



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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## **HANSARD**

**Tuesday, February 12, 2013**

Pages 1769 - 1816

**The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

**Hon. Jackie Jacobson**

(Nunakput)

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**Hon. David Ramsay**

(Kam Lake)

*Minister of Industry, Tourism*

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*Minister of Transportation*

**Mr. Norman Yakeleya**

(Sahtu)

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Tuesday, February 12, 2013****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Blake, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Dolynny, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Jackie Jacobson, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Hon. David Ramsay, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson):** Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' Statements. Honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 6-17(4):  
RECOGNITION OF INDSPIRE  
AWARDS RECIPIENTS

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is a proud sponsor of the 2013 Indspire awards. Formerly known as the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, Indspire promotes the development, education and professional advancement of Aboriginal people in Canadian society.

I will be attending the awards this week in Saskatoon. It gives me great pleasure to announce that two Northwest Territories residents will receive awards this year.

Gail Cyr of Yellowknife will receive the award for public service. Ms. Cyr is a long-time employee of the Government of the Northwest Territories and is currently the special advisor to the Minister on the Status of Women. She has had a lengthy career serving indigenous people and all our residents. She established the Native Court Worker Association for the Northwest Territories and is very involved in family violence prevention and awareness. She is passionate about making our communities sustainable, vibrant and safe. She is committed to forming partnerships that help Northerners become strong and independent. We are proud of the work that Ms. Cyr and all our employees do on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories.

Duane Smith, who is the chair for the Inuvik Community Corporation and the vice-chair of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, will receive the award for politics. Mr. Smith is also the president of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada) and was once a wildlife officer with the Government of the Northwest Territories. Throughout his political life,

he has been a strong supporter of Arctic land claims and has effectively driven initiatives in support of strengthening and diversifying our northern economy.

Both Ms. Cyr and Mr. Smith are well-known throughout the territory and are excellent role models who are proud of their Aboriginal heritage. They are helping to build a sustainable future for our territory, building on the strengths of Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, I ask Members to join with me in congratulating them on this prestigious honour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Robert McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 7-17(4):  
YOUTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 15 youth ambassadors, representing seven NWT communities, travelled with us to Ottawa recently to promote the Northwest Territories at Winterlude as part of NWT Days.

They acted as guides and greeters at various events and as traditional games demonstrators. To say that the youth ambassadors did an outstanding job does not give them enough credit. They impressed both political participants and thousands of others who attended and watched their performances. They were also featured on local and national media for their efforts. Many people approached me to tell me how much they appreciated their work and to praise them for being true ambassadors for the North.

Mr. Speaker, each of these future leaders returned with a new sense of confidence after an experience that has helped them develop life and job skills to deal with future challenges. One parent said that the program is helping turn her daughter's life around. She was an at-risk youth when she applied for the program. Now she has new confidence and respect.

Mr. Speaker, this mother's reflections are not unique. The NWT Youth Ambassador Program is guided by the principle that a structured volunteer experience and participation in major events can

develop significant skills and build the confidence necessary for youth to deal with the complex challenges of modern society. We see and hear about its positive impact all the time.

Youth ambassadors receive consistent, high quality training and preparation for projects. They work with program managers to develop expectations and standards. This program is directly contributing to the GNWT's goals of having healthy, educated people free from poverty, and the leaders that come out of this program will help build sustainable, vibrant, safe communities across our territory. This program is a long-term investment in our territory's future that benefits all of our communities.

I am especially proud of the new alumni component to the program that has former youth ambassadors returning to act as mentors to their younger peers. This youth to youth interaction and guidance is often one of the most powerful motivators for participants to make healthy lifestyle choices.

Mr. Speaker, the Youth Ambassador Program was launched in 2007 as part of our pan-territorial commitment to support the Canada Games in Whitehorse that year. Since that time, our government has supported nearly 20 projects of various sizes. Hundreds of NWT youth have now had an experience that will have positive effects on the rest of their lives.

Many more youth will get to experience this program as it progresses. This summer the youth ambassadors will be taking part in the 2013 Canada Summer Games by volunteering for the Sherbrooke, Quebec, host society. This will be another great opportunity to highlight our northern youth and culture and I am very much looking forward to it.

Mr. Speaker, the department is constantly monitoring and evaluating this program. In future years MACA will be able to present reports on the longer term effects of this program as we continue to follow up with participants as they enter adulthood and become productive contributing members of our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' Statements. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HEALTH CARE IN HAY RIVER

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I will continue my discussion on some of the issues in the area of health for Hay River. One of the major issues in Hay River is the fact that, back several years ago, the government removed the management board and replaced it with a public

administrator. Although the administrator is doing a good job, there is still a lot of outcry from the community to have some sort of advisory board so that the community from different walks of life can give information and feedback to the health authority so that we can have representation and see what the issues are. We have one public administrator, one person that the public can contact, and sometimes that's difficult. If you don't know that individual or you're not part of the inner circle of that group, it's very difficult. We in the community here would like to see an advisory authority set up, along with some information or some representatives from outside the community and surrounding area, where some of the people actually come and use the health centres. This is one of the major issues that we have in the health area.

Another area that I've brought up in the House before is the flexibility of funding. Currently, we have no full-time positions there but we have been using a nurse practitioner, and we would like to be able to use potentially more if we have the ability to hire more nurse practitioners. Right now the funding is in columns so it only allows certain dollars to be spent on physicians versus nurse practitioners.

I'm going to be having questions for the Minister of Health on those two issues today about whether we can have the public advisory committee and reduce the column funding in the Hay River Health Authority.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LONG DISTANCE SWIMMER MARTIN "BIG RIVER MAN" STREL

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased that the government is investing additional funds into the NWT Tourism Marketing Strategy. Showing Canada and the world that NWT is a world-travelled destination is key in developing and diversifying our tourism economy in all regions.

I'm working with the mayor of Fort Simpson, Mr. Sean Whelly. He has an idea of a man that can swim the entire Mackenzie River and bring along international exposure. His name is Mr. Martin Strel, but you can call him Big River Man. He has swum most of the world's longest rivers. In February 2007, Martin Strel began an insane attempt to be the first person to swim the entire length of the world's most dangerous river, the mighty Amazon.

Martin is an endurance swimmer from Slovenia, who swims rivers – the Mississippi, the Danube and the Yangtze to date – and he has highlighted their pollution to the world. It also means that the Big

River Man swam with alligators, piranhas, snakes, et cetera. Fortunately we don't have these dangers in our North. Maybe the ferocious Jackfish.

It's no surprise that we call the Mackenzie River the Deh Cho; it is a very big river. The Mackenzie River watershed is considered one of the largest and most intact ecosystems in North America, especially in the North. Our Mackenzie River is one of the longest pristine rivers and we should do what we can to use that as a selling point. There are many great communities and sights all along the Mackenzie River.

The documentaries on these courageous exploits have been seen internationally as he was shown by the National Geographic Channel and throughout many world film festivals. His films have been universally praised in all of these forums. This is the type of national and international exposure that we as the GNWT and our Tourism Marketing Strategy should support.

This would be a great idea to build on the momentum of NWT Day in Canada where we showcased our tourism potential. I envision that he will stop at each of our communities and we can have feasts and showcase local scenery and tourism stops. Hopefully, in Fort Simpson we can see him also go to the Nahanni National Park Reserve so that the world can once again see its beauty. Later today I will ask the Minister of ITI questions on how we can make this a reality.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION CALL FOR ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories is gifted with artists whose talents reflect our culture and history. As pointed out in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment Arts Strategy, art and artistic endeavours are important from a social, cultural, and economic perspective. The process of expression, and creation and production of art, celebrates, preserves and transmits culture. This appreciation and the benefits of the art is also shared by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, TRC, of Canada.

The TRC believes that artists have a keen, profound contribution to make in expressing both truth and reconciliation. I'd like to bring to the attention of the people and artists in the Northwest Territories that the TRC is inviting artists to submit works that express the truth, the impact and the legacy of the residential school experience.

The TRC is also inviting artists to submit works relating to apology, truth, cultural oppression, cultural genocide, resistance, resilience, spirituality,

remembrance, reconciliation, rejuvenation and restoration of Aboriginal culture and pride. Whether artistic expressions are created in addition to or are a substitute for individual statements given to the TRC, it is an important and meaningful way to express people's experience and assist with reconciliation.

I would like to inform the artists of the Northwest Territories that have been affected by residential schools about this call for submission, and invite them to consider submitting their artistic expression by the December 31, 2013, deadline. More information can be obtained from the TRC website, [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca). Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON BUDGET ADDRESS

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today is a continuation of my budget comments from yesterday and it's about a subject that I've spoken of many times before.

As I listened to the budget address last week, I was hoping to hear the Minister of Finance announce a new revenue source in our budget, but I was disappointed yet again. There is no reference to a new revenue stream in the 2013-14 operations budget. In fact, out of a 10-page budget address, only one small paragraph is devoted to revenue.

Our next year's budget is pretty much a carbon copy of the current budget. Yet, Mr. Speaker, our needs are great. There are so many things we want and need to do as a government and as a territory to enhance the life for our residents. Things like a bigger Midwifery Program, comprehensive early childhood programs, more energy initiatives, maintaining the Dene Ko Day Shelter, increased education programs and services, upgraded highways, and replacing old infrastructure, our schools, our government buildings and the like.

The list is too long to mention everything. The bottom line is we need to increase our revenues in order to put in place all the things that we believe our territory needs.

The Finance Minister has explained this is a stay the course budget with few initiatives. So why not increase our revenue to give us financial breathing room?

There are opportunities for new revenue sources. Many have been explored by the Finance Minister and then rejected, and that is wrong, in my view. I know we're limited to certain revenue sources because of the Territorial Financing Formula and the potential clawbacks of our own-source revenues. But to refuse to implement any significant new revenue source is short sighted.

Since the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, any time the need for revenue is raised, the Minister of Finance or the Premier refer to devolution and the presumed financial windfall that we will inherit. Minister Miltenberger did so yesterday during Committee of the Whole. Resource royalties negotiated through devolution cannot be seen as our financial salvation. We have to be more forward thinking than that.

We, the Assembly and our residents, want autonomy. We want control over our territory. I do too. Part of that autonomy demands prudent planning and long-term thinking, and both of those require a recognition that we need to put in place a significant new revenue source to move this territory forward. I urge the government to reconsider their position for our next budget. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND GRADING TEACHER PERFORMANCE

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It goes without saying that our current NWT education system is in dire need of an overhaul. The recent Auditor General of Canada clearly pointed out numerous opportunities of reform, and we know that the department has been busy evaluating the delivery of northern education.

To be clear, we are not saying the department is doing a lousy job, nor am I saying the school districts aren't pulling their weight, nor am I inferring that we have a poor quality of educators out there. What I'm saying is that we have a problem – a big problem – and it's going to take more than a department to fix this ship.

I'm sure the department is sparing no dime in gathering the best experts, discussion papers, research and feasibility studies on what changes it will need to institute. Then we are more than certain we will have a series of forums, follow-up discussions and reports at some juncture. The point is that this is the wheel of government. This is what the general public sees as we tackle obstacles or improve services. But I have a question. If you field test the kids as to what they want and have these kids had the ability to grade their teachers.

Business and government survey their employees all the time and make policy changes based on a skill data. So why would our students be any different?

The premise of grading teachers is nothing new and is being done all over the United States. Kids stare at their teachers for hundreds of hours a year, which gives them an unbiased reliability and measuring teacher performance. Some of the

results from this exercise produced more reliable means testing than student test score growth and was deemed an important measure of testing effective teaching.

Most research documents and education reformers worldwide are obsessed with teaching quality and are referring to this instrument as a perfect gauge to complement education effectiveness.

With this in mind, I will be asking the Minister of Education later today about if education reform is on the horizon and if he and his department are looking at such models as a means of achieving the full potential of our students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DECENTRALIZATION PREPAREDNESS

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few months, at the beginning of this government, we have heard a lot about devolution and some statements over the last week on decentralization of jobs. Government positions going out in the communities and the regions are going to be a big thing and something we have to prepare for. In fact, our communities are talking about it, our regional centres are talking about it, and they're very excited to hear that we are going to be decentralizing some of the jobs into the communities.

With that said, as Mr. Dolynny had pointed out, our education system, we do know there are challenges in our education system and that our students aren't ready for post-secondary schooling when they graduate from the school system. There are going to be a lot of challenges when they go through with decentralization, and we have to start planning and preparing for it now.

This government has to find innovative and unique ways that are going to help assist building capacity in these regions and in these communities, so when these jobs become available, our communities, our families, our residents will be ready to take on these jobs.

Something that has been talked about and discussed is the housing needs in the communities as well as the office space. So when these jobs become available, we know that these jobs are capable of being done in communities such as Hay River, Inuvik, Fort McPherson, wherever it might be, that we do have the office space and we do have the housing infrastructure to house these people.

But it goes further than that. A lot of these people who are going to be coming up, either taking jobs or going out to the communities, have families. We are



going to have them placed. We are going to need early childhood development programs. We are going to need nursing. We are going to need policing. We are going to need recreation services, because outside of work, people have lives. We are going to have to build the infrastructure in these communities that is well needed, so when people come up to the North or are decentralized out of Yellowknife and some of the regions, they are prepared to live in the community, that they are going to be proud to live in, to do their work in, and be welcome in the community and be able to develop their family structure and their work structure as well.

When it comes to preparing for decentralization, one motto that I always used when I used to do all my running is: fail to plan, plan to fail. This government needs to start planning so that when these jobs become available in the communities, we are going to be successful and we are going to have these jobs taken up by people outside of our small communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Moses. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NATIONAL HEART MONTH

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most of us know February is Valentine's Day month, but it is also Heart Month. The Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation and similar organizations around the world recognize Heart Month every February. It is an opportunity to raise funds for life-giving research and to alert people to the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Our hearts and bodies are fragile and need to be looked after. Every seven minutes someone dies as a result of heart disease and stroke. Ninety percent of Canadians have at least one risk factor. Poor nutrition, stress, lack of exercise, smoking and too much alcohol all increase risks. It is important for people to know that there is a lot they can do to protect their own health. The choices we make today can affect our future, not only how long we live, but also whether we spend our last years in sickness and disease.

Most, or all of us probably, have known elders who spent their whole lives working hard and eating traditional food, and in their 80s or even 90s they're still out there cutting their own firewood and looking after themselves. Some of them could probably outrun people 60 or 70 years younger than them. It really concerns me when I see our youth smoking, eating junk food and spending hours a day on TV and video games. The traditional Dene lifestyle is a very healthy one and we can learn a lot from our people who live that way.

I encourage everyone to make a commitment this month to cut down at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke. People can make their homes junk food free zones, maybe go for a long walk every day with your valentine. Just start somewhere.

There are some health issues that we cannot control, but when it comes to heart disease and stroke, our own choices do make a big difference. I wish all my constituents and people across the NWT success with whatever changes they make to reduce their risk of heart disease and a strong and happy, healthy Heart Month. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONTINUING IMPACTS OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL ABUSE

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am going to speak about something that cannot be done any justice to in two and a half minutes. I confess I was late for work this morning because I got caught up in watching a movie on television that was about social injustice. It was called "A Million Colours" and it was about the social injustice in South Africa with the apartheid. It got me thinking this morning, as I was getting in the shower, late as I was, about social injustice in general and I have so little tolerance for social injustice. When the movie "Schindler's List" came out about the holocaust, I could not stand to watch it because of the injustice of the acts that were being perpetrated on people.

I got thinking about our country and about our territory, and I got thinking about the social injustice of the policies of previous governments when they came, not so long ago, into our communities in the North and across this country and they took people's children away from them. That is the past and I know we cannot turn back the clock and we cannot go back and change that, but now in this day and age and today we still live with the fallout from that social injustice. We still live with Aboriginal First Nations people being disproportionately represented in almost every social negative indicator that you can come up with, whether it's suicide, whether it's incarceration, whether it's addiction to drugs and alcohol.

So this atrocity, as it happened, is still with us. It's alive and well today because people turn to things like drugs and alcohol to mask the pain of this injustice, but our country has never really dealt with that, I don't believe. Yes, there were apologies made by the Prime Minister and we have recently seen the efforts of the Idle No More movement in trying to communicate some of these things, but I don't think that our country will ever be healed from this until there is a general societal acceptance of

the fact that there was a grave social injustice perpetrated and we are living with the masked symptoms of that yet today.

Today is Bell satellite or TV or communications Let's Talk Day to deal with mental illness. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has gone a long ways towards let's talk about what happened in the past. They have done an amazing job of let's talk about it, but we cannot afford to stop talking about it until we start to see a change. Those of us sitting around this table know all too well what we deal with every day as legislators as a fallout of a grave social injustice that occurred in this territory and in this country, and we need to keep talking about it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MACKENZIE VALLEY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REVIEW BOARD FUNDING REDUCTIONS

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government's latest rampage against environmental protection and this government's silence in areas of critical public interest demand comment.

Thursday, the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board was informed of budget cuts. It will reduce its staffing by half, crippling its ability to carry out full consultative reviews. Because of the independent status of the board, the federal government can't tamper with board decision-making, so repressive control is exerted through funding cuts, reducing and restricting the board's ability to operate. Funding cuts will hit, most severely, its ability to do full information gathering, such as community scoping meetings and meaningful assessments. Assessments, in fact, will be a desktop exercise.

Seven new mines are in the office and these plus other large projects being proposed require meaningful review to be done responsibly. With this latest blow in the federal assault on the environment and with the new, sometimes unrealistic deadlines, ongoing ministerial decisions and banning much of the public opportunity for participation, we are going to see incomplete reviews, increased environmental impacts, and the depleted ability of our land to meet people's needs, and, I suspect, a vulnerability to Section 35 court actions that will freeze development.

The MVRMA – Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act – boards, including the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, are the mechanisms created to fulfill the promises of consultation and joint decision-making made in the land claims. Undermining the capacity of boards reneges on these promises to our Aboriginal

government partners. The federal government will fail to meet its fiduciary duty and, to satisfy Section 35 requirements, the duty to consult and accommodate.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's own environmental audits of 2005 and 2010 pointed out repeatedly that previous underfunding hurt boards' abilities to assess projects fully and promptly. These further cuts fly in the face of their own reviews and set the stage for the promised destruction of our own regional boards.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. BROMLEY:** These measures threaten our ability to protect our northern environment. They gut the board that this government will rely upon for our management advice following full devolution. All this without a public word of protest or concern from territorial leaders.

How long will devolution negotiations muzzle this government, and what on earth is it going to take before the government finally speaks up on behalf of the citizens and their land? I will have questions for the Premier.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION MANUAL AIRCRAFT CHARTERING PROVISIONS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to use the opportunity today to talk about a January 7<sup>th</sup> letter I wrote to Mr. Miltenberger regarding a Financial Administration Manual breach of 3307. It refers to aircraft chartering.

In my January 7<sup>th</sup> letter I wrote to Mr. Miltenberger and said that it looks like Mr. Ramsay led a charter to Fort Providence and several Members attended that. According to Mr. Ramsay's November 19<sup>th</sup> letter, he encouraged Members to bring family members along. Although it was an occasion to celebrate – and that should not be forgotten on this occasion – the letter did not sort of proscribe as to who should pay for these particular rides.

The Financial Administration Manual –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mr. Hawkins, this matter you brought up is before the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I will shut your statement down for the day. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Yakeleya.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very happy to recognize the leaders from the Sahtu: Chief Leonard Kenny from Deline, Chief Beaufort McNeely Jr. from Radili Ko Fort Good Hope, and Danny Gaudet, businessman and chief negotiator and good cousin of mine from Deline.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to follow my colleague from the Sahtu in recognizing two chiefs from the Sahtu, Mr. McNeely and Mr. Kenny. Welcome to the House. Also, a former colleague, Mr. David Krutko from the Mackenzie Delta, and a good friend, Mr. Danny Gaudet. Welcome.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Blake.

**MR. BLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize the former Member for Mackenzie Delta Mr. Krutko, also Danny Gaudet and the two chiefs from the Sahtu. Welcome.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Blake. I, too, would like to welcome back Mr. Krutko. It's always good to see you almost every day since we've been here. Good to have you back, David. I, too, would like to welcome Danny and Leonard. Welcome to the House here today.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 47-17(4): AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SENIOR MANAGEMENT HIRES

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask some questions to the Minister of Human Resources on the Aboriginal hire and Aboriginal senior management area of our government. I want to ask the Minister what plans he is working on to close the gap. There is a gap between the number or percentage of Aboriginal people in senior management within the Department of Human Resources already with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Glen Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of things that we're doing. One of the things that we are doing is the Associate Director/Superintendent Program, which is actually an Affirmative Action Program to bring individuals in and train them for senior management roles. We have about three positions a year, six

ongoing at any time, and we are getting good results with that program.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Can the Minister advise the House and me what the percentage rates are now with the government with regard to the senior management hire but with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I don't have that number memorized, but I will commit to getting that to the Member later today or early tomorrow.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** From last year I recall it varied from different departments. It's not a very good record for us as a government to look at the population that we represent that falls well behind the numbers that we perceive should be going higher.

I want to ask the Minister if there are some concrete, measurable plans to raise this number. I've been here for nine years and we still haven't done a significant amount of work to increase this number. Is the Minister confident that these numbers will be raised by the end of this Assembly?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** The government is working and Cabinet has given direction to each of the departments to try and increase their numbers of Aboriginal representation. There clearly are some challenges. There isn't a significant amount of turnover at the senior management level, which means there's not a lot of people moving up. The Department of Human Resources has some expertise in succession planning and they're happy to work with any department and they have made that offer to do some succession planning to move some individuals up through the system. We also have an Aboriginal Engagement Committee engaged by the Government of the Northwest Territories, which consists of Aboriginal employees from across the government. I've had the opportunity to sit down with them and discuss some of the challenges that we face, and I've encouraged them in coming forward with solutions and recommendations to think outside the box and help us come up with some solutions that will help increase the Aboriginal representation in our public service.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Department of Human Resources working with colleges and students to start successive planning for careers for students who have graduated from these post-secondary or high schools?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** We do have a couple programs that are available to help students graduating from college – whether it's Aurora College or another institution – transition into the workplace. Our Internship Program is that program

and it is an affirmative action-based program. We also work with the college to help us identify training within house, programs for GNWT employees to take. So we do work with the college, and as far as the students, we do have the Internship Program.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

QUESTION 48-17(4):  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
SKILLED LABOUR FORCE

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Furthermore to my Member's statement and preparing for decentralization, but also preparing for some of the work that's going on in the Northwest Territories, today I'm going to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment what we have planned and in store in terms of increasing our labour workforce. He did make a statement in the House the other day that there's a labour market symposium going on right now, and I want to see what work this government is doing to prepare and increase labour skilled workforce to meet the needs of our regions that are flourishing right now: the Sahtu, Yellowknife with the diamond industry, in the future the Inuvik-Tuk highway, the fibre optic link. What is he doing right now to increase and develop our numbers in the skilled labour workforce?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Moses. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for asking that question. I had an opportunity this morning to speak to that labour force symposium that's happening over the next two days. We have over 80 delegates. What we talked about at that level was partnership across the Northwest Territories, across the national stage. That's what it comes down to with five regional training committees that have been established in partnership with ECE, ITI, and also Aboriginal organizations, industry, the Mine Training Society and also the college.

They work on a regular basis to address regional labour market needs. These committees also collaborate with all the partners in the region to address training requirements and provide opportunities in the region, including safety courses, mine training programs, ready to work programs, upgrading the current workforce skills such as the financial literacy programming provided in the South Slave region. Those are just some of the examples that we currently deliver in the region. There is also a Labour Market Agreement and a Labour Market Development Agreement from the federal government that we work with.

**MR. MOSES:** I was very happy to hear the Minister make reference to working in partnership with ITI. We must not also forget that we need partnerships with Human Resources, the Department of Health and Social Services, ENR and with some of the energy initiatives that we move forward with.

Can the Minister outline any incentive programs that his department is currently putting through to encourage our young Aboriginal men and women, our young indigenous Northerners the opportunity to take some of these labour jobs in terms of getting ready and prepared for all of the development that's happening in the Sahtu, all the future development that's going to happen in our region, and also continue to meet the standards that we set out in our socio-economic agreements with the diamond mines? Are there any incentive programs that are going to increase our workforce?

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Again, creating partnerships in the regions in the Northwest Territories does have advantages and benefits. When it comes to providing incentives at the regional workforce development, we deal with the Mine Training Society, which deals with industries as well. We have industry representatives on there, ITI, ECE, and other Aboriginal organizations on the specific committee that delivers training in the regions. Not only that, there is also funding available through Aboriginal leadership, such as asset funding through the federal Minister. There is also, again, as highlighted earlier, labour market agreements that are for those individuals who would like to get training on the job who do not qualify for EI subsidy. Also Labour Market Agreement. Labour Market Development Agreement is another program through the feds that is going through our ECE department to the communities. We'll continue to push that into the communities because we know some of the communities, some of the regions are very active in oil and gas, other sectors, industries, activities. We'll continue to develop those relationships in the communities.

**MR. MOSES:** In terms of devolution and decentralization I really strongly believe that the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment holds a very important role on how this government moves forward in years to come in terms of education and training and getting our people ready to take on these jobs so that we can develop economic prosperity. I'd like to ask the Minister, what's the status on the Apprenticeship Program for our northern workforce and also our trades program. What's the status of our Apprenticeship Program throughout the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** I do not have the specific detailed information I can provide to Members, but if I recall, there's well over 400

registered apprentices in the Northwest Territories, and journeymen ticket holders as well. But I can provide the detailed information with accurate documentation.

With the devolution and decentralization into the regions, that's a discussion we've been having, even since visiting Ottawa for NWT Days, having those positions transferred into the regions and into the communities. I believe that that's the wish of this government, so we'll continue to strive towards that.

With the decentralization, there will definitely be training. That's where we come in as Education, Culture and Employment to deliver community-based training at that level. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Moses.

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to say that I look forward to getting information on this labour market symposium and some of the outcomes that came from that.

I'd just like to specifically ask the Minister, has he been coordinating and working with the leaders in my region and my communities in planning for some of the big projects that we've got on the timeline here, the Inuvik-Tuk highway, fibre optic link. Is he having those conversations with our leaders so that we can start the training sooner than later, so that when these jobs open up, our local people have jobs ready and are trained to take those jobs on. Is he having those discussions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** The quickest answer would be yes, we are, as my department, along with other departments, even with the Premier. It has been addressed with the Gwich'in, the IRC, the Beaufort-Delta leadership. We've met with them. We've addressed their concerns, their issues, their ideas. They are preparing for the exploration activity that will be happening in their region. We are continuing to work with them. We want to be prepared to deliver those highly skilled individuals at the community level with the kind of training programs that are required.

I must say and commend the Inuvik area and the Beaufort-Delta. Trades on Wheels was a good asset benefitting the communities. That's one of the economic arms that we've initiated through partnerships, and we may be looking at a similar type of model as we move forward. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 49-17(4):  
ITI SUPPORT FOR MACKENZIE RIVER SWIM  
TO PROMOTE TOURISM

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I spoke about tourism and international exposure, and the opportunity of having Mr. Martin Strel, known as the Big River Man, swim down the Mackenzie River probably from Hay River or Fort Providence all the way to Tuktoyaktuk. I think it's a huge opportunity and I had written to the Minister last year.

I'd like to ask the Minister, what would be the steps that we should take to continue this initiative.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, last year the Member wrote to myself and the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources in regard to the Big River Man and the swim down the Mackenzie. Although at first glance of the proposal it would appear that his idea wouldn't match up with any funding program that the government currently has, our officials were going to contact Martin Strel himself and propose to help out in other ways, and that was to talk to communities along the proposed route and drum up support for such an event to happen. I'd have to go back to the department and see if they've actually had those discussions with Mr. Strel and see where this is all at. But, certainly, it has great promise to be a big event. Thank you.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** The idea came from Mr. Sean Whelley, the mayor of Fort Simpson, and I've been pursuing it since last year and I have raised it with NWT Tourism. It's a huge opportunity, I think, for international exposure, so if we could get the department onside and look for some resources. What kind of resources would the department have to fund such an international event?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Mr. Speaker, we've got a great team down in the Deh Cho in the Nahendeh riding, as the Member is aware, in Fort Simpson and other communities in the riding. We'd certainly be able to coordinate efforts with communities, with tourism operators in the area to make them aware of opportunities and drum up any potential sponsorships. I think that's one area where, hopefully, the department would be able to help out in such an endeavour. Thank you.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** I guess where the Minister can play a bigger role, too, and not only with his support, is such an event would cross many jurisdictions, so getting assistance from all the different ITI departments involved as he avoids the treacherous Jackfish all the way to Tuktoyaktuk, we'll gladly need his assistance in coordinating that on an NWT-wide scale, if the Minister can commit to looking at something like that. Thank you.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Luckily enough, there's no piranha in the Mackenzie River, so the worse he'll have to fear is the Jackfish in the Mackenzie.

Certainly, we need to coordinate efforts. The swim would take place down the entire length of the Mackenzie, so it would include our ITI staff in the Sahtu and in the Mackenzie as well. So it would have to be a coordinated effort, if we are going to look at doing this. I'm going to go back to the department and see where discussions are at with Mr. Strel and his team on trying to pull this off.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think timing is of the essence. I think in order to make preparations, we have to begin those discussions now. If the Minister, with his continued support, we can begin these discussions with his department, with Mr. Mayor and the NWT Tourism could come up with a good plan that perhaps this event can happen this summer. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. That's a comment. Would you like to reply, Mr. Ramsay?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll go back to the department and get a response for the Member as soon as possible. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

QUESTION 50-17(4):  
FOCUSED CONSULTATIONS ON  
ADDICTIONS ISSUES

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow-up to my Member's statement today, I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Some days I talk about what the Northwest Territories would look like without drugs and alcohol. That's an exercise that I'd like to use as a bit of a visioning exercise.

We have many, many healthy people in the Northwest Territories and that's something to celebrate and something I'm very happy about. But you know that political statement that's always said no and left behind? There's a lot of people who are living in bondage today to drugs and alcohol, who are being left and who are not realizing their potential in life. We cannot forget about them. This group that sits around in this room, as Mr. Miltenberger refers to as this august group, let's face it, this is kind of the cream of the crop here and people may not be struggling with those kinds of things. But we cannot forget about those people who are out in our communities who struggle every day. We have to talk about it. We have to keep it in our consciousness.

To that end, our Minister of Health and Social Services struck a committee, an addictions forum, the Ministerial Forum on Addictions. These very good candidates who have gone out to the communities and have tried to engage people in the topic of addictions. But when they came to Hay River, they met with all the front-line workers, all the people who work in those. There was not a single person that I could see in that room that actually had a problem with addictions.

What is the Minister going to do with his forum on addictions to talk to the people in the homeless shelters, the people who are incarcerated, the kids in the school to get the discussion? Let's talk with them. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Members' statements.

---Laughter

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

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would have no problem directing the forum to visit with the shelters or any facilities where there was an attraction of people that had addiction issues, recognize now that their plan was to have public meetings, and advertise and try to draw people to the meetings, recognizing that they could only draw the people that were interested in the topic. Sometimes they don't have that interest in some communities, but we are finding that in the smaller communities they are getting a lot of interest. Thank you.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Mr. Speaker, in a committee meeting when we were receiving a briefing from ECE the other day, and I'm not going to give away anything super confidential here, but we were talking to children about their education, and there was hardly any of them that did not talk about their ability to get an education in the absence of talking about the addiction to alcohol in their family, in their parents or in their community of one of those things. These were kids that we are talking about education, and they were talking about how many people in the community were drinking. That is an interesting correlation. As I said, the Minister has great people on the forum. Will the Minister commit to... You don't need to send the whole panel, the whole group. Take someone like Paul Andrew, for example, who is chairing this.

Will the Minister commit to sending either one or two delegates from the commission into the places where we know there are people who could talk about their issues and shed some light on where we need to go and spend our dollars as a government? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, yes, I will commit to that. Thank you.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** I think there are stories to be told. As I mentioned in my Member's statement, I think that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission went a long ways towards the healing that comes from people being able to talk about their issues. So while I applaud the Minister for forming this group and sending them out, I think we need to talk to the people who can share the most with us, and I think that is the people affected every day by the addictions in the Northwest Territories.

When does the Minister expect to have results from the work of this commission? Is there still time to integrate this kind of very focused discussion that I'm talking about? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, the plan is the fieldwork for the forum would be done by March 31<sup>st</sup>. Soon after that we are going to select a group of them and maybe even have other people involved to write the report. Yes, there would still be time for them to expand some of their fieldwork if necessary. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final, short supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard our colleague today talk about training so that young Northerners can take advantage of economic growth, all kinds of things.

Will the Minister confirm that when we talk about the amount of money that we spend on social issues as the Government of the Northwest Territories, that addictions should be one of the highest priorities of this government? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, I recognize that addictions are a cost-driver in our various systems. Addictions are a huge cost-driver in justice, also a huge cost-driver in health and health outcomes of our citizens.

Yes, I am trying to make that a priority for the government, as the House knows. We are trying to work with various groups in the community. We talk a lot about addictions across the territory, whether it be alcohol, drugs, or even cigarettes, for that matter. We spend a lot of time talking about those addictions, so we are trying to do something about that. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

QUESTION 51-17(4):  
HEALTH CARE IN HAY RIVER

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my Member's statement, I had questions for the Minister of Health. The community of Hay River had a management board in place before; now it has been replaced with a public administrator. Will the Minister look at putting a

public advisory board into the community of Hay River?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no plan to put a board back in place in Hay River immediately. We are looking at the legislation to see what type of management structures we would be allowed to have in the various authorities right across the territory, because right now the past board, as it stands, was a board for Hay River only.

When we build a new health centre and we were trying to bring some of the surrounding communities, as Mr. Bouchard indicated, they will provide service from that centre to some of the surrounding communities. For example, right now people drive from Fort Resolution to Hay River, get on a plane and come here for health services. It may be possible to provide the health service right in Hay River. It would save a lot of money on medical travel and so on. We want to see that restructuring of our health services based on the new modern health centre in Hay River will do before we decide to refill the board positions because they may be from other communities. Thank you.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Mr. Speaker, I understand the Minister's issues with that. In the interim, the public has no effective way of communicating their concerns in the community with health issues. There is one public administrator, one person. If you don't know that person... I am looking to see if the Minister would allow for an advisory board. I am not looking for the management of the operations; I am looking for an advisory board to give the public administrator some feedback from the community so that we can branch out the contacts in the community so that the community feels like they're engaged with their health care system.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, I will look at the legislation and the whole governance around the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority. As you and Members of the House are aware, each authority has their own governance at this time. I will look at that legislation, look at the governance surrounding that and see if it's possible to appoint an advisory board through that model. If it is possible, I will certainly consider that. Thank you.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to the Minister for looking into that. My other area of concern I had in my Member's statement was the flexibility of funding. As I indicated, we have funding for permanent doctors in Hay River. We currently don't have any, but we have been using nurse practitioners, but the funds to fund those nurse practitioners are column funded so we can't use the doctors' funds to do that.

Has the Minister come up with a solution and been able to allow the community, the authority for Hay River to do some flexibility in these funds?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, we have not come up with a solution to provide flexible funding for Hay River. At this time, interestingly enough, we are waiting for a business case from the Hay River Health Authority senior management and two other health authorities that will give us the business case returned back to the Financial Management Board who restricts the funding for physicians. Once we are able to develop a business case for these authorities, then we will present that to the Financial Management Board to determine whether or not we will be allowed to build flexibility into physician funding to allow us to hire others like nurse practitioners in a system with the physician funding. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Bouchard.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been asking the Minister this question for quite a long time about this flexibility, and he keeps going back to the FMBS and the solution. I am wondering when the Minister will commit to completing this process.

The community of Hay River wants to have coroners, nurse practitioners, wants to be able to use their funds so that the community can have a better health care system. When will the Minister commit to getting this flexibility in funds?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Mr. Speaker, I will ask the department to provide me a business case on all three health authorities by the end of April. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

#### QUESTION 52-17(4):

##### FUNDING FOR NURSE PRACTITIONERS

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly enough, Mr. Bouchard and I are on the same page today. I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services and they are also about nurse practitioners. It was last June and also when we were deliberating the budget a year ago last February that there was quite a bit of talk about nurse practitioners and funding nurse practitioners, using them and so on. At that time in June, the Minister of Health and Social Services talked about a lack of doctors and using nurse practitioners. He mentioned that there were funding obstacles and it's the difficulty with FMB, I gather, but at that time in June, the Minister, I take it from Hansard, promised us a plan. I just have heard the Minister say that there is currently no solution and that we're waiting for a business case from authorities. So I'd like to know from the Minister

along the lines of what Mr. Bouchard has just asked. We're getting a business case at the end of April, I think the Minister said. Could he clarify that? Is this business case coming from the authorities or is it coming from the departments? What are we expecting and from whom at the end of April? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Beaulieu.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I said I would ask the authorities to provide the Health and Social Services with a business case by the end of April. Just for lack of not having the information and feeling that there's been plenty of time for the authorities to put that information together, I'm suggesting that that would be a good date for them to provide the business case to us. As soon as the business case is in our hands, then it would not take us long to maybe have one discussion with the Joint Leadership Council, and then over to the Financial Management Board to see if the funding for physicians can become flexible. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** Thanks to the Minister. My next question I was going to ask him was whether FMB had given any consideration to changing the policy and, obviously, they have not if it hasn't gone to them already. So I need to ask the Minister if last June, that's over six months ago, almost eight months ago now, if last June the Minister was promising us a plan to deal with this lack of flexibility, why has it taken this long to get to a point of no solution. Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you. I don't know why it's taking this long, but I do know that we have a governance system where the health and social services authorities operate with a board, independent board or through a public administrator. So we are trying to set up a system now where we're changing the governance.

As we stand up in the House here as Health Ministers to answer questions, there's something that's a little bit out of our control and that is that the management of the authorities. So we ask the authorities, we'll work with the authorities and try to get that information. I will put appropriate pressure on them to get that information to us quickly. Thank you.

**MS. BISARO:** I want to thank the Minister, although I'm not quite sure I appreciate his response. However, I'll look at Hansard tomorrow and check it out.

One of the other concerns that I have with nurse practitioners is the way that we fund them, and my understanding is that we have about nine nurse practitioners that we as a government are funding. I'd like to ask the Minister how these nine NPs are funded. Are they all funded from the base funding



from the department or are some of them funded by federal funding? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you. Nine of the nurse practitioners are funded through the THSSI, the Territorial Health Systems Sustainability Initiative. That's federal funding. The rest of them are funded through O and M. So not through any other funding other than just regular O and M through the health and social services authorities. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final, short supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the Minister said we have nine that are funded by THSSI funding. I thought we had nine in total. So I'd appreciate clarification on how many NPs we have. But of these nine NPs who are funded through THSSI funding, what is the Minister doing to ensure that when THSSI funding runs out, I think in a year, that we will be able to continue these nine nurse practitioners within our system? Thank you.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you. I apologize, I thought I said six of the NPs were funded through THSSI, and it is six NPs funded through THSSI. The plan is to, of course, continue to negotiate with the federal government on sustaining that funding. If that funding is no longer available, if that funding has been eliminated, then the department would have no option other than to go through this process of going through the mains to be able to see if we can't get funding to retain our nurse practitioners in the system. So at this time our hope is that that funding will continue. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 53-17(4):  
HEART DISEASE AND STROKE  
DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier I raised a question in terms of heart and stroke, and it being Heart Month, so my question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services. What is the department's approach, in terms of addressing the heart and stroke disease, from diagnosis to treatment? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time we look at heart disease along with all other chronic diseases; lung diseases, diabetes. So with the heart disease, what the department wishes to do at this time, recognizing that it is quite a cost-driver in our system, is to develop a strategy by first examining the pilot projects that we have run. We have run I do believe it's three different pilot projects across the territory to then evaluate how the results of those pilot projects were, and from

that we're trying to develop a chronic disease strategy. So within that disease, like I said, we would have lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and any other disease, including cancer, that is considered to be a chronic disease. Thank you.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you. I know one of the priorities of the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly was to try to take some preventative steps in terms of trying to address the health and social issues. So my question to the Minister is: What are some of the preventative measures that are in place to try to curb? He's indicated that heart disease and other afflictions are cost-drivers. What are some of the measures in place to try to curb the rates of heart and stroke disease in the North? Mahsi.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you. The department works with the Department of Education in healthy foods in schools and so on, hoping that this type of thing will carry on from the schools to the home. We support the anti-smoking campaigns like Don't Be a Butthead as an example. We're also in a federal campaign called Healthy Weights, so we deal with that as well. So these are some of the areas that we see as preventative. But just the whole nature of chronic disease management would be based on prevention that we feel is the best bang for the buck. Thank you.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you. Lacking an ambulance in most small communities, what emergency measures do the health centres have in responding to heart and stroke situations? Mahsi.

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Thank you. I don't know if all of the health centres have the equipment to deal with a heart attack or a stroke. I don't have that information with me. I know that we are, in some of the larger centres, able to deal with it, we have the equipment to deal with that, but I can't commit to saying that we have that type of equipment in all of our smaller health centres. So it would be difficult for me to answer that question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final supplementary, Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is just in terms of the long-term horizon. I know it's probably improbable for every community to have an ambulance, but is it within the department's plan, in terms of long-term objectives and goals, to ensure that at least, at the very minimum, communities such as Fort Providence would have an ambulance?

**HON. TOM BEAULIEU:** Yes, the department has had some conversations with some of the key communities in strategic areas of the highway system that may benefit from having a service such as an ambulance service. We are working with an interdepartmental group, along with MACA and the Department of Transportation, to try to get the people trained. We are also looking at including one

of the people that are required for emergency measures that would work in the ambulance under the umbrella legislation that Health is now trying to bring to the House as a legislative proposal. Within there, we would have the emergency measures people who would be able to also be riding the ambulance and so on. There are a few things in play. We just don't have the timelines here, but I'm sure we would be able to get the timelines to the Member.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

QUESTION 54-17(4):  
EDUCATIONAL REFORM INITIATIVES

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy hearing some of my colleagues today and I'm trying to be in line with some of their comments. Those like listening to our people, and we heard about listening to our kids. I'd like to build upon that.

With reference to my Member's statement earlier today about allowing students to grade their teachers as part of the overall reform change for education effectiveness, my questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment today will be focused on what the department is doing about northern education reform. There are many barriers and factors that are impeding our students from achieving success in our school system. Can the Minister elaborate as to what are the things that are pulling us to focus on the change we require?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would, first of all, like to thank the Member for that question. He raises several key topics and important issues. I'm glad to have the opportunity to address the NWT education renewal initiative that my department has undertaken. There are many factors. Several factors indicate that education in the NWT must change. As the Member puts it, pulling us to change. There are several types of assistance and large scale services that show our students are not achieving at anywhere near the levels that they should be. These also include Alberta Achievement Tests and functioning grade level assessments, international early development instrument and also healthy behaviours. Those are just some of the factors that we are contemplating. In summary, we are hearing from all corners, including the students, that change is needed and we are embarking on that.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I appreciate the Minister's response to that. Can the Minister give us a recap of all the informing initiatives we have at this time and what future initiatives can we expect during the

life of this Assembly, as the Minister put it, as we prepare for this renewal?

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** One of our focuses is the Early Childhood Development Framework that we've been working on for quite some time now. It's been over a decade and it is now before us as a result of the research that we are seeing. Those are some of the focuses that we are currently working on. That is why we are engaging into our plan to renew the Early Childhood Development Framework that's in the process.

Just having an elders gathering, I think we had roughly 80 to 100 elders from all regions gathered for two or three days to hear their input. The following week we had over 80 stakeholders to listen to their input, ideas, suggestions how we can improve and streamline the Early Childhood Development Framework. There's also a Safe Schools Strategy that's before us in terms of addressing bullying in the Northwest Territories schools. Our children need to be safe whether at home, in the community, in the region. Those are some of the areas that we are tackling as we speak. The Anti-Poverty Strategy that's before us in this House and the Minister of Health's Addictions Strategy, those are just some of the elements that we are currently working on.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I appreciate the Minister's recap of some of those initiatives here. We have many competing hurdles within the education system as of today. Some of them were mentioned by the Minister. From disparity of student achievement in small community schools, from poor results from Alberta Achievement Tests, to poor functional grade levels, staff development and retention issues, and some system accountability. Can the Minister elaborate how allowing students to grade teachers can fit in the overall assessment tools to help evaluate better educational outcomes?

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** This is a very interesting idea and suggestion. We have done some research in this area, too, and the Member provided some information on this particular subject. This is information that will be shared through engagement on the NWT educational renewal. I'm looking forward to that input from the general public and stakeholders as we move forward.

Accountability is one of the key issues that the Auditor General report specifically highlighted in her 2010 report. As we know, we need to hold students accountable for their learning and we measure through the Alberta Achievement Tests and other assessment that's before us. One of the six pillars through the education renewal process that I presented to the standing committee is professionalism. Those are the teachers; they are our assets. We have to do what we can to support them and move them along in the process. This

particular area that the Member is alluding to will be addressed in the renewal process as well.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, again, appreciate the Minister's response. Finally, northern education reform success or renewal success will, clearly, depend on the progress of dealing with poverty and other social factors. As we heard today, residential school impacts will also require an ongoing collaboration with the departments of Health and Social Services, Justice, NWT Housing, MACA and Human Resources. How will the Minister quarterback all these initiatives with so many departments in order to see real progress during the life of this 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly?

**HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY:** It's very important that we collaborate and form partnerships with interdepartmental discussion on this important matter because it will take more than just one department. We have to work with the Department of Health and Social Services and other departments. It has a ripple effect, as well, and we're very positive that we want to deliver the key messages that we need to make some changes that reflect on these important areas.

This is an area that I need to work with closely with the Social Programs committee and also with my department and the other departments as well. My department and DM are working closely with other DMs as well. We all have to be on the same page when we're talking about education renewal. We're going to make some changes that will reflect and benefit the students in the Northwest Territories and for the betterment of a lot of people.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 55-17(4):  
FEDERAL FUNDING REDUCTIONS TO  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT BOARDS

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on my Member's statement today and ask questions directed to the Premier. The federal government is the resource manager and the co-signatory of the land claim agreements. Two Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada environmental audits say under-resourcing of the boards is a barrier to speedy and thorough completion of reviews.

Does the Premier agree that it is, at least currently, the responsibility of the federal government to adequately resource the boards to carry out this work?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member recognizes that we are the responsible government. We are all elected to represent the people of the Northwest Territories, and we're doing that to the best of our ability. We're not the official opposition to the Government of Canada or we're not going to be out picketing about cuts to different areas. We are doing our job. We are writing letters to the Government of Canada, asking them questions about the activities that the government undertakes. Right now the Government of Canada is responsible for the funding of the MVRMA boards.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Of course, the reason I'm asking these questions – I appreciate the Premier's response there – is that the public is not hearing about this. It's the people, our people who are being affected by these decisions which are only affecting the Northwest Territories. We're talking about boards within the Northwest Territories. I think we very much have a role here. We have the prospect of seven new mines, the fibre optic link, the Mackenzie Valley Highway extension, and possibly hydro development in the offing.

The government has complained past reviews were too slow. We haven't hesitated to speak out there. We know a big problem has actually been delayed decisions by the federal Minister, but does the Premier agree that cutting the Environmental Review Board staff in half, from 12 to six, will cripple the board's ability to complete reviews promptly and thoroughly and has the potential to delay projects that this government wants to see proceed speedily and responsibly?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** The administration of the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board indicated that through job shadowing and the fact that there was a decrease in the amount of work that they will be doing next year to last, that they felt that it was within their level of resources to be able to handle the workload. Obviously, reduction in resources at this time is probably not very helpful as we go forward.

**MR. BROMLEY:** The Premier and I are on the same page with his last statement there. The previous bit, though, is only partially correct. The board said they had shadow people for this project that's coming up but not for the rest of the work. There's also the federal duty to consult and accommodate to meet federal fiduciary in Section 35 responsibilities. These may be federal but they are the constitutional rights held by more than half of our NWT citizens. When the federal government reneges on them, I believe we have a duty to lend support to NWT citizens under assault.

Was this government even informed in advance of the planned funding cuts, and is the Premier aware of consultation with our Aboriginal partners?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** If we feel that fiduciary obligations are not being followed, we are not worried, we don't take our time in asking questions about it. As far as if we were asked about specific reduction of six people from the MVEIRB office, we were not consulted about it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Glad to hear it. On the second part there, I was asking about the planned funding cuts rather than the people that were the decision of the board that they were finessed into. We partner governments and boards rely heavily on the Environmental Review Board for essential information and advice, and the federal government is kicking the legs out from under it. The Commissioner of the Environment said the same thing even before these cuts.

My question is, as I asked in my statement: How long will devolution negotiations muzzle our voice and our willingness to stick up for the vital public interests that are under assault here? When will this government finally speak up? Thank you.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Sometimes it's good to have the last word, but we are not being muzzled. We are negotiating with the Government of Canada. As we've said all along, we hope that everybody will support devolution, because if you want to protect resources that are in the current system, the best way to do it is by having devolution occur and have devolution occur in a very timely manner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

QUESTION 56-17(4):  
SAHTU EXPLORATION READINESS

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask questions to the Minister of ITI, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay had an exploration readiness meeting in Norman Wells that was attended by the Sahtu leadership with the Department of ITI and oil and gas companies. I want to ask Mr. Ramsay, on the 11 recommendations on the Sahtu readiness exploration session all had to do with the Sahtu shale oil play. What's the next step to this important meeting and, more importantly, to the 11 recommendations that came forward?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the first step is this budget. I think we've answered the call with what is happening in the Sahtu with the Canol shale oil play. We've addressed the concerns, some of the concerns that are there. The dialogue has to continue with the Member, with the leadership in the Sahtu and also

with industry. That dialogue continued even today, as folks from the industry were here in Yellowknife and I met with them this morning, and we will continue to have that dialogue so we ensure that the benefits are maximized for the people that live in the Sahtu and we can see this play, hopefully one day, getting into production. Thank you.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** In front of me I have the two-page 11 recommendations. I want to ask Minister Ramsay, I met, also this morning, with one of the oil companies and they were talking about their upcoming activities. One of the key points of this activity taking off would be understanding the fracking that's going to possibly happen in the Sahtu and the importance of the Sahtu people, along with the people of the Northwest Territories, getting ready. If fracking takes off, we need to get ready.

How soon can the Minister pull together a meeting in the Sahtu to look at the concept of fracking and what it's going to entail, and how we can prepare ourselves?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** The government, through ITI, has done a fair bit when it comes to getting people educated about fracking, what it is, how it works. We had a study tour with Members last fall and we've more recently taken a group of 15 leaders from the Sahtu down to I believe it was Calgary for a study tour as well. I really think it's important that the leadership in the Sahtu understand what is at risk here.

Certainly, there's going to be a lot of business opportunities and economic potential for Aboriginal businesses and development corporations in the Sahtu. I think it's very important at the earliest opportunity we get Aboriginal business leaders and other leaders in the Sahtu to a place like North Dakota, perhaps as soon as April, if we can pull this off to talk to Aboriginal leaders in North Dakota who have benefitted tremendously from the economic activity in the Bakken in North Dakota and the jobs it has created for their people.

So I want to pull this together, and hopefully sometime this April we will have a tour to the Bakken in North Dakota. Thank you.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** I will look forward to the Minister's planning and anything I can do to help to make this trip successful.

I want to ask the Minister with regard to a comprehensive sit-down with the Sahtu leadership on the transportation and the hundreds of trucks that come up on the winter road, the training, the drug and alcohol issues that we have, the business opportunities, a comprehensive review of what happens after this season in the Sahtu where there were hundreds of millions of dollars spent. Let's sit down with the leaders, sit down with the people who are, firsthand, experiencing this and say, this is

what we learned, let's get ready for this year. Could the Minister commit to a meeting with the Sahtu people?

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** In questions, I believe late last week, I gave the Member my commitment to perhaps even drive the winter road into his region into the Sahtu sometime this winter during the life of the ice road. If we can do that, if we can pull it together, I would be more than happy to talk to businesses, residents and stakeholders in the region. As I mentioned late last week, we have to learn lessons from this year's experiences with the ice road, the amount of traffic that was on that road. If there are ways we can improve things, we need to be looking at that in the interim before there is an all-weather road down the Mackenzie Valley, which, Mr. Speaker, I hope happens sooner rather than later.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If resources are proven, there will be a road down the Mackenzie Valley.

I want to ask the Minister, will he commit to pulling in people into the Sahtu to have a community/regional meeting on the exploration that's happening in the Sahtu so we get ready and start addressing all 11 recommendations from the previous meeting. I thank the Minister for that.

**HON. DAVID RAMSAY:** I believe that's a very worthwhile exercise and certainly something that, through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, we can work with the Member and try to make something like that happen. We had the readiness session last year, and I believe we should be having a readiness session each fall in preparation for the upcoming season. I want to see that become an annual-type event.

Certainly, I understand what the Member is saying, and if there is a need to get together after the season is over in the spring to talk about issues, I think that's a worthwhile exercise and certainly something that I would support. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Mr. McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5 on the Order Paper.

---Unanimous consent granted

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

**MR. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I want to use this opportunity to recognize one of our good, corporate

citizens of Inuvik, Mr. Kurt Wainman, owner of Northwind Industries, and I would also like to welcome Mr. Russell Newmark from E. Gruben's Transport. Welcome, gentlemen.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to budget address, day four of seven. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Mr. Abernethy.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 13-17(4):  
LETTER TO MR. R. HAWKINS REGARDING  
WRITTEN QUESTION 12-17(3),  
SENIOR MANAGEMENT SALARY RANGES  
– AMENDED DATA

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled Letter to Mr. Robert Hawkins dated February 12, 2013, regarding Written Question 12-17(3), Senior Management Salary Ranges – Amended Data.

Mr. Speaker, the document that was tabled by Mr. Hawkins a couple of days ago, upon further review, it turns out we actually had a calculation error and the total or grand total of salaries and benefits paid to senior management, 204 senior management, was \$35 million, not \$70 million. So I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to Mr. Hawkins, the Members and the public for any confusion or frustration the calculation error may have caused. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLED DOCUMENT 14-17(4):  
SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' ABSENCES  
FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER 17, 2012,  
TO FEBRUARY 5, 2013

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Pursuant to Section 5 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table a Summary of Members' Absences for the Period of October 17, 2012, to February 5, 2013. Thank you.

Item 16, notices of motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 2-17(4):  
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE  
TO FEBRUARY 18, 2013

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, February 14, 2013, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns

on February 14, 2013, it shall be adjourned to Monday, February 18, 2013;

And further, that any time prior to February 18, 2013, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as has been duly adjourned to that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bromley.

MOTION 3-17(4):  
FEDERAL CHANGES TO  
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Thursday, February 14, 2013, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that the Government of the Northwest Territories inform the federal government of our dissatisfaction both with the dismantling of the federal environmental protection regime and with the federal government's failure to consult and inform this government on changes directly affecting our interests, the ensured integrity of our environment and the content of devolution negotiations that are currently underway;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories immediately begin to determine the cost of repairing and maintaining the environmental management regime post-devolution in order to restore it to the responsible standard expected by our public;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories begin to identify the means through which such costs could be funded, including rigorously seeking Government of Canada support;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Mr. McLeod.

### Second Reading of Bills

BILL 1:  
TLICHO STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable

Member for Monfwi, that Bill 1, Tlicho Statutes Amendment Act, be read for the second time.

This bill amends provisions to the Tlicho Community Government Act to ensure consistency with similar provisions in other statutes governing municipalities. This bill also modifies the eligibility criteria for nominations as a candidate for chief or councillor of a community government and modifies the beginning and end dates of the term for council members.

Further, this bill will enable the council of a community government to appoint an eligible person to fill a vacant position if the vacancy is not able to be filled through a by-election.

Additionally, this bill repeals provisions in the Tlicho Community Government Act that have ceased to have affect, and amends several other statutes to add references to the Tlicho Community Government Act or Tlicho community governments and provisions, where there are references to other legislation governing municipalities or to types of municipal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Bill 1 has had second reading.

---Carried

Mr. McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2) and have Bill 1 moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. SPEAKER:** Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 9-17(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2013-2014, and Bill 1, Tlicho Statutes Amendment Act.

By the authority given me as Speaker, by Motion 1-17(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

### Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I call Committee of the Whole to order. The Speaker has listed off the items that are in Committee of the Whole today. What is the wish of the committee today? Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 9-17(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2013-2014.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. We will take a brief break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Alright, committee. We'll come back to order, please. Yesterday we ended Committee of the Whole and we did not conclude general comments. I would like to ask whether there are any further general comments on the budget. Seeing none, is committee agreed we are concluded general comments?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. We will move on to our first department, which is Human Resources. I will go to Minister Abernethy. Do you have opening comments?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Carry on, please, Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to present the Department of Human Resources' main estimates for the fiscal year 2013-14.

The department is proposing an operations expenditures budget of \$42.1 million. This reflects a decrease of \$697,000 from last year's main estimates, or a 2 percent reduction. The reduction is largely attributed to the transfer of specialized human resources programs, positions and associated funding aimed at health and social services professionals to the Department of Health and Social Services.

The department's budget is proposing funding in 2013-14 for three new positions for ongoing service stabilization, as follows:

1. a benefits position, located in Yellowknife, to meet the increased reporting requirements of our third-party service providers to ensure employees receive appropriate benefits.
2. two positions to work with managers to support employees who need accommodations to enable them to remain in the workplace or return to the workplace. Working as a team with the existing duty to accommodate advisor, these new positions will be located in Inuvik and Fort Smith.

The mandate of the Department of Human Resources is to provide leadership and direction to the Government of the Northwest Territories, its boards and agencies in all areas of human resource management. The department's leadership on human resource management supports all departments and agencies in effectively recruiting, managing and retaining their staff.

Through this mandate, the department ensures that the public service is managed as a corporate resource in a way that promotes human resource stability, employee retention and maximum effectiveness. In turn, this supports the interests of the government, and the vision of Believing in People and Building on the Strengths of Northerners.

Of the department's 2013-14 budget, \$9.703 million, or 23 percent, is allocated for direct support to members of the public service, including dental benefits, medical travel assistance, recognition awards and the Employee Family Assistance Program. In our role as a shared service provider, another \$2.7 million, or 6.4 percent, of the budget is targeted to provide funding to departments and agencies for associate director/superintendents, as well as intern and summer student programs under the Maximizing Northern Employment Initiative.

To strengthen the foundation of human resource management services across government, the department's 2013-14 main estimates identify some departmental restructuring. First, the creation of a new labour relations division, combining all labour relations functions in one place within the Department of Human Resources ensures service, support and advice to client departments, boards and agencies is timely and consistent across the GNWT. It will also ensure a consolidated approach to functions related to labour relations, duty to accommodate, investigations and collective bargaining.

Second, the creation of a new business performance unit to focus on human resource management qualitative and quantitative measures, and business performance metrics and analysis will drive the department's performance management approach, leading to improved and consistent service delivery and are critical to the success of the service partnership agreements that are currently being piloted with the health and social services system.

In building a strong and sustainable future for our territory, the GNWT is preparing for the imminent devolution of responsibilities from the Government of Canada and is moving forward on decentralization initiatives. The Department of Human Resources has a key role to play in both devolution and decentralization, recognizing the importance of people issues in these strategic initiatives.

The department has a major responsibility in the successful implementation of devolution by ensuring a smooth welcome for affected federal employees into the GNWT public service, ensuring fairness and equity for all impacted employees, including existing GNWT staff, minimizing service disruption and developing a northern workforce.

In support of the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly's priority to increase employment opportunities where they are needed most, by decentralizing more GNWT positions, the department will continue to provide corporate advice and guidance to GNWT management on organizational design and impact analysis. Within the department, direction action in support of decentralization is well underway. First, as previously mentioned, the proposed addition of two regional duty to accommodate advisors to work on this important issue with our existing staff, and second, the Department of Human Resources has taken steps to regionalize three positions where it functionally makes sense. These include:

- decentralizing to Inuvik a functional recruitment officer position with the allied health unit;
- establish a helpdesk supervisor position in Inuvik to enhance support for the Human Resources' helpdesk; and
- decentralizing a professional development initiative training officer to Inuvik. While this move is being implemented this fiscal year, it does not show up in the department's complement of decentralized positions given that it is part of the Health human resource transfer which I mentioned earlier.

In addition, the department is developing a Regional Recruitment Strategy that is intended to enhance regional employment and development opportunities, and includes strategies to align the available labour force with public service employment needs.

Development of the public service remains a key priority and there are many initiatives underway that support this under the flagship of 20/20, the Public Services Strategic Plan. In addition to the key priorities of devolution and decentralization, the department will focus on the following actions in 2013-14:

- succession planning and corporate knowledge transfer strategies, given that our demographic information confirms an increase in the number of public servants who are eligible to retire;
- continued efforts to ensure a representative workforce by encouraging diversity and supporting the recruitment, development and advancement of Aboriginal employees;
- we will also explore the enhanced use of social media, both as a means of communication with current and potential employees, and also as a specialized tool for targeted recruitment strategies;
- rigorous occupational health and safety strategies continue to be critical in order to minimize the risk of our staff being injured on the job;

- continued training and support for managers in order to ensure understanding of department and agency accountability and responsibility for human resource management such as accommodations, respectful workplaces and occupational health and safety;
- greening the workplace continues to be a key priority to ensure environmental and resource management within the public service;
- implementation of service partnership agreements remains critical through ongoing engagement and collaboration with departments and agencies, including a pilot with the health and social services system; and
- resolution of commitments in new collective agreements, including successfully concluding agreements on safe disclosure, or whistleblower, and rest periods, as agreed to during bargaining negotiations with the Union of Northern Workers.

Our investment in the public service through 20/20, the NWT Public Service Strategic Plan, has created a positive foundation of human resource management practices and services. The Government of the Northwest Territories was nationally recognized as one of Canada's top 100 employers for 2013, based on the terms of employment, programs and numerous opportunities available to our employees. This is a tremendous achievement that we all, as leaders, need to be proud to have been recognized for.

I am proud of the good work that the Department of Human Resources does which serves the interests of the entire GNWT as well as the people of the NWT.

In closing, 2012-13 has been a productive year so far for Human Resources, with significant milestone accomplishments, and I am confident that 2013-14 will also yield great results. Together with Members of this Assembly, I look forward to continuing to achieve the vision of the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly by believing in people and building on the strengths of Northerners.

That includes my opening remarks and I would be pleased to answer any questions Members may have. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Minister, do you have any witnesses you wish to bring into the House?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.



**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you escort the witnesses into the Chamber, please.

Welcome, witnesses. Minister Abernethy, if you would introduce your witnesses, please.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With me today on my right is Sheila Bassi-Kellett, deputy minister of the Department of Human Resources; on my left is Michelle Beard, director of policy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister. I will open the floor to opening comments on the Department of Human Resources. Mr. Bouchard.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to begin by congratulating the Department of Human Resources for the GNWT being named Top 100 Employer in Canada. I think that's hard work from the department throughout, I guess, but HR being responsible and one of the main leads on that.

My other opening comments would be about the job creation. The Minister talked about decentralization and devolution. We've also created a bunch of jobs this year. My indication is 56. I am just wondering what the process is from HR's perspective on what different departments have to do when they create a new position. Are there justifications that are required? Regarding decentralization, is their focus on why this is being located in certain locations?

The other area that I would like the Minister to discuss a little bit is with the GNWT we are getting larger and larger and we're seeing vacancies in positions. Those numbers seem to be growing as well. There is always a constant number of jobs/positions that we cannot fill. Whether we are in the transition or in the middle of filling them and some positions maybe have questions on whether we can actually fill them year after year. What is the Minister doing to reduce those numbers in filling these empty positions?

The other area the Minister discussed was whistleblowing. I'm just looking for more clarification and definition on whistleblowing. What is the actual definition of whistleblowing? I understand the concept of it, but are we talking about territorial employees being able to complain about their bosses or complaining about other departments? Typically now, that's kind of frowned upon. I am just looking for more clarification.

Those are my main concerns right now, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. I will go to Minister Abernethy for his response.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of Human Resources

provides technical advice to the departments as they are establishing positions. We also provide job description training when a position is created. We facilitate job evaluation to determine how the position or what the position will be paid.

As far as decentralization of positions, that is a direction that Cabinet has given to all departments, boards and agencies in the Northwest Territories, following up on the commitment of Caucus and the priorities of the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Each department is responsible for looking at their own operations and identifying which positions would be appropriate for decentralization. Technically, we provide advice on what the jobs will be paid, what the job descriptions could look like. We also provide advice and direction, where appropriate, on organizational design. We have the expertise in house to provide that information, but it's ultimately up to individual departments to make choices that are right for them and their operations. I can say, in compliance with the direction of Caucus, Cabinet has directed each department to look at their internal operations and identify which positions can or would be appropriate for decentralization.

With respect to the GNWT getting larger and larger, and the larger number of vacancies that exist, I can give a snapshot. As of December 31<sup>st</sup>, there were 1,080 vacant positions in the Government of the Northwest Territories. That number is not static. It changes all the time. Positions continued to be filled on a daily basis, but at the same time, we have people leaving the public service so the vacancies tend to evolve. So 1,080 is not specific to individual positions. It does change.

There are a significant number of reasons that positions may appear vacant. For instance, if we have individuals who go on transfer assignments as part of a succession plan, their position, their home position may remain vacant and the department may choose not to backfill it while they're gone. We also have seasonal positions that are vacant in the wintertime and filled in the summertime. Those stay on our establishment report and would show that way.

There are also positions that technically require deletion. They are no longer required. That may appear on the charges for some time until the departments have officially made a decision to permanently delete those positions. Then there are other positions that the departments may, as a result of our cost-saving measures, choose to leave vacant for a month or two as opposed to immediately fill. So those numbers do change.

I can say that it appears that on an ongoing basis, there's about 37 percent of the vacant jobs that need or that we require to fill immediately, and that we are trying to recruit them. Usually, about 50 percent of those are outside of Yellowknife in the small communities and we have traditionally had

some difficulties filling some of the positions outside of Yellowknife.

To that end, we've directed the department to develop a Regional Recruitment Strategy. That Regional Recruitment Strategy is going to attempt to address some of the challenges that we are facing filling these positions in communities outside of Yellowknife. It's going to be informed, to some degree, by the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee, and I did mention earlier today that I had an opportunity to meet with that committee and talk about some of the challenges we are having recruiting Aboriginal people and filling positions in some of our smaller or regional communities throughout the Northwest Territories.

We plan to have that Regional Recruitment Strategy done prior to the next round of business planning, so we can share it with committee and discuss it and start moving forward through the business planning process to try to aggressively tackle some of these challenges we are facing in the smaller communities to recruit and retain professionals, as well as Aboriginal candidates. This government is 100 percent committed to have a public service that represents the population that we serve. We are having some challenges.

Earlier today I was asked about senior management positions and the representation of Aboriginal people in senior management positions. There are challenges. I did indicate one of our challenges is the low turnover in those positions, but we do have programs like the Associate Director/Superintendent Program to help bring qualified and highly competent Aboriginal candidates into those senior roles.

With respect to whistleblower legislation, we had an obligation as part of the UNW Collective Agreement where we were going to sit down with the UNW and develop a Safe Disclosure Policy for UNW employees. That was going to form the groundwork of moving forward with whistleblower, or in this case, we're going to refer to it as safe disclosure legislation. The Safe Disclosure Policy is done. I have written a letter to committee indicating I would be happy to meet with committee to walk through the good work that the department and union have done. The union fully supports it and stands behind the work that's been done on a Safe Disclosure Policy. Hopefully, we will have an opportunity to discuss that in committee.

Whistleblower, or safe disclosure, is where an employee can bring forward allegations of wrongdoing, gross misconduct, abuse or misuse of resources and not have it adversely affect them as individuals or their careers. Many jurisdictions have this type of legislation. We are moving on our path to make that a reality here in the Northwest Territories. As I've indicated, the first step was the agreement we've made with the UNW and the work

we've done and I look forward to taking that to committee.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Bouchard.

**MR. BOUCHARD:** That's good. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Dolyunny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome the Minister and the delegation here today. In line with my comments from the Member of Hay River North, I too want to congratulate the department on a job well done being named one of the top 100 employers in Canada. That's quite an accolade and sometimes I think we forget to say some good things about what's happening in government, so congratulations.

Keeping in line with what was said, and you might hear a common theme here a little bit, but we know we are faced with a lot of net out-migration of employees. This is nothing new. We have, at times, a lot of complexity in our public service jobs, and as indicated by the Minister, we have a retiring population to deal with. All three of those pillars, I think, are putting a strain on our current system to fill positions now.

We've heard various numbers of vacancies currently, and I know this is always a moving target, Madam Chair, but I believe the number – correct me if I'm wrong – about 360 job openings today in the NWT. That tells me, and I think it tells many people in this Assembly, that our NWT labour market really cannot meet the demand to fill the positions we have. So when we add more positions in a budget like we have before us, I think we may be adding more insult to injury moving forward.

I know there was some ITI funded initiatives about Come Make Your Mark to promote the NWT. The Minister may want to talk a bit about whether this was a successful endeavour, but more so what did it cost taxpayers. Again, these are issues that we need to look at.

Following that, we've talked about all these types of initiatives to bring people to the Northwest Territories. A lot of those are referred to targeted scholarships, bursary programs, specific placement programs, remissable loans, return of bursaries and return of service agreements. These are all catch phrases, but these are also very unique tools. I am curious as to what amount of tool use is being used by the department to fill the current vacancies that we have before us. So I would appreciate the Minister talking about that.

Although I indicated that I was congratulating the department for a job well done being top 100 employees, if one has to look at the recent employee engagement satisfaction survey by our

service sector, it was interesting to see some of the trends in that employee survey. What I mean by trends is I look at top box score. These are your top percent responses in terms of completely being satisfied. When one looks at the results, Madam Chair, it's very clear that although we are doing relatively well, those numbers or top box scores have now been slipping from one year to the next. In the eyes of an employer, whether it's in government or in industry, these would be areas you would want to drive some concern in terms of what you are using to mitigate the perception out there.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk a little bit about safety. The Minister is very much aware that I have been somewhat critical in our safety programs and the fact that this government has been fined and double fined in the last two years to the tune of about almost \$750,000 in fines and double fines. I have some grave concerns about what we are doing to improve the safety profile. Again, there is only one mention here in the opening address that indicates rigorous occupational health and safety strategies continue to be critical in order to minimize the risk of our staff being injured on the job. Given the fact that this department has been bestowed with such a large penalty, I am curious and very dismayed that it only had one line entry in the opening comments and very little to show in the budget as to what they are truly doing for occupational health and safety in order to get on the positive side of WSCC so that our claims growth, our injuries, as well as our penalties are much more in line.

I know the Minister has made comments in the House about the injuries per 100 being at a value, I believe, of 1.8 of a value and the average in the Territories is 2.4. However, I crunch these numbers, and although this seems to be the hallmark or benchmark for health and safety for the department, I'm still very perplexed as to how these numbers are being calculated because my math does not add up to this 1.8. I may want to ask the Minister to comment on that as well.

I do have a lot more specifics that I'd like to do when we get into detail, so I will leave that for now. I did put a couple of questions on there for the Minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. I'll go to Mr. Abernethy for a response.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Member for congratulating the department on being the top 100 employer. I do have to say that HR can't take the credit for that by itself. This is an accolade given to the Government of the Northwest Territories and it takes everybody, Cabinet, Regular Members, staff and all the departments. We're very proud of this recognition and we think it's fantastic.

The Member is right; we do have an out-migration from the Government of the Northwest Territories. We do run about 360 to 400 jobs on a regular basis that we're trying to actively fill. I take the Member's point that the market does not seem to meet the needs. We recognize there are some challenges out there. We are working closely with Education, Culture and Employment to identify some of the needs of the Government of the Northwest Territories. There are shortages in some administrative type skills, some financial type skills, as well as what would be statutory skills. We work with Education, Culture and Employment to try and identify some of the challenges that we have. We are also recognizing that we are the largest employer in the Northwest Territories. We are working with the Department of ITI on their economic strategy to make sure that our realities are taken into consideration as well.

I can't provide you with any details on Come Make Your Mark. I don't have that specific information in front of me, but I will talk to ITI to see what their thoughts are on the program and I'll also look inside the department to see if we have any statistics on that as well. I'll get that back to the Member and to committee.

We do have a number of programs that are designed to encourage northern students to come back and work in the Northwest Territories. Education, Culture and Employment has remissable student loans for any individuals who come back to the Northwest Territories who have been educated in the Northwest Territories. That encourages people to come back and I think we as an employer, as well as other northern employers, benefit from that.

We do have a number of bursary programs. We have bursary programs available for health care, students in health care professions or allied health professions. Nursing, social work, pretty much all allied health professions. Those funds come from Health and Social Services. We have been administering those programs on their behalf, but that is one of the functions that we will be transferring over to Health and Social Services as a result of the reorganization that we did talk about.

I can provide the Member, it will just take a little bit of time, with details on what type of dollars have been spent out, and a little bit of history on some of those bursaries. Some of them work better than others. We've had greater success in some areas. I think the nursing bursaries we've seen some pretty decent success. The medical bursaries are a little bit more limited. We find that some of the individuals who go south to pursue medicine as a career end up discovering a life in the South and not all of them tend to come back. It's a challenge and we're happy to work with Health and Social Services to see if we can address that.

The employment engagement survey, I think it still continues to demonstrate that most people are happy with their employment in the Government of the Northwest Territories. I'd have to take another look at the numbers. I'm not sure exactly what the Member means by slipping. I see them being more stagnant. Maybe a little down but, overall, roughly where they've been.

The GNWT provides really great compensation. We provide really great benefits. We've got fantastic leave provisions. I think most employees appreciate that.

With respect to safety issues, yes, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been fined. The Member did indicate that the department was hit with a large fine and I just have to clarify that comment. The Government of the Northwest Territories was hit with a large fine. Each department is responsible for their own Occupational Health and Safety Program within the department.

The Department of Human Resources provides some advice and guidance on how committees are supposed to work within departments, but we are responsible for things like the Duty to Accommodate Policy and other policies. We draft those on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories and provide individual departments with guidance and advice on how to apply them. The Duty to Accommodate Policy only came into place during the life of the 17th Assembly and we're starting to see some positive results from that. In this budget we are putting more duty to accommodate positions in the Northwest Territories – one in Fort Smith and one in Inuvik – which we hope will help us return people to work quicker and more appropriately, which will reduce our claim costs to the WSCC. It's no secret that we have some concerns with the Safe Advantage program. The WSCC does incredibly important work, and one of their mandates is to encourage safety in the workplace. They've chosen the Safe Advantage program as their method of doing that. We appreciate and agree with the intent. We're not 100 percent convinced that the program meets its needs. The program is under its five-year review. WSCC has asked us for our input and guidance on where some of the difficulties lie, and we will be providing that information to them.

I do have to say we want and support a healthy and safe workplace. We don't want our employees injured. It's our goal to do whatever we can to make sure that employees are not injured on the workplace. We will continue to strive to meet that.

We do know, based on our analysis of claims for 2012, that our claims history for 2012 is significantly lower than previous years. Will we get a fine? Yet to be determined. I imagine we will. Given that our claims are significantly lower for 2012, I don't

imagine that it will be as extreme as it has been in previous years.

We will continue to work hard with our department colleagues and our department partners to reduce as much as possible. Many departments are doing really well. There are many departments in this organization that have virtually no claims. Some actually have no claims. We do have a couple of departments that struggle. The Department of Justice, one of the departments that I'm responsible for, does struggle under occupational health and safety and we do have a high claims history. Health and Social Services, two of the authorities – Stanton and Beaufort-Delta – have high claims history. We need to do more work. I know the Department of Health and Social Services, in cooperation with their authorities, is doing a significant amount of work in their authorities, and I do know that in Justice we have taken significant steps to identify the risks in our corrections facilities and work with our staff to identify ways to avoid injury in the future. We believe we're already seeing some reduced injuries in the justice system. But we don't stop. We have to keep going and we have to keep working with our employees, with our partners like WSCC, to identify ways to reduce injuries in the workplace. I am happy to say we have seen a significant drop in claims for 2012.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Dolynny, your time is up. Next on the list is Mr. Moses.

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to let the Minister and his staff know that I will probably be speaking to some of the topics that have already been discussed, so don't feel obligated to answer them again. I just want to show my support for certain initiatives, as well as my concern in some areas. If you feel obligated that you need to answer again and reiterate some of your points, feel free to, but with respect to time and moving forward, you can just try to move on here.

What I'm glad to see in here is under the 20/20 program that the Minister mentions the recruitment, development and advancement of Aboriginal employees, but it's not just the Aboriginal employees. What we discussed last time was northern indigenous. It's people who have lived here in the North and are indigenous to the North, and working to advance them as well.

I didn't get a chance to go to my second set of questions during question period earlier today, but just to touch on some of the challenges that we do have in the education system that sometimes, as a result, we find some of our people from the Northwest Territories in low-level positions within the government. Some of these people that are in these positions, sometimes are also long-serving employees and we know this because we give out

the awards that are for 20 years, 25 years, yet there hasn't been any advancement in there for them.

I'm really glad to see that you want to work on the development and advancement of these positions. That goes to on-the-job training, specifically for these long-term employees. How do we do that? How do we take people from administrative roles and start getting them into positions where they can start being programmers, working in programs and services areas, and slowly build them up?

As you know and see through your department, we are also a very transient jurisdiction where we get people coming up two years or three years at a time, get to know and understand the culture, area, demographics of where they're doing their work, and then they leave. Yet you're still getting some of these employees who are sticking around and continuing to see people come and go out of the office and those are the employees that I feel we need to target. Mr. Dolynny makes a good point of finding innovative and unique ways to adjust these. This is what we have to do. We have to look at ways we can start building our workforce with people here in the Northwest Territories, especially our long-term residents.

What I was also very glad to see was the work and advancement of the whistleblower legislation. Speaking to people back home, and myself working in the public service area, knowing some of the discrepancies, some of the job acts within government and how things are done, and policy, and how do we make those changes so that we can make people thrive and go and develop not only in the public service sector but in all of the Northwest Territories. There are some restrictions that allow certain Members that work for the department, I know there is the conflict of interest, but because we have such a small population, it does restrict some of our employees from going out and volunteering, being part of an NGO, and we have to learn how we can support those, because we do have a lot of really great individuals in the Northwest Territories who cannot be restricted to their workload and could be doing really good work for people of the Northwest Territories as well as their departments.

Speaking earlier in terms of partnerships and working with departments and hearing some of the stats of all the vacancies that we have throughout the Northwest Territories, that says to me that this department needs to work. I mentioned this earlier during my question period to the Minister of Education. He has a very big responsibility and important role here to start training and educating our youth and fixing the education system so that we can start filling these vacant roles with Northerners, with Aboriginals, and making sure that we have a great representation right across the board. With all the vacancies that the Minister had

mentioned earlier, that just tells me that this department needs to work closely with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to see how we can start training in those areas that we see need positions filled.

I was talking to my colleague over here earlier about the last time we had Human Resources before us. I was just new to the government, about three months in, 15 months, a lot of education, knowledge, listening to what's needed, listening to the constituents, seeing where the areas need addressing. What I say before you is just possibly some, like I said, innovative and unique ways that we can start getting our people educated and into the jobs. Like I also mentioned earlier, the long-term employees in the low-level jobs, we have to find ways where we can advance them so they can be some of our leaders in the communities and the regions as well. Keeping on going here.

What I was really surprised to see, as well, in just making reference to the budget dialogue that was taken on the road, there wasn't very much mentioned in terms of human resources or retention and recruitment. I'm not sure if the Minister would like to maybe ask another Minister around the House if that was even a case brought up during these budget dialogues and whether more money needed to be put towards recruitment and retention of either nurses, doctors, educators. That is a possibility, but in the budget dialogue when I reviewed it and read the report, I didn't see anything in terms of human resources, which just listening today, you heard a lot of concerns.

The Regional Recruitment Strategy, I'm glad to see that is on the horizon. It really needs to be supported. When that strategy comes to the table and to the committee, it needs to be implemented. Dollars need to go so that we can start getting our regional centres and our smaller communities up to par with what some of our bigger centres have. In terms of that, as I mentioned earlier in my Member's statement where I said if you fail to plan, plan to fail. As a result of that, we have to start looking at our communities. Why are people going into communities?

Early childhood development, we need those programs. We need better education systems in our schools. We need schools. We need nurses. We need policing. We need the core and essential services in our communities to provide people getting into those employment rates.

When I listened to our Beaufort-Delta Leadership Council, there was a lot of really good discussions on how they felt that the government's departments should work more collaboratively together, working together to come up with the best plans and strategies so that when we need those jobs, we need those services in the communities, they are there and that Human Resources isn't trying to get

people in the communities when families don't want to go there because there are no early childhood development services. Those are some challenges, barriers that we are facing. As Cabinet and as the Minister that is responsible for getting people in those positions, those are some things that need to be addressed. How do we do it? It is a tough job. I am sure we will find ways and strategies.

Before I continue, I just want to commend the continued support for members of the public service in all of the benefits and packages and working with UNW to reach those agreements and supporting the people that are in there. As a Member who has worked a very long service in different departments, and seeing some of the areas that need working, and being able to come in here and try to make that change and try to offer my expertise and my knowledge, I think that that offers a lot. I do know that employees within the GNWT system, as well as the managers, superintendents, supervisors, need the support from this House to ensure that we provide the best services and programs and the best packages so that we can retain our staff, and also make sure that our staff is up to par and that our communities are also all thriving. I mentioned a whole bunch of different things there.

If anything, I'd like to see more effort into the advancement and development of our employees, especially the ones that have been in the workforce for a long time and who continue to be in low-level jobs, and also seeing the development of the whistleblower legislation as we move forward, because that is really going to give us insight into what is happening to the departments and within our government system and making our government more effective as we move forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Moses. Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Madam Chair, I would like to thank the Member for his comments. I agree; we have a lot of work. We have a lot of things we need to think about as we move forward to try and engage both residents to convince them or encourage them to consider the GNWT as an employer. A significant amount of work has been done or needs to be done and is being done.

I have been in the House for five years. In those five years I have talked an awful lot about on-the-job training. When I sat on that side of the House, I must have made several dozen statements about training on the job and the value that it provides. This government has had fantastic success in the past, but as budget cuts have come through our history, some of that training on the job has gone away.

We do have the Assistant Director/Regional Superintendent Program is one of our on-the-job training programs. Some departments have some

specific programs on-the-job training as well. The Department of Justice has our Corrections Training Program, which is an on-the-job training program. Health and Social Services has things like the Community Health Nurse Development Program, which is an on-the-job training program. So they do exist in pockets.

As we move forward with the Regional Recruitment Strategy, we are going to be following two streams. Much of this is going to be informed through the research and analysis which will be done, but also advice from the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee. We are going to be following two streams, and one is trying to deal with non-regulated professions. What we are looking at here is exactly what you are talking about, which is one year on-the-job training programs and mentorships. We are talking about double filling positions to give individuals an opportunity to learn the skills or consolidate learning that they already have but haven't been able to put into practice. This is a great opportunity. We have past success in this area and we think that we can make some significant success. That is for non-regulated jobs.

For regulated or trades jobs, we are also looking for on-the-job training, but it would be longer. A trade often takes two, three or four years to complete, so it's going to have to be longer on-the-job training programs. We are going to have to work closely with Education, Culture and Employment as they are trying to address those. Then we can also look at our Community Health Nurse Development Program as a great program that transitions recent graduates or nurses without community experience, gives them the skills they need to work in a community health setting.

We are excited about the work we are doing on the Regional Recruitment Strategy. I am excited to bring that forward to committee. It's still a little bit of time off, but it will be in front of committee. We will have discussions prior to business planning process so that the findings and the recommendations can be dealt with through the business planning process. I am happy to hear you say that you would support some money. I don't know if Minister Miltenberger is looking, but obviously we are going to need some money on that. But we'll have those discussions later.

---Interjection

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** He said yes.

As a Regular Member, and as a citizen, and as an employee who used to be in the public service, I have been a supporter of whistleblower legislation for a long time. I have been trying to push it forward. This House has supported that initiative. We agreed to move forward with the Union of Northern Workers, who was a good partner. We worked hand in hand on the Safe Disclosure Policy that we have in place and it is going to form the

background of the legislation. We want to implement the safe disclosure April 1<sup>st</sup>. I have to bring it to committee first for their review, but that's the target that we are setting. We would like to have it run for a period of time so that we can do an analysis to make sure it is working the way that the union and the GNWT hope and intend. From there, that will give us more information to make sure that any legislation we put forward is going to work. It will be done in the life of this Assembly. We have a plan and we will bring it forward for discussion.

I thank the Member for his comments. If he has any other questions, I'm happy to answer them in detail.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Next on the list is Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that many Members have raised many different issues, but I think I will take a different approach this time. I am going to try to be specific.

I think within the last several years, I have had constituents approach me, and also other residents of the Northwest Territories, and their P1 and P2 residents are having difficulties getting through the new HR process because HR is handling all of the hiring for all of the different departments. They list numerous issues about applying for jobs, doing the test, and as well as the HR not disclosing to the applicants what their test results were. It kind of creates a difficulty because the client doesn't know where they could excel. At the same time, it also raises the spectre of unfair assessments for people at getting jobs, because they will say oh, their friends got the jobs.

When you are an applicant, you can't dispute something that you cannot see. Often, they are getting frustrated and they're saying P1, P2 and non-residents are getting our jobs. In fact, I think earlier in our session last week, I posed a written question. I wanted to see how many P1 and P2 applicants are getting hired over the last couple of years. That might be a little bit of work for the department, but they have those stats and I want to see those stats too. So that's my initial concern, is how come my constituents and how come residents that are P1 and P2 are failing to get into the jobs that they're applying for. Granted, while there may be some not actually qualified, I'm sure there's some that are qualified and should be working there, and that's still the case in our smallest communities, Madam Chair, where the outsiders come to the communities and they are given those jobs that my constituents never got a chance to apply for. When that happens, since they're already there, they're training for three to four months and they know the system and when the job gets tendered out or reapplied, the person that's been there on a temporary basis has a better chance than often those on the outside.

So as an MLA, in my role I'm the appeal guy and they're coming to me and saying, well, why is that person getting that job. I've been applying on it, I've been going on the website, I've been keeping an eye on this job, that's something that I really want to do, I know I can do it, but they're not given a chance. So I just wanted to see if the Minister can focus his response specifically around that area. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of Human Resources centralized a number of years ago, but with that centralization, the staffing procedures and rules that the GNWT is bound to did not change. Those are consistent prior to decentralization. What may have been happening prior to that is some departments may not have been applying the rules as intended.

I hear the Member and I've seen many of the issues come across my desk and I do see a significant amount of frustration out there, which is one of the conversations I had with the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee. What is happening within our system that either discourages people from applying or eliminates people who probably could do the job? What is it in our system that is causing that? I'm looking forward to some advice and recommendations from the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee on how we can overcome that barrier, but we're also, and I've talked about it already, putting in the Regional Recruitment Strategy which is going to focus on those two sectors, non-regulated and regulated jobs. For the non-regulated, training on the job, bringing people in who appear to be on the right track, but maybe lack something in their resume or maybe didn't score exactly high enough on their interview to double fill and give them an opportunity to train on the job. Those are the types of things we're talking about and I think that will address some of the issues that these individuals have.

An interesting statistic for people to consider is since 1999, the GNWT workforce has grown by about 36.9 percent. The growth in Aboriginal employees in that same time within the public service is 39.6. So where we have the workforce growing like this, we have the Aboriginal representation growing at a faster rate. We haven't got where we need to be, we're not even close. I think we're at about 37 percent right now and the population is 50. So a significant amount of work is still needing to be done, but we are seeing some successes in the things we are doing. We have to capitalize on our successes. To you and to all Members and to residents-at-large, if you're applying on a job and you feel that something was wrong in the process, you have the right to appeal. I encourage employees to appeal when, in fact, they

feel that something was done incorrectly in the process or that they were unsuccessful for a particular reason. So I encourage people to appeal because that helps us learn where there may be gaps in the system as well.

So we do have work to do. I hear you, and I think we're making progress, and I look forward to continual recommendations and suggestions from committee, from the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee and from the public-at-large to help us overcome some of these challenges that we're facing.

Just in closing, I've been strongly advocating within the department and directing the department to tell candidates, you know, come to us and we'll give you feedback on what you could do better, where you might have gone off the rails a little bit during this competition. We want to help people learn from the staffing process, we want to give them advice on how they can better the process, and we're also going to be looking at the possibilities of providing training outside of Yellowknife to individuals on how the process works. Sometimes I fear that it might just be a simple lack of understanding about how a competition works within the Government of the Northwest Territories and I think we can do a better job of helping people understand that process in the Northwest Territories on behalf of the GNWT.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Just with that whole aspect of scoring, I think that's where residents are getting frustrated. Even though they feel that the tests are subjective and not transparent at all because they're appealing it and the managers are sitting there and withholding information and not showing them how they scored. How can you defend yourself if you're not allowed to see that? I guess that's happened time and time again, and some applicants and some constituents have applied, like, 10 or 15 times with the same result. So, of course, they'll get frustrated and I do want to see this Aboriginal representative workforce increase to our goal, which is well above the 30 percent mark, throughout our whole departments.

Just in response, as well, maybe the Minister can briefly tell me about the appeal system, because the appeal system, too, is just as frustrating to the applicants applying. The ones that are screened out don't even get a chance to apply and find out why they weren't able to get to the interview stage, and those that do get interviewed and fail it and fail and fail the interview, it's like it's a blow to their self-esteem, as well because they've failed. One resident was telling me about 12 times in a row. So that's kind of frustrating. I don't know if the Minister has any thought on that or if the department is going to try to revamp that type of appeal with the system that we currently have. Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I hear you on the scoring frustration. I believe we've already had

conversations on this and I understand the frustration that some of your constituents are having, and not just your constituents, but others across the Northwest Territories, and the barriers that our system may be actually putting in place unknowingly, which I'm going to go back to my comments on the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee. We're really looking forward to some suggestions they have on the process. I mean what barriers we may be unknowingly be putting in and how we can improve those. So we look forward to their input.

Once again, please, anytime you have an opportunity or a constituent who comes to you with concerns, have them talk to HR, have them talk to some of the HR practitioners about what happened in the process and where they went off the rails and why they were not successful.

I did already talk a little bit about How to Apply for GNWT Jobs. That's a program that we're going to be piloting. I think we're starting with piloting that in Fort Smith, but as we move forward, we'd like to see that program get out across the Northwest Territories and that's for non-GNWT employees. That's for people who want to become an employee of the Government of the Northwest Territories. So I take all your points, I hear you clearly. The department is listening and taking notes. We have some work to do and we will try to find the solutions to reduce any barriers that may exist for people across the Northwest Territories to apply on jobs.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Thank you, Mr. Menicoché. Moving on with questions, I have Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A few quick comments here. I want to start off by adding my voice to the congratulations to the Minister and all his staff for the Canada's Top 100 Employers Award. That's really great.

So, briefly, I have similar concerns to what the Minister has heard on whistleblower, and I'm looking forward to that legislation being brought forward. Succession planning, I'm very interested in that. I'm finding myself sort of in that category here. What's been done to date we've been talking about since the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly. How do we change the statistics would be good to know.

We've talked a lot about decentralization, devolution and regional recruitment in terms of the HR challenges. I guess I'd like to refer the Minister to my colleague Mr. Moses' statement today. I was very impressed with that. That's the fundamental thing we're dealing with here. It's no surprise to the Minister the information we've received, that even local, long-term community residents are moving to Yellowknife for the additional services and extraordinary benefits they can get here. The challenge is clear and it will take a very comprehensive approach. I would be interested in



hearing, you know, that the Minister recognizes that and how he's working with his colleagues to address that and refer to that. Put it on the wall in front of your desk, that checklist that Mr. Moses has supplied.

Greening the workplace, something that comes up regularly when I speak on HR. Some great promises have been made but, again, I just still see the Legislative Assembly and ENR as the ones that are committed to this sort of thing. Looking for some leadership and real change there. Evidence can be seen in the failure to use double sided in departments except for, like I say, those two in the documents I see unless they're coming to the Ledge black and white copies. Heating with renewable energy, such as the Ledge and so on. Composting. These sorts of things that can engage our younger people who recognize the importance of the environment.

Also, on the safety front, I think the Minister has done a good job of stating the situation where we've been recently, where we are now. There's one clear barrier I haven't heard expressly stated, explicitly stated. I will be asking questions about that when we get into the details. I'm going to leave it at that just to move on to the details.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to complicate things, when we move forward with the union on what was often referred to as whistleblower legislation or whistleblower policy, through discussions with the UNW and how we were moving forward, it's changed its name. It's now a Safe Disclosure Policy. It will be safe disclosure legislation. When I'm referring to Safe Disclosure Policy and legislation, it's really the evolution of the whistleblower discussions that we've been having.

As I've indicated, I'm really excited to bring this good work that the union and department have done in collaboration, and both groups are very happy with the product. I'm looking forward to bringing that to committee for some discussion and implementing that on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Like I said, we're going to let that run for a little while to see how it works, to see what the challenges are, to see what parts are good and what parts might need a little bit of tweaking before we move forward with the legislation, but I and my Ministerial colleagues are committed to getting this legislation done during the life of this government and I will continue to push that through.

Succession planning, there are experts within the Department of Human Resources who can provide advice and recommendations to individual departments, as well as individuals who are looking at moving through the public service, but one thing does need to happen from that. We need individual

HR plans from individual departments, boards and agencies. They need to look at their operations and figure out what they're going to do. Most departments, if not all departments, are currently working on human resource plans and most human resource plans actually include some succession planning information. Hopefully, we'll see more human resource plans individualized to departments come as we move forward.

As far as changing the statistics, it's the planning and recognition of the challenges that we face that's going to help us change the statistics over time. The Regional Recruitment Strategy is going to help us address some of our shortfalls in the communities.

I was clearly listening to MLA Moses, as I'm sure my colleagues were, and I'm pretty sure I said it, as well, that I agree with pretty much everything the Member was saying. We have a lot of work to do and it's not going to be easy by any stretch of the imagination. I look forward to the partnership with the Social Envelope Committee, with Government Operations committee, with EDI committee as we move forward trying to recognize and identify and find solutions to some of the challenges that we face.

Greening the workplace, the Member is not wrong. ENR is taking the lead charge on this and we are working with departments to facilitate creation of a green committee, but for more detail I am going to go to the deputy to talk about some of the specifics that are out there. ENR is taking the lead with government staff on many of those initiatives.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. We'll go to Deputy Minister Bassi-Kellett.

**MS. BASSI-KELLETT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Minister pointed out, the Department of ENR is taking the corporate lead with a committee that's set up with representatives of all the different departments. I believe 12 of the 14 representatives now work with ENR's Green Team, which does provide best practices and knowledge across government of initiatives that are underway. Departments are doing a number of really interesting things. Clearly, the recent Winter Walk to Work Week that happened last week was something that ENR participated in on behalf of GNWT with a number of other departments. We had a lot of word of mouth out around the government with the public service to really take advantage of that, weather notwithstanding. There's a lot of work going on with double-sided copying, as well, as the Member pointed out, that's pretty much a given in most departments, as well as the various recycling programs that are underway that staff take ownership of themselves. The bottle drives, the cans, everything that goes on within the office, people are really working and setting that up within

their teams themselves under the oversight of this overall government-wide Green Team.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Ms. Bassi-Kellett. Moving on with questions we have Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a number of issues and comments in no particular order. The first one has to do with, and I think it's referenced in the Minister's opening remarks, and that's the number of senior managers that are nearing retirement. This was something I think we talked about last year during business plans. I'd like to know from the Minister where the department is in assisting other departments in planning for the loss of our senior managers and that corporate knowledge that is going with them. I'm curious to know what percentage of our senior managers is going to be lost to us through retirement over the next five years.

With regard to persons with disabilities in the workforce, there was a survey done. The Minister didn't really reference it, but I guess I would like to know whether or not we are improving in our percentage of PWDs who we have in our GNWT workforce or if we're staying static. I'm hoping that we're not going down.

I'm pleased to see that the Service Partnership Agreement has at least been completed with Health and Social Services and that we've got a pilot going on there. I'd like to know from the Minister when we're going to expand beyond the pilot, how long this pilot will go on and when we will move on to other departments where service partnership agreements are required.

I don't think it's referenced in the Minister's opening remarks, but I believe I heard somewhere that there will be a number of policy reviews within the department over this next year, and I'd like to know whether that policy review will include a review of the Affirmative Action Policy.

One of the things that we discussed, I think some time ago, was that each department is developing their own human resources plan. I presume that's falling under the auspices of the Department of Human Resources to assist them and help them with that. I'd like to know from the Minister if he can advise us what departments have yet to complete their HR plan. If he has that information, that would be helpful. I think we were, maybe, halfway through the last time we talked about this.

One of the concerns that I think Members have and that I have certainly, grievances are a fact of life for the Human Resources department, but we have quite a few at any one time, from what I understand. I'd like to know from the Minister whether or not we are reducing the number of grievances that we have to deal with at any one time or whether that's going up and if there is

anything that the department is working on, if there is a plan that the department has to try and reduce the number of grievances. I know we can never get to zero but I would hope that there's a concerted effort and there's a focus to try and reduce the number of grievances that we have to deal with.

I'm really pleased to see that there are two regional duty to accommodate officer positions that are going to be instituted in this next budget year. I think that's great. This is kind of a bit of a new focus, I think, for the department, so I would appreciate a comment from the Minister on whether or not the one officer that we have had has had an impact on the work that we need to do to accommodate people back into the workforce. Has it been a positive thing or do you see that it's too early to make any kind of a judgment?

Lastly, I'm really happy to see that the Safe Disclosure Agreement with UNW has been finalized and I look forward to seeing that sort of be tested out. The Minister may have said, and I may have missed it, but I'm just wondering, in terms of legislation, what kind of a time frame there is on safe disclosure legislation. When will we expect that this legislation will come before the House?

That's all I have.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Abernethy.

**MR. ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have statistics on the number of senior managers we expect are approaching retirement. I'm not actually sure if we have a concrete figure on that, but I will have the department go back and look and provide committee with anything that we might have. We do know, anecdotally, that we have a number of senior managers approaching retirement, which is one of the reasons the Associate Director/Regional Superintendent Program is a positive program that's helping us develop people who are on the right path but maybe need a little bit more opportunity or experience before they would be able to enter those senior roles. Like I said before, we have six at any one time in that program, three complete and three go in on a rotating basis. We usually have six going at any one time. We think it's a good program. I think we've seen some results. If you look at the deputies that we have today, some of them have, clearly, gone through the program and, I think, are performing quite well. They're showing they have the skill and ability to perform at a senior level, including that of deputy head.

Persons with disabilities, the survey that went out we had 1,800 respondents; 6.4 percent indicated they are persons living with disabilities and are employees within the public service. That is a significant jump in the numbers that existed before. We think it's fairly representative. We do still have

work to be done to accommodate individuals where appropriate.

We have the duty to accommodate officer and I'm happy that you mentioned that duty to accommodate officer. This is an incredibly valuable position. It's one of the reasons that we feel we need more duty to accommodate individuals to help us outside of Yellowknife and in the regional centres of Fort Smith and Inuvik. In 2011 and 2012, the individual helped to accommodate 20 permanent accommodations, 20 permanent placements. Fifteen are currently in process that the individual is working on. We have 50 employees on long-term disability requiring placements. A lot of work needs to be done. There are 106 cases requiring frequent follow ups. Just even when a person is accommodated it doesn't end. There's follow-up on-going, review, monitor. This is important and goes to some of the safe advantage stuff that we were talking about before. Sometimes the claim costs tend to be high because we haven't been able to get them back into the workforce in a timely manner. These positions are making a huge difference for us and we're very excited about the work they've done, we're very excited about the possibilities, and we're very excited about moving forward and getting these positions into the regional centres so that they can have a more timely response out there.

Safe disclosure legislation. I didn't give a date specifically. We will have it done in the life of this Assembly. Right now, if I was to speculate, I imagine late in 2013-2014 we would be coming forward with an LP, but I ask for a little bit of patience because we really want to make sure that what we have done as far as the Safe Disclosure Policy is working and we're going to work closely with the UNW on the implementation of the policy for UNW employees, and monitor it closely so that we can identify what parts might need tweaking, what parts may not need tweaking, what changes we have to make. We would like to make those changes in the legislation as we move forward. We don't want to rush ahead and write legislation based on the policy and then find out later there are problems with the policy. We think this is a great opportunity to make sure we have legislation that is really good. So possibly late in 2013-14, definitely within the life of this government, but we would ask for a little bit of patience as we implement it. There is bound to be some growing pains; there often is. This is a new policy.

To date, there are four HR plans done. There are five underway, which means there are a number that aren't been started at this point. With respect to grievances, I would like to go to the deputy minister for some specifics on grievances.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. We will go to Ms. Bassi-Kellett.

**MS. BASSI-KELLETT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The grievance process is one that is, obviously, on-going with a number of cases at any given time. We find our labour relations team works very closely with the departments and with the Union of Northern Workers on this. We've had upwards of about 300 grievances at any given time heretofore, before we started a monthly case management process, where representatives of our labour relations group sit down with the UNW to have monthly case management meetings. We have been able to address a lot of the grievances that way, through a really hands-on, collaborative process. It has brought our average down now. We have it relatively consistent, around 200 grievances ongoing, at any given time. We are proud of that number. We think it has brought it down and we will continue to work towards bringing that down even more. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Ms. Bassi-Kellett. Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** Mr. Chair, that's all I have.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We are moving on with questions, I have Mr. Nadli.

**MR. NADLI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to commend the department for being recognized as the top 100 employers, here in the Northwest Territories. That is quite the achievement.

I understand that staff or human resources is just one part of a system of the organization of the GNWT that we operate. I think staff and the workforce play a key role in the sole machine that operates here in the North.

I have a couple of comments. I would like to focus on a few specific questions. For the most part, in my mind, in terms of decentralization, in terms of seeing some of the shift from headquarters to regions and then down to communities. I am very interested in at least trying to understand, on behalf of my constituents, in terms of ensuring that it is done fairly timely, and, at the same time, very transparent, so we understand the process and we can have at least some input in those discussions and trying to realize some opportunities at least for some of the small communities.

What I am strongly concerned about is just the ratio of First Nation employees for northern indigenous people that live up here in the Northwest Territories. I understand that there are some policies to try and enhance the recruitment exercise of being able to hire more First Nations employees so that we have the workforce fairly reflective of the population that we have in the NWT. I understand there is the Affirmative Action Policy. I think there are a couple of incentive policies that are in place, including the Bilingual Policy in terms of trying to promote people

to be bilingual in the official languages. I understand that, perhaps, there could be some placement on the importance of cultural need, things of this nature that have been done.

What immediate steps is the department considering to ensure that the workforce of the GNWT is reflective of the population?

In another instance, I am obviously concerned that despite having the bridge completed, operating for the next 50 years, we have an ice bridge work crew plus the ferry crew that have been laid off or they have been shifted. I would like to have an understanding of how the department has played or is playing a role in terms of providing support and counsel to these employees or past employees, whether there has been some discussion of reassignment, whether there's been discussions with them in terms of severance pay, whether there has been at least some discussions in terms of, perhaps, repositioning or reclassifying some of the positions so that they can continue to work in their home communities and, at the same time, be productive in the workforce. That is my other question.

The other question is has there been some emphasis or initiatives in trying to enhance or at least have employees be more conscious of safety guidelines of trying to curb accidents and mishaps in the workplace. I would like to know whether the department is playing a hand in trying to enhance the fire department's training. I know that fire departments, for the most part in small communities, are on a volunteer basis, but yet, at the same time, the focus seems to be right now to have them play a defensive role in terms of defensive tactics of working within communities and, at the same time, on building structures. There are some instances where there have been some fires along the highway. Whether HR has played a hand in terms of trying to enhance the training and preparing for the eventual reality that we come across an instance like that and they will be better prepared.

My last question is in terms of the effort towards decentralization eventually. What is most important is I understand that we are trying to enhance the workforce to be more reflective of the population of the NWT. This is really a critical question in terms of trying to prepare small communities. What is the department doing to make working in small communities attractive for existing local candidates but, at the same time, potential candidates that might want to move to small communities? What is HR doing to basically help the small communities to keep a workforce but, at the same time, make it attractive for people that perhaps might want to move from Toronto or Montreal to take up a position in the North, especially for small communities? I understand that there is no housing

incentive and that housing is a high cost factor in small communities. Those are my questions that I had. Mahsi.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny):** Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Safety in the workplace, I already talked a bit about that and our duty to accommodate officers and working with WSCC, occupational health and safety committees in departments that are being put in. HR is helping by providing advice and guidance to each of the individual departments of the types of things that are needed to be done by occupational health and safety committees. We are trying to work with departments to create some flexibility around those, because we sometimes have buildings where there are multiple departments in it, and having them work together for building support and things like that. There are a lot of things being done around that front. There is training that we offer. We partner with WSCC, who provides a lot of training for us to help people recognize some of the challenges of safe workplaces.

Like I said before, we've had a bad claims history, but I think, for 2012, we will all be happy to see a significant reduction in our claims history. I don't know what that means by way of fines. I am still pretty confident there will be a fine. I just hope, given our significant reduction in claims, we will see a smaller fine, but that will come from the WSCC. We will see how that pans out.

With respect to decentralization and devolution, the Department of Human Resources is providing technical and administrative support to departments that are working on decentralization and helping them address their affected employees, by way of an example. The lead on that is the Department of Executive on decentralization. They are out trying to figure out capacity in communities, where houses are, where office space exists, where we can flow some positions sooner rather than later, and what we're going to have to do long term. HR is providing technical advice with respect to job descriptions, organizational design, job evaluation and how to address affected employees, and there's a range of affected employees. There are GNWT employees who might be in Yellowknife and their job is decentralized. They become affected and we have to work with the employing department to address them.

We've also got a number of federal employees who will be coming over to the GNWT public service, and we have to make sure that that transition is fair and reasonable, and that those employees are protected as well. So we're providing technical advice and administrative support on that.

You talked about fire department training and fire training for fires on the road. It's my understanding that is actually the responsibility of ENR and is

done by MACA. I don't have any information on that, so you might want to ask ENR and MACA on that.

With respect to things that we're doing to increase representation of Northerners in the workforce, particularly in small communities, I've talked about our regional recruitment plan. As I've indicated, that is going to be informed and helped along by the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee who is going to provide us some advice on how to break down some of the barriers, like Mr. Menicoche was talking about earlier. We will have that in front of committee prior to the next round of business planning so that it can inform the business planning process.

There are a number of things that we're doing, and we're looking forward to working with committee on taking some of those initiatives forward and getting advice and some input from committee as we move forward.

**MR. NADLI:** Has there been discussion? I know right now we're under fiscal restraint in terms of ensuring we control our revenues, but at the same time we control our expenditures. We're trying to do more with less, so we're at such a point it will probably make it necessary for us to cooperate and work together. There's more than likely cross-departmental initiatives to try to advance some major initiatives and do it so that it's effective but at the same time it's strategic.

One of the key things that I mentioned is just trying to ensure that we have a fairly reflective ratio of First Nation or northern indigenous workforce. Has the department considered working in partnership with regional governments to try to reach that reality and, at the same time, look at some long-range human resource strategies in terms of trying to acknowledge some of the existing initiatives that are out there with the federal government? Trying to at least work in partnership and trying to develop some concrete strategies. Mahsi.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** A couple of things. We've put together some Aboriginal cultural awareness training programs that are available to new staff as they come into the GNWT. Also – and I've talked about this every opportunity I've had to get outside of Yellowknife and into the regional settings – we have a program where we're willing to facilitate secondments either way with Aboriginal community governments. Where individuals who are working in the Aboriginal community government could come on to the GNWT, give them an opportunity to have some cross-training and learn a little bit more about different areas, but we can also send our employees there to some of the Aboriginal governments or the community governments. It's an opportunity for them to learn a little bit more about different organizations and different perspectives. We are starting to see some

uptake on that. I'm really happy to finally see that some people are approaching us and wanting to do these secondments.

We also are absolutely willing to advertise positions for Aboriginal governments across the Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, we haven't had very much uptake on that. I keep referencing it and sending letters out to the different groups, letting them know that we're willing to do that for them. We haven't had as much uptake.

We want to work with our partners. We want to find solutions. The Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee is going to provide us with some sound advice on some of the challenges that we may have created within our system outside of Yellowknife in some of the smaller communities. Things like Mr. Menicoche mentioned previously.

So we're trying to work on these issues. I take your point and I'm looking forward to working with committee on trying to address some of these issues. Any input that any Members have, we're open to anything to help us find some solutions.

Right now, representation changes as employees come and go, but I think we're about 37 percent Aboriginal; I think we're... Sorry. Thirty-two percent Aboriginal, about... Yes, about 32, 33, 34 percent Aboriginal in the public service right now, which is significantly lower than the population. Interestingly enough, it's pretty close to the workforce.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Next on my list is Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of Human Resources is going to come into a lot of challenges. Most that I'm looking at is when the Devolution Agreement is signed and we start of our implementation of the devolution chapters and the focus on the decentralization of the government.

I want to ask the Minister of Human Resources with regard to the potential number of people coming in from the federal government to the GNWT, and the number of employees that we would have now because of the Devolution Agreement, and the big picture plan when they come to the North and how are we going to look at the numbers coming possibly into the North to the headquarters and then to the region and then to the communities. Is there a plan with his other colleagues to prepare for those potential employees, and what type of plans for human resources? We need to let the people know that these are some of the challenges we're going to have. That's the first one for me.

Is the Minister working on an overall, grandiose decentralization plan coupled with the devolution issues? How are we going to prepare the Sahtu or any other regions for the potential of moving positions into our regions and our communities? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The lead on dealing with the devolution is the Executive. There is a committee of deputy heads working with the lead deputy in the Executive to figure out what the organization is going to look like in the future, and what departments may exist, what departments may not exist, the roles and responsibilities of the individual departments. HR is providing technical advice on job description writing, organizational design structure, but it is being led by the Executive. We are providing solid HR advice and recommendations in that area.

When it comes to the number of positions, I think it's over 300 positions that will be coming to the Northwest Territories. Speculation on how many individual people that might be, I've heard numbers as high as 170, but I think it's a little premature to say for sure exactly how many employees will be coming over, because we don't know who's going to say yea and who's going to say nay. But we need to be ready to bring employees in.

The Department of Human Resources has dealt with decentralized federal positions before. There are processes we have to go through, and through the devolution negotiations we've committed to protecting the employees that come over, to make sure that they're not adversely affected by becoming employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

So once the Devolution Agreement is signed off and concluded, we'll kick into high gear and try and process the individuals coming over. We have done a lot of initial research on steps that will need to be taken to protect those employees, without creating any undue or unfair systems within the Government of the Northwest Territories. We are providing technical expertise and we are facilitating the transfer of individuals. The design is being facilitated by the Executive on what the government is going to look for, and we are a partner in that.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** I look forward to more discussions in that area and how we're going to have a well laid out plan as to some of the issues with regard to the decentralization and devolution. I want to say to the Minister and staff of Human Resources, along with the Government of the Northwest Territories, being one of the recipients of one of the top 100 employers in Canada, you are in very good company with a good quality of other groups that receive this award. My hats off to the Human Resources staff to make that happen.

Mr. Minister, I want to talk to you about the Aboriginal Employees Strategy and the numbers that we are seeing within the GNWT with regard to Aboriginal people working within the Government of the Northwest Territories. I also support this strategy to see not only the issues that we have to

deal with in our communities and our regions, but how the strategy will support the community of Tulita or the Sahtu. They had 33 graduates last year from Grade 12. It would be good if we had a strong strategy that would say take these 33 future leaders and we're going to move them, if we have advertising that would want these students or a percentage of these students moving to the GNWT workforce. We are competing with oil companies, Aboriginal governments and other private sectors that will take a percentage of these students who are graduating from Grade 12 in the Sahtu and say, we're going to move you into our workforce. I'm hoping the Aboriginal strategy will take a grounding approach and start working with these students. That's the risk. Sometimes we train our people so well that oil companies or Aboriginal governments will take them away. That's the reality in the small communities. We can count on our hands how many positions the government has. That's a reality. There's only so much to go around.

Mr. Minister, would you be able to provide that type of solid, regional type of training plan that we can proudly say to our graduates we, as a government, have a plan for you? If you choose to come and work for us, we will take care of you, just like the former Premier of the Northwest Territories spoke at the Teacher Education Program. He said, if you graduate from the Teacher Education Program, we're going to have a job in one of our schools in our communities; or the Nursing Program, students who go to the Aurora College Nursing Program. We're going to put you in one of our communities, if you choose to, or work at Stanton Hospital. I'm looking forward to that type of result from this Minister and his staff in the life of this government, so I can go back to the Sahtu, speak at the graduation ceremony and say that we prepared that and we have a strategy that will work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I hear the Member loud and clear. The Regional Recruitment Strategy is one of the things that we have been talking about to start addressing these particular challenges. We are talking about on-the-job training and other opportunities for youth, but not just youth, people who are interested in becoming employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

For students, there is a significant amount out there and I think Education, Culture and Employment does provide some fantastic student loans that will help individuals fund their way through college or university. But when individuals come back, we've already had internship programs to put youth/returning students in jobs to give them an opportunity to consolidate their learning on the job, which will give them the skills they need to apply on any job they wish to apply on in the future. We've had some pretty good successes with the

Internship Program. We want to continue to run the Internship Program.

We've also been very, very proactive and working really hard to hire summer students when they come back. This past year was the highest number of students we ever hired. I say that with caution, obviously, because we can't guarantee that we'll always be able to get the same number of students. Money and work does play a factor and it's going to get tougher and tougher to increase those numbers, but we'll work as hard as we can to employ as many students as we can reasonably hire. That's a great opportunity for students to consolidate some of their learning, develop some skills that will be useful when they are applying for jobs in the future.

I talked already about the Regional Recruitment Strategy and some of the on-the-job training programs that are there for both non-statutory as well as statutory jobs. These are all things that I think can really help individuals who may lack an education but have the ability to do work and specific work. I'll give you an example. Many, many years ago, one of my first jobs in the Government of the Northwest Territories was an on-the-job training program, an affirmative action on-the-job training program. By developing profiles and strict training plans and double filling positions with Aboriginal candidates, we were graduating 30, 34 Aboriginal candidates into meaningful high-end jobs on an annual basis. We had an 84 percent success rate. We know it will work. I think it's time for us to look at that model again.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** I want to ask the Minister to look at the overall recruitment in the boards and agencies and, again, look at our region as the efforts. We need to put strong directive efforts to our boards and regions to hire the people who are qualified, who can go through this program and go through some programs so that our people in the region, vis-à-vis Aboriginal people, can be in program manager positions or higher, other than just being a front desk receptionist or administrative assistant. That is not good with me in my region.

We need to have people who can do the job and who are qualified or can be, like you said, trained on the job. That's a complaint from me for my region. Too many boards pass over a lot of people for whatever reason. We need to be somewhat flexible to say this is a good candidate, maybe like a diamond in the rough. We have to polish some things. That's the challenge we have and I think the Minister is aware of that.

So for us to be prepared for devolution and other issues we need to work on in the Sahtu, we really need to...(inaudible)...

**MR. GLEN ABERNETHY:** ...(inaudible)...with strategy, it will include all the health authorities and the education authorities. I hear the Member's

comment that we don't want to just target people for some entry-level jobs, but I don't think we should forget those jobs as well. Some individuals can get into some of these entry-level jobs, and through hard work, perseverance and taking opportunities as they come, they can advance up through an organization to fairly high levels. Succession planning is important, and sometimes starting at an entry level and working your way up is reality, but we do have to recognize that there are people out there who are probably ready for some more senior jobs or middle-level jobs that aren't getting those opportunities and we have to find ways to create those opportunities.

Like I said, I'm looking forward to the information we're going to get from the Aboriginal Employees Advisory Committee. I'm looking forward to some of the work that's being done on the Regional Recruitment Strategy. I'm looking forward to taking that to committee and having some discussions on that and how we can move forward. As I indicated, we're going to be moving forward and bringing that to committee prior to business planning so it can help inform the next round of business planning. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the House.

Thank you for the comments and I look forward to working with you as we try to address this situation over the coming years.

Madam Chair, can we take a five-minute break?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** I believe we've almost completed general comments, so if I can just confirm that we can take a break. Nobody further on my list. Are there any further general comments? Are we agreed that we are concluded general comments?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Alright. We will move to detail after five minutes only. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** All right, committee. We'll come back to order. We'll begin detail. We are on the Department of Human Resources, page 3-7, department summary, Human Resources, department summary, operations expenditures summary, \$42.099 million. We will defer this until after consideration of the activities. Page 3-8, Human Resources, information item, infrastructure investment summary. Page 3-9, Human Resources, information item, revenue summary. Mr. Dolyunny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the line entry for this page, we have a Sun Life medevac recoveries in the main estimates of \$750,000 and we've seen from 2012-2013 of only \$250,000. We've seen about a half million

dollar lift in the mains. Maybe if the Minister could explain why the lift and what that number refers to.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In 2011-2012, that was the first year that we had a revenue target here and we had them originally at \$250,000 but the actuals came at \$761,000, so we've had to make an adjustment so that we don't have to do a larger correction later in the year. We think the \$750,000 is closer. At the end, it will have to be amended to the actuals.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** The second part of that question was a definition of Sun Life medevac recoveries.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** For a specific definition I will go to the deputy.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Ms. Bassi-Kellett.

**MS. BASSI-KELLETT:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Under the benefits plan for our employees we have Sun Life operating and giving us some of the coverage for our medical coverage. We are able to work with Sun Life to recover some of the costs. There's about 80 percent of our costs that we can recover for certain kinds of services that we provide to our employees. For example, we are able to claim on some air ambulance costs if we have the right kind of situations and documentation in place, so we aspire, of course, to really meet those and maximize out the 80 percent recovery that we're able to claim through Sun Life.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Ms. Bassi-Kellett. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** These recoveries, is this a policy that is easily retrievable for review or is this something that's just within the confines of the directorate?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Abernethy.

**MR. ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not sure I understand the question 100 percent. Sun Life is basically our insurance provider and under the insurance program we can claim back 80 percent of costs, and for medical medevacs we can claim back 80 percent of the costs in certain situations. We have to obviously fill out paperwork and add justification and then we're able to charge back as part of our insurance.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I'll rephrase my question here. There's obviously a policy that the provider is using or a guideline with respect to the recoverables. As Members, are we able to have access to what that policy of recoverables are about?

**MR. ABERNETHY:** I don't believe that it's confidential. I believe it's our insurance policy. I think anybody can look at the policy that Sun Life

has with us and that we pay for. If the Member is interested in looking at our insurance policy, I see no reason why we couldn't share it with him and committee if they're interested.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** No further questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Committee, we are on page 3-9, department summary, Human Resources, information summary, revenue summary. Page 3-10, department summary, Human Resources, information item, active position summary. Page 3-12 and 3-13, Human Resources, activity summary, directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$625,000. Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I could bring this up I suppose under Human Resource Strategy and Policy, but really I'm talking about direction here when I'm talking about the safety practices of the government and the barrier that I referred to in my general comments. I think the department is doing what it can, largely in response to the safety issues and the fines, but really what's happening is this department provides policy to the other departments and then it's a matter of trusting them to implement it. That's not happening. That's been pointed out by this Minister. He has no control over those departments.

I see here this activity is to provide advice to the Minister as well as the deputy ministers across the GNWT. I think we need some interaction maybe with the Premier and the Minister here to come up with the authority that this Minister clearly needs to have in the area of safety practices for the well-being of our employees across all departments. The Minister knows that. He's essentially said it. His hands are tied. He's doing what he can. He happens to be a Minister of a couple of departments, one of which is problematic and we hear that he is working on that and moving on it, but he doesn't have control over others.

Will the Minister start addressing the issue here and work with the Premier and Cabinet, I suppose, whoever the decision-makers are at this level, to address this and get this Minister the authority to do his job for all of us to the benefit of our employees?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is essentially right. Ultimately the responsibility for these things falls to the individual deputies. A couple of things have happened over the last couple of years that I think are going to help the process. One of the things that has happened is that WSCC, based on I believe it might have been questions raised by the Member in the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly and I think myself as well, started providing us a breakdown of what the actual claims costs are by department. Originally



we only got it as a government as a whole. That is helping to inform the individual deputies as to the individual problems within their mandates.

The deputy minister of Health and Social Services sits on a deputy ministers committee and they've had an opportunity to continually push and explain this. I think the knowledge of the problem is becoming better understood at the deputy head level. I've personally had discussions with the Premier about this issue and about the accountability of us as Ministers and deputy ministers to try to address these problems within. Individual Ministers and deputy ministers have a performance review at the end of every year to success or failure in workplace safety, and fines and fees is something that will be considered as bonuses or, sorry, incremental pay is provided. I have been having those conversations.

The Premier is clearly aware of the challenges we face. These are not secrets to us. I have brought them to the Cabinet table a number of times and will continue to do so until such a time as these fines hopefully disappear and we have a safe, healthy workplace.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks for the comments from the Minister. It sounds like he is acting on this. I'm glad to hear that. I hope it works. When there's a wishy-washy line of authority, you often get a wishy-washy result. It sounds like there's some firming up happening if it's actually explicitly stated in revue standards for deputy ministers and so on. I appreciate that. It sounds like a reasonable compromise to try out.

I'd ask that the Minister keep us apprised on that and maybe the Premier to report if that has to be implemented, if there is – I forget the Minister's term for pay and benefits – action that has to be taken. We'd like to know that this is happening and being effective. I take the Minister's response and I know that we all understand that where you have wishy-washy lines of authority, it ends up in that kind of response.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I'll commit to providing committee, on a regular basis, our stats on workplace safety claims that we are paying or the WSCC is paying on our behalf. I can assure the Member that the Ministers take this seriously, the Premier takes this seriously, we've had conversations. We don't like paying \$600,000 when we'd rather use that money for programs and services in the Northwest Territories. This is something that with some diligence I think we can overcome. It's going to take some work, there's no doubt there, but I think we're all committed to having these results.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll continue where Mr. Bromley has probably left off here and opened the door here with respect to WSCC continued issues. I'm from a bit of a different perspective on this and I believe the directorate and the Minister have more accountability on our performance than we're maybe led to believe here.

The Minister has gone on record to use quotes such as "we are the collaborators of HR management" and he's also used the terms "as we provide the tools." The Minister mentioned \$600,000 in claims or penalties. It's actually closer to \$750,000 in claims or penalties in the last two years. If the department and directorate is responsible for the tools, the question I have to ask is, which tools are we using, which tools have we brought forward, which tools are we using or have we brought to the table to help mitigate the current claims growth, the current penalties?

The Minister has gone on record as saying we're probably going to see some more fines this year. I believe that the leadership for this does come from this department. Even though the managers must manage, the tools come from this department. So I want to hear what the department, directorate and Minister here are going to do to address these WSCC concerns.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the tools that we have put in place is the new Duty to Accommodate Policy that became active early in the life of this Assembly. That is a policy that is written by the Department of Human Resources on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories. All departments have to apply that policy accordingly and are ultimately responsible for the results of those policies within their departments. It is a new policy and I have already outlined some of the successes we've had with it in the last year. We are seeing some positive results.

We are going to put more duty to accommodate officers out in the field so that we can have even more positive responses. We are also responsible on behalf of the government for trying to set up some parameters around occupational health and safety committees with draft terms of references that departments can use as they establish their own occupational health and safety committees within their departments, which is something that they're responsible for. That template is available and we are starting to see more occupational health and safety committees popping up in the Government of the Northwest Territories, which is a good thing and something we all want to see.

We do offer some training through the Department of Human Resources that GNWT staff can attend. They still have to get approval from their

departments to attend it, but there is health and safety education and training programs offered on a regular basis. We also work closely with the WSCC to make their programming available to GNWT staff as well. We do facilitate some processes, we do have some duty to accommodate officers that are available to departments as they're trying to deal with some of these individuals that we do have to accommodate and find ways to creatively get them back into the workforce.

I'm not saying that the Department of Human Resources has no responsibility, I have never said that, but a lot of the ultimate decisions are those of the departments, and we put tools and offer advice and guidance so that they can utilize those tools in an appropriate way.

If you go through the list of departments that are out there, we have a large number of departments that have zero claims history. Some stuff is out there, some departments have good success, others not so much.

As I've indicated, as the Minister of Justice, we are taking measures and activities within that department to address our challenges within Justice and I think we're going to see some results there as well.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I applaud the Minister and the department on putting duty to accommodate on the forefront, but I believe this is, by and large, more of a result of an injury and we are doing something with the person thereafter to accommodate. I am talking about preventing injury, the first part of the exercise. What tools or mechanisms? The Minister mentioned training and so forth.

When we have a company, if I use the word loosely, of 5,000 employees, how many safety officers dedicated to safety do we have working for the GNWT whose prime source and prime responsibility is the safety of our employees? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Madam Chair, we have occupational health and safety coordinators in a number of departments, boards and agencies. I can get that number for the Member.

As far as tools and resources that the Department of Human Resources has in place or is preparing to assist in the workplace, we have the Occupational Health and Safety Policy, which is a GNWT policy that departments, boards and agencies are going to have to utilize. We have some incident reporting procedures, which is basically GNWT incident reporting procedures. We have occupational health and safety orientation for workers. We have occupational health and safety orientation for contractors. I have already mentioned the health and safety education and training programs. We have the template, the terms of reference that can be used by individual occupational health and

safety committees within individual departments. We have guidelines for workplace inspections. We have guidelines for incident investigations. We have guidelines for safety and toolbox meetings. We have guidelines for developing emergency response plans. We have guidelines for personal protective equipment. These are all things that are available to departments to help them prevent injury in the workplace.

As I have indicated, we do have work to do. We have to continue to push at the departments to utilize some of the tools that are available to them to promote safe and healthy workplaces. I believe we are seeing some results. Our claims history for 2012 is noticeably down from previous years.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I do applaud the Minister and the department for giving this laundry list of tools. I appreciate that we have that today. The question is, what have we done differently or new to adapt to the same terminology that WSCC has with all other companies and businesses throughout the Northwest Territories? If we're going to be doing the repeat of the same programs and expecting different results with WSCC, my concern is that it is a dangerous precedent that we are moving down.

I would rather see us look at what are the criteria the WSCC is looking for from this government. Are we aligning our strategy, are we aligning our tools to meet their criteria, having made changes, recommendations and policy renewal to adapt our ability to get off this claims penalty list, and to be more in line with every other company and every other business that has to follow the same rules? Are we doing anything to adapt to the WSCC mandate? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Madam Chair, it is no secret we are behind the eight ball on some of this stuff. This stuff that we are talking about, like the Occupational Health and Safety Policy that is being put in place by the GNWT, is new. If you look at the criteria for occupational health and safety policies put in by WSCC, there is a list of criteria.

We had a committee meeting some time ago, and I actually walked through each of those lists. We are actually beating, meeting and exceeding everything that they have identified needs to be in occupational health and safety. I am happy to re-share that list with the Member and committee, if they are interested, outlining what is going to be in our occupational health and safety. It is new. It is taking into consideration programs and successes from different organizations. Once again, I am happy to share that. As I indicated in committee, it meets and exceeds what the WSCC is actually asking for in Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Madam Chair, if it meets and exceeds WSCC policies, then hopefully we won't see the penalties that we have before us and a lot of the so-called charges to which have amounted

substantially. Again, I wish the department well this year and hopefully we can mitigate some of those costs.

I am going to stay on the same page and ask another question. This has to do with an initiative and program that was established in 2011-12. The Minister made reference to it earlier, called the Associate Director/Superintendent Program, which was aimed to increase the number of Aboriginal employees in senior management.

Can the Minister give us a brief overview how successful has this been? Has this been reflected in the estimates that we see before us?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I am just wondering, Mr. Dolynny, if that wouldn't be under management and recruitment services. I'll allow the Minister to respond if he wishes.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just going back to the WSCC claims, as I have indicated, we are putting stuff in now; we are trying to address the problem. Some of the stuff is going to take a bit of time to work through. As with any new program, there is bound to be some growing pains, but we have already seen a decrease in 2012. We know there is probably going to be a penalty coming from that. We just expect it to be much smaller, which shows that we have started to make progress. More progress is needed. More diligence is needed. We continue to work closely with the departments so they implement the policies that are in place. We expect to see some better results over time.

I don't want anybody to have the illusion that the GNWT is an unsafe place. The Member mentioned it earlier; the WSCC has a target. It is not an average. I think it was said that it was an average before and it's not an average. A target of 2.4 or less loss time claims per 100.

We work really hard to promote a safe workplace. Right now our average is 1.8. I think we had 80-some claims last year that were time loss, but our average is 1.8 time loss claims per 100. We are not an unsafe workplace. We had some challenging worksites where we are having some poor results. That will be Justice, Stanton and Beaufort-Delta. But overall, I wouldn't say that we are an unsafe workplace. I think that is important to support our employees out there that are working in safe environments where they are not getting injured.

With respect to the Associate Director/Superintendent Program, for 2013-14 we should be advertised in March and April. Going back to your initial intake, the first two graduates have completed the program and have actually taken on full responsibility for the positions they are being developed for. One is in the Deh Cho Health and Social Services Authority and the other is a MACA superintendent in the South Slave. As we

move forward and individuals complete the program and are placed, I am happy to provide those statistics to the committee.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Minister. Your time is up, Mr. Dolynny. I will allow you a further question. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is just going to be a clarification question. The Minister mentions a number of 1.8 claims per 100 and the average of 2.4. Can the Minister and the department provide the statistical backup in terms of how that number was calculated, given the information and how the details around that where they came up with that 1.8? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Madam Chair, I can get that information. The 2.42 comes directly from the website and it is a 2012 target, and our 1.8 claims per 100 is based on the number of employees we have. As far as how it is actually calculated, I will get the detail to the Member later.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Minister Abernethy. We are on page 3-13, Human Resources, activity summary, directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$625,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, committee. We will move on to page 3-14, Human Resources, information item, directorate, active positions. Any questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, committee. We will move on to page 3-17, Human Resources, activity summary, Human Resource Strategy and Policy, operations expenditure summary, \$6.774 million. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Since last year there has been some shift scheduling software that has been added to the fold. This rolled out, I believe, in March of 2012. PeopleSoft, I believe, is the terminology that is being used at the department.

Can the department give us an idea, has this helped with the mitigation of overtime and with the help of calculations of time off in lieu?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thanks, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's currently being implemented at Stanton and we are experiencing some growing pains with the program, trying to make it effective and work properly at Stanton. It's going to take a little bit more time before we can come back with an analysis on the benefits and the effects of this particular tool.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** That's, I guess, promising. I'm hoping to see some savings in the overtime area.

For all the GNWT, time efficiency is what we're looking for.

In previous information and in the vein of HR strategy involving information systems, there was supposed to be an ePerformance project that was supposed to be completed in this fiscal year. Can the Minister indicate to me if this ePerformance project is one schedule to be completed in this fiscal year? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I don't think that's correct. The program was intended to start in '12-13 and straddle into '13-14. That was capital that we did in October for the upcoming fiscal year, not the current fiscal year.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. Mr. Dolynny, anything further? Thanks, Mr. Dolynny. We are on page 3-17, Human Resources, activity summary, operations expenditure summary, \$6.774 million. Are we agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Page 3-18, Human Resources, information item, Human Resource Strategy and Policy, active positions. Any questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. Committee, we'll move on to page 3-21, Human Resources, activity summary, management and recruitment services, operations expenditure summary, \$4.056 million. Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to follow up a little bit here. MLAs, of course, are fearless when it comes to telling people how to do their jobs.

I'm just wondering, in terms of recruitment, it's often a tough experience for somebody going into a community where the culture might be quite different for them, and they don't know anybody and so on. It's obviously challenging. What do we do in terms of helping them with housing, helping get their kids enrolled, maybe checking in with them one month after they get there and another three months later to see what their issues are in the community? Is there a role for HR here? I realize this would all take some commitment, but I'm just wondering, are we exploring those opportunities to help people and support our recruitment services for communities. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Right now that's something that our client service officers do, actually, through the hiring process. When individuals come in, we try to focus and guide them to the community leadership, who can answer some of those questions; you know, identify housing that may be available. Could more

be done? Probably. I would say yes. But right now our client service officers are working with communities and individuals to get them the information they need to find the resources they desire.

**MR. BROMLEY:** I appreciate the Minister's comments there. I don't have anything specific here, but I imagine the Minister knows what I'm talking about and could try and get his finger on the pulse when he's in communities, or his staff are in communities and so on. So it might be interesting to develop a bit of a sense there and see if there's an opportunity for helping out in that front and letting us know what his impressions are. Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** To some degree, some of the employing departments are doing that, where the people are going to work, their employer, their supervisor, are introducing them in communities.

We do have some orientation programs that are available as well. But I'll certainly ask that question. I'll have my department talk to some regional staff about what they think is necessary. In Yellowknife we've had a group approach us who is interested in doing kind of a Welcome Wagon program to introduce people to the community. I think that might be kind of what you're referring to but in the community sense. It's something I'd like to learn a little bit more about and have some more conversation. I'll direct the department to have some conversations in that area.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Bromley, anything further?

**MR. BROMLEY:** Nothing further. I don't seem to know what employees' experiences and issues are, but the Minister can probably find that out fairly easily and then focus on those areas. But nothing further. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. We're on page 3-21, Human Resources, activity summary, management and recruitment services, operations expenditure summary, \$4.56 million. Are we agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. Committee, we'll move to page 3-22, Human Resources, information item, management and recruitment services, active positions. Any questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. We move to page 3-25, Human Resources, activity summary, corporate human resources, operations expenditure summary, \$9.163 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Mr. Bromley.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Is this the activity within which the WSCC is controlled? Would workplace safety with WSCC be considered in this activity?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Mr. Bromley, I'll go to Minister Abernethy for clarification on that question.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Yes, Madam Chair, this is the section that we work on some of the policies and try to encourage the departments to utilize the policies that have been developed.

**MR. BROMLEY:** On the workplace safety aspect, I know we've got the new policy. The Minister mentioned we've got occupational health and safety committees popping up all over the place. I missed whether we heard is it a requirement. Is it every department must have one, every division must have one? I'm wondering what the requirement is there and what the monitoring is revealing in terms of getting those established. Do they all need to be established within a year, and are we 50 percent there? What's our status on that front? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** They are a requirement. Not every worksite has one yet or department has them yet, but they are required to have them and they are getting established.

There's some overlap. We've got a department requirement but we've also got a worksite requirement. So there is some overlap with some of those committees. It gets a little complicated at times. But like I said, we've got the terms of reference that the individual committees can use to help develop their own and expedite that process. So we continue to work at the deputy head level with the departments, encouraging them to get this done, and at the ministerial level as well.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks for that information. I assume that has to be done, sort of, this fiscal year. I don't know where we're at in terms of getting all the entities up and running of the number that we have, but I'd appreciate that information. So any more details before I ask my last one here. Thanks.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Madam Chair, in October/November we pulled reps from across the Territories together to give them some training on what expectations there are, providing them with the terms of reference so they can go back to their committees and do some work.

As far as which departments don't have them yet, I don't know off the top of my head. But I'd be happy to go back and see if we can get that information and provide it to you in committee.

**MR. BROMLEY:** Thanks again for that information. I guess I would at least ask that the Minister check in with Justice and Health and Social Services, and make sure they're up and running right away.

There's been a great concern about WSCC rates. Again, I don't have the terminology; the Minister will know what I'm talking about. There are significant increases for our businesses and that's a big concern. I'm wondering, what can we do about that. What is the Minister doing about that?

I have collected some information. I realize WSCC has spent a lot of money on legal fees and so on. I know with the Giant thing, it was in the tens of millions of dollars. I just want to know that what we're charging our businesses is really related to what they are experiencing or engendering in terms of cost. It's not fair to ask them to shoulder costs that should be shouldered by somebody else. If they are GNWT costs, we shouldn't be asking our businesses to pay for those costs, obviously.

So what's the situation from the Minister's perspective and what are we doing to address this rather alarming jump in personnel rates that have been charged by WSCC? Thank you.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Honestly, Madam Chair, the Member is asking the wrong Minister. The Member should be asking the Minister responsible for the WSCC. We, as an employer, share the same concerns. Last year our rate was, I think, 67 cents or something like that. This year we've had a significant increase in the rate as all employers have. Last year, as an example, we paid \$2.3 million in premiums is really what they are. They are really like an insurance premium. We paid \$2.3 million in insurance premium. The WSCC paid out \$1.1 million in claims and on top of that we paid just over \$600,000 in penalties. So in total we paid almost \$3 million and there's \$1 million that went back to compensate our employees.

The WSCC, from my understanding – once again it might be best to ask the Minister responsible for the WSCC – has a process where they review their bank accounts and they have actuaries come in and they dig through their books to see what kind of money they have available, and based on what's in their account, they determine a rate schedule/rate fee. We, as with all employers, don't really have input into the rate schedules or the rate fees. We can say we think it's too high, as I think many Members and many businesses have said, but as far as having an ability to impact their rates, we don't have a voice there. At the end of the day, we pay our premiums, they're like insurance premiums, and we had a million dollars' worth of benefit out of \$3 million in fees and penalties.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Bromley, your time is up. I will put you back on the list if need be. Mr. Dolynny.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to continue on the same line of questioning as my colleague from Weledeh. This government has been known to have a very poor track record in the filing of claims for WSCC. Maybe if the Minister can

elude as to how many penalties have been in the late filing in such claims in the last year.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Minister.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think definition of poor record is maybe not completely accurate. We have had some late filings. In 2009 there were 18 late filings; in 2010, there were 11 late filings; in 2011 – actually this might be better if I just provide just a touch more information. In 2009 there were 293 claims, 18 of them were late. In 2010 there were 343 claims, 11 of them were late. In 2011 there were 378 claims, 23 of them were late. In 2012 there were 279 claims; nine of them were late. So we've had a total of 61 late claims in the last four years and the total cost on late penalties was \$56,000. There's a wide range of reasons why a claim might be late. In shift work, if someone worked on a Friday and they don't return to a shift until Tuesday, technically they would be late in filing.

So, late penalties are unfortunate. We think we can work with our employers and employees to try to reduce that. We insist that our employees file and we will work with them to try to reduce that number, but I don't think 61 in four years out of 1,293 claims is an indication of excessive late fines or late submissions.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** The Minister is correct; this is a cascade approach. I think the first fine, \$250; second fine, \$400; and it's a \$1,000 fine for every claim thereafter. That's according to WSCC guidelines.

I beg to differ, Madam Chair. I think \$56,000 is \$56,000. I'm sure anyone who said \$56,000 is on the floor over there, don't worry about it, it's a small number... I believe it's a large number. More importantly, the fact that it won't go away because, as we continue, even with one more claim tomorrow, that's another thousand bucks. It will just continue like this and snowball until such time as we go to zero and get that reset, but that's something that's going to be ongoing.

I guess my question, Madam Chair, is I think it's significant enough. Why are we submitting late? Do we not have the mechanism? Are we not providing the tools, the rationale for the employees to say if you are injured, you have 72 hours, please contact person X? Do we have those tools or measures to allow that to happen to reduce that amount because it does affect the budget at the end of the day? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Obviously, we don't want to see any late submissions. That's not our desire. We'd obviously like to save the \$56,000. There are some challenges that we face and there are times when late submissions do occur. Sometimes there are time delays when an incident

occurred and when the employee reported the occurrence to the supervisor. But as soon as the supervisor becomes aware, you get them to submit a form. There have been delays between when an incident occurred and when an employee sought medical attention. They may not have thought they were injured or that they needed attention. Then the condition or the injury got larger or more obvious later on.

There were situations where employees and their supervisors were not aware that there was a requirement to report all workplace incidents, and this is something we are trying to deal with and we're doing it through the workplace occupational health and safety committees, making sure employees are aware that every and all injuries must be reported. We don't want this to be an excuse. We think we can work on this and we are working on that one.

There was a situation where there was an understanding between an employee and a supervisor on the process to be used to submit required WSCC forms. This is one, again, an area we can work with our occupational health and safety committees to make sure they are providing the accurate information to supervisors and employees. So we want this to go away. We want this number to drop, and hopefully we will see some results on that as we continue to move forward and help educate our staff and our managers, senior managers, on the requirements for reporting across the Northwest Territories.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** It's promising to hear we are going to be dealing with this. As I said earlier, \$1,000 penalties that we claim we are going to look at in the year to come or two years to come will add up with time.

I want to ask a question in line with what the Member for Weledeh started to ask about rates. Currently, the Government of the NWT pays a 79 cent per 100 dollar rate. There has been discussion and debate out there whether or not that rate is relatively too low given our claims growth, our claims experience, our penalties and the fact that the business communities have been supplementing that so-called claims growth on the backs of businesses.

Now, I don't expect the Minister to comment on the setup. That's something for the other Minister, and I agree those are questions for WSCC in the future. But the point of my questions, Madam Chair, is we have a number of – I will use the term loosely – very poor performing departments, as the Minister indicated, we've got opportunity to improve. If we looked at comparing those very same departments in the private sector, our rate, our WSCC rate, would be well within the two or three dollars per \$100. Yet, we couch those departments and wrap those departments, so to speak, with other

departments that have zero claims, as the Minister indicated – congratulations – but we are the benefactors of a relatively low rate. Vis-à-vis, the rest of the business world and the business community, I believe, is very upset.

Even though we did get a maximum 20 percent increase from 66 cents to 79 cents, are we paying our fair share? Is this government paying their fair share, is an extremely valid question, one in which we've asked many times here in the House before, and I will ask that question to the Minister. Given our claims growth, given our penalties, given everything that we've talked about today in WSCC opportunity, does \$0.79 equate to what would be deemed what we'd see in the private sector for equivalent performance?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. I'm not sure this is a question for this Minister, but I'll go to Mr. Abernethy for a response.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think it is a question for this Minister. We pay what we are required to pay under the schedule that was established by the WSCC. If they change the schedule, we'll pay what we're asked to pay.

We pay a significant amount of money. Last year we paid \$2.3 million. This year, at 79 percent, we're going to pay 20 percent more than \$2.3 million. So we're going to be approaching \$3 million just on our fees.

We already know that for 2012 our claims history has gone down noticeably. Last year when we paid \$2.3 million, they paid out \$1 million. I would say that we're not costing them significantly. Between what we pay and what we got charged in fines, we're significantly ahead of what they paid out, but at the end of the day, we don't set the rates. It's the WSCC that sets the rates. I would say the Member should be talking to the Minister responsible for the WSCC on how they determine the rates, how they calculate what different organizations and businesses must pay, how they do that, because, quite frankly, that's out of the bailiwick of this particular department.

**MR. DOLYNNY:** I will take the advice of the Minister and I will bring the appropriate question to the Minister responsible for WSCC at a future time during the budget process.

My last question in the same relationship to the issues of claims growth and safety, the Minister has talked today about numerous tools and resources that the department is working on and everything. Just so that we're very clear and understand all the variety of resources out there for our employees to have access to, could the Minister provide to this House all the tools and resources that this division is developing to support the accountability of employer and workplace health and safety?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I have provided that information to committee once before and I actually listed off the list of tools that we have developed and/or are working on, but I'm happy to provide it in writing to the Member and committee if they so choose or desire.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Dolynny has no further questions. Mr. Moses, do you have a question?

**MR. MOSES:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we report progress.

---Defeated

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Mr. Moses, do you have a further question?

**MR. MOSES:** Yes, I'll move on to this question here then. In the opening comments I'll refer to some of the discussions that we had with the Minister and the department, but he says that one of his focuses on his actions for 2013-2014 is in recruitment, development and advancement of Aboriginal employees. I also mentioned that it should be focused on northern indigenous employees as well.

When I look at the program delivery details, there is a total cost of \$614,000 decrease from last year in the three areas of Maximizing Northern Employment, human resource planning and development, and staff retention, which we always have issues with. Can the Minister give us a description of why there is a decrease in there when it's one of his priorities, and how does he think that's going to affect us moving forward for retention and recruiting our staff?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Moses. Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under the Maximizing Northern Employment, the total budget isn't actually changing, where it's located is changing. We have removed or, rather, transferred some of the health recruitment positions that were in the Department of Human Resources to the Department of Health and Social Services, and some of the Maximizing Northern Employment dollars go with those positions and those particular responsibilities because they were health-dedicated funding right from the beginning.

The HR planning developments and staff retention dollars, staff retention is a slight reduction but some of the HR planning development resulting from some of the reorganization in the department we've created a stand-alone labour relations unit that is taking some of the dollars and moving it around. At the end of the day, there isn't a significant reduction, but the Maximizing Northern Employment to the Government of the Northwest Territories has not changed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Moses, nothing further? Page 3-25, Human Resources, activity summary, corporate human resources, operations expenditure summary, \$9.163 million. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With pleasure, I would like to weigh into this discussion a little bit. The opportunity before us here really comes down to something simple, which is one of the challenges about coordination. Through our corporate focus here, who is going to take charge of some of these WSCC fines and coordination and, certainly, safety? Wouldn't this now be the time for the department to say we'll approach the Premier and Cabinet to find a coordinating role and this could be the opportunity? Clearly, we're hearing several Members, I was glad to hear Mr. Bromley speak up to that issue earlier today and I want to give him credit for that. Fundamentally, what's being missed here is a coordinating role and all I'm hearing is that it's somebody else's problem. What is the Minister willing to do today on this particular issue?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We've seen huge progress in this area already, and I think creating awareness in the individual departments has helped an awful lot. I have had discussions with the Premier on this and we have discussed this with Cabinet; Cabinet is aware. The deputy minister has been discussing this at the deputy heads' meetings on a regular basis. I think the deputies are taking responsibility and accountability for this issue, and I think we have already started to see some positive results.

As I indicated earlier when I was talking to Mr. Bromley, the Premier has indicated that this is part of the performance measurement system for senior managers in the Northwest Territories. I think the accountability is there. I think we have started to make significant progress and that can't be forgotten.

**MR. HAWKINS:** I'm sorry, but I'm just not seeing it. The hoping that every department steps up to the plate still misses the coordinating role. It's like an orchestra. We need a conductor to ensure everyone is playing the same tune. Sure, they all play wonderful instruments that are polished nice and they practice on their own, but the reality is, without that person tapping on the music and causing it to come together properly, it doesn't have that element.

Here is a good example of the fact that no one is in charge of this particular thing. It's all left up to the deputies by saying, don't worry, you're on your own, do the best you can. Clearly, we could have a department such as Human Resources here taking the opportunity. So what is stopping the Minister

from approaching Cabinet to say, I will seize that opportunity to help coordinate this problem, develop safety programs and initiatives that could further lend strength to better rates, and better safety and compliance?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** As I've said before, we've had this discussion in Cabinet and I have discussed this with the Premier. This is going to be part of the performance measurement system for senior managers and it's discussed on a regular basis at the deputy head level. Each of the deputy ministers are accountable, and they are accepting that accountability and making the appropriate progress within the departments.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Is this not part of the performance management process of the deputy ministers, because that's what I'm hearing now being repeated we're going to make it part of? To date has it not been part of it?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** When I talked to the Premier we confirmed that it is, yes.

**MR. HAWKINS:** So maybe if it's part of the performance process and the Department of Human Resources doesn't seem interested in creating a coordinated role, who does coordinate to ensure that the deputies do comply?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** As I've indicated, we actually are responsible for writing a significant amount of the policy that the individual departments are responsible for administering. We provide technical advice and guidance on how to apply those policies and procedures, and we provide training that's available to individuals that are on the occupational health and safety committees. At the end of the day, the application within each department is the responsibility of the deputy minister and I guess, by default, the Ministers.

**MR. HAWKINS:** So there's no way of guaranteeing consistent application of policy. We're all allowing the departments to run in on their own and to apply the policy as they feel satisfied.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** We provide a framework and they do their risk assessment on the exposure as they move forward.

**MR. HAWKINS:** And the answer to my question?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Mr. Abernethy, would you care to rephrase?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I think that was the answer, Madam Chair.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Who is there to guide the performance and consistency of the policy? It sounds as if I keep getting the same answer that it's up to the departments, up to the deputy ministers and in some ways up to the Minister, but all I hear is inconsistencies of application. What I'm asking for, and other Members are asking for, is consistent application and someone to take a leadership role.



So back to the issue at hand is, who is ensuring there is consistent policy being complied with, because it's a carrot or stick approach. It's great that you can write all these guidelines and come up with some advisory stuff, but at the end of the day, no one is ensuring that there's consistent application. Is that not correct?

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** As I indicated, we are responsible for putting the policy together, then each department would have to take that policy. Every department is different and the risk for employees within each department is significantly different. Justice has a significantly different risk level than, say, the Department of Executive or Department of Finance. Every department has to take the policy, do the risk assessment, and put in the program that meets their level of risk to ensure that their employees are aware of safety protocol, that they're aware of health and safety standards, and that they apply them accordingly within their own risk framework. The deputy heads are accountable.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Maybe the Minister of Human Resources could help educate the Legislature on the inconsistencies of filing paperwork and how that is so incredibly difficult that we need a new risk matrix to explain the elements of why it's so inconsistent in some areas and why we couldn't have a consistent pattern across the board and, by the same token, someone to ensure there is a level of compliance.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** I have no idea what the Member is saying. Could you maybe rephrase it for me?

**MR. HAWKINS:** Well, the Minister keeps echoing about how different places are, but when we talk about filing of paperwork, for example, we've have incidents where people don't file on time, so why are departments so difficult they can't file their paperwork in a compliance form? Maybe he could explain in a risk matrix complex, sort of explain all the deviations that apply to these things and why they are so different and maybe we can get an education here today. Because, ultimately, what we're asking for is compliance and consistency. Do they all have different types of risks? Absolutely. That's as plain as day, or night as the case may be. The bottom line is filing paperwork. We have consistent finds showing they can't do them regularly. Why is that so inconsistent and cannot be followed through with one leadership department, which I would think would be the flagship of Human Resources.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** As far as paperwork is concerned, when an injury occurs, an employee is required to fill out a form that is provided by the WSCC. They fill out that form and then the employer is required to follow up a subsequent form which is also provided by the WSCC so that that

particular file can then become a file of the WSCC. We've indicated earlier and talked a little bit about that from time to time, 61 cases over the last four years, they have been late filed, but I don't see us having a significant problem getting these forms to the WSCC and moving forward accordingly.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Is this something you don't want to do or can't do?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Mr. Abernethy, maybe you could explain why we late file.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I've done that already twice today, but I'd be happy to do it again. Do you want me to read it again, Madam Chair?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Yes, please.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There are a number of reasons why there could possibly be a late file. There were and there have been time delays between when an incident occurred and when the employee reported the occurrence to their supervisor. We are trying to encourage employees to report incidents immediately, but sometimes it is late. It could be shift work. There were delays between when an incident occurred and when an employee sought medical attention. An individual may have had an incident and didn't realize that they were necessarily injured and, at a later time, realized that the incident actually did result in an injury so they brought it to their supervisor's attention, reported it and filed the paperwork accordingly. There were situations where employees and/or supervisors were not aware that there was a requirement to report all workplace incidents to the WSCC. I've already talked about this one. This is something that we want the occupational health and safety committees pushing, and informing and educating staff so that they know that all injuries require a report. There were situations where there were misunderstandings between the employee and the supervisor on the process to be used to submit the required form. That is another thing that the occupational health and safety committees are going to push to make sure the employees are informed accordingly.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Are you done, Mr. Abernethy? Mr. Abernethy is finished. Mr. Hawkins, your time is up. I have nobody further on my list. We are on page 3-25, Human Resources, activity summary, corporate human resources, operations expenditure summary, \$9.163 million.

Mr. Hawkins, we have probably covered this pretty thoroughly. Please ask a new question if you are going to ask one. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** I didn't ask the question he answered, but I was grateful for the time he did spend providing information to the House again. My

issue is about coordination. Is it something he can't do, or doesn't want to do?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Mr. Abernethy.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Madam Chair, we do do it. We provide that information on a regular basis to the departments so they can make informed decisions and apply the policies that they are responsible for applying on a regular basis. With respect to incident reporting, the GNWT has an incident reporting procedure that is used by all departments, boards and agencies. We are making sure that they are educated and informed so that they can utilize it appropriately. We provide advice and guidance, and we will continue to provide advice and guidance. The departments are responsible for the application of those policies and procedures, and we provide advice and guidance and we will continue to do so. We are seeing positive results.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Madam Chair, the Minister shouldn't think I am not hearing him. I do. But what continues to be the pillar of the issue for me is the fact that there is no coordinating role. How do you know we are all on the same song sheet just because they provide advice and guidance, but he keeps farming out responsibility to individual departments? When we consider complying on all these types of things, again it is the consistency of applying. Why is it so complicated to say that all information that would be going towards WSCC needs to have a check box that goes through Human Resources that can coordinate it? At the same time, then we have direct reporting, probably better reporting and, of course, consistent reporting. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I think that has been asked and answered, but I will go to the Minister if he wishes to reply.

**HON. GLEN ABERNETHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The WSCC has a requirement for us to report incidents. We report those incidents directly to the WSCC. If the Member wants it to go through the Department of Human Resources, we are just creating another step in a process which would take more time, which would probably result in more late penalties. When an injury occurs, an employee is supposed to fill out the form. The employer then fills out the form and they are submitted to WSCC.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you. Committee, we are on page 3-25, Human Resources, activity summary, corporate human resources, operations expenditure summary, \$9.163 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Page 3-26, Human Resources, activity

summary, corporate human resources, grants and contributions, zero.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Page 3-27, Human Resources, information item, corporate human resources, active positions. Any questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Page 3-29, Human Resources, activity summary, employee services, operations expenditure summary, \$14.293 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Page 3-30, Human Resources, information item, employee services, active positions. Any questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Page 3-33, Human Resources, activity summary, regional operations, operations expenditure summary, \$4.574 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Page 3-34, Human Resources, information item, regional operations, active positions. Any questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** We are agreed. Thank you, committee. Page 3-37, Human Resources, activity summary, labour relations, operations expenditure summary, \$2.614 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Page 3-38, Human Resources, information item, labour relations, active positions. Any questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Work performed on behalf of others has no amounts. We will return to the department summary on page 3-7. Human Resources, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$42.099 million. Are we agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Does committee agree we have concluded the Department of Human Resources?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, committee. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Madam Chair, release the prisoners...witnesses.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** Thank you, Minister and thank you to your witnesses for attending here. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you would escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Mr. Menicoche, what is the wish of the committee?

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Madam Chair, I move that we report progress.

---Carried

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Bisaro):** I will rise and report progress.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SPEAKER:** Can I have the report from the Committee of the Whole, please?

**MS. BISARO:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 9-17(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2013-2014. I would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the...

**MR. SPEAKER:** Members, Ms. Bisaro has the floor. Continue, Ms. Bisaro.

**MS. BISARO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. A motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The seconder will be Mr. Blake.

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 13, 2013, 1:30 p.m.:

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

15. Tabling of Documents

16. Notices of Motion

17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

18. Motions

19. First Reading of Bills

20. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Tabled Document 9-17(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2013-2014

- Bill 1, Tlicho Statutes Amendment Act

22. Report of Committee of the Whole

23. Third Reading of Bills

24. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

