



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, March 14, 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 1:29 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER'S RULING

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. I will now provide my ruling on the point of order raised by Mr. Lafferty in the House yesterday.

This is a sensitive issue involving real people with real life problems and responsibilities. Mr. Bromley did seek my advice before reading his constituent's poem, but only in regard to the use of offensive language.

Upon review of the entire text, I feel that the poem made clear reference to an individual who is not a Member of the House and, thus, not able to defend herself publicly.

Colleagues, there are two sides to every story. It is against our rules to use our privileges in this House to make insulting or damaging remarks about people who cannot respond. Although Mr. Bromley was reading something written by a constituent, Members are not allowed to do indirectly what they are prevented from doing directly.

Members, there have been several times during this session when negative things have been said about individuals who are not Members of this House. We are here to debate issues, not to use our positions to criticize the work of people who can't defend themselves. There are more appropriate ways to do that if a Member feels the need. As your Speaker, I will take a hard line on issues like this from now on.

I rule that the Member for Monfwi has a point of order. I direct that all references to the individual in question be deleted from Hansard.

I will now call upon Mr. Bromley to retract his remarks and apologize to the House.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the day in question, I read into the House a poem, a piece of art, social art, if you will...

MR. SPEAKER: The debate is over. I am seeking an apology to the House. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that. The poem contained a person's first name. I should have caught this and questioned it, but I did not. If in so doing I caused unintended offence to anyone, I apologize to both them and this House. Further, Mr. Speaker, I will be on guard to make sure that I will not do this again. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Public Works, Mr. Abernethy.

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 53-17(4):****DIAMOND JENNESS****SECONDARY SCHOOL RENOVATIONS**

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to update Members on the renovations recently completed by the Department of Public Works and Services at the Diamond Jenness Secondary School in Hay River.

Diamond Jenness Secondary School was originally designed by well-known Canadian architect Douglas Cardinal and has supported the delivery of education programs in the town of Hay River for over 37 years. Public Works and Services, working with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, recently completed a major midlife retrofit designed to extend the life of the facility while reducing operations and maintenance costs through improved energy efficiency.

In the successful delivery of this project, we are pleased that much of the original character of the building has been preserved in the upgrading of the school including the original exterior colour.

In addition to a complete retrofit of the original school, this project also included a new trades shop to provide opportunities for students to consider apprenticeship and career development in areas such as automotive mechanics, welding and carpentry which are much needed skill sets in our northern workforce.

In extending the life of the school, this retrofit included a number of technical enhancements to conserve energy and improve its performance including:

- energy-saving lighting controls with occupancy sensors;
- the introduction of efficient, long lasting, low maintenance LED lighting fixtures throughout the concourse of the school, a first for Government of the Northwest Territories public infrastructure anywhere in the North;
- improved roof, windows and building envelope with higher insulation levels and an improved air barrier to enhance comfort while saving energy;
- a complete energy-efficient ventilation system upgrade with heat recovery to improve the overall environment and performance of the school;
- a modern building control system operating in conjunction with the biomass district heating system to improve operational efficiency and overall energy management; and
- improved access and security for after-hours community programs.

In line with our government's commitments to pursue energy efficiency and sustainability, Diamond Jenness Secondary School is now more energy efficient than ever before thanks to significant improvements to the building envelope and the installation of these energy-saving technologies and heat recovery systems.

Mr. Speaker, these energy improvements are expected to decrease the school's annual electricity consumption by 235 megawatt hours each year; a reduction of approximately 40 percent. Additionally, heating requirements will also decrease by 1700 gigajoules annually, equivalent to displacing 66,000 litres of propane or 44,000 litres of heating fuel each year. Thanks to innovative design, technology use and energy improvements, the renovated Diamond Jenness Secondary School is expected to perform approximately 40 percent better than the 1997 Model Energy Code for Buildings.

Mr. Speaker, in delivering high quality energy-efficient building projects on behalf of the GNWT, Public Works and Services recognizes that local and northern involvement in our construction industry is an important part of the northern economy. I am pleased to confirm that:

- 78 percent of the funds spent on goods and services for this project went to local and northern businesses, and
- 73 percent of the labour force was northern and 57 percent of these northern workers were local from Hay River.

Mr. Speaker, the midlife retrofit of Diamond Jenness Secondary School was successfully completed on budget with a construction cost of \$28.2 million. With 78 percent of the goods and

services provided by northern businesses and 73 percent of the labour by northern residents, this project demonstrates the significant economic benefits that can be achieved through the GNWT's infrastructure program.

Throughout the life of this project, there were 12 local and northern workers who participated as apprentices, four of whom have since received journeyman certification, fostering the skill development of our residents and strengthening our northern workforce.

Mr. Speaker, midlife retrofits such as those completed at the Diamond Jenness Secondary School are allowing the GNWT to preserve and enhance our existing infrastructure, improve program delivery, reduce energy consumption and prolong the life of our facilities. The GNWT's investment in this midlife retrofit has extended the service life of this facility for another 20 to 30 years and has reduced the GNWT's deferred maintenance deficit by \$20,072,547.

Mr. Speaker, throughout this project the project team worked closely with school administration to create a schedule that minimized disruptions to the school's day-to-day operations. Flexibility and cooperation by all stakeholders throughout the delivery of the project was key to its success and is a model for future projects.

PWS is pleased to have been a partner in the delivery of this important project for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the residents of Hay River, and I hope that the community and students will enjoy and make the most of the new school for years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 54-17(4): HOMELESSNESS AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, addressing housing needs is a priority of the 17th Legislative Assembly, and the NWT Housing Corporation offers a range of programs along the housing continuum to help residents meet their shelter needs. Public housing, supports to third-party organizations that provide low-cost housing, rent supplements, home ownership repair programs, and subsidies to help low and modest income purchase homes all help residents depending on their needs. But there is more work to do and homelessness is another of the important housing issues in the Northwest Territories.

Homelessness is a complex issue with many factors, and the government has a wide variety of programs that support those who are homeless or

at risk of becoming homeless. This year the Small Communities Homelessness Fund and the Homelessness Assistance Fund were transferred, along with the \$325,000 in program funding, to the NWT Housing Corporation from Health and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, with the support provided through the Small Communities Homelessness Fund, 13 community organizations are being assisted with projects which include soup kitchens, food banks, food rescue programs and supports for shelter programs, to name a few. One particularly interesting project includes the rental of garden plots at the Inuvik Community Garden. Homeless residents are involved in the planting and tending of the garden plots right through to harvest.

The Small Community Homelessness Fund is an application-based program and currently there are projects in Aklavik, Inuvik, Fort Simpson, Deline, Fort McPherson, Hay River, Fort Smith, Behchoko and Ulukhaktok.

The Homelessness Assistance Fund provides assistance to individuals to help resolve their homelessness situation or to avoid homelessness. This is a fund of last resort which clients access through delivery agents like community social service workers. The fund is targeted to address situations where unforeseen events occur like where a job is lost or unexpected expenses happen. During 2012-13 a total of 36 applicants have been assisted through the Homelessness Assistance Fund.

The NWT Housing Corporation remains committed to supporting Betty House with a contribution of approximately \$2.3 million committed to through the MOU signed in February 2012. Betty House will provide transitional housing for women and their children. It is expected that these funds will have a significant impact in ensuring the completion of Betty House, and we believe that this initiative is an important part of our overall priority to ensure our sustainable and vibrant communities are filled with healthy, educated people free from poverty.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT Housing Corporation's strategic plan identified strengthening the approach to homelessness and transitional housing as a priority. The NWT Housing Corporation continues to work with our partners, including other levels of government and community organizations, to provide assistance to those in need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 55-17(4):
UPDATE ON PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to update the people of the Northwest Territories and our Protected Areas Strategy partners on the implementation of the NWT Protected Areas Strategy.

The Protected Areas Strategy was established in 1999 as an overall framework to guide the work of identifying and establishing protected areas in the Northwest Territories. It was developed in partnership by regional Aboriginal organizations, the federal and territorial governments, environmental non-governmental organizations and industry.

A substantial amount of work has been done under the Strategy. Saoyú-?ehdacho (Deline) was established as a National Historic Site in April 2009 and several other areas have been advanced for protection. These include Edehzhie, or the Horn Plateau, and Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta as candidate National Wildlife Areas.

We recognize and appreciate the significant work undertaken during the past 13 years by all PAS partners, including communities, Aboriginal organizations, working groups, the steering committee and the secretariat. Work conducted through the Protected Areas Strategy has contributed to a greater understanding of the ecological, cultural and potential economic values of lands across the NWT.

The Protected Areas Strategy has provided our government and Aboriginal governments with a strong foundation for the management and conservation of lands as we prepare to take on the administration of lands in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, the work is not done. As we move forward we will need to continue to work with our Protected Areas Strategy partners to ensure we can make informed decisions on the establishment of protected areas. We will continue to support the completion of working group reports and the extension of interim land withdrawals for candidate areas to ensure this level of certainty remains until final decisions are made after devolution. We will also continue to advance the establishment of core representative areas within each ecoregion of the Northwest Territories.

The NWT Land Use and Sustainability Framework will set out the principles guiding future GNWT policy direction on land matters. Land use planning and the development of new, and use of existing, northern tools for protected areas are key features of this framework, which will be completed on a priority basis.

Mr. Speaker, working with our partners will ensure sustainability and stewardship of our land and resources. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON THE BUDGET SESSION

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to speak about the budget process. Last year at this time, I was very discouraged about the budget process mainly because it was already set. This year I'm very happy about the process that we've undergone over the last six weeks. A lot of progress has been made in the Northwest Territories. I'd like to thank my colleagues here for their support on the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway, also the initialing of the Devolution Agreement, Mr. Speaker.

This government is slowly checking off the priorities that we have set as the 17th Legislative Assembly and I'd like to thank everybody for working together. We do have a long way to go, but if we keep this up, we'll make it through the priorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HAY RIVER HOCKEY ACTIVITIES

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To begin my Member's statement today, I'd like to quote a great poet and musician, Stompin' Tom Connors.

"Hello out there, we're on the air, it's hockey night tonight. Tension grows, the whistle blows, the puck goes down the ice. The goalie jumps, the players bump, the fans all go insane, someone roars, Bobby scores, at the good old hockey game."

"Oh, the good old hockey game, is the best game you can name. The best name you can name, is the good old hockey game."

I started this because I've got a couple of hockey issues that are going on in Hay River over the next couple of weeks. This weekend we have our 5th Annual Pond Hockey Tournament that's going to have over 30 teams participating in Hay River. We're looking forward to going out on the river and skating on the river like the good old days. I'd like to thank everybody who organizes that event, for putting up the large tent as we speak. It should be a great event.

The other event that's going on next weekend starts back here, and that's the Northern Hockey Challenge, where Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik have been participating. Hay River and Yellowknife are now going to go on a five-game series. I'm

sorry to hear from my colleague Mr. Moses, who is probably going to have to wear one of our jerseys, either a Huskies or a Flyers jersey. I sure hope it's a Huskies jersey.

I'd like to encourage everybody next weekend to come out to those hockey games. Go, Huskies, go!

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON THE BUDGET SESSION

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a session, and it's not over yet. Our second budget, devolution, big infrastructure bucks, Boundaries Commission... It's kept us busy and consumed our energy and attention. As we reach the pause button and time permits, it may be time to sit back and consider things in a bit more depth.

It's two out of two. Regular MLAs, through considerable solidarity and belief in priorities, modified the proposed budget once again. True, the modification is slight at half a percent of the budget, but as we all know, the dollars actually available for new initiatives are modest. What to make of this? Is this system working? Again, for context, Regular MLAs supported 99.5 percent of the budget. Debates were extensive, there was much back and forth, decisions were made. This sounds to me like a reasonable and responsible compromise and a good basis to go forward on.

Due to the good work of our Premier and his very capable negotiating team, and that of the 16th, we now embark on the heavy work of implementing devolution. Many still wonder if the GNWT has the maturity for the task, but who wouldn't want the power? As I've asked before, will we really bring the people along with us as we embark on this new focus? To some degree the response to the latter question will answer the first. If we have the confidence and maturity to do meaningful consultation and engagement on the Devolution Agreement and a plan for its implementation, things bode well.

The Inuvik-Tuk highway attracted vigorous debate, and decisions were made that will influence the availability of infrastructure dollars for priority projects for years to come. Regardless of positions, everyone had in mind the best outcome for the people of the region and of the Northwest Territories. Time will tell the wisdom we had.

The Boundaries Commission ends its mandate soon. Their critical work in upholding the principles of democracy will only be exceeded by this Assembly when we discuss their report.

With the super-storm of high oil prices, climate changes, and a permanently depressed global economy related to the first two factors, we, as every jurisdiction, must adapt to new realities.

Doing the same thing harder will no longer serve. Our stable population, our high economic activity, our hugely disparate incomes provide both opportunity and challenge. As we move forward I will be looking for signs that I can be optimistic in my expectations.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REFLECTIONS ON THE BUDGET SESSION

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has indeed been an amazing six weeks here in the House and in the Legislature. I am very proud and glad to say in the House today that what we've done and the decisions that we've made over the past six weeks, and all the discussions that we've had, we are going to be changing lives within the next fiscal year. We are going to be changing lives for the better for residents of the Northwest Territories and in years to come.

In the six weeks that we've been here, there have been a lot of emotions, a lot of debates, and what residents of the Northwest Territories don't see is everything that happens sometimes right from 7:30 in the morning until late at night, and some meetings that go on beyond the rise of the House.

When we did start this session off and we had the opening budget address, Members on this side of the House were very happy to see that we did have a footprint in that budget address in terms of the deliberations that we've had. I have to say that even though we like to call it our footprint, and over the last six weeks and all the discussions that we had, I'd like to call it our footprints; committee members and Cabinet working together for the betterment of the residents of the Northwest Territories. And this I was very happy to see. In the 16 months that I've been here, the frustrations that I had in my first few months sitting in this House and seeing that we can actually make things work, change some policies, legislation, and the way we do business, and that we're actually listening to people.

I remember last year when we finished up here, I thanked all the staff for all of their hard work. It is amazing the hard work that goes on in this building when we're in session. But there are a lot of other people that we have to thank. We have to thank the families that sacrifice for us to be here and support us while we are here. But we also have to thank our residents, the front-line workers, the nongovernment organizations, the volunteers that sometimes lobby outside this building, that send us e-mails, that continually contact us and ask us to bring things forward into this House. The people that see the groundwork and see the actual work, that do the work that we are making decisions on.

We listen to them and we want to let them know that for the next two and a half years, we're going to continue to listen to them and we're going to slowly make those changes so that the next budget round we're going to have more things to offer and more great decisions that are made. I thank all my colleagues here in the House today, and the staff.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. The Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CKLB RADIO INFRASTRUCTURE
IN NAHANNI BUTTE

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the course of the last six weeks I've tried to raise issues from every one of my communities, and I'd like to raise another one for the community of Nahanni Butte.

Ever since the flood, the radio station has not been replaced at all. I know most particularly was the CKLB infrastructure that's there has been damaged. CKLB has several other communities, and they've been trying to repair those communities, as well, but they've been running into funding difficulties. But most particularly, with the Nahanni Butte, I think the total comes to about almost \$7,000 to replace that radio infrastructure there. I think it's really important. Especially when it comes to emergencies, you do need those community radio stations up and running. You have to advise the residents of those particular communities how and when to do things.

Later on today I'd like to ask questions of the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs about how we ensure that the community radio stations locally are funded and how we ensure that they're there running for the people and for the safety of all residents.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DIAMOND QUESTIONS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today I will have questions for the Minister of ITI regarding diamonds.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION
INTERIM REPORT

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If our Electoral Boundaries Commission has its way, my Deh Cho riding will not exist in the next election. It will be folded into a large group of far-off

communities. This is true of every proposal made by the Boundaries Commission.

This is unjust. It may comply with the cold, hard numbers a court suggested as standards for the composition of a riding, but this is a classic example of how the numbers do not tell the true story.

Even now, Members who live in Yellowknife are fairly quickly available to their constituents most of the time. But an MLA with many isolated communities in his or her riding has little time to visit them all. We spend half the year in Yellowknife away from home. For example, we've been here for about five weeks, in addition to our other business travel.

The proposal for 18 ridings would shift the Hay River Reserve into the Hay River North district. It also eliminates the Tu Nedhe riding. The result would leave the rest of the communities now in the Deh Cho riding with Lutselk'e, Fort Resolution, Whati, Gameti and Wekweeti.

I am pleased to say that many people in these small communities only speak their first language. However, there are three Dene languages in the proposed riding. It is very unlikely that any MLA would speak them all. There are also three Dene land claims covering this riding, and Metis claims as well. There are also competing interests in claims among these groups. The MLA's ability to represent them all would be seriously impaired.

That same riding as is proposed, if there are 19 seats in the Assembly as there are now, once the lines are moved, most of the people of the Deh Cho would end up in the riding with three Monfwi and Tu Nedhe communities. However, the Hay River Reserve would still be moving to the Hay River North. Cultural difference seems to have been ignored.

The Boundaries Commission has also suggested adding two seats, for a total of 21 ridings. That is near the Deh Cho communities, including the Hay River Reserve, will be linked up with the three small Monfwi communities. People in my riding do not see wisdom in this. The Tu Nedhe communities would be combined in a riding with Detah, Ndilo and residents of the Ingraham Trail beyond Yellowknife's boundaries. These proposals technically give every vote something we might call equal power, but votes are not the only source of power, and day to day with any of the people in the affected ridings would actually be better represented.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. NADLI: The Tu Nedhe communities would be combined in a riding with Detah, Ndilo and residents of the Ingraham Trail beyond

Yellowknife's boundaries. These proposals technically give every vote something we might call equal power, but these votes are not the only source of power, and day to day with any of the people in the affected ridings would actually be better represented. I think anyone who knows NWT would say no, and emphatically no at that.

I don't know if there are any ways to improve on these proposals, but I cannot support the choices offered by the Boundaries Commission. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to share my comments on the report of the Auditor General on the NWT income security programs, a report released last week.

Income support is supposed to help people who have no other way to pay for basics such as food, shelter and clothing. The core shelter benefit is for rent or mortgage, utilities, damage deposit, home insurance and so on. The core essential benefit is for food, clothing, personal needs, transportation, telephone and household supplies. This audit looked at four income security programs, the Income Assistance Program, the Student Financial Assistance program, the senior home heating subsidy and the Child Care User Subsidy. For anyone remotely associated with income security, it was no surprise that the report was scathing.

A quick perusal of the report's table of contents shows the following problems with these programs, problems which have long been recognized and suffered through by income security clients and the organizations who help them. They are:

- inconsistent processing of client applications;
- payments not made on time and incorrect payments, either too much or too little;
- forms and back-up paperwork lost or misplaced;
- inadequately trained staff and insufficient opportunities for staff training;
- not enough staff to handle the workload;
- staff overburdened with work, handling too many files;
- inconsistencies with how different officials apply the rules to applications;
- management not adequately monitoring staff performance;
- a lack of clear processes to support program delivery and manage the work; and
- limited assessment of program performance.

All of these deficiencies indicate a division at Education, Culture and Employment that is not operating as it should. It results in clients who suffer the consequences, a reduced quality of life and a lack of self-respect, both of which the Income Security Program is supposed to avoid.

I would like to quote a constituent I recently met with to discuss consistently late support payments. This is her assessment of the current situation: Over the years, there have been numerous problems with income support. It has been bounced from Health and Social Services, where social workers worked with families and knew all the issues, to Education, Culture and Employment where families are falling through the cracks because there is no one department looking at the whole picture.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: My constituent went on to say: Since ECE has taken over, that department has become the enforcer and the two departments, Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment, do not talk to each other. They are in conflicting roles.

The Auditor General's report didn't tell me anything I didn't already know but it does quantify the deficiencies for MLAs, the department and the public. Now as the department formulates its action plan in response to the Auditor General's report, I hope that the department has the blinders off, and I hope they remain objective and honest about their performance and about the Auditor General's findings.

There's an opportunity here for ECE to make some major adjustments to its Income Security Program delivery, to revise it for the better, and revise it to benefit the clients it's intended to serve. I'm happy to see that the department accepts the Auditor General's recommendations. The proof of their commitment will be in the actions they take to fix the problems. I'll be watching for that. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
REVIEW OF THE GNWT PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The review of public accounts is the cornerstone of financial accountability and governance in the public sector. In the NWT Legislative Assembly, this oversight is performed by the Standing Committee on Government Operations or, as we like to call it, Gov Ops for short. Our Gov Ops committee works in tandem with the Auditor General of Canada to hold the government to account for its use of public

funds and resources. Generally, in overseeing government's expenditures, we examine the financial accounts; we examine whether the government has spent funds for the purposes intended by the Legislature; we examine whether funds spent were with due regard to economy and efficiencies; and we evaluate governance means to measure its own effectiveness.

In our modified Westminster system of politics, the Auditor General of Canada has the power to report the findings to the Legislature but does not have the sanctioning power. That is, they cannot force departments or agencies to correct deficiencies. Therefore, the Gov Ops committee plays an essential role in bringing about corrective action by endorsing the Auditor General's findings and recommends corrective action.

Sadly, during the 15th and 16th Assemblies, the standing committee chose not to address public accounts as part of its mandate. As a result, there was no standing committee review for public accounts until last year's closed-door review, which was eight years in waiting.

Excitingly, we have turned a new corner and I'm pleased to report that this Friday at 11:30 a.m. the present Standing Committee of Government Operations will, for the first time in the history of the NWT, publicly broadcast our review of the public accounts for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Our Gov Ops committee, chaired by Mr. Nadli, comprises of Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Moses and myself, and we look forward to shedding transparency and clarity to our public purse. We want the people of the NWT to know that this committee has fought hard to bring back the proper oversight expected by their elected officials and we look forward to tabling our findings later this spring. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DIAMOND JENNESS
SECONDARY SCHOOL RENOVATIONS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister of Public Works and Services for his very comprehensive Minister's statement today: Diamond Jenness Secondary School Renovations.

It just seems like yesterday that I was standing up in this House waving that thick volume of material that was the technical review of the Diamond Jenness Secondary School and I guess lobbying hard on the government to get that midlife update done on it, and I'm happy to celebrate with the citizens of Hay River on June 29th when we have the unveiling, the reopening of the new and improved Diamond Jenness Secondary School. This event will take place on June 29th and it will

coincide with probably the biggest ever homecoming hosted by Hay River. Many, many former graduates of Diamond Jenness Secondary School will be there to celebrate with us, and we have a graduate of that school with us here in the Chamber today, a fine specimen of the GNWT education system, my colleague from Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

I'd also like to say that maybe we can televise the grand reopening of the high school on our new Bell Vu channel. I would like to thank again the GNWT, the contractors, the staff at Diamond Jenness, the teachers. About midway through the renovation the Minister was down and we did a tour, and we saw boxes and incoming supplies and everything all over the place. So although it's a happy thing to get your school renovated, it does take a lot of patience for the staff and the teachers who work around a major renovation like that all the while keeping the school open, and for the students as well, I'd like to thank them.

So now we have the Purple People Eater, as it is fondly known, that will remain on Hay River's landscape as a landmark, as a tourist attraction and probably the most remarkable purple school anywhere. Now with this new improved school, with decentralization, we just need more government jobs so more people can fill it up. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RECOGNITION OF THEBACHA LEGISLATIVE PAGES

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to take this very brief opportunity to thank the Pages for all their work here. In particular, I'd like to recognize two Pages from P.W. Kaeser High School in Fort Smith, Anna Gervais and Aurora Vassal in the corner over there. I want to thank them for their hard work. They came here during a good week. They got to see the Prime Minister and were here during some very, very important proceedings.

I'd also like to thank Anna's hardworking grandmother, who has been chaperoning them for the week.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HMCS YELLOWKNIFE NAMESAKE CITY VISIT

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the crew members of Her Majesty's Canadian ship Yellowknife are conducting a namesake city visit here in the city of Yellowknife. During their namesake city visit they

will be conducting a number of civic outreach activities with charities, schools, Aboriginal and government organizations, as well as participating in the Long John Jamboree. I had an opportunity to tour the ship late last fall and it was a great opportunity to meet the crew, tour the boat and thank the members of the crew for all the important work that they do for the residents of the Northwest Territories. Later today I will be recognizing a few of the crew members in the gallery.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRIBUTE TO STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to use my last Member's statement of this long winter session to pay tribute to a Canadian icon who died recently – as my friend Mr. Bouchard also did – the one and only Stompin' Tom Connors.

Stompin' Tom was a friend to all Canadians and wrote timeless songs about our great country from sea to sea. In his honour, I'd like to perform my own version of a song he didn't write but often performed.

I was walking the winter road from Tulita to Norman Wells
when along came a trucker like a bat out of hell.
If you're going to The Wells, he says,
with me you can ride.
I climbed in the cab
and then settled down inside.

He asked me if I'd ever seen a goat road
quite so bad as this.
I said, listen, bud, I've travelled every road
from Tuktoyaktuk to Fort Smith.

I've been everywhere, man,
I've been everywhere, man.
Hiking the Canol Trail, man,
I breathed the mountain air, man.
Travel, I had my share of travel, man.
I've been everywhere, man.

Where ye have been, he says?
Oh, let me see now, a couple places.

I've been to Salt River, Trout Lake, Midway,
McPherson,
Taltson, Porcupine, Carcajou, Coppermine,
Detah, Dory Point, Fort Res, Checkpoint,
Behchoko, Gameti, Wekweeti, Whati,
Hay River times two, Boot Lake, Sahtu.

I've been everywhere, man,
I've been everywhere, man.
Drove the Ingraham Trail, man,
I've breathed the mountain air, man.

Travel, I've done my share, man,
I've been everywhere, man.

Now this truck driver turns to me and says,
Look, buddy, you ain't the Sahtu George Jones,
you want to get out and walk?
And I say, why? Somebody else wants to talk?

Inuvik, Aklavik, Ndilo, Tsiigehtchic,
Huskey Lake, Kelly Lake, Lac de Gras, Enodah,
Fort Liard, Fort Good Hope, Wrigley, Paulatuk,
Twin Lakes, Colville, up, up, up in Tuk
K'atlodeeche, Jean Marie, Nahanni Butte, Lidlii
Kue
Fort Providence, Jean Marie, it's okay in
Lutselk'e.

Now this truck driver says, Look here, buddy,
I'm sick and tired of hearing you talk about all
those small communities.
How about a few places from good ol'
Yellowknife?
Like Range Lake, Great Slave, Weledeh, Frame
Lake,
YK Centre, YK South, Kam Lake
Two more seats for YK? Give me a break!

---Laughter

---Applause

I've been everywhere, man. Everywhere. Ever
good, man.
Cross the barrens bare, man,
I've breathed the Arctic air, man.
I'll always be a Sahtu man!
So safe travels to my fellow MLAs, man.
And to you too, Stompin' Tom.
We'll miss you.

Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: I see when you retire you do have
a future. Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 4, reports
of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns
to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in
the gallery. Mr. McLeod.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr.
Speaker. My colleague from Boot Lake said it well,
before me, when he said we have to thank our
families for all the time we're down here. I've got my
wife, Judy, up in the gallery. I thank her for her
support. I've also got up in the gallery, my sister-in-
law Debbie. Welcome to the Assembly. We also
have Ellen McDonald and Melissa McDonald, both
from Inuvik.

We have been here for a long time. We've been
here for six weeks and my grandchildren are
watching. I'm coming home tomorrow and, yes, I
bought you something.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr.
Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr.
Speaker. I'd like to recognize a couple of individuals
from Her Majesty's Canadian ship, the Yellowknife.
When I toured this ship last August, I was reminded
several times it's a ship, not a boat. I had a note
from one of the Members who has indicated that
I've called it a boat already. I apologize for that.
With us today are Lieutenant-Commander Cory
Gleason, the new commanding officer of the HMCS
Yellowknife; Petty Officer First Class Calvin
Langager, the coxswain and senior non-
commissioned officer of the ship; with us as well is
Lieutenant David Connelly, the Aboriginal and
Northern Affairs advisor Joint Task Force North and
vice-chair of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council.
Welcome, and thank you for all that you do.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr.
Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.
Today I want to recognize some people from the
health authorities and Health and Social Services.
These individuals are taking advanced
investigations training. We have Cheryl Abraham,
Fort Providence, Deh Cho Health and Social
Services; Jocelyn MacLean, Fort Simpson, Deh
Cho Health and Social Services; Debbie
Greenland, Inuvik, Beaufort-Delta Health and Social
Services; Lisa Norris, Aklavik, Beaufort-Delta
Health and Social Services; Ellen McDonald, Inuvik;
Melissa McDonald, Inuvik; Tasha Lake,
Yellowknife; Amanda Neville, Yellowknife; Vanessa
Rankin, Yellowknife; Cheryl Armstrong, Yellowknife,
all from the YK Health and Social Services; Elaine
Sanchioni, Tulita, Sahtu Health and Social
Services; Carlie Tucker, Behchoko, Tlicho
Community Services Agency; Brian Kolback,
Department of Health and Social Services; Anneka
Westergreen, Department of Health and Social
Services; Lynn Barry from the Canadian Society of
Investigation of Child Abuse; and, of course, Judy
McLeod, Inuvik, Beaufort-Delta Health and Social
Services.

Also today I notice Graeme Drew, who is the senior
admin officer from Lutselk'e Dene First Nations.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr.
Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also
like to recognize David Connelly, a resident of
Weledeh, here with his colleagues. I would also like
to recognize Peter Redvers here representing
Sambaa K'e Dene Band of Trout Lake and

Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation of Kakisa and their considerable work on the Protected Areas Strategy.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize the two Colville Lake Pages, Chantell Orlas and Lecy Gully. Both are here this week.

I'd also like to, along with my colleague Mr. Abernethy, recognize the YK ship crew from Vancouver. I appreciate the tour there.

Also some former high school students, Debbie Greenland; of course, Mr. McLeod's wife, Judy, and the mental health worker from Tulita, Elaine. Also a good friend of mine, Peter Redvers.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to recognize a Page who has been working very hard for us all week. Ryan O'Brien is a Frame Lake resident. He goes to school here in Yellowknife at Sir John. Thank you to Ryan for his hard work and to all the Pages for the work that they've done for us.

On behalf of Mr. Bromley, I would like to recognize his constituency assistant who is a resident of Weledeh but he kind of forgot him. Mr. Craig Yeo, welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize Mr. Peter Redvers, who has been doing work with the community of Kakisa and also Ka'a'gee Tu First Nations.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a Page that I have from the riding of Kam Lake, Ms. Caleigh Matheson. I also want to thank all the rest of the Pages for all the work that they've done for us over the entire session.

I'd also like to recognize Mr. Peter Redvers, a constituent of Kam Lake. Welcome to the House.

Also, the folks in the audience from HMCS Yellowknife. I was there in I believe it was 1996, when the ship was commissioned. Good to see you here. Pleasure for you to be here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a Page here who is from the Yellowknife Centre riding, Wendy Giang. She is a Sir John Student.

The other thing is, at the same time, I would like to recognize Mr. David Connelly, who has been a friend for many years. I appreciate his conviction

and devotion he provides the HMCS Yellowknife. It's good work he does.

Finally, the same as Mr. Ramsay said, I'd like to thank all the Pages, those from Sir John, Colville Lake, and certainly PWK for their hardworking services here. I'm grateful for it and I certainly hope you enjoyed the time here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I'd like to welcome all visitors here in the public gallery. Thank you for taking an interest in our proceedings here today. Thank you for coming.

Item 7, acknowledgements. Item 8, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 243-17(4): FEDERAL REVENUES FROM NORMAN WELLS OILFIELD

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier of the Northwest Territories. I want to ask the Premier some questions around the Norman Wells proven area. Specifically, I want to target on the resource revenue issue with the Government of Canada. I want to ask the Premier, in regard to this issue here, if the Government of Canada is holding firm on their stance that this area here is not a resource revenue sharing deal other than they have other interests, such as a commercial venture, and if there are any other type of discussions to see if they will move away from that definition.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have had those discussions on several occasions with the Government of Canada, first and foremost during the development of the agreement-in-principle. We couldn't resolve it, so it was punted to the negotiations of the final agreement, so to speak. We made some progress by the fact that they have agreed that royalties will be paid on two-thirds of the Norman Wells interest. The Government of Canada remains steadfast, though, that their one-third share is ownership, it's a commercial interest and that it is not a royalty. On that basis they do not see fit to pay royalties on it, because they are very clear that it is not a royalty.

MR. YAKELEYA: I've done some of my own research and I found a very interesting document that in 1944, July 21st, Imperial Oil and the Government of Canada struck up a management/ownership type of deal with the Norman Wells oilfields and that they've been taking a cut in the share of that development fuel since then; even longer.

I want to ask if the Government of Canada is changing the rules as time goes on and because they're so adamant not to release that definition under what is stated in the research I have that Norman Wells is looked at resource revenue rather than the ownership. Is the Minister looking to see if there are some other leverages that we can use, for example, if Canada is willing to sell their share of the Norman Wells oilfield?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As part of the negotiations process, we were able to limit the extent of the Norman Wells oilfield so that for a period of time they were looking at all of the Norman Wells area that would be covered. We were able to limit it just to the existing oilfield from Norman Wells. We also discussed, and the Prime Minister mentioned it in his response to a question, that from time to time the Government of Canada sells off assets of commercial interest and if it does happen, then there might be a possibility there for royalties.

I should point out that in the '80s, or when the Gwich'in and the Sahtu took the Government of Canada to court for unpaid royalties, there was an out-of-court settlement whereby both the Gwich'in and the Sahtu signed an agreement that the Norman Wells payments were not royalties, in order to receive compensation in an out-of-court settlement.

MR. YAKELEYA: We're looking at the bigger issue with the Norman Wells royalty regime. I want to ask the Premier, because of the interest now in the Norman Wells area, and not just the Norman Wells proven area, does the Premier see the Husky, the Conoco, the Shell type of structure that could possibly see the federal government looking elsewhere outside Norman Wells to say there's not millions but there's billions to be had. Is that something that we have positioned ourselves so that they keep their hands out of our pockets?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We believe we have been able to successfully negotiate that, but recognizing that that field is still being proven. It's still in the exploration stage but the potential is unlimited. I think there's tremendous potential in the Sahtu and we'll see it come to pass.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say, because, again, in my research, there were regulations, a management regime, and in the time when they were making the deal, Aboriginal people didn't even have the right to vote in Canada. These were all being done on Aboriginal lands that we're supposed to have a treaty. Now we're taking over devolution, and part of taking over devolution is the 24 acts, regulations and legislation that we're going to take over. One of them is the Canadian Petroleum Act, I think, and I want to make sure that we are set and the federal government is not going

to interfere with our type of resource revenue sharing that we need in the Northwest Territories. I want to ask the Premier, will his department look at some of these things that ensure that the federal government does not poke its hands in areas that it shouldn't be.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We definitely want to make sure that is the case. That's why the legal and technical review of the final agreement that we're doing right now is so important, because we want to make sure that doesn't happen.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

QUESTION 244-17(4):
TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I was asking questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on training for the Inuvik-Tuk highway. I guess you could say I was putting the cart before the horse, but now that we have made decisions on the Inuvik-Tuk highway, I'd like to ask the Minister again, is the department making any plans for training in the Beaufort-Delta starting this spring.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. That is a great question. This is an area that we are preparing. I just met with the standing committee this morning, just preparing for whether it be the Deh Cho, Sahtu and Beaufort-Delta, there is so much activity that will be happening in that area. We need to plan now. I've instructed my department and also my senior staff that we need to develop, if there is a committee in place already, what are the training needs and the requirements at the community level and let's focus on those are let's have a meeting immediately. We're forming a steering committee to deal with those matters, especially the Beaufort-Delta now that we just approved infrastructure. We're going forward on that and we are full force following through with that.

MR. BLAKE: It's projected that we'll provide 400 jobs on the Inuvik to Tuk highway. There is a lot of training that needs to be done. A lot of our workers right now are actually travelling to the Sahtu for all the work that's happening there. There is a lot that we need to do in the communities. Will the Minister use the facilities and the capacity in the communities to provide the training, whether it's Class 1 and Class 3 and heavy equipment operating?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Those are the areas that we need to discuss with the group, and

when I mention the group, that's the community representatives, the industry representatives. They are the experts that will provide the community-based needs, the human resources. We do have community learning centres. We have the colleges. Colleges are part of the process, as well, and the Mine Training Society, if they happen to be part of the process. I think they should be part of the process, and other industries and organizations that are part of the group. We're going to have a dynamic discussion identifying short-term, mid-term and also long-range plans on the training needs. My Department of Education, Culture and Employment at the regional level will be actively involved.

MR. BLAKE: When we did do our budgeting process, we didn't anticipate the added training needs that we are going to need in the Beaufort-Delta. I'd just like to be assured by the Minister whether we will have training in the communities, whether it's every six months. We do have a lot of training that needs to be done, but I'd just like to be assured.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: With the project that's going forward now, there are going to be various training aspects and that's what we need to identify. I want to push this forward expeditiously with potential partners that are there in the Beaufort-Delta and, based on their needs, develop plans of action pertaining to training. That's an area that I'm committing to with my department, working with the regional representatives, and also industry and Aboriginal organizations. We need to plan now.

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

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask the Minister if he will work with the Minister of Transportation to ensure that we can find a way around the process, I guess you could say, for the basic driver's licence. Right now, when a person gets their learners they have to wait one full year to actually get their licence, and I don't believe that we can wait one full year for our residents to follow that process. We need to speed it up. Will they work on that?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I agree that these types of training should be pushed forward in advance. I will be working with the Department of Transportation on this particular piece of work where we've done that in the past in other communities, whether it be a Class 1, Class 2 or Class 3, and even Class 5. There are certain individuals that want to take this training. I will commit to the Member that we're going to put that forward, and then based on the communities' needs, if that is the interest, then we'll definitely fulfil that.

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

QUESTION 245-17(4):
PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on the Minister's statement earlier today on the update on the Protected Areas Strategy from the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources and see if I can seek some more clarity. He did state we will continue to support the completion of working group reports and the extension of interim land withdrawals for candidate areas, which I really appreciate. He also says we will continue to advance the establishment of core representative areas within each eco-region, which makes sense.

My question is: Are any of the five areas currently scheduled for consideration as national wildlife areas included in these representative areas, and as national wildlife areas being contemplated, will they be put on hold for some unscheduled amount of time until the northern tools materialize or what's the plan for those? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ones that are most advanced, of course, are the Edehzhie and there are the other candidate areas mainly in the Deh Cho. The work is being done, as I outlined in my statement to the House, and we intend to keep moving. We do have northern tools that exist and we're prepared to be more proactive in actually looking at using them and not just talking about using them. We will continue to have discussions with the federal government about the federal designation as well. As I indicated in the House yesterday, I have to have discussions with Minister Kent to that effect. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, I also would like to know exactly what are these new and existing northern tools that we hear referred to explicitly. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, I believe yesterday, as well, we have the ability in the North to set up parks conservation areas, critical habitat, wildlife habitat. As we move to devolution and we take over with all the enhanced responsibilities, there may be other types of tools that will come up and make a certain amount of sense as we lay out work that's going to be within the Land Use and Sustainability Framework and regional land use plans.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. Some time ago committee commented on the NWT Land Use and Sustainability Framework but it seems to have disappeared into the quagmire. Will the Minister be bringing this forward for consideration by committee before it's finalized? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: This is a critical piece of work. It has a history that dates back to the previous Assembly. We have been working on it diligently. As the Member's indicated, they see some of the work. Yes, as we move forward to the next stages we will be, as per protocols, working closely with committee in the proper sequence to make sure that they have their input at the front end of this process. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is: What will our role be in land use planning, actual land use planning on the ground under the new auspices of devolution? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We will look to have a key role at the table. The federal role won't be as visible. We need to have our thinking clear, which is why we're working hard on the Land Use and Sustainability Framework as well as all the other subsidiary and interrelated strategies that we're working on. We're going to be at the table and we're going to be much more proactive because we're going to have the authority, plus, with our thinking much clearer coming from the Land Use and Sustainability Framework, we'll be able to hopefully move these processes with more alacrity. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

QUESTION 246-17(4):
RURAL COMMUNITY PHYSICIAN
RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some questions today for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I was reading in the news, there was a press release put out yesterday by the Government of Saskatchewan – actually, the Health department, Government of Saskatchewan – where they've created this incentive program to lure doctors into rural communities. I want to know if the Minister of Health and Social Services was aware of this news release, and if the department has any plan of action in terms of recruitment of physicians, which we know is already a challenge throughout Canada.

What is the Minister of Health doing, in terms of this news release that has come out of the Government of Saskatchewan? How is he going to address this or are there any incentives from the NWT that will keep us in the running for some of these physicians? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Recently we had transferred the territorial physician recruitment, developed a Territorial Physician

Recruitment Strategy that's developed to improve recruitment to the Territories. We hadn't contemplated luring doctors with cash, but rather improving the system and how we attract them back to the Territories. We have a fairly healthy compensation package for doctors that wish to work in the Territories and we are seeing some success. Recently, since we've developed this recruitment strategy, we have some doctors in Inuvik, Fort Smith and now the first one in Hay River. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Mr. Speaker, I do understand in terms of discussions that standing committee has had with the Minister of Health and Social Services and his department on these compensation packages, but what the Government of Saskatchewan is doing is very unique in terms of the cash amount that they are giving to physicians that recently graduated, and they're actually going even retroactive for ones that qualify and it is a pretty substantial amount.

Is the Minister contacting, perhaps, some of his federal counterparts in terms of how to address this kind of situation? One jurisdiction is often some type of mechanism to get doctors into the rural communities when they would be taken out from other jurisdictions. Is he speaking with his federal counterparts to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, I haven't specifically talked to other Ministers. We all have the different types of issues in recruiting doctors. There are doctor shortages everywhere. It's just that our percentage of our population that don't have immediate access to doctors is probably higher than most, maybe not as high as Nunavut but higher than most places. We develop various strategies. We have a website. We have bursaries. We have 22 medical students from NWT now out in school that we are tracking. Like I indicated, we offer a good compensation package. We also offer residency to any doctors that wish to come here to gain some experience and practice. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Mr. Speaker, seeing as this press release just came out yesterday from the Government of Saskatchewan, I ask Members, especially the Standing Committee on Social Program members to take a look at it because it is going to possibly have an effect on the positions in our recruiting strategies for the Northwest Territories where we have a shortage of physicians.

Should we start to see that has an impact on the Northwest Territories, what is the Minister of Health willing to do to address this issue, working with possibly the Government of Saskatchewan or the Government of Canada? Can he make a commitment to trade some discussion or some type of strategy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan they're trying to attract doctors to communities with less than 10,000 people. All of our communities, with the exception of Yellowknife, have less than 10,000 people. Again, our game is a little bit different but, of course, as we meet at the federal/provincial/territorial meetings, I would talk to the executive deputy minister and see if there would be some value in us having a discussion with a jurisdiction such as Saskatchewan, Manitoba, which also have remote communities, and Alberta to see if there is maybe something that can be gained from having the discussion. I will certainly do that. Thank you.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We always talk about the communication between governments and committees and even between committees here. Was the Minister of Health made aware of this press release that the Government of Saskatchewan put out that's possibly going to affect the Northwest Territories creating this awareness in getting some recruitment for physicians? Did he have any discussions with his counterpart in Saskatchewan, or was he made aware of this press release when it first came out? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I had not had previous discussions with the Minister of Health from Saskatchewan on the press release. However, when there is anything that's pertaining to health right across the country, we have individuals in our communications that would track it, pull out some information and eventually, as we sit down and go through various agenda items with the deputy minister as part of regular routine, we discuss what's happening in other parts of the country in as far as health goes. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 247-17(4):
CKLB RADIO INFRASTRUCTURE
IN NAHANNI BUTTE

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I raised the issue about the broken CKLB radio transmitted in Nahanni Butte. I'd like to ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs if this was taken in account during the flood damage and ultimately, as well, how does Municipal and Community Affairs assist communities with local radio stations. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that I think there

were issues with that particular radio station before with the towers or the infrastructure before the flood and I'm not sure if there was a claim made, but the Member's second part of his question he asked how we can assist. They are able to use some of their O and M funding for infrastructure. However, if the costs are quite high, then they can use some of their infrastructure money to assist with the infrastructure for radio delivery. As well, my understanding is that there is some monies available through ECE to assist with the O and M of the radio station too. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. Also, is there any way that this government can help a community like Nahanni Butte with the capital costs? I've got an estimate. We met with CKLB officials and they said Nahanni Butte replacement infrastructure would be about, I think it was almost \$6,500, including the technician to travel in there. So I wonder if there's any capital dollars within MACA or within our government that we can look at addressing this need. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. As far as capital dollars go, MACA has absolutely no capital funding dollars. We give all the capital funding dollars to the community and they can make a determination. If they want to spend the \$6,500 on this particular piece of infrastructure, then they have the ability to do that. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. Is the Minister aware, when working with his colleagues, of any other places where the community can access some infrastructure dollars to address this specific need, and in fact, while the Minister is in charge of, as well, emergency situations, and having a local station will greatly enhance our emergency services in all the small and remote communities? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. I would have to have discussions with my colleagues on any potential pots of money that might be available. Again, I reiterate the fact that we do provide a lot of infrastructure money to the communities and the Member raises the point about the emergency side of it.

Again, there was an old federal program where we were able to access some kind of money for that. That's gone now. We'll wait and see what the rules are on the new pot of money that the feds are coming out and exactly what our share may be. So there may be opportunities there for that too.

I think, at the end of the day, in a situation like this where it is an emergency, the community has well within their means to pay for the infrastructure and then the O and M, there are some monies available for that too. But I will commit to the Member that I will work with my colleagues to identify any kind of pots of money that might be available to the community. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ. Thank you very much. Moving forward, we do have a couple of budget planning sessions coming up this summer. In the fall we have the O and M and the capital. I know that in the past six weeks, Members on this side of the House have raised issues about emergency services. The Minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but is their team going to be assessing how we handle emergencies in the communities and capital needs for infrastructure such as this? Even though it's a local radio station, it benefits the community and it still benefits our residents in terms of addressing emergency services. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. The Member is correct; we do have an interdepartmental working team, and one of their duties is to identify all types of services that might be available in the communities as far as emergency goes. A radio station would fit under that, but they are looking at all the different types of emergencies and how we can assist communities. Once we come up with our initial findings, we'll be sharing them with standing committee and then we'll get some input from them, and we'll go from there on a go forward basis. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 248-17(4):
SECONDARY DIAMOND INDUSTRY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment a couple of questions regarding the joint agreement and the development of the diamond industry here. The joint agreement was between Deepak International Limited.

Recently there's been an announcement about the resurgence of the diamond cutting industry in the Northwest Territories, and I'd like to know what the delays have been from opening these two diamond plants that he's made a deal with to start cutting diamonds in the Northwest Territories. As I understand it, there have been significant delays. So, what are the delays? Will you lay it out here before the House? Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those would be equipment coming from overseas. Also, the negotiation of purchasing agreements with the NWT producers. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. More specifically, what are the delays in the purchasing of the buildings? Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you. That doesn't fall under my responsibility and that question should be directed to the Minister of Public Works and Services. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. In the department's due diligence to get this industry back on its feet, what is the department doing to ensure that this diamond cutting initiative gets done in a timely manner? This project, as I understand it, has been in the works almost a year and they've only started signing agreements now. So what is the Department of ITI doing to insist the closure of these deals to ensure we get plants up and working? Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you. This is an investment of between \$30 million and \$40 million, a private investment. There are a number of details that have to be worked out. As the Member knows, caution should be taken when getting into a business like this. There are a number of things that have to be accomplished. Like I said, the equipment is one concern and, also, the purchase agreements from the NWT producers is another issue, as well, and the proponent continues to work toward the goal line and that is to open both of those factories here in Yellowknife. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Your final, short supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe if the Minister could elaborate what this goal line specifically is and when it's targeted. The Minister has said there seems to be equipment problems and purchase agreement problems. Can he elaborate what those specific problems are and how his department is working to solve these problems so we can get people in the industry back up and working, cutting diamonds and selling them? Thank you.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you. From the government's perspective, we've approved a northern manufacturing status for Deepak International. We're working closely with the m, but this is a private business deal at the end of the day. As I mentioned, there are a number of items that have to be carefully thought out and planned. You simply just don't flick a switch and open a factory. Certainly, there are a lot of employees that have to be found as well. We are encouraged by what we've heard thus far and certainly want to support Mr. Kumar and Deepak International as they endeavour to open both of those factories. It will be a great day when both of those factories are open and we do have the 45 to 50 employees working at those factories, and we will continue to support this company's efforts in opening those factories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 249-17(4):
PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask a question to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources on his update on the Protected Areas Strategy. As people might be aware, the Deh Cho has been in discussions a long time, particularly with communities that have put their faith in the Protected Areas Strategy when it began in 1999. It's been a long, drawn-out process. Communities have been involved and elders have been involved. A lot of the elders that were initially involved have passed on, so a lot of the leaders have taken up at least the torch of trying to move forward on some key areas within the Deh Cho. At this point, I think First Nations communities, especially, have put their faith in the negotiations process. They put their faith in this negotiations process that it will work. The other option is through the courts. In the end it's really a deliberate, well-reasoned choice of trying to put their faith in the negotiations process.

My question to the Minister is: In terms of the discussions on protected areas, can the Minister explain the mandate of his department in the negotiation of protected areas?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories has a critical role to play as part of this process. We devote a considerable amount of public funds to maintaining the secretariat. We work with other stakeholders, the federal government, the Aboriginal governments, the communities. We work through this eight-step process.

MR. NADLI: I think it was just recently that one community in particular had worked on trying to advance the eight-step process and I think they're at the point where they're trying to conclude one of the stages to ensure that the process continues. Suddenly the government has stepped back and I want to know from the Minister why the department stepped back from the Protected Areas Strategy process.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We remain committed to the process. As we reached the critical point with our negotiations with the devolution process and we're looking at concluding the deal and doing the transition and implementation so that we can take over those responsibilities, we wanted to make sure that the federal government didn't, at those late stages, do anything precipitous until we could get ourselves sorted out with devolution and our thinking clear on the steps ahead. We indicated that we were fully committed to getting the groups that weren't at step five to step five to pull the information together, look

at northern tools, negotiate with the federal government about the funds that were available for the five identified national wildlife areas in the Deh Cho. We are, as I indicated today, still committed to that process. I have in my briefing book a list. The farthest, most advanced site is Edehzhie, step six. We are going to conclude that with the federal government and the Dehcho. As I indicated yesterday, we've had a meeting with the leadership of the Dehcho. We've agreed to remove all the tables plus establish a bilateral process specifically to work on issues of special concern with the Dehcho.

MR. NADLI: Part of the negotiations process is trying to at least understand the issues and try to mediate and at least meet at a common point where both parties compromise. I think from the start of this process there has been great compromise, especially in terms of communities trying to... Without having a land claims settled First Nations communities have taken a leap of faith in terms of ensuring that this process works. One of the stumbling matters that has become apparent is that one of the policies that this government has stood on is the ratio of 45 percent land.

Can the Minister explain in terms of how this plays out in the negotiations of lands, particularly the PAs, and also the whole Dehcho land claims process. How does that figure prominently in negotiations and what kind of 45 percent ratio of lands fares with the amount of 225 square miles in the Deh Cho?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: In our discussions with the leadership of the Dehcho, the issue of the 45 percent was raised, and through the bilateral process that was one of the items that was put on the table for further discussion. We indicated that we have some flexibility and we are prepared to enter into those discussions with them as we sort through that particular issue.

The key underlying principle, of course, is to make sure that, at the end of the day, we have an adequate balance between land that's available for development that's going to help the economy as well as recognizing that there are areas of special significance that need to be put aside and the balance between the environment and resource development on culturally appropriate land and those type of significant issues need to be, those pieces need to balance.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Nadli. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 250-17(4):
DELIVERY OF INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of

Education, Culture and Employment and I'd like to follow up on my Member's statement and ask a few questions about the Auditor General's report and the report from the Auditor General on Income Security Programs at ECE. One of the things that was identified in the Auditor General's report was a lack of training for staff. It was identified that this lack of training contributed to part of the problems that were identified within the Auditor General's report.

I would like to first ask the Minister what exists now in terms of abilities and opportunities for training for staff.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The report is before the committee but I'll allow the Minister to reply or take it as notice. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. With client service officers usually when there's a demand for any advancement in their position or usually we have client service officers to get together. There is training or workshops that happen at times. Just recently we had a group of client service officers gather to provide training to them to deal with clientele professionally, not only that but the efficiency and proficiency and effectiveness of delivering a program. Those are some of the areas that we've covered. Whenever there's training that is required, we provide that to client service officers.

MS. BISARO: Thanks for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister, as well, for his answer. One of the things I have understood in my dealings with constituents who have come to me with difficulties and with concerns with income security programs, is that they feel that the staff of the department are handling way too much work. There is not enough staff to handle the work and they have difficulty keeping staff. I'd like to ask the Minister why, if he can advise why, if he has any understanding why the department is consistently short-staffed on both front-line and supervisory positions on a regular basis.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I'm sure that will be the outcome of part of our action plan we're going to be delivering to the standing committee next month. We make do with what we have, the client service officers, throughout the Northwest Territories. Some have high caseloads, some low. It does fluctuate. We are monitoring that right now. We continue to, again, pertaining to training, conduct training in the regions and communities. At the same time, this is an area that we are seriously looking at as part of the nine recommendations that came down from the office of the Auditor General. We are taking it seriously as part of an action plan going forward.

MS. BISARO: Another problem that I have encountered, my constituents have encountered and I hear about it by-the-by, is the issue of paperwork and files that are lost or misplaced or incomplete. It's a huge issue. Clients regularly have all their paperwork in hand, they hand it in, and then they get a call a few days or a week later saying that their paperwork is not complete. I'd like to know from the Minister if he can advise whether or not this is a problem with the software that the department uses. Is it a technical issue, is it a lack of processes for the client service officers that they don't understand how they should deal with applications, or is it something else?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: What we're talking about here will be released next month. I don't want to get into detail before it comes before standing committee. This is an area that we have addressed and it will be part of the action plan. We are taking it very seriously. We've heard there's probably... I'm not sure the percentage of files that have been misplaced but, at the same time, there are other areas where we have made progress and improvement. We will continue to do that but this is an area that will be before us as part of the action plan.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. I understand that he doesn't want to prejudge what may come from the department. I know the staff within the department do their best. I would like them to know that I am not criticizing when I ask these questions. I am looking for solutions to solve the problems. I do believe that there is a great deal of knowledge and experience within the staff of the department on the programs that they run and I'd like to know if the Minister, in looking at the Auditor General's report, will tap into that knowledge and that experience and the valuable resource that he has in his staff as he develops his action plan.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, we do have, even with our client service officers throughout the Northwest Territories and even as far as the directors, we have the professionalism, we have dedicated, educated individuals in the system. At the same time, there is always room for improvement on the programming areas and we have to work with that as well. I'm glad the Member is raising that profile. That is part of the process as we discuss the action plan.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 9, written questions. Mr. Yakeleya.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 25-17(4): SINGLE PARENTS RECEIVING INCOME SUPPORT

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Jackson Lafferty, regarding single parents receiving assistance under the Income Support Program.

1. Please provide the total number of single parents receiving assistance under the Income Support Program.
2. Please provide the various ranges that single-parent clients receive under the Income Support Program.
3. Please provide details on the support single parents are eligible for under the Income Support Program.
4. Please provide a breakdown by constituency of the number of single parents receiving assistance under the Income Support Program.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Mr. Bromley.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 59-17(4): EKOS POLL ON DEVOLUTION AGREEMENT PLEBISCITE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a statistically valid poll of small and large communities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, male and female residents of the Northwest Territories, sponsored by Alternatives North and entitled EKOS Poll Reveals Groundswell of Support for Plebiscite on Devolution Agreement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

TABLED DOCUMENT 60-17(4): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Annual Report 2011-2012. Thank you.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 61-17(4): MEASURING SUCCESS: THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF DIAMOND MINING IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 1998-2012

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled Measuring Success: The Positive Impact of Diamond Mining in the Northwest Territories 1998-2012.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 15, notices of motion. Mr. Nadli.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 12-17(4): REFERRAL OF PROPOSED OMBUDSMAN OFFICE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

MR. NADLI: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, March 18, 2013, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the potential role of an NWT ombudsmen, whether stand-alone or combined with another statutory office, and options for implementing such an office, be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for research, review and analysis, and that the committee report its findings back to the House at the earliest opportunity;

And further, that the Standing Committee on Government Operations shall be provided, through appropriations of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, with the necessary financial support to carry out its assigned responsibilities as they relate to this review.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Colleagues, I'm going to call a 15-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Item 17, motions. Mr. Yakeleya.

Motions

MOTION 9-17(4): EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO MAY 29, 2013, CARRIED

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that, notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns on March 14, 2013, it shall be adjourned until Wednesday, May 29, 2013;

AND FURTHER, that any time prior to May 29, 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 it has been duly adjourned to that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Nadli.

MOTION 10-17(4):
GROUND AMBULANCE AND
HIGHWAY RESCUE SERVICES,
CARRIED

MR. NADLI: Mr. Speaker, WHEREAS Northwest Territories highways are remote and communities are not equipped to respond to emergencies on our highway system;

AND WHEREAS communities must apply for reimbursement when they respond to accidents outside of their municipal boundaries;

AND WHEREAS there have been an average of 130 collisions per year on Northwest Territories highways over the last three years, and the volume of traffic on the Mackenzie Highway between the 60th parallel and Yellowknife will likely increase with the opening of the Deh Cho Bridge that now allows uninterrupted travel year round, 24 hours a day;

AND WHEREAS increased traffic increases the risk of fires, injuries and fatalities on the Northwest Territories highway system;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories has engaged a working group to advance the provision of ground ambulance and highway rescue services;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that the Government of the Northwest Territories enhance its work in the area of ground ambulance and highway rescue by emphasizing training and preparing for emergencies outside of municipal boundaries;

AND FURTHER, that the government bring forward legislation within the next 12 months to update the Fire Prevention Act and to make any other amendments required to make provisions for ground ambulance and highway rescue services;

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. Nadli. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleague from Range Lake for seconding this motion. Essentially this motion asks for the establishment of ambulances and, at the same time, highway rescue services to deal with people that are in distress either in communities or on the highway.

Of course, it also calls for the enhancement of first responder training, training for fire departments, as well, and likely the establishment of protocols for dealing with emergency situations both inside and outside of communities. I understand there has been an interdepartmental exercise in terms of trying to add some focus in terms of the discussions of looking to establish some solutions on this initiative. In that instance, I think three departments have been working on this for some time.

Initial comments include that there's a lack of trained personnel. There's a lack of equipment, lack of money, plus a matter of liability is a major concern. Our conscience will be our liability if we do not act immediately on this matter and put in place adequate services for transporting medically distressed people or assisting vehicles, accidents or fires on our highway system. At this point there's a lack of will to establish the vital, basic service for the well-being of all Northerners, and this motion addresses that.

With the bridge opening, we should have anticipated that it's going to necessitate the need for increased services on the highway in terms of trying to be able to respond to accidents that could happen. At this point we have our volunteer fire departments in communities that need to be properly trained. One example is just in terms of putting them into a capacity so they do know how to deal with defensive fire techniques, and at the same time, first responders need to have adequate training so they're confident and, when the call of duty comes, they don't hesitate on a moment's notice. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. To the motion, I'll allow the seconder to make comments. Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've risen in this House a number of times during this session to speak about ambulance, first responders, as well as emergency services on our highways.

Mr. Speaker, recently we suffered a dangerous tragic accident on our highways and those are always – and hopefully and thank God – rare on our

highways. But the statistics show that we have had 130 vehicle accidents on our highways in the last three years, and if you add the numbers, that's almost one accident every eight days somewhere on our highways. They may seem small compared to the roadways in Alberta or our southern counterparts, but indeed it's something that is gravely concerning to many of us here.

It has been brought up in this House a number of times, as I said, during this session, where I've had concern where we're at with respect to our emergency services or highway emergency services and our first responder protocols.

I've had the chance to speak to both Municipal and Community Affairs and the Department of Health and Social Services, as well as the Department of Transportation to find out where we're at with respect to our highway protocols and our highway services. It appears that we actually did not get very far on those questions. In fact, it did probably shed more light on the fact that we had more gaping holes in our program than we did have in terms of process. So we're hoping, by virtue of today's motion and those Members who are speaking in favour of it and with Cabinet listening, that we, indeed, can make some progress and some milestones towards the safety of Northerners across the Northwest Territories.

We've known for years now that the three departments in question that I mentioned have been working on programs and services to develop emergency training management programs, but years have passed and yet we still have no solutions in site. In fact, we've asked whether or not there could be interim solutions or temporary solutions to these problematic issues. We've heard that there will be none forthcoming.

I applaud the Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli, who has brought forward this motion. I think it speaks loud and clear the needs of our citizens, and it speaks loud and clear the needs of this government to finally get to a point in question where we have the right services and safety for the people on our highways. I will be voting in favour of this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. To the motion. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting this motion given that at least several communities in my riding don't have an ambulance, or even the training and the support services to support an ambulance service. I think that our government has to start taking a look at this. I know that we had a nice ambulance committee, joint committee on the government side at the deputy level. I'd like to see that reactivated, look at the issues and certainly provide for the safety of all those travelling our highway systems. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion is overdue. Action on this front is overdue. I thank my colleagues for bringing this forward. Highways in the Northwest Territories are a part of GNWT infrastructure and, as such, we are the responsible party. Communities are clearly willing, if properly resourced with equipment and training, to fill in here, but they need proper support. The horror of having severe injuries and being left to suffer with nobody responsible to respond and/or no one with capacity to do so by those who are willing is completely untenable. I will be supporting this motion, as I said, and I thank my colleagues Mr. Nadli and Mr. Dolynny. I urge all to support this motion and get it done.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the motion. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting this motion. Our NWT highway system, in some cases, is very long distances between communities and if somebody should get into an accident, it could be hours before anybody could get to them. That's very critical to the safety and life of an individual. I do applaud Mr. Nadli for continuing to address this issue in committee, and bringing it to the forefront and to the House today in terms of a motion. As I said, I will be supporting the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. To the motion. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise in support of this motion. I would like to thank the mover and seconder of the motion for bringing it forward. I feel that we have long needed an improvement in the provisions across the NWT for emergency services on our highways. We have been making do and we've been doing things a bit piecemeal. We have provided a small amount of money but it's not nearly enough, and it's time we look seriously at what is required and put in place a system that is going to provide the services that are required.

I've advocated in this House many times since I've been here, on behalf of my community, for increased funding to cover the costs of the Yellowknife fire department, who regularly acts in response to an emergency outside of the city limits. It may be down the highway, it may be out on the Ingraham Trail, but they are very often called out to fires or traffic emergencies. There are also emergencies that happen in the wintertime with ice and people falling through ice on lakes and so on. It's definitely a need within my community, and I recognize that all the other communities that are on the highway system feel a responsibility to respond to an emergency that is outside their municipal

boundaries but is on a highway that goes through their community.

As our territory grows we are going to add more and more highways to our system. As we do that, we as a government have to consider the safety of our residents. We're going to have more people on highways. We're going to have more people at risk in the remote areas, as people have already mentioned. As a government, I think we have to recognize that need for increased emergency services and we have to seriously look at what we have and don't have, and that there is a need for us to provide greater emergency services.

Some investigative work was done a number of years ago. The departments of Health and Social Services and MACA got together and they looked at providing an emergency service program across the NWT. That work was stopped pretty quickly when they ran up against a fairly large bill in terms of setting this in place and funding. I think it's important that we have to start that work again. The cost may seem to be prohibitive, but there are ways of doing it. We can start minimally and work our way up. I think the government must investigate, as this motion requests. The government must look at the funding that is required, and that we, as a government, have to find a way, government and Regular Members have to find a way to find that funding and put the services in place that are required. I urge all my colleagues to vote in support of this motion. It is something we need.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. To the motion. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with my colleagues, I will be supporting this motion. I know this is an issue for Hay River. We are in the centre of three highways and we do respond quite a bit to rescue outside of the community. We have issue with this and we think this motion moves us in the right direction.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. To the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is a good thing to look into, to investigate. I think that everybody probably sitting on this side of the House has a different idea of what an adequate emergency response network would look like in the Northwest Territories. I'm sure that some people have an idea about what it should look like that would probably be out of reach, from a financial point of view.

In a community like Hay River where we have many volunteers who are willing to devote their time to being first responders, to taking all the training, to going out on calls, it's a system that needs to be supported and can work well, but if Members have an idea of people who are on a payroll full time in communities waiting for accidents to respond to, I

don't think that in this day and age and in our territory with its vast expanses between communities, and its vast miles and miles of highway, I'm rather doubtful that our government could afford something like that. But if it means getting communities together, identifying volunteers, our government supporting them with training and skills, including the ones that already currently exist like I mentioned, the Hay River fire department, offering more service to, I guess, harness the volunteers and the people who are willing to go out and do that, I would totally support that. But I'm not getting a sense, from what Members are saying, exactly what their expectations are here. But if it means moving forward to look into this, I will support that, but I think we also have to be realistic.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Members who have brought this motion forward, Mr. Nadli and the MLA for Range Lake.

This past winter Minister Ramsay and myself travelled over 702 kilometres on the Mackenzie Valley winter road. Mr. Ramsay and I also took turns driving on the Mackenzie Valley winter road, and there were several close calls. Even though the vehicles were going 50 kilometres an hour, the roads were so narrow and so bumpy, and not quite up to the standards where we'd like to see our roads up in the Mackenzie Valley.

I'd like to see if there is some way that this government can put together a comprehensive regional type of emergency rescue protocol. Even the Town of Norman Wells, in the last government, met with me and said we need to know who are the first responders, what's the protocol. Is it the RCMP? Is it the church? Is it the town? Right now there's no territorial coordination to help us with these jurisdictions and authorities.

When we were driving the winter road, Mr. Ramsay and I, there were three or four inches in between the space of a semi-truck and our vehicle, and there was hardly any space to pull aside. I also heard that the communities in my region have said that they've been hit by some of the vehicles. Thank God there have been no serious accidents on our winter roads. We had one in Wrigley that the vehicle went off the road and they had to get some aircraft and helicopters to help this person.

I will be supporting this motion. I look forward to seeing how the Minister can work with the different regions on different flexibilities and see where it makes sense in the Sahtu, what makes sense up in the Beaufort-Delta, Nunakput or down in this area. Everybody has different needs at different times, and certainly, for us, seeing 1,600 to 1,700 trucks coming up in a short period of time. Plus, that's the opportunity for people in the Sahtu to come out to

Hay River or Yellowknife or Edmonton, do their shopping, take their children out. They use that road, also, we just need to be a little more coordinated. We know once you get into the communities if there's an accident, who's ready, who's going to go, who to call right now. It's sort of, okay, we have to do this and so let's organize ourselves. I look forward to some leadership, direction and input from these committees as to what we can do.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will also be voting in favour of this. I'm hopeful that this also extends to the Mackenzie Delta riding, the Beaufort-Delta. During the summer months, I believe the Dempster is one of the only highways in the Northwest Territories that is all gravel. There is a lot of dust on the road during the summer and there are a lot of accidents also. I do believe the community of Fort McPherson has requested this service a few months back, and I do believe we are working with them, but it is much needed. I'd also suggest that this government work with the Government of the Yukon. As many of you may know, the Dempster Highway connects to the highway in the Yukon. We need to work out some kind of agreement with them to respond to any emergencies that are on that highway and share the costs.

With that, I fully support this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, like my colleagues, to speak in favour of this particular initiative. It's time that this government moves forward on an emergency health services type of act which outlines what we can do and what we will do for our citizens because they're important.

In this day and age, it's a great surprise that we do not have some time of ambulatory act that demonstrates and says that these are the types of services we offer. What we hear today is both the passion and the struggle brought forward by many Members and their communities, where they're almost helpless, stranded by the process by not being able to help good people in certain circumstances. What we get are Good Samaritans running out doing the right thing, but in some cases they may end up causing more harm than good.

If we move forward on a particular act, spurred on by this motion that says ground ambulance services are necessary on our highway, this will stimulate the right type of action and we need to stand by it with the right type of funding.

Health care is such a critical issue amongst all Canadians, not just people in the Northwest Territories, all Canadians. We see the groundswell at every single budget across Canada as it grows and grows and grows because it emphasizes how important health care is.

This is one of the elements in northern health care that cannot be stranded and ignored. These are the types of services that our policies and protocols must address because, in some ways, they are already addressing them. Under MACA, we have the Highway Emergency Ambulance Protocol, which I was trying to get at a couple of days ago, which basically says we had an incident but we didn't follow our protocols. I look forward to the response by the Minister of MACA as to what actually happened in that situation.

But equally, as I balance this issue out, it's tied in with skills as well as tools. Yes, we can fund them, but we have to make sure that we can get behind them so they get the right training. We have to make sure they get the right tools, such as the proper ambulance services, for the right conditions. There are many elements of this particular motion that cannot be forgotten.

By and large, I start off by saying it's time this government comes forward with a health emergency services type of act that addresses ambulances, highways and says how we reach outside of our typical municipalities.

The last area I'll mention, although it's not directly related to the motion, it sort of speaks to the essence of the motion. As we know, the incident a few weeks ago, we could not send a medevac out there to rescue that one person. Timing, as we all know, in incidents can range from we need to respond immediately or some with lesser priority. The way our medevac services are set up, we can't send anyone out to rescue anyone who isn't at a health centre. So where are we left? We're left with motions like this today that say we have to find a way to respond to our people who are in urgent need of help.

This motion I think speaks to that. I applaud the Member for bringing forward this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion. Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all in here I think appreciate the value of this type of service. However, there are a number of things we need to look at. I think a couple of Members have pointed out some of the challenges we face. One of the therefores in the motion is that we update the Fire Prevention Act. The Fire Prevention Act regulates the investigation, reporting of fire hazards. It does not address ground ambulance or highway rescue in the Northwest

Territories. We're working on updating the Fire Prevention Act right now and we need to keep that work going to ensure that that act is... If we were to try combining the two policy initiatives, it may delay the Fire Prevention Act, which we don't want at this point.

I have said in this House on a number of occasions that we have formed a new departmental committee. They're tasked with looking at the overall picture across the Northwest Territories. An important part of the committee's work is going to be dealing with exactly the situation that Mr. Hawkins mentioned yesterday on the Highway Emergency Alerting Protocol. They're going to update that and have a look at that.

Work is going on. I have said that before. We continue to do our work.

Our municipal legislation allows our communities to establish, and deliver, and operate services such as fire rescue and ambulance. It also allows communities to extend fire and ambulance services outside the community boundaries. The point is being made, and is well taken, that we need to do what we can to assist our communities.

One of the things we're looking at is training opportunities. I think that's first and foremost, and most important is to ensure we have properly trained folks that are running out to respond to any type of emergency. Then part of the committee's work is to work with the communities to identify equipment and maintenance, administration and training. We are doing that. We're undertaking that right now. We're working very closely with Health and Social Services. They are looking at moving forward with developing standards on this particular issue. So we're working closely with them. We're working closely with Transportation.

All the issues that the Members speak of, I think we're doing a lot of the work. Because there is such interest and it's a very important topic, and there's is no denying that, we'll commit to our colleagues that at the first available opportunity, we would like to provide a briefing to committee to share our vision, get their input on a territorial-wide strategy. We look forward to that opportunity. It will give Members some clarity and help provide some direction. We are looking forward to that opportunity.

I would like to assure Members that this is a very important issue and it's one that we take quite seriously. We've already done a lot of the work. Again, the most important part here is to ensure that our community first responders are trained and able to respond to emergencies. I think one Member may have pointed out that, in our desire to be helpful, some people just rush in and help because that's just the way we are. We're Northerners. That's just our nature. But sometimes

we may do more harm than good. So we want to make sure that all of our folks are trained.

As this is a direction to Cabinet, we will be abstaining from the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I'll allow the mover of the motion to speak to final remarks. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of my colleagues that spoke in favour of this motion. We also have to acknowledge that we're dealing with some very stark realities in the North when we have small communities and large centres. We're kind of living in the North at different levels, but we all make this our home. It's important that we take care of each other. I would like to think, whether we live in Inuvik or Fort Smith or Yellowknife or Fort Providence, we're all there to help each other. I think this motion is in that spirit. I will be seeking a recorded vote. Mahsi.

RECORDED VOTE

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The Member is seeking a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Nadli, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Moses, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Blake, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Dolynny, Ms. Bisaro.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. McLeod – Yellowknife South, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. McLeod – Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Order! The results for the recorded vote: in favour, 11; opposed, zero; and abstentions, seven. The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Bromley.

MOTION 11-17(4): PLEBISCITE ON RATIFICATION OF DEVOLUTION FINAL AGREEMENT, DEFEATED

MR. BROMLEY: WHEREAS the Elections and Plebiscites Act provides that the Commissioner may, on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly, direct that a plebiscite be held on any question that is of importance to the people of the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories signed the Northwest Territories Lands

and Resources Devolution Agreement-in-Principle on January 26, 2011;

AND WHEREAS on March 11, 2013, the Prime Minister of Canada announced that consensus on the terms for achieving devolution of lands and resources to the Northwest Territories had been reached;

AND WHEREAS assumption of the authority to manage lands and natural resources is the most significant stage in the political development of the Northwest Territories short of provincehood;

AND WHEREAS a plebiscite would provide a formal and high-profile opportunity for public debate and would increase public awareness and understanding of the meaning of devolution;

AND WHEREAS there has been little opportunity for citizens to express their wishes on the form of the Devolution Agreement and on the resource management regime that would result;

AND WHEREAS providing citizens with the opportunity to participate in this historic decision in advance of ratification of the Final Agreement by the Government of the Northwest Territories would result in a clear demonstration of the public will with respect to devolution of lands and resources to the Northwest Territories;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that this Legislative Assembly recommends to the Commissioner that a plebiscite be held in the Northwest Territories on Monday, May 13, 2013, with the following question: "Should the Government of the Northwest Territories sign the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Final Agreement?"

Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the motion. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: To the motion?

MR. SPEAKER: I was just going to say that. Motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I'd like to thank my colleague Ms. Bisaro for assisting with this motion. I'd like to thank the House for the opportunity to bring this proposal for consideration by my colleagues here today.

What is the legal basis for a plebiscite? Our Elections and Plebiscite Act says the Commissioner, on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly, may, by order, direct that a plebiscite be held on any question that is of importance to the people of the Northwest Territories or to the people of one or more electoral districts. It further says a plebiscite is only for the purpose of collecting information and the results of a plebiscite are not binding. Does the question of devolution and its implementation fit the

requirement of the act that plebiscites be staged on "any question that is of importance to the people of the Northwest Territories." Based on the importance applied to this initiative by successive Premiers and super stressed by our own current Premier, I know this government thinks of this as a very, very big thing.

We have used the mechanism of a plebiscite to support other debate and ask for responsible input from our public before. When it came time to decide whether our former Northwest Territories should be split to create two new jurisdictions, the leaders, who were equally elected at the time, took the question to residents. That plebiscite on division was no more binding than a plebiscite on devolution would be now.

The Premier says, I don't believe in government by plebiscite. To be clear, a plebiscite is not binding. In fact, it is a proven effective mechanism to get input from our people on an issue that is important to them. The biggest benefits of the division plebiscite was to focus and galvanize public attention on the issue. It gave us all the opportunity to consider the detailed implications of what that decision would mean. It prompted motivated citizens to learn and inform themselves, not only about the division question but the nature and forum of their government. Government chose to listen to the people.

The Premier has promised "an unprecedented level" of public consultation. We have the precedent of a plebiscite on a major issue. So if the Premier is promising to go to unprecedented lengths, a plebiscite would be even less than what he is promising. Is there an expectation that the citizens would turn down the Devolution Agreement? By the Premier's description, the proposed agreement already enjoys solid, formal support demonstrated by the participation of five of the seven Aboriginal governments in the negotiation process. He said the other day that he has heard no groundswell of opposition.

I've been listening closely the last few days and while there have been detractors and opponents, I think we would all estimate the public mood is highly supportive. I have myself a record of critical oversight and comment on devolution. Yet I hope to support the initiative once I become more thoroughly familiar with the draft Final Agreement. People are concerned that the consultation plan will not be meaningful. The Premier has been quoted as saying that this is a done deal and stated his concern that if the plebiscite were turned down, it would be hard to get the federal government to move on this again. Given these statements, I think it's understandable that people would dismiss the promised consultation as pointless and meaningless. People want their interests accommodated? How about through

implementation? A government offer for a public vote on the question itself would provide the proof that the government is listening and looking to respond to public interest.

We have an opportunity to obtain resident validation. The democratic inclusion through a plebiscite is an opportunity too good to miss. So again, the benefit of a plebiscite is not primarily in the answer, but in the offer of partnership and participation. Not only do our residents need to understand the Devolution Final Agreement, but they need and want to understand how things will work in a post-devolution NWT. How the agreement will be implemented is of keen interest to the general public and the general public must have an opportunity for input.

The Premier has said that the public will have full access to information on the agreement. Since the announcement, I've asked for a printed copy of the agreement and been directed to the website to print my own. As a Member, I have not even been able to get a printed copy of this 120-page agreement. If I can't get one, how will our residents get it to read? Even people with computers and the Internet will be hard pressed to print out the 120-page agreement for study. That's not a good beginning. This points to why the full and detailed review of the agreement would be promoted by the staging of a plebiscite.

People also need to understand what the signing of an agreement would mean in real terms. For the half of our citizens employed by some level of government, full public discussion would clarify these complex issues. We know that voter turnouts are down in general elections. Here is an opportunity to invite our citizens into the workings of their democracy. We shouldn't shut them out.

This week a poll was conducted by EKOS Research, tabled earlier today, a nationally recognized polling firm. A statistically valid sample weighted to provide representative proportions of Yellowknife versus non-Yellowknife residents, Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal residents, women versus men residents. The question posed was, "In your opinion, should the NWT government ask NWT residents to vote on whether to accept the proposed devolution deal with Ottawa before the deal is finalized," and the results, I'm sure most of my colleagues will know by now in the House, was an overwhelming yes – 68 percent said yes. Slightly more for Aboriginal people. Twenty percent said no, 12 percent were uncertain.

Mr. Speaker, the people have spoken. They want a meaningful role in the decision and a real and proven mechanism for providing their input. Overwhelmingly, they want a voice. I did not come up with this idea. We are simply responding here to public demand. A plebiscite is not binding and employing this approach will not negate or prevent

a vote in this House by our leadership here. Indeed, it will enhance the basis for a House decision.

The Member for Frame Lake and I seek all Members' support on this motion and I would welcome the Premier and Cabinet's recognition of the people's will. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call for a recorded vote. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Motion is in order. The Member has requested a recorded vote. I'll allow the seconder to speak to the motion. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's absolutely no question that devolution and its implementation is one of the most important political developments in the history of the NWT. I believe that all residents should be able to be a part of it. We have yet to see any consultation and public engagement plan, as mentioned by Mr. Bromley. As the expression goes, talk is cheap and that's all we have at the moment. I find that it's not a surprise and it's no wonder that people are skeptical about their ability to have input into this Final Devolution Agreement and implementation.

As I said in my statement in the House yesterday, not only do our residents need to understand the Devolution Final Agreement, but they need and want to understand how things will work in a post-devolution NWT. How the agreement will be implemented must be discussed with the general public, and the general public must have an opportunity for input. A plebiscite is an opportunity for education and creation of awareness, to provide for an indication of support for the deal from our residents. I would think that the Premier would want to get that concrete validation of his efforts, a positive sign that the NWT believes, as he does, that this devolution deal is good for our territory.

The Premier has stated several times that the Devolution Agreement is a done deal. Holding a plebiscite, if the Premier were to agree, would contradict current public opinion that the upcoming public engagement and consultation is meaningless and a waste of time and money.

I feel very strongly that the Devolution Agreement requires a full public discussion. There needs to be a full analysis of the impacts of the agreement. We need assurances and guarantees from our government that the funds to come from the federal government will be used for the same purposes that they are now, and we have heard none of that. A plebiscite will allow for that, for full disclosure and full dialogue.

People are telling me that they don't know enough about devolution. They don't know enough about the agreement, they don't know enough about its implementation and the impacts that it will have upon them as a resident. This issue concerns everyone, and all residents should have a chance

to express their view on this issue. As stated in an e-mail that I received today, and I imagine other Members did as well, "If there ever was a question that needed the input from residents, this is it." That's in reference to the question on devolution.

As mentioned by Mr. Bromley, we must consider that about 50 percent of NWT residents work for some order of government: the territorial government, municipal governments, Aboriginal governments, and the federal government. They need to know how implementation of this agreement will affect them and their families. They need to know what changes will result from the Devolution Agreement to their workplace and their community. The plebiscite will provide the opportunity for that discourse to occur for 50 percent of our residents to fully understand how the proposed changes will affect them.

We have to consider students and other NWT residents who are temporarily not resident in our territory. They also should have a say on this important issue.

In conclusion, a plebiscite is not binding, as stated by Mr. Bromley, but it will provide the Premier and Cabinet with a wealth of information about the mindset of our residents. It will garner serious brownie points for the Premier in his relationship with the NWT public if he agrees with this motion.

I don't understand why Members are so resistant to this plebiscite, to a process and activity that will involve our residents in a truly significant event in their lives. If we are the democratic society that we say we are, then Members will vote to support this motion. A plebiscite is democracy in action.

Lastly, I must post a recent Twitter question for people to mull over: "What's the downside of a plebiscite? If it's worth having it," – meaning the Devolution Agreement – "it should be worth engaging and defending it with the public."

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. To the motion. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today not in support of this motion. I do not believe we need a plebiscite to make this decision. The cost for this plebiscite is anywhere from \$400,000 to \$1 million and, as you said, it's not binding. What is the need for this plebiscite?

We have signatories that signed on to this agreement. I have all the faith in the signatories and this government to follow through with devolution. We've waited decades for this government to get to this position. We need to move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. To the motion. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today and I'd like to thank the mover, Mr. Bromley, and the seconder, Ms. Bisaro. The motion speaks

to a plebiscite on devolution to be held. In essence, I believe the motion is asking Northerners to put devolution to a vote. The elected Members of this House gathered together some 17 months ago and agreed collectively on the priorities of this 17th Legislative Assembly. One of those priorities was to build a strong and sustainable future for our territory by strengthening our relationships with Aboriginal and other northern governments, negotiating and implementing a Devolution Final Agreement. My support to this priority has not diminished.

Now, I'm all for debate as this is the moral fabric to which we aspire to as legislators, and from what I've seen here as an elected official for Range Lake, and after discussing this motion with many residents of my riding, the concept of putting devolution to a vote is not in the best interest of moving forward and works against the priorities of this Assembly.

Citizen participation can take on many forms of getting issues on the floor of this House and I would suggest that citizens choose all means necessary to exercise this right. The devolution bus has left the station and we need to support its journey for the betterment of all Northerners.

It is with utmost respect to the mover and seconder and those Members who may be voting in favour of this motion, I do respect their positions; however, after careful consideration of the wording of this motion and the ask of this motion, I cannot support the motion in its current format.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Democracy means many things to many different people. Democracy is certainly a form of government where people rule through their elected MLAs. The people are the absolute and supreme form of political authority. As we, as legislators, from time to time vote on behalf of our people, such as the budget process or the motions brought up in this Assembly, we are the people's voice. We were put here by the very fact that we will represent our people in these legislative halls of government.

We stand today on new ground with the old ways of doing things. We achieved a new deal with Ottawa. Much of the leadership under our Premier and past governments, to them we owe our appreciation. We value our democratic process and the importance to let our people speak through a vote. A vote to choose, a vote to say yes or no through a simple question, a question that will be affecting them for the rest of their lives and their children's children.

We're still a consensus government and passing our budget shows it's alive and well and it can work if we work it. We have regional votes. It's been done in the past with our land claims and it works.

This is the price of democracy. Power to the people. We need to believe in our people.

With a plebiscite vote the stakes are high. I'm not too sure about the timing, but we as government must ensure that all residents know the details of the Devolution Agreement. More importantly, the people need to know the possibilities and opportunities that are here for them.

We must inspire each individual to pick up the Devolution Agreement, read it, study it, talk about it, and not listen to other's opinions about it. This is true responsibility for their lives. We need to respect the Devolution Agreement and the collective ownership of it. This devolution will stop us from asking for permission from Ottawa if we can do this or that.

We have become the adults today. Now we must learn the rules of the adult world and we need to live by them as responsible adults with Canada.

We value the people's right to decide, and every four years we allow that to happen. It's a privilege to be here, not a right.

Once again, I say from our leadership in the Sahtu, have faith in our leaders. As Mr. Blake said, have faith in our people. We will decide amongst ourselves in our own way if we're going to look at the Devolution Agreement and accept it. We have a process. I'm going to work with my people. My people are going to do this in a way that is good for the Sahtu people. I would say let them have their own way of saying yes to me and I will vote according to my people. In this poll thing, I will not be supporting this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to say that I will not be supporting this motion as well. As my colleagues have said, this has been a process 20 years in the making and a priority of this Assembly. We are moving forward with the process. The mover and seconder talk about democracy, and the democracy that happened was when we were elected to make decisions for this territory. I think it's in our hands to make the decisions and to go forward.

To have a plebiscite would be a costly venture, anywhere from \$400,000 to \$500,000 are the numbers I have heard. The government is in the process of doing a consultation. It will be debated on the floor of this House. I think it's in our hands to make a good decision for the territory and I believe that's where it is. The plebiscite is too costly and I don't believe it is an effective way. It wouldn't be binding anyway, so it's not being very effective. I will not be supporting this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. To the motion. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The job of an MLA is to be here front and centre and make decisions. Often you have to look at both sides of the issues and often the decisions have to come quick.

We've discussed devolution when we got elected into the Assembly, like Mr. Dolynny pointed out. We had many briefings with the government. They have informed us about the plan. We have looked at the whole Northwest Territories, and to say that the people haven't been consulted I think is not true. There have been many public consultations throughout the past 18 months and I think as part of the signing, the Premier indicated there will be even more consultations.

I believe there are other ways than a plebiscite to gauge public support and public opinion as we move forward on big issues. If we start looking at plebiscites, why didn't we do it for the bridge or the Inuvik-Tuk initiatives, which have huge impacts on our government and budgets in the future? I don't believe that we're doing ourselves a service by going down the road of a plebiscite. With that, I will not be supporting and will be voting against this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You've heard a lot of good comments here in the House today. As elected officials, people put us in this position. A lot of us have talked to our constituents and, actually, two of the groups that I represent back home in the Beaufort-Delta region and in Inuvik have signed off as signatories to the Devolution Agreement. We also have to respect all the hard work of the people that we elected to the Executive Council that have been doing a lot of negotiating with the federal government as well as the Aboriginal organizations and governments to get them on board and consult with them and work with them.

In terms of consultation, I think it has been done. What happened earlier this week in the House with the signing on Monday, with that signing I know government is going to go out and do a good job in consulting with all the communities and Aboriginal groups and with those who haven't signed on yet as well. We have to respect the hard work that's been put into this file, both from our government, our staff, and our Aboriginal organizations. It's about building relationships, building relationships with the federal government and the Aboriginal groups.

With that said and with the other elected officials in my region that are supporting this, I will be voting against the motion today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. To the motion. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing that I've really been thinking about lots is devolution, obviously. What's fairly significant is the statement from the Premier that this is a done deal and that there are five out of the seven Aboriginal groups that have signed on. One of the regions that hasn't signed on is the Deh Cho. I understand there are talks to try to perhaps identify some common ground in terms of building consensus and partnerships and the level of collaboration.

What really concerns me is, in terms of trying to build partnerships, we need to trust each other. I think I've built my political ground in terms of building that trust and having integrity and respecting people's differences. At the same time, we have to be very up front with each other, and trust is very critical in terms of negotiations at this point. If there's ever a time that that comes to task, this is the moment where we are at a juncture of either jumping all in one canoe or else leaving some people behind and then shooting the rapids. Hopefully that doesn't happen, but at the same time, there are discussions going on that I feel, perhaps, could create an opportunity for at least some matters to be resolved and make it possible for the regions that remain outstanding on the outer perimeter to, perhaps, consider the confederation that has resulted, in terms of going forward into the future.

For those reasons, I will not be supporting this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. To the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've already spoken to this issue of the plebiscite in the House before, but just to be on the public record for this particular vote and this particular motion, I will not be supporting the motion.

A plebiscite is a costly thing. It is an opinion poll. I do applaud the Premier's efforts in getting the signatories that have come to the table already on devolution. I know that that did not happen by waving a magic wand. That took hard work. That took visits to all of the regions. It took a lot of consultation out there. We know some of the work that quietly went on behind the scenes to canvass Aboriginal governments and canvass people in the public.

I think that I would rather see the money that would be spent on a plebiscite go into an awareness campaign whereby communities or regions or organizations, schools, could make a request to this government to have a presentation made to them on what devolution is. It's a complex subject, and it isn't just something we've been working on or talking to people about in the last 18 months. Try the last 18 years. Try the last four years. I mean, it's something that's been around for a long time and

talked about, and now we have a draft final agreement, we have a, well, a final agreement, and I think the money and time could be better spent to respond to people's requests who would like to know more and be informed of how this is going to affect them.

I know in Hay River, we'd probably like to know how devolution is going to affect us on many different fronts. I don't think that we should go out on a campaign, though, and hold public hearings and meetings, and all kinds of things that people may or may not choose to show up. I mean, devolution is a complex thing. It's something that a lot of people are probably interested in, but it's something that a lot of other people aren't interested in. I think that if we set up some kind of a presentation team and we could do it by request, by community, by region, by intuition, I think that would be money and time extremely well spent, and I would support that, but not a plebiscite.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. Mr. McLeod

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Final Agreement represents an important step forward for the Northwest Territories and the people we serve through this Assembly.

As I have stated before, devolution of lands and resources will provide tremendous benefits to the people of the Northwest Territories. Devolution means that decisions made over public lands and resources in the Northwest Territories will be made here, by a more accessible, accountable and responsive government. Devolution means, finally, a direct benefit in the form of resource revenues will flow to the Northwest Territories and not just to Ottawa. Devolution also means that we will have the opportunity to work more closely and collaboratively with our partners, Aboriginal governments, in matters related to land and resources.

Devolution, once realized, will be a huge accomplishment and significant achievement. It is of such importance that this government will ensure that all residents of the Northwest Territories are informed of it. That is why, prior to the signing of the final agreement, we will undertake extensive public engagement unlike any we have done for previous devolutions.

While negotiations have been concluded, prior to deciding on whether to sign the Final NWT Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement, this Assembly will have the benefit of hearing the public views on devolution. Prior devolutions were negotiated and signed with very little community engagement. Indeed, all previous devolutions in the Northwest Territories were done without the participation of Aboriginal governments and made effective through program transfer agreements

approved by the executive branches of government alone.

This devolution has been the subject of comprehensive negotiations over a dozen years. This devolution, unlike others, also included an agreement-in-principle that has been widely publicized and reviewed. Most importantly and most uniquely, this Devolution Agreement will be put before this Assembly where the elected representatives of all of the residents of the Northwest Territories will be asked to consider and approve it. We did not do that for the devolution of health, of airports, of highways, of forestry, or any previous devolution.

In light of the fact that this Devolution Agreement will be presented to the people of the Northwest Territories, who will have opportunity to comment on it through public information sessions and it will be put before this Assembly for approval, I see no reason to entertain the idea of a plebiscite.

The Government of the Northwest Territories will be asking the Members of this Assembly to participate in the public meetings held in their ridings so that Members can also hear directly from their constituents. It also makes no sense to ask the Commissioner to hold a plebiscite when we are already committed to having the elected representatives sitting in this House vote on the Devolution Agreement.

We are trying to reduce our dependence on Ottawa and take control of our own lands and resources. With all due respect, why would we ask the Commissioner, who is a federal appointee, to intervene in business that we want to see conducted in this Legislative Assembly?

Plebiscites are not binding. They are simply tools used to gauge public support. They are not the only tool to do that, and they certainly are not the most cost effective. Previous estimates for the cost of a plebiscite were approximately \$1.8 million, and we know a significant amount of work and time with Elections Northwest Territories would be required. A plebiscite would delay the potential approval of this agreement, and a delay in approval could delay the potential transfer date. Each month of delay represents approximately \$10 million in lost funding the Government of the Northwest Territories would receive under the agreement we have negotiated. We cannot afford to not move ahead.

As I mentioned, a plebiscite is not binding, so it does not relieve this government from having to make a decision. One of the great strengths of our government, and one of the reasons devolution will result in better land management, is that we are a small jurisdiction with a very accessible representative government. We can meet with, and work with, our constituents at a scale that other jurisdictions simply cannot do. Each Member of this Assembly holds a responsibility to do the work of

considering the Devolution Agreement and weighing the views of the people they represent, and ultimately, each of us will be asked whether or not we support this Devolution Agreement. I invite all Members to join the Government of the Northwest Territories as we provide information sessions throughout the territory.

As I have stated, the Members of this Legislative Assembly will be asked to make a decision on devolution. We do not need a plebiscite in order to make such a decision, and for this reason, Cabinet cannot support the motion. Cabinet will be voting against this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 7, 1897, Frederick Haultain had taken the reins of the Northwest Territories as its first Premier. We lost that dream on September 1, 1905. Then Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, who happens to be my favourite Prime Minister not because he's liberal but for a lot of reasons, took away the rights of the Northwest Territories' people to govern itself. For 109 years we have been waiting for home rule to finally return to the Northwest Territories where it belongs in the hands of the elected people of the Northwest Territories. Home rule has finally come home and it's time we get on with business. No more negotiations. Let's get this job done, finally.

Since this idea of a plebiscite has finally risen, I have received three e-mails in support of a plebiscite. Conversely, I have received dozens of e-mails saying, finally, let's get this job done. Many people are saying we need this done; we need to move forward.

Never before has the future been so promising than it is now before the people of the Northwest Territories. One hundred and nine years it has taken us to finally get our act in order, finally to get the Government of Canada onside and we cannot miss this opportunity.

Every Member of this Assembly has been elected to make decisions, as my colleague Mr. Bouchard has said and several other of my colleagues made reference to. With that, this issue has never been a surprise to anybody in the Northwest Territories that when this deal finally came after 109 years. I'm not talking about the 12 years in the last negotiation round we have had. It has taken us 109 years to get this far. We cannot let this opportunity pass by once again.

I completely agree with the Premier on this, and a few other occasions, that a plebiscite is important, but it's not the right tool at this particular time. I believe, in my travels as an MLA over almost 10 years, I have used every occasion to remind people how important devolution is and I have used every election to talk about it. I have no doubt every

Member, in some form or fashion, of this House, has used the occasion of their election to talk about the opportunities of devolution and finally in the Northwest Territories succeeding to its rightful place as a full partner in this confederation of Canada.

Our language may have come in different forms, but we have all talked about, in some manner, the same message, which is, Northwest Territories is an equal partner in Canada, and a plebiscite, in my view, may be delaying that. I think it sets the public up for the wrong message. I think if we proceed with a plebiscite, it better be succeeded with a clarity act as to what it actually means to make sure we know where we're going.

I think a plebiscite is a yes or no, but it doesn't take into account the last 12 years of work required. It doesn't take the last year and a half's work into consideration. As I said earlier, it certainly doesn't take the 109 years into consideration when home rule is finally returning to where it belongs: to the Legislative Assembly for the people of the Northwest Territories.

In closing, I want to point out this: It has been repeated several times in this House, this plebiscite could cost up to \$1.8 million. I cannot imagine how we would not consider spending that \$1.8 million on programs for nurses in small communities, for addictions and treatment programs, for investment in students at Aurora College. This could go so much further than just a simple question. So I put programs before this vote. I put programs and people and services first. In that sense, there should be no surprise to this House where I stand. I will be voting against this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Order! To the motion. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, if I may add a few quick comments to this debate. Seventeen Assemblies have come here through the history of the Northwest Territories, a long journey to self-government going back nearly 70 years. It's 46 years since the planes came north from Ottawa with the Commissioner to get us even closer to that idea of a responsible government.

My colleague Mrs. Groenewegen and I have been part of five of those Assemblies. Every one of those Assemblies that I've been in, we've been pushing for devolution. We're on the verge of the removal of the last of the political shackles from Ottawa that bind us and hold us back and it's time to keep moving. We should not be standing in front of the Commissioner hat in hand, shuffling our feet and tugging our forelock like a humble mendicant asking for a plebiscite. We should be discussing this issue in this Legislative Assembly, where we are elected Members, and deciding on whether we approve, up or down, the devolution motion.

We will do that. We will vote on this motion in the May session. I think we're making the right decision here today. I hope it's clear to the folks that are listening that we have their interests at heart. I haven't received one call. I haven't received one e-mail. I ran on devolution in the last election. I have run on it in every election. I think it's time has come and we know what we have to do. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. To the motion. Mr. Bromley, for closing remarks.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate hearing from my colleagues today. I heard many comments about cost. I am the first to admit that there is a cost to democracy, and I know that everybody in this House is aware of considerable government wastage that is way beyond the cost and the benefits of a plebiscite.

I've heard some comments about time. The Premier waxed loquacious about how this is going to delay everything. The motion itself points out that it's within his dictated time schedule, so there would be no delay whatsoever from this.

The people don't want this, people are saying. I didn't get any e-mails, people are saying. The idea of a plebiscite has been on the books for, what, two or three days here? EKOS research conducted a poll. Have people been consulted? Obviously not. They want a vote. They have spoken overwhelmingly and clearly.

I might mention that this is all the people of the Northwest Territories. More than two-thirds of every person in every riding have spoken and said we want a plebiscite, we want a vote, we want our voice heard.

People have mentioned that they are elected so, therefore, they are the voice of their people, but when people are elected, at least when I'm elected I also hear them saying, but we want you to listen to what we have to say, and we want you to act based on what you're hearing. Again, the people have spoken, more than two-thirds of the people – Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal, men, women and so on across the Northwest Territories – and they want this to happen. Are we listening, is my question. I think we are, by proposing this plebiscite and approving it today.

The Premier talked about why ask the Commissioner, he is a federal employee. That's pretty good semantics there. I'm surprised at the things I'm hearing. It's almost as if this is threatening. I'm sure it's not, but I'm very surprised at the tone of these remarks when we're talking about a democratic tool here. I'm pretty perplexed about that. Obviously, that's untrue. What we're doing here is asking the people what their comments are and what their take is on the idea of devolution in a non-binding, constructive, and proven, effective way.

On the other hand, the positive aspects of a plebiscite, of course, is the opportunity it presents to give a formal way to educate, inform and seek input and reflection. It provides a validation. I have no doubt that the Premier would get his validation to this, but in a much more meaningful way. This is a real opportunity for validation.

My colleague from the Deh Cho said, what kind of basis do we want to move forward on. Do we want to move forward on a dictatorial basis or do we want to move forward on a representative, democratic basis where we're actually listening to the people and responding. We're engaging, we're giving them an opportunity for their voice to be heard.

The right action here is, clearly, to get a plebiscite on the table within the Premier's time frame. The Chief Electoral Officer has provided assurance that this can be done and a good format for a question. Obviously, this doesn't detract from the accomplishments of devolution, what the Premier talked about. Indeed, it's a major accomplishment. In fact, it is an important step, just as the Premier said. However, how it's implemented will actually determine the benefits that the Premier spoke about. That is where we actually could do some real consultation here as opposed to the hollow sorts of things that have been done to date. Again, it is the people that are saying this, not me.

I look forward to a vote and I appreciate the support of Ms. Bisaro and Mr. Nadli and their comments today. I appreciate all the insights provided in everybody's comments. I will look forward to a plebiscite this coming May.

RECORDED VOTE

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The Member asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Bromley, Ms. Bisaro.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Blake, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. McLeod – Yellowknife South, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. McLeod – Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Dolynny, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Moses.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please rise. In favour, two; opposed, 14; abstentions, zero. The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to deal with a motion I gave notice of earlier today.

---Unanimous consent granted

MOTION 12-17(4): REFERRAL OF PROPOSED OMBUDSMAN OFFICE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, CARRIED

MR. NADLI: WHEREAS nine Canadian provinces and Yukon have parliamentary ombudsman offices; AND WHEREAS Yukon, a smaller jurisdiction than the Northwest Territories, has combined the offices of the Information and Privacy Commissioner with that of an ombudsman;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Yukon recently commissioned a report on the operations of Yukon's combined ombudsman/Information and Privacy Commissioner, which in February 2013 recommended that the office be made a full-time position, citing pending health privacy and whistleblower legislation which are expected to increase the workload in the position;

AND WHEREAS the Northwest Territories' current Information and Privacy Commissioner has also noted that her workload will expand should new health privacy legislation and whistleblower legislation be enacted;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories has undertaken a review of current practices which identified more than two dozen pieces of territorial legislation which establish statutory appeal mechanisms;

AND WHEREAS Members of the NWT Legislative Assembly have frequently raised the need for a territorial ombudsman in debate in this House, most recently in Motion 9-17(3), carried on June 8, 2012;

AND WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Government Operations wrote to the Premier on November 7, 2012, to state the committee's interest in the concept of an ombudsman's office for the NWT, combined with that of another statutory officer or officers such as the Information and Privacy Commissioner;

AND WHEREAS such an office could assist the Legislative Assembly and standing committees in their role in upholding standards of government accountability;

AND WHEREAS further research, analysis and review are required in order to determine the potential need for an NWT ombudsman, whether stand-alone or combined with another office;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the potential role of an NWT ombudsman, whether stand-alone or combined with another statutory office, and options for implementing such an office, be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for research, review and

analysis, and that the committee report its findings back to this House at the earliest opportunity;

AND FURTHER, that the Standing Committee on Government Operations shall be provided, through appropriations of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, with the necessary financial support to carry out its assigned responsibilities as they relate to this review.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. To the motion. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the chair of the Assembly's Standing Committee on Government Operations, I'm pleased to move this motion. Committee members have a keen interest in any measures that could improve government accountability, administrative fairness and responsiveness. The matter of a territorial ombudsman, which could be just such a measure, has often been discussed in this House. There is support from this Assembly for the concept, as shown by the passage of Motion 9-17(3) last June.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations took the initiative to write to the Premier to state our interest in the possibility of an ombudsman combined with one or more of the existing part-time statutory officers. I would like to thank the government for reviewing our concerns and cataloguing the current statutory appeals processes. This is a hopeful start, but more information is, clearly, needed. The present motion will authorize the Standing Committee on Government Operations to conduct independent research and analysis to explore the need for a territorial ombudsman and the potential role of such an officer.

From my own point of view, as an MLA representing small communities, I will want to make sure that such an office can benefit all of our residents. Practical, cost-effective options for implementation should also be researched. The standing committee will be very pleased to undertake this work on referral by the Assembly, and report back to the House at an early date.

I'd like to thank the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, Ms. Wendy Bisaro, for seconding this motion and for her long-standing leadership on this issue. Finally, thank you, colleagues. I hope you will support this motion in the interest in full and fair consideration of the need for a territorial ombudsman.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. To the motion. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the seconder of the motion and deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, I would like to speak briefly about committee's reason for bringing this forward. As my colleague Mr. Nadli has mentioned, the need for a territorial

ombudsman has been discussed in this House for many years and I have been pushing it over the last few years that I've been here.

I'm sure that all of us believe in commonly accepted principles of administrative fairness, and these include:

- the right to be treated with respect and dignity;
- the right to speak on your own behalf or to have an advocate speak for you or with you;
- the right to be heard;
- the right to participate in decisions that affect you;
- the right to receive clear, complete and appropriate reasons for a decision;
- the right to obtain all information that led to the initial decision or that is being considered in an appeal;
- the right to an impartial review of a decision that affects you, a review that is accessible, flexible, timely and easy to use; and
- the right to an appeal procedure that has a built-in mechanism to protect against retribution.

The Northwest Territories has numerous appeals and complaints processes set up through both policy and legislation, processes which help protect our citizens' rights to administrative fairness. In many jurisdictions, however, there is an ombudsman who generally oversees the administrative actions of government and determines their administrative fairness. An ombudsman may investigate complaints from the public or, in some cases, conduct investigations on his or her own initiative or by referral from a committee or a Minister. An ombudsman may consult with authorities and make recommendations to resolve issues of unfairness and improve administrative practices. The ombudsman can be a source of information and advice about administrative fairness.

In the Northwest Territories, an ombudsman could do many things. He or she could provide an information and referral service or recommend efficiencies in our processes or identify gaps in existing complaint and appeal processes, as well as dealing directly with any complaints and concerns that do not fall under an existing process. These are only some of the possibilities that could be investigated.

This motion will allow the Standing Committee on Government Operations to conduct research and analysis and thoroughly review all the options, including combining the ombudsman's office with that of an existing statutory officer, such as the Information and Privacy Commissioner or the Language Commissioner.

The committee would be pleased to undertake this study with a focus on the efficiency, effectiveness and usefulness of an ombudsman in the context of northern realities. I urge all my colleagues to support this motion and let the committee get to work.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Item 18, first reading of bills. Mr. Miltenberger.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 5:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2012-2013

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 6:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2013-2014

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 7:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2011-2012

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 7, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 7, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 8:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2011-2012

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 9:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2012-2013

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 10:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2013-2014

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 10, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 10, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Item 19, second reading of bills. Mr. Miltenberger.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 5:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2012-2013

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for infrastructure expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, has had second reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 6:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2013-2014

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for infrastructure expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, has had second reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 7:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2011-2012

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 7, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for infrastructure expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 7, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, has had second reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 8:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 4, 2011-2012

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, has had second reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 9:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2012-2013

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, has had second reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 10:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2013-2014

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 10, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 10, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, has had second reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Item 21, report of Committee of the Whole. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. McLeod.

Third 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 third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 1, Tlicho Statutes Amendments Act, has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ramsay.

BILL 2:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE TERRITORIAL PARKS ACT

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Territorial Parks Act, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Territorial Parks Act, has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 5:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2012-2013

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 6:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2013-2014

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 7:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 4, 2011-2012

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 7, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 7, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 8:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 4, 2011-2012

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012, has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 9:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2012-2013

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013, has had third reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Miltenberger.

BILL 10:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2013-2014

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 10, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, be read for the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 10, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014, has had third reading.

---Carried

Mr. Clerk, will you ascertain if the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the honourable George Tuccaro, is prepared to enter the Chamber to assent to the bills.

COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (Hon. George Tuccaro): Please be seated. Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, good afternoon.

I would like to commend Premier McLeod, Cabinet and their staff, and Members of the Legislature for your hard work that culminated in the historic signing ceremony on Monday of the draft Devolution Agreement with the federal government, and the process that continues.

I want to wish you all a well-deserved break, safe travels, and a happy and blessed Easter.

ASSENT TO BILLS

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

- Bill 1, Tlicho Statutes Amendment Act;
- Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Territorial Parks Act;
- Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013;
- Bill 6, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014;
- Bill 7, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012;
- Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2011-2012;
- Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2012-2013; and

- Bill 10, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2013-2014.

Thank you, merci beaucoup, mahsi cho, quanani, koana.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, before we conclude our proceedings for today, I would like to comment on the session just ended. Our spring budget sessions are usually longer and busier than most, and this was certainly no exception. During this session you have considered and passed into law one appropriation act, six supplementary appropriation acts and two other pieces of legislation.

You have debated 12 motions and have considered two committee reports.

I appreciate the work done by all Members during the last six weeks, by Ministers and their departmental staff, by the standing committees and the public. Thank you to all who participated in various ways to move the work of government forward.

This Assembly also made history earlier this week with the signing of the Devolution Agreement. It was my great pleasure to host the Prime Minister of Canada, Ministers Aglukkaq and Valcourt, our own Aboriginal leaders and all Members of the Assembly for this special ceremony which took place in this Chamber.

I would like to thank all of the Pages who have helped us out during this long session. Thank you from all Members of the Assembly for the excellent job you do.

---Applause

Colleagues, we will meet again in this Chamber in May. However, I know that the work of government never stops and that committees will be meeting and travelling during the months of April and May. A personal highlight for me during this time will be the convening of the 12th Youth Parliament. Our young counterparts will take over this building during the week of May 6th and will conduct a model Parliament in this Chamber on the afternoon of May 9th. I encourage the public and all Members to attend. We always have time for our youth. This is a real opportunity to see the future of the Northwest Territories in action.

I would also like to encourage all Members to observe the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation on Sunday, May 26th. This is the day set aside by the 15th Legislative Assembly to acknowledge and support the collective healing and reconciliation process that is happening in all our communities.

As you make your way home, Members, I wish you safe travels. Treasure the time you spend with your family and loved ones and enjoy this spectacular season in the North. I'm going home. It's going to

be good. We have carnivals and jamborees happening across the territory, and spring hunts will be starting soon. I hope you all get out to enjoy the beautiful longer days of a northern spring. Members, just be careful when you're travelling. Watch yourselves and bless you all. I'll see you in a couple of months. It's going to be good.

---Applause

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 29, 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. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, May 29th, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

