief that public and aboriginal governments must sit together around a table to discuss these issues if they are to be

resolved. It is also critical that the federal government participates in this process as a full and equal partner. The time is right to begin this intergovernmental process and it is the intention of this government to continue to move forward on this process over the remainder of our term.

Mr. Speaker, I promised that I would be brief so I just want to touch on two other issues before I finish. The first is northern control of northern resources. Mr. Speaker, we spend a great deal of time discussing the challenges that we face. As we travel across the territories I am struck by the tremendous potential that we have. For example, the current gas play in the Liard Valley has brought a very real sense of economic potential of this resource. In Fort Liard, the chief, Harry Deneron, and his people are doing a tremendous job of maximizing the local benefits from the search for gas in that region and I applaud them for that.

However, I remain concerned about what happens once the gas begins to flow south. Where then is the benefit to the people of the Northwest Territories? Where is our opportunity to share in the long-term wealth generated by this industry and redistributed to pay for badly needed programs and services to all our citizens here in the Northwest Territories? I know that Chief Harry Deneron shared my view that these benefits can only be realized through a Northern Accord that ensures that royalties from these resources flow to northern governments. The example in Fort Liard is reason enough for northern governments to sit down to discuss how we can share control and revenues from northern resources.

On the other side of the issue, Mr. Speaker, the current situation with Giant Mine is another reminder to me of how important it is for northern people to take control of northern resources. This situation has resulted in an environmental mess and the very real possibility that well over 200 of our residents will be out of work. This situation is not isolated to the people currently working at Giant Mine and their families, but the effects will trickle down to affect all the people in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter is that the Government of the Northwest Territories and northern people have little or no control over this situation because jurisdictions for minerals remains with the federal government. We, however, are left to live with the aftermath. Mr. Speaker, I cannot say, with any degree of certainty, that Northerners would have managed the situation with Giant Mine in a better

fashion, but I do know this, I know that we would have had a better opportunity to deal in a more constructive and productive manner if these decisions were made by people who live in this community, who breath the air, who drink the water, and who feel the economic impact of potential closure of this mine rather than, as it stands now, that decisions of this matter that affect us here in the North are being made in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, the final issue I would like to speak to you about today is the significant progress we have made over the past four years on the recognition and implementation of aboriginal and treaty rights. A most recent example was the initialling of an agreement in principle with the Dogrib people of the first combined land claim and self-government agreement in the Northwest Territories. I am hopeful that we will be in a position to sign this AIP prior to the end of this Assembly. We have also made significant progress, and I believe we are only a short time away from reaching an agreement with the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit on their self-government agreement in the Beaufort Delta. We are well on our way to a self government agreement with the community of Deline. The process is beginning in my home region of the Deh Cho that I hope will result in formal negotiations that will meet the aspirations of my people of my region. I just had a very productive meeting recently with the chief from Salt River First Nations, Chief Nora Beaver, as representative of the band. I believe that we are moving forward in a positive way to a resolution of the treaty land entitlement process they have begun.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to look for ways to move forward in other regions as well. These processes represent real and measurable progress in the recognition and implementation of aboriginal and treaty rights in the Northwest Territories. I believe that this progress has been made because we have developed negotiating mandates that are flexible enough to recognize the different aspirations of different regions while, at the same time, maintaining our core principle of an efficient and relevant central government.

Mr. Speaker, before I end, there are a great many people I would like to thank for their support over the past four years. Mr. Speaker, politics is sometimes exciting, as well as a demanding and often unforgiving vocation. I am blessed to have a family that supports my career and forgives me for the absences that are many, the long hours, the occasional stressful times we all face. For that I

would like to thank my wife Celine, my children Denezeh, Melaw, Sachey and Tumbah.

Mr. Speaker, I have been honoured to have been selected by my colleagues in this Legislative Assembly to have served as Minister for the past three years of this Assembly and as Premier since December. During this time, Mr. Speaker, there have been agreements on many issues and occasional disagreements on others. At all times, Mr. Speaker, I have tried to serve as best I can. I would like to thank all the Members in this Legislative Assembly for their support over the past four years, and I hope that I have served you well.

Mr. Speaker, during my time as Cabinet Minister, I have been fortunate to have worked with many capable and committed public servants. I would like to recognize some of these people today and thank them for their effort, their commitment, and their professionalism. In particular, I would like to thank Bob Overvold, Fred Koe, Andrew Gamble, Bruce Rattray, Liz Snyder, Ron Williams, Peter Vician, Charles Overvold, Lew Voytilla, Gabriela Sparling, and others that I may have missed, but I would like to mention these.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my personal staff for putting up with me for the past four years, mainly my executive secretary, Edith Mack. She was my first official executive when I became Minister, and she is still here with me, and I just want to say that she has been a very capable assistant to me and that

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I think she is capable of doing bigger and better things.

As well, I would like to mention my executive assistant, Pietro de Bastiani, who came from within the government system in Transportation. Many people ask why I selected Mr. de Bastiani. I think I would like to say that as a politician, I know the politics that goes into it, and I needed somebody that knows the system from within the bureaucracy. I think he was quite capable the last four years that he helped me out in this area.

I also want to mention my correspondence secretary, Shelley Muller, who has been helping us out since becoming Premier. She kind of filled in when Ms. Mack was not around. I would like to thank her for her support and putting up with me.

When I first came in as a Premier, I had Paul Bachand as the principal secretary for the beginning. I would like to thank him for his support in the beginning. He is with the Department of Justice now and is quite capable in the work that he does.

Finally, I would like to mention my current principal secretary, Rick Bargery, who was supposed to provide me with political advice and other direction in all the issues that we deal with. I would like to thank him for his help.

Finally, I have been fortunate that the people of Nahendeh have twice put their trust in me to represent them in this House. For this trust, I would like to thank the people of Liidli Kue, which is Fort Simpson, Echaot'le Kue, which is Fort Liard, Tthekehdeli, which is Jean Marie River, Pedzeh Ki, Wrigly, Samba K'e is Trout Lake and Tthenaago, which is Nahanni Butte. These are the six communities that are represented in the southwestern part of this territory. I would like to thank the people there for having the honour and the trust put in me for representing them for the last current four years and the four years before that.

Mr. Speaker, I could name many people from my constituency that have supported me. I would like to mention my constituency assistant Bob Villeneuve, and my previous one, Eric Menicoche, for helping me out in my constituency. There are a great many people I would like to thank for giving me advice over the past eight years but I would, no doubt, miss some. Therefore, I would like to thank all my constituents, and I hope that they feel that I have served them well.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the new Northwest Territories will be going to the polls for the first time on December 6 of this year, and I intend to put my name forward for another term. I hope that the people of Nahendeh would once again consider honouring me with their support. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Replies to opening address. Mr. Rabesca.

Reply 7-13(8)

MR. RABESCA:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make a Commissioner's reply as short as possible. I rise

today to get the last word in prior to leaving, concentrating on the election at hand. During our Commissioner's address, I found his speech giving me a feeling of fellowship and unity. I am very glad to see he has gone on the road, so to speak, and is spreading the word of unity and how this territory should and can work together to provide our residents in all areas on a better and more prosperous way of life. Over the last year our residents have suffered many hardships as a result of actions that we were forced to take. We have met many challenges facing us and I feel we have come out ahead. I realize there are still many issues to be resolved, and I hope I can return and again make my mark in this Assembly. It was also good to hear our Commissioner recognizing the role models in all our communities. There are the individuals that, in every community, are very important to communities who, most times, do not get this recognition.

As we go forward, we must strive to unite our territory. We all have seen what can happen when we work together. We can, while achieving greatness, it is important that we look ahead to these opportunities and we can achieve and reach for them. Our residents need this and we are obliged to provide this. One united territory will make a difference and this is what must be in the forefront of our minds.

In closing, I would like to thank my constituency for the honour of representing them in this Assembly. We have achieved much more than many ever thought possible. We must continue to look to the future and strive for a much better life for all the residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

Replies to opening address. I just wanted to remind the Members of an oversight on my part and that is we know that, and most Members knew, that today was the last day. As part of the prorogation, we usually do not have item 9, replies to opening address. Usually on prorogation day, we do have a very short day, but again an oversight on my part has allowed for it to be a very long day. It is very clear, in the rules, regarding the replies to opening address, they shall be placed on the orders of the day for the day after opening day and for every following sitting day except the day designated for prorogation. My apologies for that. Item 10, petitions. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to go back to item 6, oral questions.

MR. SPEAKER:

The Member for Mackenzie Delta is seeking unanimous consent to go back to item 6, oral questions. Do we have any nays?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Nay.

MR. SPEAKER:

Mr. Krutko, you do not have unanimous consent. Petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 5-13(8): Promising Practices: Ideas That Work in Northern Secondary Classrooms

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled Promising

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Practices, Ideas That Worked in Northern Secondary Classrooms. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Tabling of documents. Mr. Dent.

Tabled Document 6-13(8): 1999 NWT Labour Force Survey

HON. CHARLES DENT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have two documents to table. I wish to table the document entitled 1999 NWT Labour Force Survey and, Tabled Document 7-13(8): Interactivity Budget Transfers Over \$250,000 for the Period April 1, 1999 to July 31, 1999.

Mr. Speaker, as required by section 32.1, subsection (2) of the Financial Administration Act, I am tabling a

list of all interactivity transfers exceeding \$250,000 within departments for the period April 1, 1999 to July 31, 1999.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Tabling of documents. Mr. Kakfwi.

Tabled Document 8-13(8): NWT Development Corporation Annual Report, 1995-96

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Northwest Territories Development Corporation Annual Report, 1995-96. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

Thank you. 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. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters. Item 20, report of committee of the whole. Item 21, third reading of bills.

Before closing this final sitting of the 13th Legislative Assembly, I would like to take a few moments to make some closing remarks. Unless for unforeseen emergency, this will be the last time we sit as Members of the 13th Legislative Assembly and as I said earlier this week, the last four years have not always been easy and that the Members of this Assembly have probably faced more difficult situations than any previous Assembly.

The next time we meet, at least those of us who are successful in our bids for re-election, will be in the 14th Legislative Assembly. The first of a new millennium. Not only will the 14th Assembly take office in a new year and century but it will also be with a new mace and other symbols and with plans for a new coat of arms and flag set to be unveiled. These are truly historic times. It is only the start of a new journey for the people of this great land.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish each of you well in the coming months and offer my best wishes to those of you who are seeking re-election. To those of you who are not running or are not re-elected, I wish you the best in the future.

Each of us leaves here today with our own personal memories and sense of accomplishment. However, I hope you have fond memories of the past four years

and know that you did the best you could to represent the people of the North.

Before closing, it would be remiss of me if I did not offer, on behalf of all Members, our thanks to the staff of the Government of the Northwest Territories and to our professional people in the communities including the nurses, teachers and social workers who tirelessly provide a most valuable service. A special thank you must also go to the staff of the Legislative Assembly for their hard work and efforts in the last four years. We have been well served by the clerk and his staff here at the Legislature, and I am sure Members of the 14th Legislative Assembly will see the same professionalism.

On a personal note, David Hamilton has worked tirelessly on division and our thanks must go to him not only from the Western Arctic, Denendeh, but also from Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

--Applause

I would also like to thank my constituency assistants. The first one that I had was Mr. Mark Dickie, who is now working for a reformer and Mr. Ben Nind who is presently my constituency assistant, who I hope does not work for a reformer.

A very special thanks goes out to our families, who have also had to endure the last four years with us often not being home for family events. I would like to express my personal thanks to my other half, my partner, my friend, my wife, Alphonsine, and my children and grandchildren for being there for me when I needed the support. I certainly needed that.

As Arnold Schwarzeneger says, I will be back. Wherever the trail takes you, may you travel it safely and God bless. Mahsi cho.

--Applause

MR. SPEAKER:

The Commissioner is not here at the moment to assent to the bills, so we will take a short break and come back in at the ring of the bell.

--Break

MR. SPEAKER:

The House will come back to order. It is my understanding that the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories is prepared to enter the

Chamber to assent to the bills and prorogue the Session. Mr. Clerk, will ascertain if his Honour, the Commissioner, is available to enter the Chamber.

COMMISSIONER MARION: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Premier and Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my pleasure to be here today to assent to bills and to prorogue this Session.

Since this is the last time you will meet as the 13th Legislative Assembly before the general election for the 14th Assembly, I would like to take a few moments to reflect on the achievements and notable events since you were elected in 1995.

This government was elected at a crucial time of change. The Northwest Territories was facing uniquely difficult and challenging problems. Rapid population growth and related social problems were making it increasingly difficult to maintain adequate housing, employment, health and education services. At the same time, like the rest of the country, the NWT had to deal with significant fiscal restraint measures and federal cutbacks.

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Meeting these many challenges head-on required hard, and in some cases, unpopular choices. Government programs and benefits were downsized. We had to learn to do more with less and find new and innovative ways of providing services to people.

At the same time, we had to address our social and economic conditions, not only in an effort to control costs in the future, but also to create more healthy, self-reliant communities. We had to find new ways to break the old cycle of dependence on government, to build pride in our communities and faith in our ability to take care of ourselves.

This new focus meant a shift to greater regional and community control of programs, investments in training and in the school system, new infrastructure and a greater focus on preventing health and social problems. It meant supporting aboriginal rights negotiations and working towards a productive and respectful relationship with new aboriginal governments.

Some of these initiatives have already shown success. With others it is too soon to tell. A society does not change overnight. I believe this government was correct in setting the priorities that it chose and

trust that future governments will build on this promising beginning.

A great deal has happened since 1995, more than could be captured in this address. I would like to mention some highlights that stand out for me:

During this term of government a package of new and modern laws dealing with Family Law was enacted. As well, a comprehensive reform of Business Law was completed with the passage of the Business Corporations Act. Members will also recall the many division measures bills passed to facilitate the creation of two new Territories on April 1, 1999.

The government's Public and Private Partnerships Initiative allowed the continuing development of infrastructure in the NWT in a climate of fiscal restraint. The opening of the Ekati diamond mine and its related socio-economic agreements was a much needed boom to the northern economy.

During the life of this government the Wire North Program brought all northern communities closer together by providing access to the Internet. The Digital Communications Network has greatly improved the speed and efficiency of information management.

New collective agreements with government employees and teachers were reached and new formula financing agreements for both the NWT and Nunavut were established with Canada.

The NWT has been a part of the Canadian delegation on international trade missions and has gained additional strength in federal/provincial forums. The GNWT recently signed the Social Union Framework Agreement with other jurisdictions, signalling a commitment to renewing social programs at home and nationally as well.

Plan 2000 and the Minimum Down Payment Assistance Program provided new and innovative kinds of assistance to northern families that would not otherwise be able to purchase homes.

I would like to offer special thanks to our public service who have proved themselves more than competent during the past four years. Time and time again they came through for us under some very trying conditions.

I would also like to recognize the support that Members have received from their families whose patience and caring made this job a little easier.

I wish you all good health, happiness and success in all of your future endeavours. It is my hope that all people of the NWT will look to the future and the new millennium with optimism and good will.

As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I am pleased to assent to the following bills:

Bill 1: An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act

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

Bill 3: Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act

Bill 4: Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Statutes Amendment Act

Bill 5: An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act

As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I hereby prorogue the Eighth Session of the 13th Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

--Applause