



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

5th Session

Day 32

17th Assembly

HANSARD

Friday, May 30, 2014

Pages 4511 – 4544

The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Speaker

Hon. Jackie Jacobson

(Nunakput)

Hon. Glen Abernethy

(Great Slave)

Minister of Health and Social Services

Minister responsible for

Persons with Disabilities

Minister responsible for Seniors

Hon. Tom Beaulieu

(Tu Nedhe)

Minister of Human Resources

Minister of Transportation

Minister of Public Works and Services

Ms. Wendy Bisaro

(Frame Lake)

Mr. Frederick Blake

(Mackenzie Delta)

Mr. Robert Bouchard

(Hay River North)

Mr. Bob Bromley

(Weledeh)

Mr. Daryl Dolynny

(Range Lake)

Mrs. Jane Groenewegen

(Hay River South)

Mr. Robert Hawkins

(Yellowknife Centre)

Hon. Jackson Lafferty

(Monfwi)

Deputy Premier

Minister of Education, Culture and

Employment

Minister responsible for the Workers'

Safety and Compensation

Commission

Hon. Bob McLeod

(Yellowknife South)

Premier

Minister of Executive

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and

Intergovernmental Relations

Minister responsible for Women

Hon. Robert C. McLeod

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

Minister of Municipal and

Community Affairs

Minister of Lands

Minister responsible for the

NWT Housing Corporation

Minister responsible for Youth

Mr. Kevin Menicoche

(Nahendeh)

Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger

(Thebacha)

Government House Leader

Minister of Finance

Minister of Environment and Natural

Resources

Minister responsible for the

NWT Power Corporation

Mr. Alfred Moses

(Inuvik Boot Lake)

Mr. Michael Nadli

(Deh Cho)

Hon. David Ramsay

(Kam Lake)

Minister of Justice

Minister of Industry, Tourism

and Investment

Minister responsible for the

Public Utilities Board

Mr. Norman Yakeleya

(Sahtu)

Officers

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Ms. Colette Langlois

Deputy Clerk

Mr. Doug Schauerte

**Principal Clerk,
Committees and
Public Affairs**

Mr. Michael Ball

**Principal Clerk,
Corporate and
Interparliamentary Affairs**

Ms. Gail Bennett

Law Clerks

Ms. Sheila MacPherson

Ms. Malinda Kellett

Mr. Glen Rutland

Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 669-2200 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

<http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	4511
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	4511
69-17(5) – Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway (Beaulieu)	4511
70-17(5) – Building Community Policing Partnerships (Ramsay)	4512
71-17(5) – National Cancer Survivors Day (Abernethy)	4512
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	4513
Acknowledgement of Sahtu Aurora College Graduates (Yakeleya)	4513
Acknowledgement of Nahendeh High School Graduates (Menicoche)	4514
Support for Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren (Groenewegen)	4514
Implementation of Junior Kindergarten (Bisaro)	4515
Temporary Foreign Worker Program (Dolynny)	4515
Provision of BillBlankets for Babies Affected by Jaundice (Moses)	4516
New Hay River Health Centre (Bouchard)	4516
Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders Today (Nadli)	4517
Giant Mine Remediation Plans (Bromley)	4517
Consumer Affairs Protection Division (Hawkins)	4518
RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS	4518
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	4519
ORAL QUESTIONS	4519, 4529
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	4537
NOTICES OF MOTION	4537
Motion 19-17(5) – Financial Compensation for Medical and Non-Medical Travel Escorts (Yakeleya)	4537
NOTICES OF MOTION FOR FIRST READING OF BILLS	4537
Bill 28 – Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015	4537
FIRST READING OF BILLS	4538
Bill 27 – Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014	4538
Bill 26 – Act Act to Amend the Elections and Plebiscites Act	4538
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	4538
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	4544
ORDERS OF THE DAY	4544

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, May 30, 2014****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, 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 10:01 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good morning, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Beaulieu.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 69-17(5):
INUVIK-TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has committed to building a strong, prosperous territory and ensuring its benefits are shared in all communities and regions. Strategic investments in transportation infrastructure will help support the long-term growth of our economy and provide jobs and opportunities to our people. The Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk highway is one of these projects, and I am pleased to report on the success of the first winter of construction.

The highway is one of the largest construction projects ever undertaken by the GNWT and is significant as the first leg of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway that will continue south to Wrigley to connect the entire NWT.

Mr. Speaker, the project is progressing according to the Department of Transportation's estimates. Operations ran smoothly and efficiently this winter to make the most of the construction season.

Work began this winter following the procurement and delivery of new equipment. Seventy-five percent of the major equipment on site is either new or near new. This allowed work to continue without delay as breakdowns were minimized, safety was increased and the carbon footprint of operations was reduced.

Seventy-two days of construction took place on the north end of the project near Tuktoyaktuk, lasting from mid-February to the end of April. During this time, crews made progress on the construction of 16 kilometres of embankment, one bridge and six large diameter culverts. On the south end by Inuvik, there were 58 days of construction from

March 3 to the end of April, resulting in progress on the construction of 13 kilometres of embankment, two bridges and seven large diameter culverts.

Over one million cubic metres of embankment material was moved during this time.

Mr. Speaker, this success should be attributed to the effort of crew members who worked days and nights during some of the coldest and darkest part of winter. The resiliency and determination of these men and women is essential to the project's success. At the peak of construction, 425 individuals were employed by EGT Northwind, of which approximately 10 percent were female employees who were involved in all aspects of the construction project from environmental monitoring to operating 40-tonne rock trucks.

Mr. Speaker, Northerners are already benefitting from this highway construction project. Over 18,000 person days of employment were created during winter construction, including almost 15,000 person days for NWT and Inuvik region residents. This does not include employees working for the 41 subcontractors hired by EGT Northwind to provide a range of services from wildlife monitoring to medical services. In addition, 83 percent of these subcontracts were awarded to northern companies.

The project company used simulators to train more than 70 individuals on different types of rock truck and excavator equipment during the first construction season. Training activity is expected to increase during the next construction season that is anticipated to last up to six months.

While most construction activities occur during the winter, shaping, grading and compacting activities will resume at the end of June until fall. During this time no movement of material from the borrow pits will take place. This plan is developed to protect the permafrost underneath the highway.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to encourage residents spending time in the Inuvik region this summer to learn more about this spectacular project by attending the Inuvik Petroleum Show. The department will be featuring a booth where photos and additional information regarding the construction of the highway can be found. Residents may also find information on the project's dedicated website located at inuviktotuk.gov.nt.ca. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Ramsay.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 70-17(5):
BUILDING COMMUNITY
POLICING PARTNERSHIPS

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, the RCMP enjoys a long and important history in the NWT, going all the way back to its original creation as a force established to police what was then a much larger Northwest Territories. Today the RCMP continues to be valued for the policing services they provide and the contributions individual members make in our communities.

Within our government and throughout the North, we are working collaboratively to address social issues more effectively. The local policing plans we have developed in partnership with the RCMP and communities demonstrate how effective this approach can be.

This process started two years ago, when the Minister's policing priorities focused on objectives such as building public trust and confidence in RCMP services. From this came a series of conversations that were held between community members and the RCMP with the goal to develop plans setting out policing priorities for every community. As a result, each of our 33 communities has had the opportunity to work closely with the RCMP to determine what matters to them most.

In keeping with these priorities, community leadership and the Department of Justice receive a monthly report from the RCMP detailing progress on the agreed issues. This process is building trust as well as accountability and contributes to an increased satisfaction with policing services.

Communities are now better informed about the work of the RCMP, and the Department of Justice can identify common issues and priorities Northerners share. The valuable community-based information collected in reports will be used by the department and our partners to guide policies, programs and services. The ultimate result will be an increasingly effective and efficient use of limited financial and human resources.

As part of the evolution of this work, I have asked the RCMP to go further in working with the communities by developing joint policing action plans. These are intended to complement and work hand in hand with the priorities set by each community. The community and the RCMP will work together to decide how to address the priority issues within existing resources. While many of these will be coming directly from the RCMP, this process also gives communities the opportunity to contribute their own strengths and resources. These action plans will help to demonstrate progress and outline timelines for results. Again, we

are finding ways to be accountable to those we serve.

Mr. Ron Smith, the new commanding officer of the RCMP at "G" Division, is known to many of us. He is here with us today and I will be acknowledging him at the appropriate time. Prior to assuming the commanding officer position in May, Chief Superintendent Ron Smith was the officer in charge of criminal operations here in the Northwest Territories. He has served in other northern jurisdictions, including Nunavut and Labrador. We are all looking forward to working with him.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Wade Blake for his contribution to policing services as chief superintendent of "G" Division. Mr. Blake was instrumental in rolling out our new approach to the policing priorities from the beginning. It is his good work that we are now able to build upon, and we are very pleased that he will continue to work with us in his new position as director of community justice and community policing.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the concerns of Members about the 12 communities that do not have detachments. In consultation with Chief Superintendent Smith, we will be recommending that these communities be the first to benefit from this enhanced policing plan process.

Achieving sustainable, vibrant and safe communities is one of the goals of this Assembly, and we are committed to making it a reality in partnership with communities. The RCMP and the GNWT recognize the importance of collaboration to ensure we are properly targeting and allocating resources to meet the needs and priorities of the people we serve. We believe in the people of the NWT, the history, the strength and the abilities we have to make our communities safer together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Abernethy.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 71-17(5):
NATIONAL CANCER SURVIVORS DAY

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, June 1st is National Cancer Survivors Day. This day is an annual celebration of life and loved ones. Each year it reminds us of the importance of speaking openly about cancer and supporting one another in the face of such a serious disease.

On average, 111 new cases of cancer are diagnosed in the NWT every year. There is life after diagnosis. The NWT residents I know who have cancer have shown courage and strength in their individual cancer journeys.

Too often we think that the diagnosis of cancer is a reason for despair, but more people are surviving

and going on to live full lives during and after treatment. These people are survivors.

I encourage everyone to look at every cancer patient as a survivor, not a victim. NWT residents who have experienced cancer may choose to self-identify in different ways, but there is no reason to view someone living with cancer as a victim.

In March the department launched a project funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer to improve the cancer journeys of NWT residents. The Continuity of Care Project focuses on supporting cancer patients and survivors along the full continuum of care, particularly in the post-treatment phase. This project will help us to enhance after-care and services by reinforcing community-level capacity and improving coordination and communication.

We must continue to raise awareness of cancer so that people get screened earlier. I encourage everyone to join the fight against cancer. Residents can talk to the NWT Canadian Cancer Society to find out what awareness-raising events are taking place in their communities, like the Relay for Life. In past years as many as 30 NWT residents who openly identify themselves as cancer survivors have participated. This government is in full support of this event and all others which raise awareness and funding for cancer prevention, and I encourage others across the NWT to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, we understand our communities' concerns about cancer. This demands that we talk frankly, work collaboratively and continue to support one another. On National Cancer Survivors Day, please join me in taking a moment to celebrate the resilience and strength of all NWT residents who have bravely faced this disease. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SAHTU AURORA COLLEGE GRADUATES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I read in a newspaper ad, "To be proud of your history, you must know it. Education builds roots to the past that will open pathways to the future." I thought about this quote because I want to talk about the graduates from Aurora College 2014, students that have undergone extreme conditions of hardship, sacrifice, but with the passion and enthusiasm to get an education for themselves and for their families; students who made the sacrifice to be away from home, away from family for a year, two years, three years, four years; students who

know what it means to pack up their house, move it to a new location and having housing issues, having housing for their family; students who know that there is funding, but there is limited funding, not enough; students who take on extra jobs; students who ask the land corps, the band, the Metis organizations for funding; families who have been separated because the father or mother has to stay home and work to support their family going to school.

I know a student in Fort Smith. The father is working in Colville Lake and the mother is raising five children and taking a bachelor of education degree. Students who yet make these sacrifices, knowing that something good will come out of these sacrifices. Those are the words that the elders have taught us. You make a sacrifice into something good.

Education is our tool that will keep us alive today, just as the ones we once used on the land to survive. We are changing over time and adapting so that we can use the value of learning that remains the core of who we are.

Today I want to acknowledge our Aurora College graduates, Aurora College itself and the staff, to say how proud we are to see our students in colleges and to see the completion of their studies.

I want to name the 10 students. From the Sahtu at the North Slave campus: Cheryl Kelly from Deline, Helen Menaco from Deline, Helen Batelle from Deline, and our own Miss Lovely, Cheryl Yakeleya from Tulita. At Thebacha Campus: Violet Edgi from Fort Good Hope, Janelle Perriot from Fort Good Hope, Martha Stewart from Fort Good Hope, Sylvia Clement from Norman Wells, Robin Tagisou from Deline, and my niece Laura Krutko from Deline. These graduates have made a contribution to the people in the communities and for themselves.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, and I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. YAKELEYA: I want to acknowledge the families, their communities and the students themselves for a job well done. Graduates are role models. We need to look at how we can continue to support them.

Lastly, I want to thank the campuses of the communities of Fort Smith, Yellowknife and Inuvik and all the Aurora College centres in the Northwest Territories that support these students. Mahsi cho from the MLA for Sahtu.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF NAHENDEH
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to commend our high school graduates in Nahendeh. It's that happy time of year when the days are getting longer, the weather is getting warmer and proud parents and families are celebrating with their offspring one of the most important milestones in the life of a child or young adult: high school graduation day.

I want to congratulate each and every graduate in the Northwest Territories for the achievement they are celebrating this year, and I also commend the parents, families, teachers and communities for the support that has helped their students succeed.

As indicated, I especially want to acknowledge the graduates of the communities of Fort Simpson and Fort Liard that I represent in Nahendeh. It can be especially hard for students from small communities to get a good education. I'm so proud that our small communities and small schools can do this for our students. I offer my thanks and greatest compliments to our teachers and the teaching support staff for their dedication to our children's success. They all get a pat on the back from me.

To those of you who are hoping to graduate, take a look at your older brothers, sisters, cousins and friends. Just like them, you also have what it takes to succeed and you can be a graduate too one day. Just keep working hard and dreaming big.

To all our graduates, I want to give a special message: Enjoy your graduation ceremony. It is an appreciation and recognition of your hard work and achievement. You each have a great deal to be proud of. You have shown us that you've got what it takes to be successful. Keep working towards your dreams. With continued dedication we know you'll be successful in your education and career goals. The doors of opportunity open to welcome you. As you step through those doors, be bold and fearless. Just keep calm and move on. The whole world is waiting for you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
SUPPORT FOR GRANDPARENTS
CARING FOR GRANDCHILDREN

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about support for grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren. I'm a grandmother and I know that if I had to go to sleep at night or for one minute had to wonder whether my grandchildren were being properly cared for, I would necessarily have to rearrange my life and make sure that I stepped in and became involved in that. Thankfully, I've been blessed with daughters-

in-law and sons that are probably better parents than their parents were, but I understand the heart of grandparents who do step in and raise their grandchildren.

This issue has been raised to me by constituents recently and also by aunties and uncles that step in, also thinking of the couple that went to the media that are from Ndilo that were raising four of their grandchildren and without financial support from our government. When asked about this recently, the Minister of Health and Social Services confirmed that in cases where children are apprehended through the system and placed with grandparents, grandparents are eligible for remuneration at the exact same rate as regular foster parents, but when grandparents foster their grandkids informally, they don't qualify for remuneration, and this is because it's happening outside of the formal child and family services system. In these cases, the Minister stated that income support is an appropriate avenue for help. But what if the grandparents caring for these grandchildren aren't eligible for income support? Then what is their recourse?

I have reviewed the department's pamphlet on voluntary support service agreements. These agreements come into play when parents can't take proper care of their children and when "there's no other available help from family, friends or other community services." What does no other help available mean? Does it mean grandparents have already stepped in with their own resources? Some grandparents are penalized because they have had the compassion and the sense of duty to step in before their grandchildren are formally apprehended by the system. Then they are expected to go to income support, and if they don't qualify they're expected to provide for their grandchildren from their own resources.

It seems that there may be a way to improve the system here and there may be a break in the system here. I would rather that we could come up with a way of recognizing those situations and work collaboratively with the social services to determine...

May I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement, please?

---Unanimous consent granted

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: We all know that for children who are apprehended by the system it is a very big upheaval in their life, and ultimately, they may end up with family members or grandparents, but if there was a way to avert that apprehension process, and if it were possible for family members to work collaboratively with a social worker to ensure the best course and plan of care for the children in question, I think it would be a better system. No doubt, homes do need to have to be qualified regardless of whether they're relatives or

not, because we've heard the stories from southern Canada where grandparents have sometimes been looking after children and weren't really qualified to be doing so.

I'd just like to further ask the Minister of Health and Social Services questions about this later today in question period to find out if there's a missing piece here that we need to think about and address.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
IMPLEMENTATION OF
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I voiced the concern of Yellowknife residents who have expressed their views to their MLAs about the implementation of Junior Kindergarten. Today I want to delve deeper into the dollars and cents aspects of their concerns.

The Education Renewal and Innovation Project is an ambitious one. It's looking at a renewal or restructuring of our whole NWT education system. To date, the Minister and the department have announced, or is it decreed, that Junior Kindergarten will start in September 2014 in 29, or 22 now of our 33 communities, but with no new money. A very strongly expressed view in the e-mails and letters received is that new programs should not be put in place without accompanying new money to fund the new program. I cannot disagree with that view.

The current funding levels provided by ECE to school boards and councils allow for a certain excellent quality of education. Introducing a new cohort, a whole new grade level into the school system without any new dollars effectively forces the boards to provide more schooling for less money. It's the old do more with less mantra.

I asked the Minister yesterday, how can that let the boards continue to provide quality education that they do now. Although the Minister didn't answer the question, I can. It can't do that. The only choice left for the boards if they want to preserve the excellent system that they now have is to use their contingency funds – the Minister would say their surplus – to make up the shortfall. If there is no surplus, well, it means staff reductions and a corresponding increase in the number of students in each class. The end result: a reduction in the quality of education.

Yellowknife school districts have had their budgets reduced so Junior Kindergarten can be instituted, but they've also had their requests for adequate funding for teachers' pensions denied by the department. The Minister contends it's not a matter for the GNWT, leaving the YK boards twisting in the wind. If the pension expense for any other board,

one with GNWT employees, was to increase, what would the Minister's response to a request for additional funding be? The same? I doubt it.

It is a matter of fairness, and the Minister and the department are not treating all NWT school boards fairly. If Education, Culture and Employment funds YK boards at approximately 80 percent of their budget, why will ECE not fund 80 percent of the increased pension costs?

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: Why are we seeing the outright denial of any assistance to cover the extra pension costs? Don't all NWT teachers deserve the same standard of pension benefits? Apparently not, according to the Minister.

Yellowknife school boards are being unfairly targeted by Education, Culture and Employment through funding cuts and denials of applications for extraordinary funding. Just because they have taxation capability is no reason not to treat them equitably with all other NWT school authorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program has been a hot button topic for Northerners and Canadians for the past month. This program is delivered in the NWT by the Department of ECE and ITI as the NWT Nominee Program.

This program of last and limited resort is designed to be accessed by employers facing genuine acute labour shortages and only after Canadians are not available to fill the job. Admittedly, opponents of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program argue it takes jobs away and drives down wages. Proponents argue that not enough Canadians are willing to work in certain jobs or relocate to certain communities. To be honest, both sides have valid claims.

I myself, as a past owner in the service industry for over 20 years, employed over 15,000 employees, yet I did not use one foreign worker. However, I have many business colleagues who have and I definitely understand their positions.

Some say the recent federal freeze on the TFWP was a mere over-reaction and that select responsible employers are being targeted. Given the state of NWT of having never received a report of abuse, according to the GNWT employment standards office, tends to lend argument that responsible NWT employers who hire temporary

foreign workers are being unfairly punished. I tend to agree.

The TFWP may be the right model in some instances in the NWT, but our real target should be permanent immigration solutions. In essence, what we really need in the NWT is more foreign workers to become citizens. We know that the Canadian government is catching on to this opportunity as it recently announced a new express entry program for 2015. Let's hope the GNWT through its skilled worker and critical impact worker programs and our entrepreneur and self-employed business programs we'll be able to harness our government's aggressive 2,000 population increase during the life of the 17th Assembly.

Let's face it, adding more taxpayers is a much better solution than a mere temporary band-aid. I will have questions later today for the Minister responsible. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROVISION OF BILIBLANKETS FOR BABIES AFFECTED BY JAUNDICE

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 25, 2013, I asked questions to the then Minister of Health and Social Services regarding BiliBlankets for babies and the lack and shortage of BiliBlankets that we have throughout the Northwest Territories. The questions came because we had a medevac in Inuvik at the time, and the family was concerned that if another baby had come while they were using the BiliBlanket, what would have happened to the other baby.

BiliBlankets are used when a baby is born and has yellow jaundice. For those of you who don't know what jaundice is, jaundice occurs when there's a buildup of naturally occurring substance in the blood, called bilirubin. Bilirubin is produced by the breakdown of red blood cells, and red blood cells are very important because they carry oxygen to all tissues within the body. As bilirubin begins to build up, it causes the baby's skin and the whites of the baby's eyes to turn yellow.

Just recently we had another medevac in Inuvik with a baby that had jaundice and there was another serious concern. When we did our initial research, there was one blanket in the Inuvik regional health authority. It also brings concerns about what are we doing for the small communities and regional centres. If we don't have this type of equipment available, what happens when we have weather situations where we can't get a medevac out to get medevaced either to Yellowknife or down to Edmonton? I can only understand the stress that this causes the parents of the baby that might have

jaundice, or the stress that it has on the family and community, especially in a really small community.

I want to get an update to questions that were asked on February 25, 2013. What kind of updates are we getting on this and if any action has been done to get the proper equipment that we need in our health centres and our hospitals to help these families out that do have these kinds of issues and are facing these kinds of challenges?

I will have questions later on for the Minister of Health and Social Services to get an update. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NEW HAY RIVER HEALTH CENTRE

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you as well as most of the Members here know, there's an exciting project going on in Hay River right now: the building of the new health centre there. This exciting new facility will be up and running next fall. They indicate they're on budget and on schedule, and the community is abuzz with some of the activity of that construction. There are many people in the community and some specialized workers coming into town.

Obviously, some of these big projects cause other issues and bring concerns. Some of our local businesses would like more activity and more opportunity to bid on some of these projects. These big projects, sometimes with big dollars, sometimes have demands from other people.

The other issue that has come forward, and as Members know, when this facility was scheduled to be built, it didn't have 10 long-term beds. After last year's capital budget, along with the support of all the Members here, we got those long-term beds placed and they will be on the capital budget here coming forward.

This new facility has also brought up other issues. One of the rumours is that Public Works and Services would like to take over the maintenance of the facility, where we already have a maintenance crew at our current facility that we're basically pleased with. They are, obviously, part of our community. They have families that we need to keep in our community and keep them employed.

The other question that has been brought up is: What happens to the old hospital? We've been asking the departments of Health and Public Works to get together, find out what the plan is going forward with the old facility. Is there a possibility? Mr. Yakeleya has mentioned a diabetes centre. What are the opportunities that we can use this old facility?

The final issue that I wanted to talk to you about today is the current facility doesn't have enough office space in it. We basically have questions of what's going to happen to the office space for social services and health services in the community of Hay River.

I will have questions for the Department of Public Works and Services to see what is going to happen in the future about the office space for the new health centre.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PREPARING TOMORROW'S LEADERS TODAY

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Children have been described as the ultimate resource for a society's long-term development and well-being. Nowhere is this more true than in the NWT where the proportion of our population under 24 years of age is almost 8 percent greater than for Canada as a whole. Last week I had the opportunity to participate with an esteemed group of northern leaders in hosting a youth forum in Fort Providence. I was joined by Mr. Joachim Bonnetrouge, chief of the Deh Gah Got'ie First Nation; Mr. Sam Gargan, former grand chief of the Dehcho First Nations and MLA; Mr. Steven Vandell, deputy mayor of Fort Providence; and Dene councillor Xavier Canadien, along with a group of dedicated teachers, community health and social service workers, recreational workers and the RCMP.

We met with a group of bright, ambitious young people to talk about their fears and concerns, their goals and hopes for their future, and their suggestions for community improvement. I'd like to thank Chris Carson and Lois Phillip for helping us out.

Our discussion was the beginning of a dialogue which highlighted the importance of involving our youth in decision-making at the earliest possible opportunity. After all, everything that we do is ultimately for the benefit of our young people. Youth today are growing up in a fast-paced, technological world. They have big problems such as addictions, suicide, teen pregnancy and violence which can derail young lives and steal bright futures. How do we prepare young people to be competitive in society while still embracing the culture and traditions of their ancestors that will ground them and give them strength and perspective?

The high school graduation rate for non-Aboriginal students in the NWT in 2011-12 was 78 percent, which is consistent with the national average. However, the graduation rate for Aboriginal students was only 44 percent. We are failing our Aboriginal youth. They cannot get jobs or be qualified for future employment if they are only

educated to a Grade 9 level. Our kids need to know how the doors of the world will open to them with the right education. They need to know what it takes to succeed and to believe that they can do it.

Our young people need a variety of educational opportunities. They need youth workers, parent volunteers and interagency committees to help them set up access resources. They need jobs in their home communities. Most of all, they need the love, support and encouragement of healthy families and communities to give them the best possible chance in order to become productive adults. We must remember the youth that we raise today are tomorrow's northern leaders.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GIANT MINE REMEDIATION PLANS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the new bypass around Giant Mine has opened, there are now barriers and gates across the old highway that passes through the contaminated mine site. The public no longer has access to the site but they still have questions.

When the City of Yellowknife referred the stabilization plan for an environmental assessment, the federal proponents complained that this would result in long delays. They said that any delay would be dangerous. Yet their recommendations were released almost a year ago and we are still waiting for the responsible Ministers to complete the process. Six months ago, in December, the Minister stated that they accept the recommendations, but we have heard little since.

What is the plan for operations at Giant Mine this summer? Are they following the old plan that was largely rejected or the new one based on the environmental assessment that is sitting on the responsible Ministers' desks? Both Minister Valcourt, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and our own Minister Miltenberger are responsible for approving the environmental assessment. While Ministers delay responsible oversight, work is proceeding without a clear and transparent plan. Also, it's proceeding without any inspectors in Yellowknife to monitor what is going on.

Now that devolution is in place, all the former government inspectors work for the GNWT. The nearest federal inspector is based in Whitehorse. We've just come through another spring thaw and are getting reports of arsenic-contaminated dust from the tailings and spills of arsenic-contaminated water on site blowing into town at off-the-chart levels of contamination. Meanwhile, and despite an offer of GNWT inspectors, there have been no inspections for months now.

The Giant site is closed off from the public, and that is probably good for public safety. It doesn't mean that we should relax our vigilance. We need to keep a closer eye than ever on activity at Giant, particularly because the work team regulators and inspectors are all working for the federal government. The environmental assessment clearly lays out a plan for stabilizing Giant Mine and providing independent oversight. We need to get the plan off the Ministers' desks and implemented. What will it take? Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROTECTION DIVISION

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to use today's opportunity to return to one of my favorite subjects, which happens to be the consumer affairs protection division, or lack thereof, Mr. Speaker.

Many Northerners continue to wait for any action from this division and certainly by the Minister and for years have been continuing to raise issues about the restrictiveness and confusing concerns around cell phone contracts, problems around homeownership purchasing, protection, the fact that homes don't require full disclosure under protection rules, and payday loans continue to hold people at risk, at prey and vulnerable.

I've gone on relentlessly about the high cost of gasoline and how they affect the cost of living. There are so many other issues when it comes to collection agencies and certainly home renovation repairs.

Municipal and Community Affairs seems to not be interested in this issue. While I sit and watch, it certainly pales in comparison to the action taken across Canada by other governments. Why won't this government budge? It appears this Minister is either not interested in these issues or, as constituents ask me, does he just not care about consumer protection or does he not understand consumer protection? People want to know, does he just believe everything's fine or is he stubborn? We just don't know.

The constituents ask me how do we know he even appreciates the issue. I just don't have an answer for them. I've been asking for years. When you pay some of the highest gas prices in the land in our remote, northern communities, you often wonder if you are being taken advantage of and you don't know where to go. When our phone bills hold you over a barrel, people want to know how to access services to find out if they are being treated fairly.

Many services go on and on and on, but people don't know what their full rights and disclosure and

protections are. That's why we need a consumer affairs division that is public and not anonymous.

Speaking of that, many months ago, if not a good year and a half ago, I asked the Minister of MACA to make this public, not anonymous. This office continues to hide behind I don't know what, some web page.

I went to the web page because I actually know where to go. There is very little information on how to contact this particular office, so when the Minister says it's a very busy office, perhaps not from complaints. I'm not sure what they do.

The bottom line is we need a public office that helps citizens know their rights, understand their rights and so they know where to go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Mr. Miltenberger.

Returns to Oral Questions

RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 213-17(5): TOBACCO TAX COLLECTION AND REPORTING

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I have a return to oral question asked by Mr. Dolynny on March 4, 2014, regarding tobacco tax collection and reporting.

Statistics Canada conducts the Canadian Community Health Survey on an annual basis in the Northwest Territories. This survey collects self-reported cigarette consumption and is publically available from a variety of sources, including the Statistics Canada website.

In the Department of Finance, the tax administration section collects tobacco product data as part of the tax collection process. Wholesalers of tobacco products sold to retailers in the NWT report their sales and remit the taxes on these sales monthly to tax administration. This data is released annually to the public in the public accounts as the tobacco tax revenue for the year.

The tax audit and investigations section has standing procedures to perform compliance audits on tobacco wholesalers and retailers. Retailers are also inspected on a regular basis. All complaints of non-compliance with tobacco tax legislation and possible non-compliance issues are fully investigated. The section keeps detailed statistics on its activities, which are not publically available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 5, recognitions of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Ramsay.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned in my Minister's statement earlier, but I want to recognize two individuals with us today. First if all, Mr. Wade Blake. I'd like to welcome him today and thank him very much for his work here in the Northwest Territories. I wish him well in his new capacity as director of community justice and policing with the Department of Justice.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize Mr. Ron Smith, the new commanding officer with "G" Division here in the Northwest Territories. Ron is from my hometown, St. John, New Brunswick. It's nice to see another fellow from St. John making it to the top. Congratulations, and I look forward to working with Ron in his new capacity as commanding officer. Thank you.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you, again we've heard from the Minister of Justice, but I, too, would like to thank the new commanding officer of "G" Division, Mr. Ron Smith, for being here. I'm looking forward to working with you.

Of course, without due cause, Mr. Wade Blake, the retiring chief superintendent of "G" Division, it was a pleasure working with you over the years. You are well deserved in your retirement. I hope your golf game goes very well.

We also have a number of Pages with us who have been working very hard all week. We've had Pages from all over the Northwest Territories, but more importantly we have one Page from Range Lake. I'd like to thank Sommer Snow for working very hard this week. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

I would just like to recognize and I appreciate all the Pages working with us. I appreciate their work ethics and just for being here with us. One of them will be Sahara Sadeh Lafferty. Sadeh stands for my sunshine. She's also my girl, Sahara Sadeh Lafferty. Mahsi.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join in and thank retired Chief Superintendent Wade Blake for his many years of northern service. He has dedicated himself in an excellent manner. At the same time, I'd also like to recognize our incoming chief superintendent, Ron Smith. I really appreciate the dedication and service both gentlemen have offered Northerners. They

continue, as in Mr. Blake's case, serving Northerners working for the Department of Justice and Mr. Smith works now serving Northerners in his new role. I want to say thank you to both of them for their fine service and certainly service with distinction to all Northerners. That's an important difference, distinction, it's a high quality in their area. Thank you for that.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the residents of Frame Lake, I too would like to thank Mr. Blake for his service. It has been great service and we appreciate that. I would also like to welcome the incoming commander, Mr. Smith. I have some Pages as well. Frame Lake is extremely well represented with Pages in the Assembly this week. Today I would like to welcome three Pages from Frame Lake: Sebastian Ransom, Isaac Macpherson and Dakota Earle. Thanks to those three in particular for your service, but thanks to all the Pages for the work they do for us. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 314-17(5): SUPPORT FOR GRANDPARENTS CARING FOR GRANDCHILDREN

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

The issue of child and family services is something that has been much discussed in this House. The previous Assembly did a very in-depth consultation in this topic and now the Auditor General's report has been reported on. There is one area that I particularly wanted to zero in on today. We know that families do, from time to time, suffer from extreme challenges and from crisis, and where there are children involved, sometimes it requires an intervention or outside support.

It would be the natural thing for close family members to be aware of these situations and to step up to the plate. However, in reality this may put stress on that family that's helping, those grandparents, aunts and uncles, may put financial stress on them.

I'd like to ask the Minister if the department has ever contemplated support for direct family members than is less invasive than having to apprehend children, putting children through the trauma of that, but finding a way to support those

related family members who could, at a time of crises or challenge, step in and help family members. Has the department contemplated that being done on a collaborative basis and seeing some remuneration available to those family members? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Health and Social Services does become involved with children at risk when they enter the system and access the Child and Family Services Act. When that occurs, whether it's voluntary or through identification, we do try to keep children with families as much as possible. When a child needs to be placed, we obviously like to approach families to see if they'd be willing to foster. If they're willing to foster, we'll put them through the process. If that happens, they will receive remuneration that is consistent with all other foster families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: My experience has been that sometimes when family members step in, there is a sense in the department or with the child welfare worker that the problem has now been alleviated, it has been solved and the inclination is to step away from the situation and say, okay, the children are no longer at risk and therefore they are safe.

I would like to know if there is a process that allows family to be involved in that transition for those children. Quite often, child protection workers are seen as the enemy coming in to apprehend children and take them out of their home. I know there are very many variables on what can happen in terms of why those interventions are required, and I have always been very reluctant to ever criticize child protection workers who have to do a very difficult job. But, is there a piece missing here?

Is there a collaborative way that family members could approach social services and realize the same end without having to intervene with an apprehension? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, raising children is, first and foremost, a responsibility of the family. Parents have the right to make decisions about where their children live, but the GNWT is not necessarily responsible for paying for those decisions. The only time the GNWT would actually become involved is if a family has some financial challenges, is living in poverty, and we would provide income support. Families can make the decision to have children stay with one group and then apply for income support.

When health and social services becomes involved, the only time we can actually engage with families and do the types of things the Member is talking

about is when they actually become part of the system and we have a file on them. When they come in, whether it's voluntary, which I think is part of what the Member is talking about, or whether it's through an intervention, we will work with families and we will try to find ways to keep the children with the families. If that requires a foster placement, we have a process that is expedited or modified for family placements, which is less thorough – thorough is not the right word – less intense than the normal foster process. When they are placed with those people, whether it's a shorter term placement or a longer term placement, they do get the same funding or financial support.

But as we move forward with child and family services, we're talking about changing our philosophy. We're talking about helping support and build stronger families, which means we want to work with families when they are struggling, so that they can continue to provide the loving care that they want to to their families, which will include the types of things that the Member is talking about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'll keep this really short. Here's a scenario: The grandparents already have the child in their care. The child is not apprehended. The grandparents intervened. They already have the child in their care. Who can they go to to talk about getting support for caring for that child, other than income support? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: It depends on the timing. If the family has made a choice to put their children with grandparents or another family member and the system is unaware and hasn't been involved, we don't have the ability to engage. If the family had indicated that they're having problems and they're struggling and they weren't meeting the needs and they engage the system through a voluntary mechanism and then through a plan of care it was decided that the children would benefit from spending time with the grandparents while the parents work on their challenges, in that scenario we would be able to provide support. But if they do it without engaging the system, the system doesn't know, doesn't have a plan of care, doesn't have a plan, hasn't worked with the parents to see what the parents' long-term plans are and how we can help those parents get to the point they need, in that scenario the family made decisions we weren't aware of, we weren't engaged. I would encourage them strongly to go to income support. If families are having problems, I would encourage them to engage the system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: So, Health and Social Services has not been involved from the outset. I am a grandmother. I'm looking after my

grandchildren. Can I go to social services and explain the situation to them and work collaboratively with them to ensure that I can afford to financially care for my grandchildren? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I would encourage the grandparents, obviously, to talk to social services to see how they can engage with the system, but it does come back to the parents who have the legal responsibility for those children. They would have to be involved as well. History would have to be determined; a file would have to be created. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 315-17(5):

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I discussed some of the concerns surrounding a Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Admittedly, the Alberta Labour Minister earlier this week indicated that Ottawa is over-reacting with the foreign worker moratorium and that responsible employers are being unfairly punished. Ultimately what we are hearing from many of the big western provinces is that they want to have more control over the program. It's about a month since the temporary freeze on the program. I thought it would be important to see what our Minister of Education, Culture and Employment has to say on this subject.

Could the Minister indicate to the House where does NWT sit on the temporary foreign worker file? Is the Minister in contact with the federal Minister Jason Kenney on a regular basis? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We are fully aware of the temporary foreign workers moratorium that is laid out across our country. GNWT has no Temporary Foreign Workers Program. It is a federal program but we do share concerns. I did speak with Minister Jason Kenney just the other day, Wednesday evening, May 28th, about this particular program and share our concerns, how to move forward on this and what his plans were. My department senior officials are working very closely with other counterparts as well, territorial/provincial and also the federal Minister's office on this particular subject. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYNNY: It's good to hear that we have some communication here with our federal Minister, but I would like to get a little bit more information in terms of where we are at with our NWT Nominee Program. This is where we administer from our end. I am led to believe that we have only two out of four employees actually working in this department, so

I'm a bit concerned whether or not we have the capacity to work with it.

For example, what has been our quota for this program? How many unprocessed applications do we have? How long have these applications been in stasis and how many have actually been processed during this fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the Temporary Worker Program, again, is a federal funding, but also federal programming. The Nominee Program, we also administer that with the federal government. Part of the process is to monitor and evaluate the program itself. With the actual numbers which I don't have with me, the detail, but I can share with the Member all the transactions that have taken place since we took over the program with the federal government until today and how we are planning to integrate that with the federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program as well. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYNNY: Mr. Speaker, I will entertain those numbers when the Minister has them for me. That would be great.

We know that this Temporary Foreign Worker Program is, as I said, delivered here through the NWT Nominee Program. We know that a recent ITI Economic Opportunity Strategy implementation plan proposed strengthening this NWT Nominee Program. However, there has been little information on the proposed timeline of action. There hasn't been any mention of any anticipated resources required.

Can the Minister share with the House what is this action plan and how much is this going to cost taxpayers?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: During my discussions with Jason Kenney, these were some of the discussions that we've raised. We've raised some concerns, as well, just to elaborate and also enhance our nominee programming. The Northwest Territories Nominee Program is employer driven. The program is administered by our department and supports a permanent residency. The department is investigating ways, as I stated, to enhance the immigration program, which includes raising awareness of the Nominee Program and provide supports for new Canadians. Any new enhancements to the Nominee Program will be met with the existing resources. Those are the discussions that I had with Jason Kenney, and he is also supportive, and we will be pushing forward with the federal government.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard that there are internal funds being used for that, but I didn't quite hear a timeline, so I'll

encourage the Minister to get back to the Member and the House.

We know that competition with the local job market requires a strong policy with such an NWT Nominee Program. Can the Minister reassure the public, with pending reform, will GNWT policy, including mining industry socio-economic agreements, still recognize Aboriginal people at a higher priority than foreign workers?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes. Of course, the people of the North are our most important resources, and first and foremost, we want to ensure that Northerners in the Northwest Territories have the skills and knowledge for their employment success. That's our priority. We also recognize that there are growing pressures on the government, not just our government but the federal government, industries, business, to respond to the increase in the labour market demands due to changing demographics. Those are some of the important discussions that we have had with Jason Kenney just the other day as well. It's important that my department is also working with all partners to ensure skills training and also the post-secondary education system responds to these needs. I will carry this forward with the federal Minister as part of a priority for this government.

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

QUESTION 316-17(5):
NEW HAY RIVER HEALTH CENTRE

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, the new health centre definitely has some issues and some questions. My questions today will be for the Minister of Public Works and Services.

The question is: What is the department doing to address the office space that is not currently planned for the new facility?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The Minister of Public Works, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are evaluating the needs of the staff for office space at this time when the people from the old centre go to the new health centre. We recognize that there are approximately...well, at this time exactly 57 people that would have to be housed outside of the new health centre, so we are looking at all of the possibilities including refurbishing the clinic, which will be moving to the health centre, to accommodate some of the staff in there and maintaining the current lease that we do have that accommodates 11 staff members. We're looking at a location for another 23 staff and probably also some contingency space. We haven't made a final determination on how we're going to do that at this time.

MR. BOUCHARD: The Minister indicated the refurbishing of the current medical clinic. I guess my concerns and questions are: Do we have an estimated cost of what that refurbishing is to an older building, and would those dollars be better spent adding to the new facility so that we have office space right in the location as opposed to renovating an old building?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: It would be around \$785,000 to get that clinic tenant improvements to accommodate the staff at this time. We will be doing a cost comparative analysis to determine whether or not leased space purchased from the private industry would be more feasible. Hay River has very good rates, so that is something that when we go in to needing office space in Hay River we do a comparison to actually going into the market and getting leased space as opposed to producing our own space through capital because the rates are very good in Hay River.

MR. BOUCHARD: Obviously, the fall of 2015 is when the new facility is going to be established. I guess the question is: When will the general plan for this office space be released and the report completed so that we actually have a plan in place before the close of the fall of 2015?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: We're going to complete the move into the new health centre. The individuals that are currently housed in the H.H. Williams will remain there until the spring of 2016. Prior to that date, we will be placing them outside of H.H. Williams and then the Department of Health and Social Services would then have an opportunity to determine whether or not the H.H. Williams is surplus to the government.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the question is about that renovation and the \$785,000. Would that not be better spent to be invested into a newer building, into a newer facility, along with some of the costs associated that we currently have in leasing? Is the department looking at that as an option as well?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Certainly, we are looking at that. The clinic itself is a good building. Whether or not it will be used for health, it most likely would be feasible for the government to retain as office space, but for this purpose and at this moment we are looking at the possibility of housing the individuals that are moving from H.H. Williams outside of the refurbished clinic as well.

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

QUESTION 317-17(5):
YOUTH-ORIENTED PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very excited with the recent youth forum that we had in Fort Providence. It brought together the leaders and youth of Fort Providence. My question is to the Minister for the Homelessness and Youth.

Could the Minister explain the kinds of programs, funding and resources for youth that his department could deliver and that's available for communities that may want to work with the youth.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through MACA we deliver a large number of programs and we have funding for many youth initiatives. We went through the numbers during the debate on the budget back in February or March. The youth centre funding program is one of them. We do support some youth centres. We have a lot of youth initiatives. There is a long list. I could compile a list and provide it or even table it in this House as to the number of programs we have for the youth and the amount of money that we allocate to these programs.

MR. NADLI: I'd like to thank the Minister. I'd be very interested in having a list of the programs that are available for youth initiatives in the community. One primary finding of the discussions that were held recently in Fort Providence was the need to follow up with the meeting to try and identify the next steps. The other thing that was recognized and acknowledged by the leaders is that we need to work with our youth in terms of leadership development, showing them how we make decisions, role modeling and that kind of stuff.

How is the Minister ensuring that youth leadership development is a priority of local communities? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. This government takes the future of the youth quite seriously. With the Youth Parliament they have every second year, it gives them an opportunity to see how we work here. As well, through Municipal and Community Affairs we have the Youth Ambassador Program, which is actually an excellent program and every opportunity I have to speak on it is most welcome, but we just had a recent intake. So we're in the process of having intake now. We get applications from youth, I believe, from 17 to 24 across the Northwest Territories, and they have an excellent opportunity to broaden their horizon. I believe this next group that's coming in may have an opportunity to be part of the Pan American Games that are taking part in Toronto next year, as well as the Aboriginal Games.

This past group took part, they were actually volunteers in the Arctic Winter Games in Fairbanks; they were part of the volunteer team. So there's a lot of opportunities there to help youth build their leadership abilities. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: Thank you. When we did have the forum, I think everybody was there, the local leadership, the youth, the agencies, and the only missing element at the time was a representative perhaps from MACA, maybe even the Minister was absent. So I'll give him an opportunity to make up for his absence and ask him how will his department be prepared to assist the leaders and the youth of Fort Providence in trying to follow up on this meeting and identify the next steps in trying to advance the working relationship between the leadership and the youth? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. We welcome any opportunity that we have to interact with the youth and hear their opinions. I don't know if I was aware of the event that was taking place in Fort Providence. Perhaps if the MLA had invited me I would have gone.

---Laughter

So I'll put some of the blame back on the Member. We welcome any opportunity we have to work with the youth. We have an excellent team over at MACA that works with youth and they're all over the place, all parts of the Northwest Territories working with the youth. So we welcome any opportunity, and if there's an opportunity for me to meet with the youth in Fort Providence in the future, the MLA can let me know and I will be sure that I'm there. Thank you.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think what the community has done is taken the initiative of trying to bring the leadership and the youth together at the local level, and there's a need for resources and program-wise and funding and trying to work with the youth.

The last Assembly, the 16th Assembly had a Youth Forum. Would the Minister ensure that we do have a pan-territorial youth forum for the end of the 17th Assembly? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you. The one in the 16th Assembly was the initiative of the then Premier, but it was a very valuable tool, because I took part in that and I think one of the other Members in his former life had taken part in that too. It was an excellent opportunity to gather with the youth from across the Northwest Territories and get their views on a lot of different issues that are facing the Northwest Territories. So I will commit to the Member that this is an initiative that I'll work with the department to have a look at and I'll work with my colleagues to see if there's a possibility we

could pull something like this together, especially in event of the Youth Parliament not going ahead this year because of the Elders Parliament. This might be a good opportunity to gather the youth and have their input on issues facing the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 318-17(6):
STUDENT DIALOGUE WITH
AURORA COLLEGE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 5, 2014, I'd asked the Minister of Education to use some of his authority under Section 7 of the Aurora College Act. I asked him to tell the Aurora College Board of Governors to meet the students and certainly provide some e-mail addresses so people can contact them, but rather, they still appear to be anonymous. Perhaps they like it that way in a sense of governance of the board and the college for the students.

I want to hear what updates the Minister can provide the House immediately to find out has he actually done anything. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that information was brought to my attention even in this House. I did meet with the chair and also the president and addressed that concern to their attention. There has been work done in that area where their meeting is open and they have a student representative. We nominated a student just recently.

So we'll continue to make that important to the Board of Governors of Aurora College. I've always stressed whatever has been brought to my attention from this House, or even the general public, I raise that with the profile for the Board of Governors. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: It has been three months and I'm glad to hear that the Minister has met with the board and met with the president, but he hasn't informed me or anyone else that I'm aware of that he has met with any of them. So what topic did he actually meet with them about, what did he direct them to do, has he had the courage to use Section 7 of the Aurora College Act where the Minister can direct the board to do things such as provide e-mail addresses so students can contact their Board of Governors with concerns and complaints so they can get direct action? There is zero accountability. What can the Minister say about that problem?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. When I met with the Board of Governors, I addressed all of those issues. Any issues that come to my attention, I address with them. We work out solutions. When it

comes to the contacts of certain individuals, private e-mails of private individuals' contacts, those are at the discretion of the board if they want to release that information. But they do have a website. All the contact information, phone numbers, e-mails, it's all on the website. They even have a student representative as well. We are going to a June meeting in Inuvik and I believe the Member will be there as well.

So, we're looking forward to those exchanges of information as we move forward. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. So, go to the website; interesting answer. As I brought up before, the website says send all correspondence through the president's office. So the president gets to handle, control who knows what with the information. So the direct contact and accountability, what is the Minister afraid of to tell them to provide them with an Aurora College e-mail address because if they're on the Board of Governors, they're there as an advisory board, they're there as an administrative board, or are they there for whatever reason? I don't know. Maybe the Minister will take that initiative on and demonstrate some true accountability for the students. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. Obviously, we're not afraid of anything. Every time an issue comes up, I do address those issues with the Board of Governors. What's being said here will again be shared with the Board of Governors. Mahsi.

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

MR. HAWKINS: I'm not sure this is getting through to the Minister. I brought a complaint to a particular member of the Board of Governors the other day and they just go, well, it's part of the policy, that's the way it goes. Then he sent me to the president's office with the complaint. What is the point of having a Board of Governors if they don't do anything? This is frustrating. They don't represent the students, they don't represent MLAs when we bring complaints on behalf of the students, and now the only option for us to do is bring complaints to the president's office, who controls them, whether they meet the Board of Governors or not. So, frankly, I want to know what this Minister will finally do to demonstrate accountability because, frankly, it's a hollow word around this Assembly, it gets batted around regularly and I see zero meaning behind it.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi. Aurora College Board of Governors does work with the students. We deliver the best program we possibly can in the Northwest Territories, along with our partners further down south at various institutions. We'll continue to make that a success. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 319-17(5):
EDUCATION RENEWAL AND
INNOVATION INITIATIVES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to follow up from my statement and ask some questions of the Education, Culture and Employment Minister about the Education Renewal and Innovation Project and how it's going to be funded.

I recently received a letter from the Minister responding to questions that I raised in March of this year about the Education Renewal and Innovation Project. In that letter it indicates 10 initiatives from the ERI plan, well, actually 11 if you consider Junior Kindergarten, but the 10 initiatives are set to start in the 2014-15 school year. However, in the letter there was absolutely no reference to how these initiatives will be funded.

I would like to ask the Minister to explain how these 10 initiatives planned for the 2014-15 school year will be funded. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This whole education renewal and innovation, as you know, I did a statement on that. We are going through the various stages of engagement with the general public. We have delivered the overall framework. Now we have to develop an action plan based on the feedback from the stakeholders, the educators, the school boards, the superintendents and MLAs and others. Other individuals are interested to providing their input. Based on that, we are going to have a cost factor where the new money is going to be approached. Those are some of the discussions we are going to have with the stakeholders.

MS. BISARO: The Minister mentions an action plan. I know that that has been out there for quite some time. We have been waiting for that. It was originally scheduled for January and I know committee suggested that it be pushed back. Another question would be: When are we going to see that action plan?

The letter indicates that some of these initiatives will be funded from existing budgets but that others will require funding to be put in place. I need a little bit further elaboration from the Minister.

Will there be new funding for these initiatives, or will he continue with the current funding from within policy that we happen to see right now? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, when I talk about the action plan, yes, it's been directed to us that we need to have more time to engage the general public because it will be their document, their solutions, their ideas and their suggestions. So I have allowed more time for that to happen. We

want to deliver a draft action plan by this fall – that's the target date – and deliver that in the House potentially I am hoping by February session or sooner. It all depends on the engagement that we're conducting.

When the Member is talking about using existing resources or new funding, those are a mixture of information that we need to discuss. If there is going to be an ask for new funding, by all means I will be there demanding that within my portfolio. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: I'm very glad to hear that new funding may be on the horizon, but if these initiatives are being implemented in the '14-15 school year, the budget for that school year is already over and done, and I am not convinced that we are going to get new money.

I spoke a bit about contingencies for school boards in my statement. Yesterday the Minister, when he was talking about contingencies, stated that, "those monies should be expended into educational programming, so we support that as well." I am very pleased to hear that the Minister supports spending contingency money on educational programming. He said it I think three times yesterday – I would have to check Hansard to be sure – but my concern is with the fairness of the support that is being provided.

I would like to know from the Minister, in terms of support, does he support forcing the boards to use their contingency dollars to make up for the reduced budgets that he's implementing? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I am not forcing the school boards to use their surplus on various projects. It is at their discretion to use. We're hoping and encouraging them to use it towards their educational programming within their district. We will continue as a department working closely with them. My department, as I stated yesterday, is meeting with them now and yesterday and continues to discuss part of the opportunities that we have before us. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Minister and I have to respectfully agree to disagree. He is forcing the boards to make one of two bad options. They either use their contingency to fund the shortfall or they have to cut staff and increase their class sizes and reduce the quality of education.

The boards use this contingency money to fund extra staff, so they may get a special needs student who needs an assistant. They may get an extra 20 students in September that they need to find a staff person for.

I would like to know from the Minister, without a surplus, if my board has no surplus, in such a situation where I have an extra 20 or 25 students come September, can a school expect funding assistance from Education, Culture and Employment? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make it clear. If I was forcing the school boards to use their surplus, I would take all the surplus back, which I am not doing. It is at the discretion of the school boards to use the funding towards educational programming, and we highly encourage them to do that. Some of the boards have, as I stated in this House, substantial surpluses. When it comes to enrolment, if the enrolment goes up, then obviously the financial aspect of the school boards, their contribution increases as well. Those are areas that we continue to closely monitor and provide additional funds if that's the case. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 320-17(5):
PROVISION OF BILIBLANKETS FOR
BABIES AFFECTED BY JAUNDICE

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am following up to my statement today. I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As I stated in my Member's statement, the last time I brought this issue up with jaundice and the lack of a BiliBlanket being available or having an extra one on hand at the Inuvik Regional Hospital was brought up in February 2013. I was wondering what kind of updates have been happening since then in terms of looking at securing extra equipment such that somebody who does come in that needs a BiliBlanket that we have one extra one on hand. Can I ask the Minister for an update? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In most cases the neonatal jaundice is treated with light therapy and the BiliBlanket is one of the tools that may be used to support individuals that are suffering from jaundice. It's a clinical choice by the physician providing the service, providing the treatment, whether they use the BiliBlanket or another source. We don't direct the physicians to use any particular tool. However, I have talked to the department and I have asked for some specific information on the number of BiliBlankets that are available to residents of the Northwest Territories. As soon as I get that information, I will happily share it with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MOSES: Mr. Speaker, the photo therapy from the BiliBlankets actually helps reduce the bilirubin

that is built up when the decrease in red blood cells happen. If there is no immediate action taken, that build-up of the bilirubin can become very harmful to the infant. Hence, we have the medevacs.

The cost of the BiliBlanket is about \$4,000. If you put the costs associated with a medevac, which is thousands of dollars, why wouldn't the Minister look at purchasing more BiliBlankets through the Northwest Territories rather than continue to possibly send more medevacs out? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly going to have to follow up with the department to ask some additional questions and get some more information for the Member. The BiliBlankets offer the possibility to treat some degrees of jaundice at home for otherwise healthy babies. I acknowledge that there are some advantages here, but there are other methods of treatment as well.

In the Northwest Territories, unlike the rest of the country where the statistical prevalence of this particular condition is about 50 percent in babies, in the Northwest Territories, fortunately our statistics are significantly lower. In 2007-08 it was about 7 percent of babies. It has gone up a little bit, so that for 2011-12 it is about 13 percent of babies.

I acknowledge that there is certainly an opportunity here. I am certainly willing to have additional conversation with the Member. If there are opportunities for cost savings for those babies who the BiliBlanket will work for, I'm certainly willing to explore that with the authorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MOSES: Just in terms of the information the Minister is seeking and mentioning that he's going to commit to, I just want to confirm commitment that he will get a full inventory of BiliBlankets that we have in the Northwest Territories and for the regions and whether he will look at doing something in the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I commit to getting that information for the Member. As far as providing BiliBlankets in the additional communities, we need to figure out what the rate of prevalence of this particular condition is and figure out the cost balance analysis. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 321-17(5):
FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM
DISORDER SERVICES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, also known as FASD, affects many people in the North. It impacts every aspect of their daily lives in the way they interact

and participate in society. It often causes them to act in ways considered harmful to the community or themselves.

My first question to the Minister of Health and Social Services is: Does the department consider FASD a treatable condition, or is it considered to be a lifelong chronic condition requiring continuous support? Mahsi.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no cure for FASD that I am aware of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BROMLEY: That was my understanding as well. Today diagnosis of children with FASD is routine, but diagnosis of adults who were not assessed at young ages is a problem and many adults remain undiagnosed. They find themselves abandoned by the system, in trouble, in hospital or homeless and unaware of programs that might help. They don't have the ability to function in a society that seems uncaring and stacked against them.

What treatment options and support services are in place to identify and help adults who have FASD? Mahsi.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Cognitive behavioral assessments for adults are completed by psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists upon referral from a physician, community health nurse or a community social worker. In the Northwest Territories, we use the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Canadian guidelines for diagnosis, which were developed in 2005. There are a significant number of supports that individuals with FASD can access within the Government of the Northwest Territories. So I would say we are far from not caring for these individuals. We are not stacking against them. We have social workers who can deal one on one. We have mental health and addictions counsellors who can meet with them as well. We have rehabilitation supports to help people transition through activities of daily living. We've got case management that's available, as well, supported living as well as respite services.

Adults with FASD who cannot live on their own may qualify for income support, for shelter, food, clothing, utilities and other things. We do have out-of-territory placement for individuals whose needs are beyond our capacity.

There are a number of things that we do, Mr. Speaker. We certainly aren't stacking the system against these individuals. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. This is the impression adults with FASD often have. I didn't accuse the department of that. Thanks for that thorough description of the services available.

Families put a tremendous amount of time, resources and love into caring for children with FASD who are now adults. When these children grow up, they often remain in the care of their families. Caring for someone with FASD can be difficult, as the Minister knows, and the families become highly stressed and the person confused. They do not know if there is help or how to find it or access it. So perhaps it's a communications issue.

What measures are in place to reach out to the families who have children, especially adult children, with FASD and help them access the services they need?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There are a number of services, and I hear the Member, we may have a communication gap in getting this information to the right people at the right time. I know our professionals certainly share the information when they come in contact, but if they don't come in contact, the Member is right, the individuals who may need the information may not have it. I will have a conversation with the deputy of Health and Social Services to find out and get more concrete information around the types of communication we are using to help get the right information to the right people at the right time. I will share that with the Member and Members on both sides of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Short, final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our judicial system treats adults with FASD as though they are responsible for their decisions and have a full capacity for that responsibility punishing them instead of offering treatment or alternative ways of dealing with it, and thus, our jails are full of adults with FASD who circulate through this costly system without resolution. A wellness court announced for this fall that partnership between Health and Social Services and Justice is a positive step and is needed as soon as possible.

Is there any capacity within Health and Social Services and the courts to expedite this for adults with FASD? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We are making progress with the wellness court and we are hopeful and actually anticipate that anticipation of the wellness courts later this year will help the courts better address these exact situations by providing supports. As far as expediting, we have a plan in place to start rolling out the wellness court in the fall and we would be ready to start providing those services then.

In the meantime, if there are individual cases that Members are aware of, Justice and Health and Social Services are always willing to work together to try to find solutions in the interim. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 322-17(5):
SUPPORTS FOR
AURORA COLLEGE STUDENTS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I talked about the celebration of students who have graduated from universities, colleges and other post-secondary institutions. I want to specifically focus on the Northwest Territories Aurora College graduates. These students have made some huge sacrifices to take their studies in the North, to leave their communities, and they have made sacrifices to the families. They have also done things that I just don't know how they did it. They take on extra jobs, one or two jobs, study late at night to get a degree or diploma or certificate.

I want to ask the Minister, with our continuous support of services to these students through these hard times, what is the department doing to look at ways that we can help the students with large families away from home living in cramped conditions to help them through their educational studies as they attend either Inuvik, Yellowknife or Fort Smith institutions? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost is congratulating all the college grads throughout the Northwest Territories. We are very, very proud of them. Obviously, we want them to further their education success, as well, then, upon completion, return back to the Northwest Territories so we can offer them a northern attractiveness when it comes to workforce development.

Part of the Student Financial Assistance program is, again, one of the best across our nation and also international world renowned as well. We continue to provide those subsidies, those services to our students, whether it be in the certification of the diploma programming degree or master's program or even Ph.D. Our students are now pursuing Ph.Ds. We have increased our SFA, so we can increase the disability area, professional areas. So, those are areas we can continue to monitor and we'll make changes that reflect our northern students. Mahsi.

MR. YAKELEYA: I want to let the Minister know that I would like to continue tracking the types of support services that are going to be looked at for continued support for our Aurora College students and in our institutions. I also want to say to the Minister, I would like, one day, to see our learning

centres in our small communities take part in the celebration like we have done in Fort Smith, Yellowknife and the Inuvik campuses. We have had a good celebration in our own communities in our learning centres.

Is the Minister looking at ways that we can improve our community learning centres so that one day we can also have a celebration in one of our small communities at our learning centres? Is that a possibility?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes. It's a great possibility. In fact, I'll be addressing that with the Board of Governors when we're meeting in June. We've already addressed with the Board of Governors a while ago, and they are developing their corporate plan for a long-term strategy. This will obviously be part of their strategy, community learning centres in all communities. They should be producing highly skilled, qualified people. That's my view, that's my push, and I fully support that. The Members support that, as well, so we'll continue to push that forward.

MR. YAKELEYA: In my research specifically in the Sahtu communities, I have noted that the high school students with greater or higher grades needing diplomas or certificates in the Sahtu. Norman Wells has 89 percent of students. Colville Lake is 78; Fort Good Hope, 68; Deline, 62; and Tulita, 58. These are good start points for measurements to say at some period of time that we want to get 100 percent of these students that have a higher than Grade 12 diploma. This leads me to my third question.

I understand from the last session, and I've been pressing the Minister very hard on a Sahtu needs assessment, because we have opportunities that are knocking on our doors. I need to know, is this needs assessment going to be released? What are the next steps? We need to get these students who are willing to work, who want to work, and get them trained now in the Sahtu.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: First, I'd like to commend the Sahtu region and the communities for their academic success. Congratulations to them. The needs assessment that the Member is referring to is before our department now compiling all that information. I know the Member has addressed that issue in the House on numerous occasions. Now it's before us within the department. Now we're compiling all the information from other jurisdictions, as well, because we are looking at a territorial-wide training initiative and how it's going to look in the Sahtu region. The Member alluded to earlier about the program development institution potentially and a May tour and so forth. Those are the discussions that we are going to have, and I will update the Members once that is available by the end of this summer and the fall time.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to having this needs assessment discussed within the Sahtu, the leadership and the communities. I want to ask the Minister as I've also been pressing with the help of my colleagues on a feasibility study with the Sahtu technical institution, and that's going to be greatly needed in the Sahtu. I want to ask the Minister if he can provide the House and the people in the Sahtu, where is that specific project at, at this moment now?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, it was brought up in this House about the Sahtu and will there be a training institution. We were waiting on the training needs assessment and the assessment of the communities, which involves the stakeholders, the industry, the community leaders and community educators. Now we have that package and now we need to identify what's needed in the Sahtu region when it comes to program development and also a training centre area, how is that going to look. Based on the package that we received, those are options that we're going to create and then deliver that to the Sahtu region.

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

QUESTION 323-17(5):
TROUT LAKE AIRPORT PROJECT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation to provide a brief update on the Trout Lake Airport project that has been going on for some time. I'd just like to know how it has progressed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The Minister of Transportation, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been many challenges in the construction of the airport, being weather, quality and quantity of material. However, we have recently completed a change order with the organizations that we're working with to complete the airport this summer.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Exactly what type of work will be done in Trout Lake this summer and fall?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: As I indicated, there was an issue with the material and the quality of the material and the quantity, so what we are doing is we are bringing in some crush material and we're going to blend the material to complete the airport. It would be all of the work that would be required to have the airport at a finished stage. As I indicated, we have completed the change order and the work should have started four days ago, actually. That's what the change order indicates.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: For a small community and a large project like that, that's good for the economic sustainability and jobs for the community. Just for clarification, did the Minister say potentially we'll be landing at the airport this fall?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The department and the community of Trout Lake along with the development Corporation and Rowe's Construction have full intentions of completing the airport this summer, so for sure we'll be landing at that airport in the fall.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like the Minister had indicated, given a lot of the challenges, I'm really pleased to see the work towards the completion this fall.

Just one more question is the question of an airport terminal. Is that on site in Trout Lake this year or will it be there soon?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: This has been a very likely project. As the Member knows, it was back in 2009 that we got the money from the federal government for the Building Canada Plan so that we are able to complete this project. With all of the issues that were pertaining to the airport itself, we have been concentrating on that. The information on the actual terminal itself, I don't have with me, but I would be pleased to provide that information to the Member. But I can assure the Member that the department is serious about completing the project. The project has gone on for a significant time and we'll be working with the community closely to ensure that the completion is done this summer.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The time for oral questions has expired. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to return to item 7 on the Order Paper.

---Unanimous consent granted

**Oral Questions
(Reversion)**

QUESTION 324-17(5):
DEH CHO BRIDGE

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Today I want to talk about one of the mismanagement projects that we've had in our history of the Northwest Territories. In fact, this project has even been earmarked by the Auditor General of Canada as having definite issues with accountability and transparency, and even more recently, the taxpayers are still dealing with cost overruns with this project. I'm talking about the Deh Cho Bridge.

This project is still not done. I'm led to believe that we are still dealing with structural issues and even as of this summer that we've just recently sole sourced a southern contractor for a substantial amount of money to fix the pillar that is in dire need of repair, which has failed engineering specifications and it is really an issue of safety. So I'm now going to ask the questions to the department, represented by the Minister of Transportation, or maybe give us a little bit of an update here.

What exactly is happening this summer with this new contract that's being sole sourced to a southern firm? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister of Transportation, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that the bridge was shut down temporarily a couple of weeks ago to complete the work that had to be completed. I know that that did not create a tremendous amount of issues. We had some issue with the traffic and people wanting to haul larger loads across. We're able to accommodate everything at this time. I don't have the specifics of that contract that the Member refers to, but my understanding is that that's not an issue. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Contrary to what we just heard from the Minister, I don't believe this is indeed what's transpiring. What we're hearing from the industry is that there is indeed a large contract that is coming from the South, sole sourced, to do major repairs on the cement pillar to bring it up to safety code. We're also hearing that this organization is coming back to fix the railings that were not repaired last year and to fix the electrical system that was not done properly last year. Again, we're hearing to the tune of up to \$4 million. Can the Minister confirm or deny whether or not we're going to be doing this large-scale project to bring this bridge really to safety code? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you. One of the piers that was repaired on the Deh Cho Bridge, we have confirmed that there were three issues with the pier underneath the water. What had happened was that after the repair work was done, we had taken photos of the repair work. Unfortunately, we only obtained two photos of the three areas. We're going back down when the season is right to look at that pier. That's my understanding of the pier and the rock that is around the pier. There is some work that needs to be done. There's some holdback on it.

I'm not aware that we are requesting \$4 million to complete work. If there is \$4 million worth of work, it would be work that would be done in the budget that was approved here in the House. Thank you.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you. This is exactly the problem with why the Auditor General of Canada was brought in to evaluate this project. We continue to have mismanagement of these cost overruns, we continue to have a clandestine approach to how this project is being managed in the department, Members on this side of the House have no idea where this money is being spent. We go to the website, there's nothing mentioned. We go to the Deh Cho Bridge info website, what does it say, account suspended – no information.

Can the Minister indicate as to when we're going to get updated information so we can follow this so-called phantom spending that may happen this summer? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you. I know that each time the Members had asked for an update on the Deh Cho Bridge, the department has been more than accommodating. We are prepared to do that and we can provide an update, full disclosure of costs, anything that needs to happen that we need to communicate to the Members.

The issue here is not as simple as the Member makes it out to be. We had an issue with a contractor, the contractor that had to be removed from the site or had been taken off the site. The contractor changed. There were some issues with that. Anytime you do a large-scale project of this size and you have to change contractors in midstream there's a potential for issues. So, there is some of that and that had happened.

The bridge is substantially complete. There is some work that has to be done, some is seasonal and some are minor deficiencies, but nothing to the scale that the Member speaks of. Thank you.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I ask, the Department of Transportation website last correspondence was 2010. That is it. Your current Deh Cho Bridge website is suspended. I appreciate the Minister wanting to provide Members information, but I think the public deserves to know where their dollars are being spent, not just the Members.

Will the Minister commit to do a full disclosure update, update these websites, talk about all the money, talk about the reserve and put a final closure to this project so we know indeed what taxpayers are on the hook for? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes, I will commit to that.

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

QUESTION 325-17(5):

GIANT MINE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Environment. I'd like to follow up from my Member's statement of earlier today on Giant Mine. As both a proponent and a regulator, I'm asking the Minister if he could ask himself and tell us when you will sign the agreed upon environmental assessment for Giant Mine and allow its implementation. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We, along with the rest of the responsible Ministers, are waiting for the lead responsible Minister from AANDC to publicly announce the agreement and agreed upon recommendations and modifications. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: We often hear complaints about delays in process and so on, but really fundamentally most of the delays are because things end up on Ministers' desks without resolution.

Could I ask why the delay? We've agreed upon it. Everybody has agreed upon it. Work is going ahead without being done under the conditions of the environmental assessment that everybody has agreed on. Why the delay?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, this is a project on a site that is under federal responsibility. The federal Minister of AANDC has hold of the pen and is investing his department. We, like everybody else, are awaiting his public release and approval of the report and the agreed to modifications. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister. Will the Minister ask his federal colleague why the delay and report back to the House? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final, short supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll probably be delayed on the answer, but if it could be done during this session so the public is informed, that would be appreciated. Thanks for that commitment.

Work is needed, definitely needed. It's a situation that we want to get resolved, and work is underway, but there is also the need for oversight to make sure it's being done in the way that everybody has agreed upon.

Is the delay being done on purpose to delay public oversight? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the attribution of motive is not something I want to engage in. We know what is before us. We're waiting for the federal Minister to give a public response. In the meantime, some work is carrying on. It has been taken out of the EA that has been deemed to be critical with the roaster and underground stabilization and such, but other than that, the project remains under care and maintenance until the federal Minister releases the final decision following the response from Ministers. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 326-17(5):

DEH CHO BRIDGE ELECTRICAL CONTRACT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to pick up a little bit on one of the subjects Member Dolynny raised with the Deh Cho Bridge. Of course, I'll be directing them, obviously, to the Minister of Transportation.

More than a year ago, I was raising with the former Minister of Transportation a concern about the electrical contractor, how he was quite proud about the fact that the southern contractor met the expectations of the contract, and of course, we had to award it to the southern contractor because they were cheaper. Of course, they met the standards of everything that they had asked for in the contract. But my understanding is they never met those expectations on safety and installation process. Of course, their community commitment, from my understanding, was nothing and I think that proved itself out by itself.

I would like to get some details on how a southern contractor fulfilled their obligations when they won the electrical contract on the Deh Cho Bridge. My questions are to the Minister of Transportation to explain how that rolled out and how they met every obligation that they won that contract under. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister of Transportation, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a commitment to the House, the department did a retrospective analysis of the bridge and also accepted all of the recommendations of the Auditor General. The specific work that was done in detail, the contract that the Member speaks of, I don't have that detail here with me and I am not able to speak on that at this time. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the former Minister proclaimed quite adamantly and passionately about how much money they were saving, but it seems like we may be just redoing all that work that that southern contractor lowballed the bid so that they can get the job. Now I want to know, is this

electrical work that they did last year under the conditions that we thought we were being led down the garden path that they would be obliged to meet and would meet and promised to meet haven't been met.

Can the Minister explain, has the electrical work fully been signed off as lawful and safe for Northerners and are a fulfilled their contract in the eyes of the Department of Transportation?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I don't have the details of the contract that the Member speaks of. It would be difficult for me to determine or indicate whether or not all the work has been signed off as good work by the department. My understanding is that these individuals that were doing the work are professionals. I know that the staff that are inspecting the work are professionals. My assumption is that if the staff is signing off on work on the Deh Cho Bridge, then the work is done to proper standard. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the Department of Transportation is going to do when it comes to finding out if we have any holdbacks on this particular work at this time and what are we going to do when we need to address these in the future. Quite frankly, a northern company that has investments here, that has employees hired here that wanted to do this particular work lost the job because the southern business lowballed them and it seems like we are going back to fix the work that they lowballed a northern company.

Are we at a financial risk or a legal risk in this situation because we accepted a low tender but we allowed a change order to sneak well beyond the original expectations?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the details of that specific contract. I don't have the details of the change order to that contract, but there are regulations in place, there are holdbacks on all contracts to accommodate any potential issues on the contracts, so those are our standard. They are laid out in the contract. Depending on what the price of the overall contract was, then the holdback would be there. The appropriate amount would be held back to ensure that the work is completed to a standard that's acceptable. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we need to boil it down to who is responsible for this mismanagement of this electrical contract. Frankly, it seems as if they were all too excited to save all this money, but it turns out that it has turned into an interesting boondoggle all over because oh, my goodness, we are going to save

money from a southern company, but it turns out if we have to redo the work, it's going to cost us more. I, quite frankly, think we are in a situation of liability here that we may rightfully, if not morally, owe money or some type of responsible action towards the original northern company that bid on the work, could have done the work or we wouldn't be talking about it today. I would like to hear what type of accountability this Minister is going to hold somebody to account. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, the department doesn't mismanage projects. I don't believe that this is one that was mismanaged. I will check into the allegations made here by the Member. I'm sure that everything is done according to the regulations, according to the standards. There are certainly a lot of regulations surrounding any sort of electrical work. We will ensure that is done within that. I don't believe there is mismanagement.

I can advise the Members if there are any issues out there, but I don't believe there are. It's difficult for me to respond to a question when the Member is assuming that things are mismanaged. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 327-17(5):
GNWT MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY
ESCORT PROVISIONS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to try and get some clarification from the Minister of Health and Social Services with regards to some answers he gave to MLA Blake two days ago in regards to the Medical Travel Policy and escorts. In his answer to Mr. Blake, the Minister stated that there was going to be an RFP put out to deal with an escort policy. I believe that's what I heard. Hansard doesn't really clarify it for me. From Hansard, the Minister stated, "I'm hoping to have that Cabinet policy to Cabinet and then to Standing Committee on Social Programs in July." That's a little confusing to me, plus the reference to the RFP. So I would like to ask the Minister if he could please elaborate a bit and clarify it for me. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for the confusion. Several months ago, I briefed committee and provided them with some information on the review of the Medical Travel Policy. We had hoped to actually have what would be the base policy, the Cabinet policy ready for some discussion in March. Unfortunately, I had an opportunity to be briefed on that and I didn't feel it was consistent with the types of questions and

concerns the Members had been raising, so I asked the department to do a little bit of work. As a result, we are delayed on that. I hope to have that base Cabinet policy around medical travel done in July so that I can share it with Cabinet and Regular Members.

As part of the medical travel review, we were going to work on the base Cabinet policy but then we were also to do some work on some specific aspects of it, things such as escorts, non-medical escorts as well as fees as well as an appeal process. That was going to occur based on the timeline that I provided after we had done the base policy.

Frankly, given the delay that is now in place, I don't want to wait to do the work on the escort portion because clearly we are hearing from people that that needs to be done. I have directed the department to prepare and go out with an RFP to seek somebody who can actually help us through that process to facilitate meeting with stakeholders, bring individuals who have some input that they want to provide onto this, build upon all the statistical work that we pulled together and all the research that we've done to do that public consultation process to make recommendations on how to move forward with this escort portion.

We've heard a lot of opinion; we've heard a lot of ideas; we've heard a lot of solutions. Some of the solutions contradict each other. I've had one community say we want to do this and other communities say please don't do that. There is a lot of information there. We are seeking a consultant to help us go through that process and give us some concrete recommendations on the escort portion. That is what the RFP is for.

I apologize for any confusion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for the explanation. Generally, policy is developed internally. Why is it that we need to go to an RFP and hire a contractor to develop this part of the policy? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, we have a certain number of staff in the department who are doing a large amount of work, and more and more priorities are coming at them on a regular basis. We have seen clearly that we are capped with resources, and I want this work to be done and I want it to be done as quickly as possible, but we often go out and seek additional resources to help with the reviews and analysis and there are people who can help us do this in a timely manner, so this isn't unusual, but given the timelines, we want to make sure that we get this done. I feel it's important to expedite the section around escorts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: I totally agree. This policy has been revised for a very long period of time, so I'm glad that we are moving forward on the whole policy but specifically on this one section.

I'm still a bit confused when the Minister references a Cabinet policy. I'm not sure if that is a policy that stays just within Cabinet. When policies are developed, they are generally made public. So when he talks about a Cabinet policy, is this a policy that will be public afterwards and he is simply calling it a Cabinet policy because it's not approved? I'm a little confused there. Thanks.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: What I'm referring to is the overarching policy with respect to medical travel and how it operates and functions. It will be available to the authorities, it will be available to all individuals. We will make sure that people understand the Medical Travel Policy. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mrs. Groenewegen.

QUESTION 328-17(5):
IMPLEMENTATION OF
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm probably the umpteenth person who has stood up in this House to talk about Junior Kindergarten, but I have to weigh in on this topic. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Right from the start, who can argue with early childhood development and expanding that within our government? Where the problem lies is how this department tried to take, yet again, a cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all approach to early childhood development in the communities without taking into consideration what impacts that would have and what ripple effect that would have. In a community like Hay River where we have play school, Growing Together, Tree House, Aboriginal Head Start where age four children attend all of these programs, sure, parents are going to put their kids into an optional Junior Kindergarten Program, but we have added this. We've asked our educational councils to do more with less. So I don't think you could find a parent who wouldn't agree with the principle, but if you ask the same parents if they want to have the whole school system diluted by adding another grade, essentially, into our schools without any funding to go with it, I'm sure you would get some mixed responses.

So I would like to ask the Minister – and maybe he's been asked this before, but let me ask again – did you consider, in the small communities where the need was the most dire where you didn't already have long established ECE programming, did you approach the federal government and think about things like Aboriginal Head Start? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This particular programming, Junior Kindergarten is part of it. Head Start program is another one. We have eight Head Start programs across the territory through federal funding. Obviously, yes, we have approached the federal government on numerous programs such as Head Start and other early childhood delivery into the communities. We've been told over and over, it's your own jurisdictional deliverance. We have to work with that, but every opportunity, yes, we have met with the federal government not only on the education part but other labour market development agreements and other sources of funding that could be potentially available to us, so we have embarked on that and we will continue to do so.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Did the department consider that rolling out Junior Kindergarten in all communities without any consideration for what was already there in the area of early childhood development, did the department consider how that was going to affect those existing programs that had been on the ground for a very long time? When you take all of the four-year-olds out of all the ones I just named, what is the result for those and the daycares? Are we basically gutting all that stuff that we've already established in favour of Junior Kindergarten? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes. The answer would be yes. We have considered all those mitigations and working with the early childhood deliverers in the communities, the child care workers, as well, and the program deliverers. We thought about all the implications, as well, but at the same time, creating more opportunities where if we draw out the four-year-olds, they have more opportunity to focus on zero to three years of age. How can we assist in those areas?

At the same time, the Head Start program, some of those have been in place for a number of years. This is an option for enhancing. Working with the Head Start program, it's an optional program for them, for the parents. So we've reached out to the workers, reached out to program developers and provide them as much support as we possibly can and provide options as well. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Did the department consider that in the small communities where there was nothing established formally for early childhood development, that perhaps a made-in-the-North, not in association with the school, kind of approach could have been better where we could have involved parents and families and incorporated some other kind of parenting support and training and life skills and different things? I am not trying to be mean to the smaller communities, but obviously

there is a higher unemployment rate in those communities and it might have been an opportunity to get parents and children, if not a program, fashioned particularly for those communities in consultation with those communities rather than trying to add a grade into schools. Was that considered? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I agree that that is part of the process with early childhood development, the overall framework. When we talk about early childhood development, it is a mega piece of work across the Northwest Territories. Junior Kindergarten is just one piece of it. We have all these different initiatives on the go. Recommendations are brought to our attention as part of the action plan. Now we're currently working on those on what we can do immediately, the short-term/long-term plans.

So, yes, we've considered all those areas. It came from the parents, grandparents and educators. Based on that, we are rolling out those specific programs. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have such a diversity of communities and such a diversity of needs in the Northwest Territories. I just think that something that was not across the board and more responsive to each community in terms of what was already there and what was needed would have been a better approach. Would the Minister agree? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I agree we have to have all those programs in our communities that do not have licenced early childhood programming. Based on the stats we have delivered in the House, there are 10 communities without the program. So, yes, I agree with that. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 329-17(5):

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING IMPACT STUDIES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Environment. Several weeks ago an academic panel of experts put out a 295 page report on the hydraulic fracking in Canada. I want to ask the Minister if his department has taken a look at the report and compared it to what we already have in the Northwest Territories, what we have with the National Energy Board and what we have within our own land claims/water board provisions on this issue. Are we doing most of what the experts believe we need to be looking at or are we above and beyond what the report is stating? Has an analysis been done like that?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are aware of the report. We have done extensive work, a couple of years at least, of our own work looking at best practices and looking at other jurisdictions. There has been a lot of on-the-ground research done. Mr. Ramsay has taken a number of groups to different sites to take a look first-hand. We now have regulatory authority, we have a development assessment process. We are looking at that report along with all the other work that's out there in terms of the best practices. As we look at the issue of hydraulic fracking, how do we do it in the best way possible that will honour our obligation and commitment to people and look after the land, water and animals at the same time and have balanced sustainable development? So, that report will add some information and value to those processes. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: In the report that I briefly read, the summary, are there studies that we are already undertaking? We have the Sahtu Land Use Plan put together by primarily the elders in the Sahtu where they're saying there's development and there's no development. I mean, our elders put this Sahtu Land Use Plan together over 15 years.

I want to ask the Minister of Environment, because the environment is very close to us. The elders know what they're talking about. I want to ask, in regard to this report, is there any type of evidence that we're doing right now that says we're doing more than what the report is stating?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We, as a government, are aware of the need to do, within the Sahtu, some regional groundwater mapping. The baseline work on wildlife, that work is underway. There is work being done through the Environmental Studies Research Fund, which is a fund and a program that involves the federal government and the territorial government as well as assistance from industry. We've got money invested there, nearly a million dollars as well. The industry representatives have been very forthcoming in terms of offering to share the site-specific work that they have to do in regard to groundwater and wildlife impacts that we could add to that knowledge base. We are clearly now embarked upon that project over the long term to conclude that much needed baseline information.

MR. YAKELEYA: The technique that I understood from Husky and Conoco's personnel, and of course our own research in our communities, is that the hydraulic fracking would go down about two kilometres underground. Some of the other fears that people have is that there are only shallow wells that will be hydraulically fracked. That's not the case in the case in the Sahtu.

Is there any type of method that can reassure the people that when we do hydraulic fracking underground two kilometres, that if there are any type of tracers that you can put in the fluid that shows that the actual chemicals are coming up out of that type of operation? Is there any type of information that you have that could reassure our people that from other locations that they're doing hydraulic fracking that this is probably something that we could use in determining our decision as to the methods being used in the Sahtu?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: As the individual projects are permitted, there are going to be the requirements to look at those types of issues. What we are committing to, of course, is a thorough monitoring on an ongoing basis. We'll be able to track to very, very close range the need to go below groundwater tables and then there will be ongoing monitoring on site. We've also developed a process across the Northwest Territories with community-based groundwater monitoring that we'll be looking and testing water on a regular basis, so we are going to have all the steps and best practices in place that we need to provide those assurances.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sahtu has provisions within the land claims and the Sahtu Land Use Plan and, of course, our own co-management decision-making authority with our Sahtu Land and Water Board, so we're in the driver's seat on this issue here.

I want to ask the Minister, in the analysis of the report that came out by the academic experts, I'm not too sure if they looked at our authorities in the Sahtu to have this issue being looked at. I want to ask the Minister, other than the Sahtu region getting the attention on this hydraulic fracking, are there other fracking operations in the Northwest Territories?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We've been in the oil business for literally decades. There has been a tremendous amount of traditional vertical drilling and fracking. The issue of horizontal is something that is, from my understanding, new to the Northwest Territories and is being looked at carefully through the process we've just been talking about here in this House. I'm not aware that there was any other horizontal fracking that I'm aware of.

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

QUESTION 330-17(5):
IMPLEMENTATION OF
JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment regarding some of this Junior Kindergarten stuff, just to follow up with some of the problems that we've talked about to date and certainly issues I've raised before.

I was speaking to two parents yesterday with grave concerns about this, because they had gone to an invitation at, I believe, our museum to talk about the impacts on day home operators, and the senior official said that, yes, you might lose a third of your income, but if you were better budgeters you would notice very little change.

Is that the advice our senior officials are giving the families that take care of our most precious people, which is our children? Is that sanctioned and condoned and directed by the Department of Education?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. When we talked about rolling out the Junior Kindergarten, we wanted to work closely with the daycare providers and also the child care workers. We provided as much support as we possibly could to hear their perspective, and we took all that into consideration as well.

MR. HAWKINS: That's not an answer. When the senior official says day homes need to accept that things are going to change and you're going to lose money and you need to accept that, when two parents are telling me this yesterday, directed from our government, which in essence is the Minister's words if you put it this way, because they're head of the department, is this sanctioned, condoned and stood by, by this Minister?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, when we are rolling out the program this fall, we talk about the implications into the daycare providers, and the contributions they get from ECE is based on enrolment, the enrolment of the child in the daycare system. We'll continue to support those areas.

MR. HAWKINS: That's okay. I'm two for two. Two questions, no answers. I'll keep going.

Is it sanctioned and condoned and supported by this particular Minister that when a government official tells these people in a roomful of parents and daycare operators, et cetera, that if you could budget and manage your money better this wouldn't be a problem? These are parents telling me this. Does the Minister stand by those words?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: With any organization there is a budgeting process. We have to work with that. As the Department of Education,

Culture and Employment, we provide public money to these organizations. There is the accountability issue and transparency issues, so we'll continue to support that.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker the government official continues on by saying if you can't manage your own money, give us your budgets and we'll do it for you, and by the way, you probably won't notice any change. What facts support that when the government takes a third of the revenue stream and moves them over to Junior Kindergarten, and the government seems to be telling everybody, don't worry, go to the schools for free child care, but don't worry, lots of people still want to pay \$1,000 a month, so you've got no problems. What does the government think about that and does the Minister stand by that, that they're offering to say if you cannot manage your own budgets we'll do them for you?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: As I stated in this House, I did meet with both YK 1 and the Catholic School Board just a couple days ago, and we're compiling all the numbers now. We want to have the true facts and the true numbers. That will be before us early next week and we will be releasing that to the public.

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

QUESTION 331-17(5):
IMPACTS OF PREVIOUS HYDRAULIC
FRACTURING INITIATIVES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to continue on with my question on the issue of hydraulic fracking. I want to ask the Minister of ITI in his capacity with this information.

I spoke to one of the leaders from Fort Liard. The leader had said that they did have some fracking in his region. Have there been any other types of fracking in the Northwest Territories in the last 15 or 20 years?

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe there has been some, but it was not horizontally drilled and fractured but vertically drilled and fractured. I believe there has been some in the Northwest Territories over the past few decades. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the commonality that we have is there have been fracking operations in the Northwest Territories. Vertical, or the new one now we are using is called horizontal, so there has been fracking in the Northwest Territories.

I would like the Minister to provide me with more detailed information as to what type of impacts it had in those regions.

Have there been environmental studies? Is water being studied after that, or the air, the animals? That is so we have some baseline information as to where those actual fracking operations went in the Northwest Territories. Can the Minister do that?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, we would be happy to try and get that information together for the Member. Back in the '70s near the Northwest Territories/British Columbia border, there was some fracking that took place and, again, at Beaver River. I would be happy to get that information for the Member. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, also I would ask the Minister, given in the time of the '70s, what type of authority, what type of working relationship and if it's possible that when that fracking operation happened at Beaver River. I'm not too sure where exactly it is and what type of impacts we are seeing today in 2014 from that operation even though it is a vertical frack. A frack is a frack is a frack. I want to ask the Minister if that is possible.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, all those operations would have been under COGOA back in the '70s with the federal government. We will do our best to try to get that information for the Member. Of course, now we are responsible for onshore regulation of oil and gas here in the Northwest Territories. I will make a commitment to the Member that we will try our best to get that information to the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I certainly look for that information. I want to ask my last question to the Minister and to his colleague, that the Sahtu people have a land claim, a constitutionally protected document that was negotiated by the guidance of our elders in the Sahtu to take control of our destiny.

What type of approach is set by this department and this government on another protected area that is protected by the Constitution and jurisdiction as how do we work in relationship with land claim organizations that have these types of protection in regards to decision-making authorities on types of economic opportunities that are in that region?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, the land claim is a very powerful tool for the people of the Sahtu and a valuable tool in that I do understand there are subsurface rights included in that land claim. As far as our government is concerned, we need to continue to work with the leadership in the Sahtu, and decisions are going to have to be made together with the people of the Sahtu so that they can get their way forward by working together with

us. That is the way things are going to continue to happen. We have a track record of continuing to work with the Member, the leadership in the Sahtu, and we are going to continue down that path. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 8, written questions. Ms. Bisaro.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 17-17(5): GNWT FUNDING PROVIDED TO EDUCATION COUNCILS AND AUTHORITIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The department provides funding to eight district education authorities in the NWT according to a predetermined formula. Elementary and secondary school contributions are provided to education authorities based on government priorities and education needs. This funding framework plays a pivotal role in directing and supporting education councils to achieve education objectives. School contributions are calculated based on enrolment and to cover annual operating and maintenance costs.

1. Provide a breakdown showing the comparison of GNWT funding for divisional education councils to the Yellowknife education authorities.
2. In this comparison, include the total student enrolments per divisional education council and district education authority and any special funding that they receive; for example, small school allocations, inclusion funding, et cetera.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 19-17(5): FINANCIAL COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL AND NON-MEDICAL TRAVEL ESCORTS

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, June 2, 2014, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that the Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services devise a system of compensating medical and non-medical travel escorts for their time, with the goal of implementing the system in the fiscal year 2015-16; and further, that the government provide a

comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Mr. Miltenberger.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 28 SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2014-2015

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Monday, June 2, 2014, I will move that Bill 28, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 17, motions. Colleagues, we will call a 15-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

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

First Reading of Bills

BILL 27: MISCELLANEOUS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Bill 27, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 27 has had first reading.

---Carried

Mr. Bouchard.

BILL 26: AN ACT TO AMEND THE ELECTIONS AND PLEBISCITES ACT

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Elections and Plebiscites Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 26 has had first reading.

---Carried

Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I call Committee of the Whole to order. We have one item before us today on our agenda, Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. What is the wish of the committee? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. We would like to deal with Bill 24 today.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment if he would like to read his opening remarks. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to introduce Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. The purpose of this legislation is to raise the maximum aggregate of the principal amounts of all student loans that may be made by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The maximum aggregate principal amount of student loans that the government may lend under the Student Financial Assistance Act is currently set at \$40 million. The amendment proposes to increase this amount to \$45 million for the fiscal year 2014-2015 and thereafter. This change is required to allow the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to continue providing student financial assistance at current benefit levels.

I trust that Members will agree that this amendment is appropriate and necessary.

I would be pleased to answer any questions the Members may have. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. I'd like to ask the Minister if he'd like to bring witnesses into the Chamber.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, I would.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed, thank you. I'll ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the witnesses to the table.

Minister Lafferty, could you please introduce your witnesses for the record?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. To my left is Jolene Saturnino. She's the director of income security within the ECE department. Also, to my right is Ken Chutskoff, legislative counsel within Justice. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Before we proceed with general comments, I'd like to ask the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, Mr. Moses, if he would like to bring the committee's remarks. Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Standing Committee on Social Programs conducted its public review of Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, on May 27, 2014. A clause-by-clause review was held the same day. The committee thanks the Minister and his staff for presenting the bill.

The purpose of the legislation is to ensure ongoing financial aid to students. The bill increases the maximum aggregate for principal amounts outstanding for all loans to \$45 million for 2014-2015 and subsequent years.

Following the committee's review, a motion was carried to report Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, to the Assembly as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the committee's opening comments on Bill 24. Individual Members may have additional questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Moses. General comments. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the discussions that we had with this bill in camera I want to bring to the floor of the House to make them public. One of the areas of concern that I know I had as a Member, this is the second time during the life of this Assembly that we've come back to add a component, or a financial component to this SFA total. I just want to make sure that we're doing things in the right mannerism.

One of the concerns we had, and it was also brought up and echoed by the Auditor General of Canada, is that there has been some concern on the collection of student financial loans. In fact, some of the numbers that the Auditor General realized in their audit was that we failed to collect on roughly around 60 percent of our student financial loans that are out there, which is putting a burden on our system.

So my opening question here in a general sense is because of the fact, not just me, not just committee, but the Auditor General of Canada clearly articulating that we've got a collection problem. Is this collection problem, or is the repatriation of getting our money back to taxpayers causing the impetus here for seeing an increase of \$5 million being asked here today? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. We're fully aware of the collection that's before us. It's a challenge that we've been faced with, and the office of the Auditor General gave specific instructions on this particular area. The Member alluded to 60 percent fail. Those are areas that we are continuously and aggressively going after for collection. This is not pertaining to this particular change. The amendment is coming with the \$5 million increase. So it is a separate topic, and I'll get Ms. Saturnino to just elaborate a bit more on the process itself. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Ms. Saturnino.

MS. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. The department, in its action plan related to the response to the office of the Auditor General's audit on the Income Security Program, made a number of commitments with regard to automating the system, the reporting system for student loans, so to identify when a loan becomes due.

Previous to this there was a very manual process that was used. The request for the increase for the \$5 million is not in relation to the collection or default of collection files. It is in fact related to the fact that we have recently increased our remissible loan rates, which means that we have more funds that are being disbursed to our post-secondary students while they are attending studies. As a result, we requested an increase in the amount of funds that are available under the revolving loan limit.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Saturnino. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just so I'm completely understanding the situation, this increase has to do with more remissible loans being involved; however, what we have heard also here is that this is a revolving amount of money, so money going out and coming back in. With respect to as we are now talking about the challenges we have had in collecting that money to come back into this so-called pot of revolving money, so you're saying that this increase of \$5 million has no way, shape or form involved with the fact that we are struggling to collect those monies back that are in debt or default. Are these two separate issues? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Madam Chair, that is correct; they are two separate issues. We have been talking about the collection, how we can collect or be aggressive in that area. I've been dealing with my department on how to address those matters at hand because we have to take the Auditor General's recommendations seriously into consideration, so that's what we are doing. Those

are two separate issues with requests of the \$5 million to increase. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Madam Chair, for the life of me I can't understand. If we have a revolving amount of money, which is a total wholesome amount, a pot, if you will, and we are giving out loans and we are collecting loans back in payment, to me this is a revolving pot of money. If we are, by virtue, having trouble, as indicated by the Auditor General, and I am hearing promising words that we are working towards mitigating collection, which is good to hear, that sounds like by default that we are actually increasing this revolving pot limit. For the life of me, I can't understand how these are two separate issues if we are dealing with one pot of revolving money.

I'm going to ask the department if they can provide some type of accounting framework to clearly articulate that these are indeed two separate issues, because I can't for the life of me see how this are two separate issues. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Ms. Saturnino.

MS. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. When a student receives funding to attend post-secondary studies through the remissible loan, part of the agreement is that they would return to the Northwest Territories and live here in order to pay back that loan. They are not in fact required to make financial payments towards that loan. At current rates, for every year that a student attends post-secondary studies, it takes them approximately two years, in fact 1.7 years to come back to the Northwest Territories and remiss that same amount of money.

The rate that we are currently providing our remission rates compared to the amount that we provide has resulted in the rate of which students are receiving the remission to take longer. As a result, we have more funds that are being disbursed than are being written off or forgiven at the same time.

MR. DOLYNNY: Madam Chair, I think we're getting a bit more clarity here. So, we are hearing that the remission rate, the rate that we are writing off, or basically return of work services, if I can use that terminology, is increasing. The question that I have here is: How much of that is real cash that is being in default? Really, is this real cash that's not coming back in as a result of a fairly high default rate of possibly 60 percent? How much of that revolving fund or how much of that of the potential \$5 million increase here is due to actual cash not coming back into the coffers of this revolving fund? Thank you.

MS. SATURNINO: Unfortunately, I don't know the answer to that question; however, I can commit that we will look into it and we can provide that information.

MR. DOLYNNY: Madam Chair, I am encouraged to get that type of information, and I think committee would also be interested in receiving that.

Lastly, this is a question I brought up two years ago when we had the opportunity to look at this bill. Last time we increased it to \$40 million. It was the fact that if we are going to do the work of opening up a bill to do a consequential amendment to the act, the fact that the appeals program was also noted as being an opportunity in this area and, again, I ask once again.

The student financial assistance appeals process is in dire need of a review. When can we expect to see this happening, and why didn't we include it now? We know how much time, work and energy it takes to get a bill to the House, to the floor. I know this has been asked not by this Member; other Members have come forward. I am asking why didn't we include it now since we are opening this up for the second time during the life of the 17th Assembly and if it's not going to be opened up now, when can we expect to see the appeals process being revamped, relooked, retooled in order to meet the needs of our students? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. We recall that two years ago that was addressed to our department. I was just trying to get clarification of the status on that. The appeals part will be introducing that potentially this coming fall. I will get Ms. Saturnino to just maybe elaborate more in detail. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Ms. Saturnino.

MS. SATURNINO: The section relating to appeals that is currently under the SFA Act is in relation to the SFA Appeals Board. With regards to the first level of appeal, that's in the Student Financial Assistance Regulations. We have made a commitment to return to standing committee with recommendations for changing the current process with regards to the first level of appeal, specifically in regards to Section 40 of the Student Financial Assistance Regulations.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Saturnino. Next under general comments I have Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thanks, Madam Chair. I have similar concerns to my colleague Mr. Dolynny. I also wondered about why we needed the increase,

and I appreciate the answer. I do have questions around the amounts, similar to Mr. Dolynny.

We've talked about a default rate, I think defaulting on loans rate, and we've talked about a remission rate. My question is not so much the dollar amount but a trend.

Has the percentage of remission and defaulting on loans gone up or gone down over the last number of years? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Ms. Saturnino.

MS. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have the exact figures with regards to defaults on student loans at this time, but what I can inform you of is that we've recently worked with the Department of Finance and have substantiated, through income tax returns and filing of income tax returns, that approximately 70 percent of our non-Aboriginal students who received the remissible loan do return to the Northwest Territories upon completion of studies. In comparison, approximately 80 of our Aboriginal students return and file income tax returns the following year.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Saturnino. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's great. Can I get a sense of whether or not...and this is not so much relative to the students coming back but... Well, I guess it is, because if more students are coming back then we are remissing more money.

I'm looking for a trend. Can you give me any indication of over, say, the last five or 10 years whether or not this number has been going up or whether it has stayed steady or if it has gone down? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We just know that over a five-year period it's around 70 percent, but we can provide the detailed information to the Members.

MS. BISARO: My next question is similar to Mr. Dolynny's in looking at the cash amount, but I guess if you can't tell me the percentage, you probably can't tell me the amount of dollars. I'm looking to know whether or not the dollar amount that we are forgiving and/or that we are losing through defaulted loans is going up or down over time.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That is detailed information that we don't have at the tips of our fingers here, but at the same time, we can provide that information to the Members.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister. My last question is a general question with regard to this

particular process, and I think we all know that developing a bill requires a great deal of time and effort on the part of both Regular Members, the Minister's office and staff. It's quite a process to put legislation in place and to go through the whole process of providing it to committee, committee does the review, it then comes here. There is a great deal of time and effort involved on many people's parts, and it seems to me that there might be a better way to do this without having to make a change to legislation, whether it's every year or every two or three years.

I'd like to know whether that's something that the Minister and the department have considered, and if they have, did they find that there's an easier way to do it without having to go through a bill every time we want to increase the amount in this fund?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: These are the areas that we are currently exploring. As I stated, two years ago it was introduced to the standing committee, and we want to have a better and also a faster process of dealing with it in light of this time-consuming...(inaudible)... We hear the Members clearly, so we'll find ways of expediting this process in a timely manner.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. General comments. Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions would hopefully stay within the confines of this bill here. I'm very interested in hearing what the issues are and the increase to the student financial assistance. Certainly, I spoke earlier in my Member's statement of the struggles students have attending post-secondary education in colleges or universities. I want to ask the Minister, in regard to this increase, is the Minister, I guess... I'm glad to hear that the students are returning to the Northwest Territories, so is it to say that if a student has a loan and they come back to the Northwest Territories, do they have to work within a government department, agency or NGO, then that will help them with the remission of their loan? Is that the agreement?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Part of the process is that the loan to be remitted are those individuals need to come back to the North and live in the North. They don't necessarily have to work in the North, but they have to be living in the North.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Rather than getting into great detail on the program itself, if we could limit our comments today to the issue of the increase on the cap for the Student Financial Assistance. That might serve us well. Thank you. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will certainly take your advice on this one here and I will make comments on his opening comments. I will follow that procedure.

Since these are opening comments, I do want to say that it is good to have students who are going out from the North or in the Northwest Territories, especially from outside the Territories. It encourages them to come back and bring these skills back with educational knowledge and be positive role models in our communities. I know that Aboriginal students are taking advantage of it through the grants. I know a grant is only limited and they're only allowed a certain number of semesters before the grant runs out. SFA has that in the policy, and sometimes the Aboriginal students feel that they're treated differently from the rest of the population. If the semesters are taken up or the funding is being used to the maximum, they no longer are eligible for it and they want to continue on with another type of career, because it takes them awhile to get into that requirement for this type of education. Say if they want to become a lawyer or study, they have used up their semester, I call it points, then I guess that's when they'll have to look at the loan system and see if they're eligible, and according to the Minister, as long as they come back and live in the North, that shows true repatriation of our students.

I'm a little concerned when students who come to the North, raised in the North, and take advantage of our generosity because they don't have to go to the banks. One thing I always found curious when I met with the students down south, they said they're paying off their loan. I didn't understand that, that they had, to the banks or some other institution, to pay off their loans. We see a lot of those students in our schools right now or in our health centres. People who are young who say they're paying off their loans working up here. I never understood that. I thought everybody has a similar situation like I do, and I didn't realize that. That's part of my ignorance was, I didn't know there were different levels of education in the Northwest Territories. You know, I'm saying, paying off your loan?

Anyhow, I do want to say that the more I look at this that the students who are taking advantage of this through the loan system and go down south, and for whatever reasons they continue to live down south after they finish their education, that's where we're seeing this issue here. I'm not too sure if the Minister and his department is continuing to work on that, because he said aggressively seeking policies that would make sure students, to the best of their knowledge, said they'll come back and work and live in the Northwest Territories. It feels like sometimes that we're being taken advantage of and our system has some form of a degree of abuse, and that's not the whole intention of these support systems we have in place for students.

I wanted to just let the Minister know that we need to look at this issue seriously and stronger, the issue that students who come to us with good intentions and they get support, but they do not return, for whatever reasons, and only they know those reasons. However, according to the statement, there is a lot, a high percentage of them coming back and living in the North, so that's a good sign. We're seeing a small fragment or segment of our loans, and I certainly, again, support this bill with the request, and I support the students who are taking post-secondary institution training for the betterment of their families. Those are my comments.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. I didn't really hear any questions there. Did you want to respond to that, Mr. Lafferty?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Yes, this particular remissible loan, \$40 million to \$45 million, is certainly an incentive for the individuals to come back to the North and also to live in the North, and also to welcome them back to work in the North as well. Yes, they are 30 percent, or less than 30 percent out there we're still working with individuals that may not come back or there are some challenges. We have to continue working with that, but it is creating incentive for them to come back to work. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. General comments. Next I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just going to follow up and it's very specific to the issue before us at this second, but I'm going to follow up on a matter that I raised in committee some time ago. Still, to my knowledge, I have yet to receive either a letter or any type of correspondence to that. It directly relates to the SFA and the loan system, and now we plan to expand it.

The issue I brought to the attention of the Minister is when we provide loan bursary programs and we only charge, if memory serves me correctly, at 1 percent above the regular rate, it is very, very low. Here, we're asking for more money to increase the loan system, which I'm not necessarily against by any means, but the fact is how do you encourage people to come back when we have the lowest interest rate on loan systems. Shouldn't we have a multi-tiered system to encourage people to come back? It doesn't cost any additional money by increasing the rate, and actually it helps keep the balance of this fund lower if people are paying the higher rate if they choose not to come back to the Northwest Territories. It's a choice, because right now it's almost as if we're giving money away and I'd like to see education pursued, and if we need to expand the loan system, I'm in favour of that, but we need to do it in a way that's strategic.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. First of all, we're not the lowest in Canada, and even the interest paid, it does go back to the general fund. But I will get Ms. Saturnino to elaborate, and she's been actively involved in this, as well, with the remissible loans. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: He just said Ms. Saturnino.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'm sorry. Ms. Saturnino.

MS. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. We've recently done some research, and that recent research shows that the Northwest Territories does not offer the lowest interest rate in Canada. There are a number of jurisdictions that offer loans with zero percent interest rates, or just offer grants straight across the board, such as the Government of Newfoundland.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Saturnino. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That still doesn't change the principle of the question, which is if somebody takes a loan through the loan program, goes and gets an education and they say to themselves if I'm only going to pay 2 percent interest to come back to the Northwest Territories regardless if its 2 percent, zero percent, 1 percent, I don't really care, to be frank, low, low, and that's the point. They say, well, I can get a job elsewhere. Well, it's almost like it's free money. So they choose to go elsewhere. That's the issue.

The whole idea of the loan program is get people to come back and invest here in the Northwest Territories. So we invest in them and they come back and invest in us by working here. I'm asking about what type of evaluation and how do we crunch the numbers to encourage that if people choose not to come back to the Northwest Territories, which is their choice under mobility reasons, they're certainly welcome to do that, we cannot make them do that. So should we re-evaluate our loan system to say if you want to go stay somewhere, whether you took your school in Toronto or who knows, Houston, Texas, wherever, and you want to stay there, that's fine, but now you kick into the secondary loan interest rate program.

The whole idea is we send people out to get technical skills, training, well-educated people and bring that strength here back to the Northwest Territories. If we almost give it away, we're really giving it away and what benefit has it been to the people of the Northwest Territories?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Obviously, this whole remissible loan within the SFA area, we want to attract those individuals to come back to the North. As Mr. Hawkins alluded to reviewing, we are doing that as we speak. We want to evaluate our current system in place to make it more attractive, to make more incentives for those individuals who are going south. We want them to come back. If not, what other options can we provide to them? Mr. Chair, those are the areas we are currently reviewing. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, I asked this question well over three months ago and I'm still waiting for an answer. I've asked it in committee. The Minister said that they would get back to me. If it's my error that I've received your response, which I'm pretty sure I haven't, please resend.

The fact is my understanding is that no one has responded to me after three months on this issue. I, frankly, want us to find ways to ensure that we attract well-educated people back to the Northwest Territories. I think it's of great value that we have people from the Northwest Territories who have spent most of their life or all their life here, going out, getting education and coming back to the Northwest Territories and continuing on to the next chapter of their life. I like us to find every reason to do that and I think maybe looking at a tiered loan system can do this.

We need to put pressure on people to say this really is your best choice, not your only choice, but your best choice. Can I get that information and perhaps maybe he could give me an idea when? This question is at least three months outstanding.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I just did commit to that. Sometimes when it comes to a review, it does take time, but we will provide that information to the Members. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: I don't know what else to say. I've already said it. I've already waited three months. The Minister says he's going to come back to me, so I guess that's it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Any further questions, Mr. Hawkins? Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. General comments. Committee, are you prepared to go clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. I'd like to turn your attention to Bill 24, clause 1.

---Clauses 1 and 2 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): To the bill as a whole.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Does committee agree that Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Act, is ready for third reading?

---Bill 24 approved for third reading

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Bill 24 is now ready for third reading. I would like to thank Minister Lafferty for coming here today. I would like to thank Mr. Chutskoff and Ms. Saturnino for joining us today. If I could get the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber. Thank you.

Ms. Bisaro, what's the wish of committee?

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Dolynny, can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, and I would like to report that Bill 24 is ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Do I have a seconder to the motion? Ms. Bisaro.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Langlois): Orders of the day for Monday, June 2, 2014, at 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

- Motion 19, Financial Compensation for Medical and Non-Medical Travel Escorts

18. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 28, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2014-2015

19. Second Reading of Bills

- Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Elections and Plebiscites Act
- Bill 27, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014

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

- Committee Report 6-17(5), Report on the Review of the 2014 Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Northwest Territories Child and Family Services
- Bill 8, Write-off of Debts Act, 2013-2014
- Bill 9, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2013-2014

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, June 2nd, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 1:53 p.m.