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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Wednesday, September 30, 2015

Members Present

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

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 223-17(5): FISCAL UPDATE

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to update Members on our fiscal situation and the challenges that Members of the next Assembly will be facing.

As the 2014-2015 interim Public Accounts that I will table later this session will show, we have achieved our fourth consecutive surplus last year, totalling \$120 million. Our departments were diligent in keeping expenditures within budgeted levels. However, this is not enough. The public accounts will also show that our net debt has increased \$37 million. This means we continue to rely on short-term debt to pay for our capital expenditures and we remain in a cash deficit position.

In June of this year we received the last of the 2014 resource revenues, and after adding in the estimate for the revenues we expect to receive for the first three months of 2015, we have recorded \$63.7 million in resource revenues in the 2014-2015 Public Accounts. We have shared \$6.3 million of the net fiscal benefit of the revenues already received with our Aboriginal partners under the Devolution Agreement. After sharing with the federal government and our Aboriginal partners, our remaining net fiscal benefit for 2014-2015 is \$23.9 million. This allowed us to make our first contribution of resource revenues to the Heritage Fund. In August we transferred \$4.7 million to ensure that future generations share in the resource development happening now. The remaining resource revenue will be dedicated to investment in infrastructure and debt repayment, consistent with our previous commitment to the Assembly and public.

In 2015-2016 we will continue to meet our fiscal challenges in spite of extraordinary expenditure pressures resulting from fire suppression activity and low water levels at our Snare Hydro system. This year's revenue forecast has not materially changed from the February budget. Due to extraordinary expenditures related to forest fires and low water, we

are expecting a reduced operating surplus at \$105 million, down from \$147 million projected in the 2015-2016 budget.

We need these operating surpluses to fund at least half of our annual capital investments, and our dedication to managing our expenditure growth in line with revenue growth has kept us in a surplus position. Going forward, even more fiscal restraint will be necessary to maintain surpluses because our revenue growth is forecasted to be flat over the next five years.

The flat revenue outlook means less fiscal resources to sustain programs and services and capital investments at current levels. Under current fiscal planning assumptions, our operating surplus will continue to decline to what would barely be a balanced budget by 2019-2020. That year could see us with a small surplus of \$10 million and still in a short-term cash deficit position, living beyond our means as we continue to borrow money to finance operations and capital investment throughout the life of the 18th Legislative Assembly, something we said we must not do.

The key components of our revenue are beyond our control, so we cannot simply choose to grow them. The reality is that almost 70 percent of our revenues come from the Territorial Formula Financing Grant, which increases at the rate of provincial and local government expenditure growth adjusted by the NWT population growth. As provinces struggle to balance their budgets and manage their debt loads and we deal with flat population growth, our main source of revenue will also begin to decline.

While making up only 19 percent of total revenue, our own-source revenues are volatile and difficult to estimate and are linked to the NWT economy.

The NWT economy has experienced three years of growth, primarily because of activity related to the construction of the NWT's fourth diamond mine. However, this fact masks the reality that the economy is only 85 percent of what it was before the global recession in 2008. Furthermore, economic activity is uneven, with southern NWT, especially the North Slave region, benefitting from mineral exploration and diamond mine activity, but other regions, especially the Sahtu and Beaufort-Delta regions, experiencing serious declines in economic activity. This economic slowdown has caused business opportunities to dry up and the population to stagnate, as families leave to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Yesterday's Statistics Canada release of the July 1, 2015, population estimates show 0.2 percent population growth in both 2014 and 2015, caused mainly by less people leaving the territory. While these new estimates suggest that the retention efforts in our Population Growth Strategy are working, other important initiatives of this strategy, including increasing immigration to the NWT through the Nominee and Express Entry programs, may also be

bearing fruit. However, It does not change the Northwest Territories fiscal outlook and we cannot relax efforts to address our economic challenges.

What happens in the resource sector has a dramatic ripple effect on the rest of the economy in relatively short order and we are keenly aware that our resource sector is strongly linked to the global economy as the prices for NWT resources are set in the global market. Both workers and capital can easily leave the NWT when the economy slows down or another province experiences strong growth. Simply having the resources is not a guarantee that they can or will be developed.

The scope and timing of new resource projects are uncertain. Currently, potential new mines are having difficulty obtaining financing, and low prices have caused oil and gas activity in the territory to decline significantly. New drilling and exploration projects in the Beaufort Sea and Sahtu regions have been put on hold. At present there are no potential projects large enough to replace the existing diamond mines and the resource revenues they provide our government when they stop production. None of the existing diamond mines are projecting production past 2031. The first mine projected to close is Diavik by 2023, just eight years away.

Resource development depends on exploration investments made by private companies with plenty of worldwide options for future growth. A new mineral discovery may take more than a decade to become a productive mine and the rate of exploration investment has decelerated. Total mineral exploration is at levels similar to 2009, when the global economy was in recession, and very little oil and gas exploration has been undertaken over the past few years. Without exploration, new resource development does not happen.

This is our dilemma. We need to make investments in our economic future now by ensuring our territory is attractive and welcoming to potential investors. Infrastructure investment can help encourage resource exploration and development and we need to position ourselves to capture the benefits of a global economic recovery. However, our projected revenues are flat and our existing expenditure pressures continue to intensify. Taxation and other measures to increase our revenues are not the answer; these would only raise the cost of living and doing business here and discourage the investment we need.

The solution is growing our economy and growing our population, which means investments in infrastructure are required to not only support resource development but to diversify our economy, lower our energy costs and, in turn, lower the cost of living and operating businesses in the NWT. In short, we need to spend money to create future prosperity, but that means managing current expenditures so that we have the fiscal resources to invest for the future.

As we look to our future post-devolution and the need to grow our economy, there are key things to be done. Specifically, we need to commit ourselves to settling outstanding land claims. This will bring political certainty to both the GNWT and Aboriginal governments. It will bring economic certainty and opportunity to industry, opening up 144,000 square kilometres of mineral rich land that has been under interim withdrawals for decades, allowing for potential development. Settled claims also mean no more tens of millions of dollars spent on protracted negotiations, saving three levels of government critical fiscal resources.

Going forward, the GNWT will need to do more to free up fiscal resources to continue to meet the difficult challenge of maintaining existing assets, improving housing stock and meeting legislative requirements. We have to create fiscal capacity by ensuring expenditure growth is still controlled, implementing reductions in areas where reasonable and looking at ways government could be structured more efficiently.

If current planning assumptions remain unchanged, our operating surplus will continue to decline over the life of the 18th Assembly to as low as \$10 million by 2019-2020. This will require us to lower our investment in our capital program after 2016-2017 to ensure we are able to manage debt and adhere to the Fiscal Responsibility Policy. This means our infrastructure deficit will continue to grow.

We cannot borrow our way out of this quandary despite the increase in the federally imposed borrowing limit to \$1.3 billion. Increased debt today leads to higher future debt repayments. Using the increased borrowing room entirely would add almost \$30 million annually in expenses for interest and debt repayment. The operating budget would be required to cover these extra costs and we would be in deficit by 2019-2020.

We need to ensure we are living within our means, watching what we spend on operations so we can continue to invest in infrastructure to grow the economy. The current outlook projects both flat revenues and increasing expenditures. This leaves us with a narrowing surplus and a capital investment profile that is cut in half by 2019-2020. Economic growth and diversification will require capital investment so that mine closures in the medium term do not push the economic base past a tipping point. Make no mistake, I am confident that as we transition to the 18th Legislative Assembly, the resilient people of our fine territory are up to the task. Aligning our expenditures to our flat revenue growth will be challenging but necessary as we continue on our path to creating a sustainable economic environment that will allow the future Legislative Assemblies to provide our residents with programs and services they require. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Honourable Minister of ITI, Mr. Ramsay.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 224-17(5):
HYDRAULIC FRACTURING
REGULATIONS UPDATE

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is immense oil and gas potential in our territory and this government is committed to establishing the tools and resources with which it can be developed in a balanced and responsible way. We are also committed to ensuring that Members of the Legislative Assembly, the public, Aboriginal leaders and other stakeholders have a role to play in the development of those tools and resources.

Like our mineral resources have in the past, we believe that oil and gas resources can provide needed economic opportunities for our communities, residents and businesses, while still respecting and sustaining the lands, water and environment to which we are intrinsically tied.

The GNWT has inherited, through devolution, a well-established and proven regulatory system that ensures resource development decisions in the NWT are made in the public interest and are informed by appropriate scientific and technical information, traditional knowledge and public input.

As we move our territory forward, we will continue to improve this legislative framework to reflect the needs and priorities of our residents. We are supportive of an open and transparent approach to advancing resource development in the NWT and of incorporating best practices for industry reporting and public disclosure as they emerge.

To this end, our decision- and policy-making will continue to be guided by what we learn and determine from our many dialogues, debates, engagements and formal consultations.

The input sought and received this summer on proposed regulations governing hydraulic fracturing and the development of a made-for-the-NWT Oil and Gas Strategy are examples of that.

In keeping with our government's commitment to strengthen and refine regulatory processes following devolution, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, together with the departments of Environment and Natural Resources and Lands, sought feedback on draft Hydraulic Fracturing Filing Regulations. We held 14 public engagement sessions in 12 communities in the Northwest Territories and received input by mail and e-mail as well.

Our work to develop an NWT Oil and Gas Strategy is also being guided by engagement with communities, territorial stakeholders, leaders, subject-matter experts, Aboriginal groups, industry and the public. Once a strategy is drafted, we will again seek input from these key groups and incorporate their comments and feedback.

I would like to thank all of the individuals, organizations and businesses who have contributed their input into both of these initiatives.

Through our discussions, NWT residents have told us that they want, and deserve, a greater level of understanding regarding their government's plans for the management and realization of our territory's oil and gas resources.

We agree. That is why I announced earlier this month that the important dialogue that we have begun regarding the safe and responsible management of oil and gas development in the Northwest Territories will not conclude with our government. Rather than implement proposed hydraulic fracturing regulations at this time, we are now taking the necessary steps to continue the public engagement, education and discussion into the 18th Assembly. In this way, we can provide both the time and information that our people have asked for.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister told us in his fiscal update that the NWT is experiencing an economic slowdown. This is a serious challenge to creating the jobs and opportunities Northerners want and will also reduce the revenues our government collects to fund the programs and services our people expect. The only long-term way to address this issue is to reverse that trend and grow a strong and diverse economy, starting with the tremendous natural advantages this territory already enjoys, including our oil and gas resources.

It is the role of government to take the lead in creating the conditions needed to attract and sustain oil and gas activity and to do so in a way that ensures that residents and communities of this territory benefit fully, from exploration, to development, to production and the transportation of our resources to market. This government is committed to resource development in a manner that is balanced, sustainable and responsible. By keeping both the environment and the economy top of mind, we can continue to build a bright future for this territory.

The public engagement that we undertake is always an important step in our work and we will not rush it.

This government will continue resource development dialogue with the public, Aboriginal governments and industry stakeholders so the future of this territory is guided through collaboration and mutual respect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 225-17(5):
2015 FIRE SEASON

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, it isn't very often we can say that weather forecasters were spot-on with their projections; however, this fire season it seems they got it right.

The fire season started very early. In fact, it may be one of the earliest on record. It seemed like the 2014 fire season just spilled over into 2015. There were several hold-over fires from the 2014 season, fires that burned deep over the winter. By early June the numbers and frequency of fire occurrences were record setting. The effect of extended drought was really evident through the South Slave, Deh Cho and North Slave regions. Fire behaviour on most of the fires was explosive. Fire crews reported having issues finding water sources to run their power pumps.

Large fires began to show up on the landscape in the Deh Cho and South Slave regions. Several communities were impacted, including Trout Lake, Jean Marie River, Fort Simpson, Hay River, Enterprise, Fort Providence and the Hay River corridor.

Large numbers of heavy equipment were hired to help deal with the fire situation. Finding additional wildland fire resources to help stem the tide of these fires became a serious challenge as western Canada and the United States, suffering under the same drought as the Northwest Territories, began to take up any available resources in the country. A National Critical Resource Protocol was established to divide available resources according to need, the protection of human life being the priority. As you are no doubt aware, Saskatchewan was indeed the most affected province in the country, requiring the most help with several communities evacuated. Despite conditions here, the NWT was still able to render some assistance, along with Ontario and the Maritimes.

Fortunately, as meteorologists predicted, conditions changed from mid- to late-July and we began to get some substantial rain. This, of course, helped firefighters get the upper hand and establish control. In early August the North Slave joined in the fray as a fire near Hearne Lake began to grow beyond the control lines of firefighters and into the Reid Lake area. Cottagers were evacuated and firefighters from other parts of the NWT and Alberta moved in to help the region deal with this fire. Again by mid-August, wetter conditions moved in and curtailed the fire. Priority areas of the fire were brought under control and extinguished.

For those statistical analysts, there were 241 fires in the NWT and 622,000 hectares of land consumed by fires, which is above average. However, things could have been a lot worse. Last year, as you recall, the NWT had 378 fires which consumed 3.4 million hectares and the Government of the Northwest Territories spent \$55 million on wildfire suppression. To date, expenditures for 2015 are close to \$32 million. However, we can say, with glad hearts, that no lives were lost and very few values-at-risk were affected, which is, of course, our ultimate goal.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Forecasters are already looking at large-scale global weather models and into forecasts for next year. Forecasters are predicting an El Nino winter, warm with limited precipitation which, depending on the actual outcome, may affect our water levels for next season. It seems that the drought through the NWT will continue.

As such, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, or ENR, will continue to be proactive and ready itself for the next fire season. A debrief of this year's lesson learned will take place in the fall and public meetings will take place over the winter.

The rollout of the new Air Tractor 802 Fire Bosses continues. The first two planes have been built and are awaiting avionics and floats. The entire squadron of eight aircraft will be ready by May 2017 and will be integrated into the department fleet over the 2017-2018 fire season. New aviation and personnel contracts will be negotiated over the winter.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot stress enough the value of the FireSmart Program. Everyone has a responsibility to help prevent and protect their homes, cabins and communities from the risk of wildland fires. Property owners and communities should be using FireSmart tools to reduce their risk of loss from wildland fire. It was noted over the past month, Mr. Speaker, that some of the cottages and cabins on the Ingraham Trail were FireSmarted. This made firefighters' jobs of protecting these values that much easier.

FireSmarting homes, cabins and communities allow firefighters to concentrate on fighting fires and is in these difficult years a simple solution to a very complex problem. Information on FireSmart is available from local ENR offices and local community governments.

There is still much to do before the next fire season. ENR will clean up and put away the gear from this past summer and prepare for the next. Firefighting can be a dirty, laborious and under-appreciated job. Our hats are off, Mr. Speaker, to the firefighters who return every summer to protect our communities: young women and men from the North and across the country who should be applauded for their efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RIGHTS OF GRANDPARENTS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a little bit of trivia, when I was sworn into this

Legislature the first time, there's a video footage of my family out in the Member's lounge and my husband was holding my daughter in his arms and Jillian was six years old. Now almost all of my grandchildren are now older than six years old, but today I want to talk about the rights of grandparents.

I've often got on the plane to fly here to Yellowknife to do my work and thought that I'm blessed because I could not be doing that work if I did not know that my five grandchildren were in good hands, in good care and that they were safe and being well cared for. Not every grandparent has that blessing and has that privilege to know that. What's even sadder is that sometimes grandparents don't have the ability, and they are blocked from intervening when it comes to the well-being of the grandchildren.

So, today I want to talk about the rights of grandparents in the Northwest Territories. When it comes to rules for visitation and custody, grandparents' rights is an evolving field across our country. It's affected by new case law as well as changing understandings of what family means and what role different individuals can or should take to ensure a child's welfare.

But there's one thing we know for certain, and that's that our NWT visitation and caregiving legislation doesn't even address grandparents directly. This isn't the case in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec or the Yukon. These jurisdictions expressly recognize grandparents and clearly give them opportunities to pursue their cases. Nova Scotia introduced a package of grandparents' rights legislation just last fall.

We know from public hearings on the Child and Family Services Act that NWT grandparents often play a vital role in their children's lives. They can provide care, emotional and financial support, and essential links to traditional cultures in home communities.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs highlighted these in our recommendations on the Child and Family Services Act, and I quote, "According to one weary grandmother who has fostered several grandchildren, 'I'm tired and I'm angry and this government is actually going backwards. When are things going to change for the better?'" That's about grandparents and foster care, but today I want to extend this conversation to also speak to grandparents seeking something as simple as visitation and custody.

These are complicated questions and in every Canadian jurisdiction, legislation requires us to always prioritize the best interest of the child in any decision or ruling.

I'd like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: But while the jurisdictions vary in the details of their approaches, several have at least taken steps to bring grandparents further into this conversation. The NWT must be the next jurisdiction to bridge that gap and formally recognize grandparents in our legislation.

Later today I'll have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FIFTEEN YEAR REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL AND CAPITAL SPENDING

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had the privilege of tabling a report, entitled "Measuring GNWT Fiscal Performance and Accountability." So, today I wish to spend some time referencing my findings and talking about our operational capital spending over the past 15 years.

When one looks at spending, one must look at our spending growth rate from year to year as well as our forecasting ability to stay on budget. So, my testing in this area begins in the year 2000 and includes this fiscal year. Obviously, we have the ability to evaluate four Legislative Assemblies, starting with the 14th Assembly under Premier Kakfwi, the 15th under Premier Handley, the 16th under Premier Roland and, finally, the 17th under Premier McLeod. So, what did we discover? We found out that the total increase of year-over-year operational spending from 2000 to today was 115 percent. The Bank of Canada calculation of the inflation rate for the same period was 33.23 percent. Therefore, the GNWT operational spending during this 15-year period is much more than triple the official inflation rate.

Further to our findings, it was interesting to note, of the four Assemblies during this review period, the McLeod government did win with the highest honours in overall operational spending dollars, but did come in second place for least overall growth during its term. So, to be fair, the McLeod government did have some measure of restraint to deal with growth following the devolution implementation, otherwise its ordinates in the operation spending growth would have propelled its placement much lower.

However, the second measurable operational performance comes down to how we manage the accuracy in spending forecasts. In other words, how do you minimize supplementary appropriations?

We all know sometimes there is unavoidable spending, such as droughts or firefighting issues; however, large or repeated supplementary appropriations may also signal a need for better budget controls and forecasting.

The C.D. Howe Institute recently ranked the GNWT eighth of the 14 Canadian governments in terms of its accuracy and spending forecasts for the years 2004

to 2015. Yet, it is important to note supplementary appropriations fell dramatically in the final year of the 16th Assembly and the first year of the 17th Assembly but, unfortunately, have risen every year since then.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. DOLYNNY: In the end, the final report card for the McLeod government on operations spending growth and forecasting is a B minus. Increased inaccuracy in budget forecasting during the life of the 17th greatly affected this grade. Yet, luckily, this grade could have been much worse if not for the controls in place during the new NWT responsibilities following its devolution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICIES

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past four years, it's been an interesting job, but in some ways it's been frustrating. Our government sometimes has flaws in it. We see that through some of the constituents who we have. A lot of these constituents are low income or students.

One of the examples that I'm going to talk about today is we have some students who have grown up in the Northwest Territories, lived here all their life, went from kindergarten to Grade 12, after Grade 12 moved on, decided they were going to go somewhere else, to some other jurisdiction for a year or two, and now want to come back and get education here in the Northwest Territories. But now our government says no, you're not a resident of the Northwest Territories anymore. That credit that you had for student financial assistance, you're not eligible for that for another year, once you become a resident again. For one whole year. These are Northerners. A lot of these students' parents still live here.

We are trying to promote the Northwest Territories, get more people to live here, get our students to come back, and our government has a stringent rule on this residency issue.

I've heard many scenarios from other colleagues about people leaving for a short period of time – a year – and losing a whole bunch of their benefits like that. Our government needs to be flexible and responsible to the public of the Northwest Territories.

I will have questions today for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment how we change this residency for northern students and these Northerners to come back, get education, better their lives and make the Northwest Territories a better place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ENTERPRISE BIOMASS DEVELOPMENT

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In the past I've stood up in the House to celebrate the hardworking town of Enterprise, our gateway to the NWT. Even though it's a small town with a population of just over 100 people, Enterprise is home to great enthusiasm and a lot of exciting ideas for economic development.

I've also spoken before to support biomass opportunities in the Deh Cho and South Slave regions. Today in Enterprise, residents look forward to the possibility of a new wood pellet plant to bring jobs to the region.

I support this project. This month the hamlet council passed an agreement-in-principle to sell 3.2 square kilometres of Enterprise land to the mill project. Forest management agreements signed in 2014 ensure harvesting, providing access to timber resources, employment, and business opportunities for jointly owned Aboriginal development corporations.

Deh Cho communities are ready, willing and able to build our economy on sustainable resources and industries that complement our traditional economies, use residents' existing land skills and offer fresh opportunities for employment. Biomass projects boost local access to alternatives to fossil fuels, not to mention the expense and pollution that goes with them.

Work like this brings new jobs and fresh revenue to communities, and biomass projects help our small lead in environmental stewardship.

I'm excited to see these enterprising residents and small business owners working and I hope they'll get the support they need.

Initiatives like this can bring a much needed industry boost to the South Slave and Deh Cho regions. Despite my excitement, I can't help noticing that the NWT Biomass Strategy expires this year. I urge the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to continue this important work.

Later I will have questions about the support for the wood pellet industry in the Deh Cho and South Slave regions.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INUUVIK-TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY CONTRACT CLAIM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The GNWT announced last week that they are reviewing a \$32 million claim submitted by the contractor for the Inuvik-Tuk Highway. As we've heard time and time again, this is an iron-clad contract. It's a fixed price and there will be no need for extra money. Boy, if I had a dollar every time I heard that.

I'm also going to remind everyone that this was a negotiated contract which was promised not to cost more than \$299 million. So what happened? As fate would have it, an e-mail error through our good colleague Mr. Menicoche certainly sheds some new light on this project. It makes MLAs start to wonder how long would we have been kept in the dark about the \$32 million claim if this e-mail wasn't received in error or, frankly, good luck. Frankly, discussions and decisions like this to fund the project further happened behind closed Cabinet doors while Members are on the campaign trail.

For many of us this is certainly déjà vu all over again when it comes to the bridge deal. Ironically, many of us have been hearing for months and months that there have been many problems with this project, but yet every time we ask, don't worry, everything's fine, everything's on budget, no big deal.

It's fair to say we may have 32 million problems. While this is being scrutinized, I certainly hope they're watching it very closely. But to be fair, now that the cat is out of the bag, let's look at it this way: This is a request for more money. The claims are being reviewed, and yes, it is normal to put in claims for construction projects. It's a normal part of business. But if you don't know this, well, you may have been lucky by being one of those lucky few who had one of those unicorn projects dazzled with fairy dust and have had no problems. But that largely doesn't exist. The fact is projects do have problems. The issue that really is at hand here is the extra costs that we don't know are coming. What are they, how much will they cost, and how will the government deal with this?

Is the government on the hook for more money? I don't know. I don't even know if they know. All I know is they're asking for more money. In other words, will they keep the Members of the Assembly in the dark? Frankly and humbly, no decision can be made without informing Members. We need to be part of the discussion, we need to be part of the debate and we certainly need to be part of the final decision. I'll be seeking that type of assurance from the Minister later today.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, as promised, case number two of Education, Culture and Employment's Student Financial Assistance policies that don't work as they should.

This problem is the same problem that Mr. Bouchard was speaking about earlier, and it's the denial of an NWT resident for student financial assistance funding. The student who attended all of her primary and elementary schooling in the NWT has been out of the territory caring for an elderly relative, all the while

filing taxes in the NWT as an NWT resident. She has now returned to the NWT, intending to take a nursing program at Aurora College, and has been denied student financial assistance funding due to the rigid application of the residency requirement.

"We can't accept your application," she was told. The policy says you have to be out of any post-secondary school and live in the NWT for a year before you can get funding. No exceptions.

If we're trying to drive residents away, this seems to be a pretty good way to do it. This logic, like the logic I mentioned yesterday, also defies my understanding. In a territory where it is a declared priority of government to add residents to our population – 2000 in five years is the goal – we are refusing to make it easy to repatriate someone who wants to come home, who wants to live in the North, who has been schooled here.

We will help with the education of a Southerner who has been here just a year but deny the Northerner who grew up here, it seems. Why do we insist NWT residents have to be out of any post-secondary school for a year before we will fund them? What's the rationale for that part of the policy?

I offered a solution to yesterday's problem. Well, here's a solution for today's problem as well: amend the policy. Allow a student who's received all of their schooling in the NWT to re-establish their residency by living here for a more reasonable length of time, like three months instead of 12 months.

Both of these issues, these undesirable endings described today and yesterday, didn't have to happen. We need to grant a flexibility to the student financial assistance staff making funding decisions so students in an exigent situation can be accommodated and supported to advance both their education and our territory. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RECOVERY AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS IN THE NWT

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the years of this 17th Legislative Assembly, I've stood in this House many times to speak to the importance of having recovery and treatment programs for the people who are battling with mental health, alcohol, drug addictions, and they need those services. We continue to see those in a high need throughout the Northwest Territories.

You've seen in the news recently our Standing Committee on Social Programs did a tour on one of our bills and we constantly heard the need for a treatment centre here in the Northwest Territories. There's been a lot of underlying issues, and it's not only alcohol addictions but we also deal with grief, we deal with trauma and, more importantly, residential

school and the experiences people have had with those. It takes more than just a day to get an assessment or for somebody to go into the emergency room and be let go the next day or within a couple of days. We need to find a better way to deal and address the issue of people who are battling with their addictions and can't get the help on their own. There's got to be a process where they get a full observation and assessment.

I know here in Yellowknife, if you go to the psychiatric ward they'll keep individual patients here for seven to 10 days and get a complete assessment. That's not offered on a regular basis to the people in the communities or even the regional centres, and as a result, a lot of people are slipping through the cracks and continue to fall down into bad situations within their communities. It affects not only themselves, it affects their families and it affects their communities.

However, I know that we do have a lot of people who go to treatment and they come back with very successful stories; they come back wanting to help their fellow residents in the communities, but sometimes they come into roadblocks by not having the services and the programs in the communities to assist.

Looking at some of my statements from the past, I want to make reference to one question I did bring up in 2011 with the Youth Conference Report. Even our youth recognized this in 2011, where they wanted consultation for regional treatment centres with the end goal of creating treatment centres with culturally sensitive multicultural staff, trained professionals and unique treatment plans for youth, adults and elders.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. MOSES: As I said, the youth of the Northwest Territories spoke up about this four years ago. I brought it and I asked questions in the House and we're still trying to battle to get some really good support service and recovery programs. We've got to listen to the youth; we've got to listen to our elders who we heard in the communities and our residents of the Northwest Territories. This is more about whether or not we have enough people to have a treatment centre in the Northwest Territories. This is about people's lives.

I will have questions for the Minister later on today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HEARING AIDS FOR CHILDREN

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first few years of a child's life are crucial to learning and development and much of what they could learn depends upon being able to hear. Forming

neuropathways during brain development, language skills, the soothing voice of their mothers when they fall, shouted warnings to avoid injuries, and lullabies before they sleep all require the ability to hear, and hear well.

For families with babies hard of hearing, however, hearing aids are expensive and not every family with a young child in need of them is able to afford to give their child the lifeline to the world that a hearing aid represents. Fortunately, we have coverage for Aboriginal babies, but unfortunately, we do not currently have a universal hearing aid program to ensure coverage for all needy children.

Closing the gap and covering these children in their crucial first years of life would require a very modest change to the current GNWT supplementary health benefits as it does not fit under the current policy. While the 16th Assembly failed to address this policy void, resolution of the need for additional hearing aid coverage for children in the NWT is long overdue.

While only a few babies a year need this support, the impacts are desperately large for each of these few individuals who suffer because of our lack of action. Filling in this gap is critical, yet it is inexpensive. A decision paper started in 2010 and delivered in 2012, after considerable research by audiology experts breaking down all costs associated with providing a comprehensive hearing aid program, found that the cost of a hearing aid program for children not covered by another plan for their first 18 years was only \$14,500 per child with an annual cost for the total NWT program a meager \$22,000 per year. Costs to government, let alone families of affected individuals of not providing hearing aids to these children were found to be much greater than the costs of providing them because of education and other issues that arose without this support. Shame on us for not getting this done long ago.

Such costs are covered for our seniors. Every province with a respectable hearing support program provides coverage for all children. We screen all newborns for hearing impairment and we know that hearing impaired children need hearing aids by age six months, yet we are leaving some vulnerable children without the tools they need to learn, grow and prosper. Again, I say, shame.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: The policy gap has been identified, the cost calculated to be minimal, while the positive effects on those in need can be huge. I urge the Minister of Health and Social Services to find 20 or 30 K in his annual budget of over \$300 million to address this developmental necessity. Dealing with issues identified in early childhood must be a priority, and providing hearing aids for all of the children in need of them is certainly one that we can and must achieve. I

say to the Minister, get this shameful gap filled now within the life of this Assembly. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PALLIATIVE CARE IN DELINE

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people want their loved ones to live out their last days at home, not in Yellowknife or Inuvik or anywhere else.

People in Deline want to know why it's so difficult to get palliative care beds in that community. I've been working with the community of Deline and have brought this issue to three Ministers so far. My last hope is with this Minister.

I have questioned the Minister on February 23, 2015, seven months ago, regarding the Deline palliative care study. This summer both the Minister and I met with the Deline leadership and we were advised at that time the health staff were planning to travel to Deline this summer, 2015, to assess the suitability. What happened there?

Last week the Sahtu Secretariat met with the Premier and the Ministers. An item that was discussed was the request for palliative care beds in Deline. Prior to that meeting, Chief Leonard Kennedy wrote to the Minister, carbon copied to me, stating, where is the Deline care beds study and stating why they need it. What happened to the commitment he made to the people and I in Deline.

I want to know why does this community request to have palliative care beds in their community have to take an SSI meeting with the Premier, and now we've been told that this study will be done in two weeks. October 9th, by the way, Mr. Speaker. The department doesn't get the need, doesn't get the urgency to make this happen. I want to know why the Minister is dragging his feet on this request. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON OPENING OF THE JOHN TSETSO MEMORIAL LIBRARY IN FORT SIMPSON

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes you have to challenge government; sometimes you have to commend them, so that's what I'm going to do today.

On September 15, 2015, I had the honour to celebrate the opening of the newly built John Tsetso Memorial Library in Fort Simpson. It was my pleasure to join the Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment; Dehcho First Nations Grand Chief Herb Norwegian; Lidlii Kue Chief Gerry Antoine; Mayor Sean Whelley and the

residents of Fort Simpson to celebrate this long awaited and very special event.

A library is the heart of a community. It is a place where our children can nourish their imaginations and learn important life skills while having fun. The John Tsetso Memorial Library has been an important part of Fort Simpson for many, many years, providing a range of popular programs and services promoting literacy.

Mr. Speaker, as you and my colleagues in this House are well aware, I have expressed my concerns many times over the years about the condition of the library. Since the closure of the Deh Cho Hall in about 2004/2005, the library has struggled to manage its collection and meet the community's need in a less than ideal space. Now, in addition to the new space, the library has expanded its collection, added iPads with a digital language app loaded on them, DVDs and new furniture for the patrons.

It took a long time – over eight years – and a great deal of urging to get the funding for the new library facility in the GNWT's capital budget process. I would like to thank my colleagues for their support, who toured the small resource centre some seven years ago during the 16th Assembly. I also wanted to thank the Minister for his contribution to this important project and thank the Village of Fort Simpson for their involvement in the management of the project.

The new John Tsetso Memorial Library has room for an expanded collection, better spacing for library programming, public access computers, iPads and an awesome northern collection of books by NWT authors and about local history in the Fort Simpson area.

I am excited for the people of Fort Simpson, the Aboriginal users who will benefit from this new facility. I also want to encourage people to get out, renew their library cards and use this wonderful resource. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPACT OF HIGH FUEL PRICES IN AKLAVIK

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I need to raise the urgent concerns of the community of Aklavik. Gasoline and heating fuel prices are putting extreme pressures on my constituents. There are also potential power rate increases. Prices have increased by 35 percent. That means gas that cost \$1.60 per litre in August now costs \$1.90 per litre today, just one month later.

The people of Aklavik had no warning that this was going to happen. When Beaufort-Delta Petroleum took over fuel delivery, the company did not meet with the hamlet council. They didn't let their clients know of a rate change in advance and rates weren't increase gradually. The change was sudden and substantial.

In communities that depend on diesel, fuel prices already make up 47 percent in the retail for electricity, the largest cost component. In the GNWT's response to the 2014 Energy Charrette, the government plans to improve their data on community fuel use and to use renewables to reduce our consumption, but urgent action is also needed here today.

This afternoon I will be tabling a petition, signed by Aklavik's homeowners, hunters and trappers, community government representatives, recreational vehicle users and many other residents. In the petition the people of Aklavik raise very serious and legitimate concerns about high costs of gasoline and heating fuel, and they support a call for proposals for a new distributor for fuel and gas products in Aklavik. The hamlet will be looking for companies that can provide fuel to the community at a more reasonable rate. I hope that the GNWT will support the community.

I will have questions for the Minister of Public Works and Services about next steps later today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Yakeleya.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I once again rise to recognize a wise elder, Mr. Andrew John Kenny from the Deline First Nation government.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to recognize a couple of Pages from the riding of Frame Lake. They will be working for us this week. I'm not sure about next week. I'd like to recognize Jordan Balsillie and Princess Duculan. Welcome, and thanks for the work you're doing for us.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a constituent of the Great Slave riding, Mr. Kieron Testart.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Welcome to all the visitors in the gallery. Thank you for taking an interest in our proceedings here today.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Mr. Yakeleya.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 24-17(5):
LUCY JACKSON –
ORDER OF THE NWT RECIPIENT

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, today we would like to acknowledge a well-respected lady from Radihili Koe, Mrs. Lucy Jackson.

Mrs. Jackson will receive the Order of the Northwest Territories on Wednesday, October 7, 2015, at the Great Hall of the Legislative Assembly along with other recipients.

Mrs. Jackson is a lady with strong traditional knowledge, along with her supporting husband who is a full-time trapper.

Mrs. Jackson is known for her North Slavey translation in the Sahtu region and across the NWT. She is also a layperson at her local Roman Catholic Church.

On behalf of the Sahtu region, we would like to congratulate Mrs. Lucy Jackson for keeping traditional knowledge alive through her many skills and strong language.

Mrs. Jackson is truly an inspiring lady to the people in the Sahtu, her community and her family. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 7, oral questions.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 887-17(5):
HIGH FUEL COSTS IN AKLAVIK

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow-up to my Member's statement, I have questions for the Minister of Public Works and Services.

The Department of Public Works and Services has a mandate to provide expert support and innovative leadership in community fuel provision.

How will the department help Aklavik to address their urgent concerns about the price of gasoline and heating fuel?

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Public Works fuels services division is responsible for the communities that are considered to be non-market communities. Aklavik is a market community. In Aklavik the fuel and the gasoline have been distributed by a private company up until this year, and the private company is continuing with a change of ownership again this year. However, we are having discussions with them as a result of the concerns from the community and the petition that was sent out.

MR. BLAKE: The petroleum products division manages fuel supplies for communities that aren't served by the private sector.

When will the department step in to help a new community, one like Aklavik where residents are experiencing severe rate shock?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: We are currently engaging with the new private company that is providing fuel to

the community of Aklavik. We have been having discussions right up until yesterday, perhaps even today, especially with them. We, too, have a concern with the cost of fuel for operating the power plant in Aklavik, who we are continuing to have discussions with them currently. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: I'd like to ask the Minister, how long would it take Public Works and Services to provide fuel and gasoline to Aklavik? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: At this point, it's necessary for us to assist the Power Corp with some fuel into Aklavik. We are currently working on delivering some tanks. I would say something like this could happen within a couple of weeks once we create some capacity. At this time, aside from the mobile capacity you will be bringing into Aklavik to accommodate the fuel for the Power Corp, the only other capacity is owned by the new private enterprise that is now responsible for fuel in Aklavik. Thank you.

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

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister meet the leaders in Aklavik to find a solution to this crisis? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: We have not gotten to that point. We did receive a text message from the mayor asking if I was available for discussion. Unfortunately, I have not made contact with the mayor at this point. I am prepared to talk with the leadership, along with the private company, to try to come up with a solution for Aklavik so there's not such a steep increase in the cost of fuel and gasoline for Aklavik. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 888-17(5):
LIARD RIVER FERRY SCHEDULE

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residents of Nahendeh have been asking the Department of Transportation to consider moving from a 16-hour day to an 18-hour day, which means opening up the Lafferty Ferry at the Liard crossing from 6:00 a.m. until midnight. We were very pleased that we almost had a trial period this fall, but unfortunately the residents didn't like the two-hour break which is prime time for traveling back home and would have created some other headaches. Since that time, I have spoken with the Minister to review how the Providence work was being done for an 18-hour day. I don't know if the Minister has had time to review how they would be able to operate from 6:00 a.m. to midnight as opposed to 8:00 a.m. to midnight that is currently happening with the Lafferty Ferry. Thank you.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this point I've only had the opportunity to review the situation in Fort Simpson. We've tried to do a trial, as the Member indicates; however, we found that the two-hour break in the centre was a considerable change to the businesses in Fort Simpson. At this point we were trying to operate the ferry within the time that we have been operating the ferry at the current costs allocated to the ferry and expansion of the hours. An increase in the hours to the ferry in Fort Liard would add substantial cost to the ferry operation, most likely meaning that we would have to add a complete crew. So, right now the ferry operates with a certain number of crew and to increase hours would mean that we would have to have a complete crew because of the regulations that determine how long individuals can stay on the ferry for one shift. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Certainly that's the kind of information I had asked the Minister to provide, so I don't know if he can provide me with those facts, the actual costs between the 16-hour day versus an 18-hour day. Because the head residents are saying, well, they ran that way at the Providence ferry, why can't they run it here at the Liard crossing at Fort Simpson? So, a good comparison will let us look at those figures and see what it would take to move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I'm prepared to have the department provide the cost of increasing the ferry that crosses the Liard to 18 hours to see what has to occur, what regulations we have to look at. I'm pretty sure that if we do, I think that regulation only monitors the amount of crews that we currently have. So, if we added a crew it should be well within regulation, so the issue would be costs. So, I'm prepared to provide that information to the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That would be nice to get that kind of documentation as soon as we can. Can the Minister commit to that? Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: I will endeavour to get that information to the Member as soon as possible. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 889-17(5):
PALLIATIVE CARE IN DELINE

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I talked about the need for palliative care beds in Deline. I've been working with three Ministers so far and we're trying to figure out why it's such a struggle to get palliative care beds in that community so that loved ones can live out their

dying days amongst their people. Why is it taking so long?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister of Health, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're committed to getting this done and are working with the community of Deline to get this done. We had actually hoped to go in this summer, but due to staffing issues and the fact that Deline was probably one of the busiest communities in the Northwest Territories this summer, we didn't actually manage to get in there.

Last week, during our bilateral meetings with the Sahtu, I committed to getting in there as quickly as possible, prior to October 23rd. In fact, we were hoping to go in this week, the same time that the Sahtu AGM, the Sahtu Health and Social Services Authority AGM was going to be held in the community. Unfortunately, I understand that a respected elder has passed away in the community. With respect to the community, I'd like to pass along my condolences to the family as well as to the community itself. But it has resulted in that the AGM was in fact cancelled and our staff has decided not to go in there this week.

This morning I attempted to call Chief Kenny to set up a time for us to go in or, rather, the staff to go in to work with the community, because there's a number of things that we have to do with the community. We want to make sure that the people are there who we can engage with properly. Unfortunately, I was not able to get through. I will be calling later today at break to hopefully coordinate a time with the community when we can actually get in there. I'm hoping that we can get in there next week to do the work that needs to be done. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I do want to commend the Minister for the respect for the well-respected elder who passed away, and that is why we need the urgency to have our loved ones come home so their last dying days can be at home.

I want to tell the Minister, there's a program called Excuses No More. I wonder if the staff could look at that program, because that's all I've been hearing from this department. I've been at this for some time, you know, and all I get, and people in Deline get, is excuses, excuses, excuses.

I want to ask the Minister, can he stand by his commitment, when he said in Deline in June, we met them and said we're going to do this, you know, and let's get to that.

So, I want to ask the Minister, according to the press release, it said that the Premier's committing to meet with the Deline leadership within the next two weeks to discuss how to bring palliative care beds into the community. That's October 9th. Can we believe this? How strong is your commitment?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. As I indicated in my first response, we were actually intending to go in this week and we were booked to go in, but as a result of the death in the community and the cancellation of the AGM, we've chosen not to. I have committed to getting the staff in there. I'm hoping they can go in next week, but before we can get to that time I'm hoping to speak to the chief in the community to make sure that it is still an appropriate time, given the recent events in the community. If not, hopefully we can get it done the week after, but I have committed to getting this done prior to October 23rd and I stand behind my original commitment that we will get this done.

MR. YAKELEYA: This is where I'll see it when I believe it. It's been a commitment by this government, the past government, through all the governments and the Ministers to get palliative care beds in that community. I just don't know what's going on over there to get the beds that they need over there.

So I want to ask the Minister again, can he assure this House and assure the elder up there, assure the people in Deline that we're going to go beyond just saying we're going to get it, we're actually going to put palliative care beds in the community, because from this side here it's quite frustrating to stand up and not be really sure that the commitment is followed through. It's hard.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I appreciate the Member's opinion. I disagree with him. I've made a commitment; we're going to stand up to the commitment. There's a significant amount of work that needs to be done and they were hoping to do it this week, but they will do it the week after or the week after, depending on what the chief of the community says is appropriate.

Department staff need to work with the authority and we need to work with the community to conduct a functional program assessment of the wellness centre that exists. They also need to complete a health assessment with the needs of elders and residents with chronic conditions in the community. This will help identify the gaps in the current resources so that a plan for services that will support the elders to remain in their community, remain in their homes during the dying process can be put into place. This isn't just the GNWT. This is going to require a partnership with the community of Deline.

We're looking forward to moving forward and developing that partnership and finding a way to conclude this in order to ensure that residents have the ability to receive palliative services in their communities during the final stages of life. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My reason for standing here is to represent my people. This is what my people are saying. You know, where is the

conviction of this department and this government? How many Ministers do we have to go through to say we want palliative care beds in Deline? I've heard, I can go through Hansards and bring up all the commitments that you're going to do. Nothing has panned out and that's a matter of fact.

So, I want to again remind this government, remind this Minister that the commitments are not there. They're like standing on sand, it's not salt, and people know because nothing is happening in Deline right now. So we'll see. We've heard it before. So this is the voice of the people in Deline.

I want to ask the Minister, how strong is your commitment to the people? How strong is your word?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I appreciate the Member's frustration. I've said this is my fourth time standing here in this role saying that I've made a commitment, we're going to get it done. We were supposed to go in this week, but out of respect for the community, we have not gone in this week because of a death in the community. I tried to speak to the chief. I will call him again at break. I tried to call him this morning to work with them, to work with the community that we respect to make sure that when we go in there we can have meaningful dialogue. We are committed to this. I don't know how I can say it differently for the Member. We are committed, we're going to get this done, we will work with the community, a community we respect and a community that we have been working with up to date. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 890-17(5):
HUNTING RESTRICTIONS ON
CARIBOU POPULATIONS

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for Minister Miltenberger and it's about caribou. Recent ENR surveys indicate that most caribou populations in the Northwest Territories continue to plummet. One vivid comparison states that if the population of the Bathurst herd was compared to the population of Yellowknife, the Yellowknife population would now be smaller than Deline or Fort Resolution. This is disastrous with human and ecological impacts. We know what the numbers are, but what are the causes? We've had severe restrictions on harvesting caribou for several years now, with the last two years in almost complete moratorium on Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds.

What has the Minister learned about the effect of hunting on the caribou populations and whether he feels that the hunting restrictions have had a measurable and positive effect? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: What we have learned as part of the decline in 1986, 460,000 animals, down to today about 15,000 for the Bathurst, during the prime hunting times a number of years ago, about 15,000 animals, mainly cows, were taken out of the herd. What we have learned since then – as the Member has indicated, no hunting for the last probably four or five years now – is that there are other contributing factors. They all combine together. There are access roads, cumulative impact, rising temperatures and things like in the last two years we've burnt four million hectares of forest.

With the pressures on the herd, the stressors, it takes a long time to turn around a decline that precipitous and we are still struggling with every herd in the Northwest Territories with probably the exception of the two to the east and the west, the Porcupine and the Beverly Ahiak. It is one of many factors. There are others like predation, climate change, as I indicated, and those other types of things, but there is still a need to control the harvest because, as the Member has indicated, the population drop has been precipitous. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate the response. I didn't hear, really, whether the Minister feels the hunting restriction has had a measurable effect, but one area that has been suggested and the Minister mentioned as a stressor on the caribou population is industrial development.

I am wondering what research is government doing into the effect of the impact of increased industrial development on the caribou and what actions are being undertaken to ensure the recovery with respect to those factors. Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: That issue came up during the Jay pipe hearings. The issue of cumulative impact was a directly contributable effect in terms of fatalities on a regular basis. It's one that has not been clearly defined. There have been changes made as issues have been raised in terms of the road access, how the road is used, how the traffic flows, the ability of the herd to cross the road. So, there is continuing work as we look at that particular issue. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: ...(inaudible)...what is this government doing on its own or with its partners to address or at least understand these factors so we can then address them? What research has been or is being done by this government or our partners on the role that our changing climate is playing in the decline of our caribou herds? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: This is an issue that has been raised as one of concern as well. For example, the chiefs in the Tlicho region where we were visiting and having our regular meetings with the chiefs about the need to gather around the table and take a broader look, hunting is not the only issue. There are things that we have to better understand as a government, a territory and a Legislature. We've

made significant investment to try to reduce our carbon footprint to switch off of fossil fuels, to get more involved in provision of renewable energies all in an attempt to mitigate what is now known to be a clear factor that is driving up the temperature. At the same time, we are struggling to adapt. There is work going on in many quarters on that particular issue and that is, indeed, one that is very complex. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've heard the expression that work is going on. I have been asking, what work? But given that there is work going on and I've heard the Minister on the radio about the situation in Nunavut relative to harvesting and even commercial harvesting, given all these things, what does the Minister see, given our current, recent and continuing declines? What are the current priority management actions that are required and when will we be putting these into place to ensure the return of these critical populations? Mahsi.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The final harvest decisions on an interim basis will be done before the middle of October. We are in discussions now with all the impacted and affected Aboriginal governments, programs and boards, our Department of ENR. So that will be done.

In the longer term, we are hoping to get the Bluenose-East Management Plan up and running finally. I believe now that the conditions are right, where we can get the attention and interest of all affected parties to gather around the table to work on an ongoing, longer-term plan on the Bathurst herd, which is in the most dire straits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 891-17(5):
NWT ADDICTIONS TREATMENT FACILITY

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will follow up to questions on my Member's statement earlier for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As I stated, we've heard over the last little while the need for a treatment centre in the Northwest Territories. I do understand that we have four contracted treatment centres down south at any given time, pending that there are beds available.

How many of our NWT residents actually, through the fiscal year 2014-2015, went out for treatment during that fiscal year? 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 2014-2015 we had a total of 174 residents who took advantage of the treatment facilities available to Northwest Territories residents. In 2015-2016, to date,

we've had 109 residents of the Northwest Territories take advantage of those same treatment facilities.

Just as a note, we have put in an expedited referral process to ensure that people can get to those facilities as quickly as possible. Sometimes now is the right time for individuals. We have seen some significant success with those bonafide referral processes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MOSES: I am glad to hear that. Those numbers are pretty high for the Northwest Territories. I would like to ask the Minister if he's been working with any of our Aboriginal groups or any other non-government organizations to look at the possibility of creating a facility or using an existing infrastructure, which is one of our priorities that we set out at the onset of this government, to create a treatment facility in the Northwest Territories.

We have 174 residents in 2014-2015 and 109 to date this year. We do have a facility up in Inuvik, Arctic Tern facility, and I do recall at one time there was only one person in that facility. Yet, we fully staffed that facility for the one person. I know the Minister has mentioned the feasibility of having a treatment centre based on the number of patients that would be in that facility at any given time.

I would like to ask the Minister, has he spoken to any NGOs or Aboriginal groups to partner – that we will take care of all the expenses to partner – and create a treatment centre here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Just to be clear, we have on average, at any given time, about 12 residents for the Northwest Territories who are seeking treatment through facility-based treatment. The individuals who are attending treatment often have significantly different needs and, as a result, are going to any one of our four facilities available to our northern residents. For instance, Poundmaker's Lodge is a co-ed facility with a wide range of spiritual-based programs as well as the ability to provide some level of social detox. They have on-site psychologists and psychiatrists who can provide support to the residents who need that particular programming. We also have Aventa, which is a facility for women only and it has gender-specific programming as well as trauma-informed treatment programs. It has a wide variety of programs that we've never been able to provide here in the Northwest Territories for a more generic type of facility that have been delivered in the past.

We also have Fresh Start Recovery Centre, which is a male only facility with gender-specific programs designed to support men through their healing process. We also have Edgewood, which is a facility more specifically designed for opiate use or individuals suffering from addictions to narcotics and other drugs. At no time do we have 12 people who are in one facility. We tend to have them throughout the four facilities because they have a wide range of needs.

When the Minister's Forum on Mental Health and Addictions was completed, it told us clearly that we need to offer a wide range of services to the residents of the Northwest Territories. Treatment facilities are but one of those options and we provide that option. We have an expedited referral process, we have no waitlists, and we can get people in there 24 to 48 hours if it's appropriate. We do encourage people to do some level of counselling before they go, but sometimes now is the right time.

We also have on-the-land programs that are throughout the Northwest Territories, done in partnership with our Aboriginal governments. We've had some great turnout in attendance to those particular workshops. We also have community counselling, and we've recently put in new community counselling guidelines and processes to ensure that community counsellors are providing a high range of services. Before anybody goes to one of our treatment centres, they have to have a follow-up appointment booked for after-care with the community counsellors.

Mr. Speaker, we have a wide range of services. We are following the direction from the Mental Health and Addictions Forum. We're always looking for ways to improve our services. We continue to move forward with our attempts to put in a mobile treatment so that we can provide more regional based, building upon things like the Matrix program that we have in place that is being used by residents of the Northwest Territories. So, we offer a wide range of services to people suffering from mental health and addictions. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: I appreciate all the answers that the Minister stated. However, the realities are, we can provide all these services but if we don't have the resources to see them through in some of our small communities where we have some of our higher rates, even in the regional centres. You know, I've chatted with some of these people who have gone through these programs and have had a difficult time reintegrating back into the community because those services weren't always provided during the times that they needed. So, obviously, the after-care is still a concern.

The Minister did mention the expedited process, and I know I've had a lot of individuals who I've spoken to who really needed to get the treatment right away but they were told that they need to go through counselling services, whether it was six or eight sessions, and as we all know, there are waiting times, but also in the small communities you might not have a counsellor or the fact that if it's a really small community then everybody knows what the issue is and there's a stigma attached to that.

I'd like to ask the Minister, what's the expedited process and how can residents who really need the help be able to get that treatment sooner than later?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We do encourage residents who are struggling with addictions to attend a number of counselling sessions. I believe it's four, depending on the nature of the addiction. But we also recognize that sometimes four sessions is too much. Sometimes now is the time. If you are suffering from mental health or an addictions issue here in the Northwest Territories and you know now is the time, you need to speak to a counsellor or health practitioner, let them know that now is the time, I need to go now, and we can get a referral through the department in 24 hours and we can begin the process of getting you into treatment after the 24-hour period. Sometimes we've been able to get people in treatment as quickly as 48 hours.

So, if you have constituents who have gone and said now is the time and they haven't had that offered to them, you need to let us know so that we can make sure that we fix the process. In the meantime, if you have constituents who tell you now is the time, encourage them to talk to their counsellor. It's an emergency situation. We always book emergency situations immediately. We can get you in, we can get the referral in 24 hours and we can get you to treatment as quickly as possible. Thank you.

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

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that also needs to be reiterated and emphasized and encouraged to our social work staff, to our health professionals, because sometimes people who really need it are getting turned away and not getting the services that they need. I am speaking from the experiences I have had over the four years, especially since this expedited process has gone through.

I also want to ask the Minister – and it has been brought up in this House before – whether or not he's speaking with his ministerial colleagues in Nunavut and the Yukon, so we are creating a pan-territorial northern treatment centre that would offer the cultural values, the traditions and provide that family and community support, that northern support that's needed. I wonder if he's had any kind of discussion with our Health Ministers from Nunavut and the Yukon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We remain committed to finding opportunities and we are always looking for opportunities to work with our northern partners. In the last four months, I have tried twice to arrange meetings with my counterparts in Nunavut and the Yukon. This is one of the agenda items that was on the list, that was on the agenda. Unfortunately, both meetings were cancelled by the other jurisdictions. I have asked to work with my colleagues in the other territories to gather information on the facilities and programs available in those jurisdictions to see how we can partner. Unfortunately, as I indicated, both meetings that I booked with the other jurisdictions were cancelled. We are committed to working with

them if there is an opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 892-17(5):

STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICIES

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I want to follow up on my statement from yesterday and today and talk about student financial assistance policies which, as I said, are not working as they should. The first one I would like to talk about is the residency requirement. I asked in my statement and I want to ask the Minister at this point, what is the rationale and why did we require for a student to be out of post-secondary schooling for a year before we will fund them for student financial assistance? Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. There are purposes for having policies in place and the process itself where individual students are sponsored, up to 1,600 students. There are students out there who also qualify for southern funding, as well, in provincial jurisdictions. We have to be careful that there are no duplications. We are mindful of that and we are monitoring it as well. Those are some areas where we have policies in place so there's no duplication from other jurisdictions, so there is no double-dipping. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: I didn't really hear an answer to my question as to why you have to be out of school for a year. I can appreciate you don't want people double-dipping and getting student financial assistance from a province and also a territory, but I don't understand why we can't monitor that and allow students to go from a school in Alberta to school in the NWT from one school year to the next.

The second question I would like to ask the Minister with regard to the residency is we have determined that someone must be in the NWT for 12 months before they are eligible for student financial assistance. It doesn't seem to matter where you were born, where you grew up, how long you've been out of the territory.

I'd like to ask the Minister what the rationale is for 12 months in the NWT before you can establish residency. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That policy has been in existence since 2000, for 15 years. We've heard from students about the particular policies we have in place. There are certain areas where 12 months' residency versus what Members suggested, three months. If an individual moves south after high school, whether it is for work or school, and they come back for three months and go back to school

again to further their schooling down south, they would qualify based on what the Member is suggesting, three months. There is no guarantee that these students will be coming back. We just have to be mindful and monitor those mechanisms that we have in place, Mr. Speaker. We are open to discussing these areas of residency. We've made some drastic changes, as you know, in 2015, 2013, 2006-07 and 2000. It does take time to make some changes, but we have enhanced our SFA program and we have one of the best SFA programs in the whole of Canada.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for that response. I'm really pleased to hear that there's a willingness to consider a possible change. I'm not too sure that he said he would consider three months. I'll leave that to my colleague Mr. Bouchard to follow up on.

I want to ask a question with regard to the other policy that I mentioned, and that has to do with travel. I spoke yesterday about a mother who endured Christmas on her own because her children were flown home by the dad and she was left at school on her own. I had made a suggestion. I provided a solution to the Minister yesterday.

I'd like to ask the Minister if he will consider if what he considers wrong with providing a dollar limit to a student. They can travel up to whatever the dollar limit that SFA sets. Once that's gone then they can't travel anymore. Will he consider that and does he see anything wrong with that?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, that particular policy has been in existence since 2000 as well. Depending on which students you talk to, some students want to be down south with their family that they brought over there. They don't want the hassle of coming back to the Northwest Territories, to their community, with the kids that they have without belongings, so it's their choice if they want to pursue that.

There is a cost factor that we need to look at. How much would it cost us? With 1,600 students, how many are parents with children and dependants? Those are areas that we are currently looking at and how can we move forward on this. If there is any decision that needs to be made, obviously, it would have to be at the forefront of the 18th Assembly government.

Again, we just made substantial changes in 2015, so it will take some time to provide that recommendation to the new government.

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

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister again. I appreciate that there were a lot of changes that were made fairly recently, but I have to say to the Minister, he quoted both of these policies of having been in existence for a long time. I'm sorry, but that doesn't

cut it with me. Just because it's been here for a long time doesn't mean it's right.

I would like to ask the Minister, in terms of allowing students, of doing the best for our students, and I guess I would challenge the Minister to read my statement from yesterday and for him to understand that this mother spent Christmas on her own and not with her family. But will he consider and will he recognize that there's an ability within staff to make some of these situations work? Will he empower his staff with the flexibility to make decisions not to throw the policy out the window totally but to make a decision based on the particular circumstances of a student and allow for the best interests of the student to be met?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Any changes we make to our policies, obviously there's a cost factor, as I stated, and this is an area that we are looking at.

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

QUESTION 893-17(5):
INUUVIK-TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY
CONTRACT CLAIM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Transportation will certainly be the lucky recipient of my questions this afternoon, and I'm sure he'll be quite pleased to have them. My questions will be focused around, of course, the \$32 million claim being submitted by the contractor.

As we understand it, we don't know what the outcome of that is, so to be clear, I don't think a decision has been made to spend money or not. But I think it's important to stress this and build a good foundation on the issue of the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway. I need to be clear, there is no question about the importance of that infrastructure to Northerners. In its very own way, of course, it's nation building, and I have no doubt that the residents of that community will benefit from this and certainly the fact that it will lower the cost of living. It will be a beautiful highway, I have no doubt. Maybe not beautiful enough to drive a rented Audi A8 down, but it is certainly a beautiful highway in and of itself.

My question for the Minister of Transportation is: How does he plan to keep Members informed once the review of this potential claim has been submitted? Members want to know the next direction that will be taken long before any decision is made. How does the Minister plan to keep the Members informed? And this really affects whether there is an election or not.

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

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the committee meeting of Priorities and Planning yesterday in the House, I committed to providing regular weekly updates on this potential claim to the committee. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: I'm sure I don't need to remind the Minister that we only have basically a week of committee meetings left and the Assembly, of course, is done on October 8th from a sitting point of view and Members are still active, in theory of course, until I think it's the stroke of midnight on Sunday the 25th.

But decisions are being made behind the scenes and I think the issue really comes down to what assurances can the Minister provide the House publicly that no decision, if there is a situation where there may be a need for extra money, that no decision will be made in absence of the Members having an opportunity to discuss the merits of this initiative and certainly debate them and, if need be, support them if necessary.

What assurances is the Minister going to provide this House that true accountability can happen?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The Member is correct. Of course, the writ will be dropping within probably the next four weeks or so. So, I guess we will ensure that the Members are advised, if it has to be in writing, advised up until the point the writ is dropped. At that point we have 30 days or 28 days of campaigning period. During that time, if there is a need for a decision, we're hoping that there would be no need for a decision during the campaign period, but we would govern according to the contract that we have with the company.

The last thing we want to do is stop the project or delay the project. They're already operating with reduced days because of the weather. So, I guess the best case scenario is we make our decisions prior to the election and any other decisions that need to be made will be made after the election.

MR. HAWKINS: Can the Minister clearly say to this House that no decision will be made if the case need be to advance money on this project, that no decision will be made if Members are not around in any normal form or fashion to be able to participate in a meaningful discussion, debate and decision?

If there is some decision, I just don't know how it's going to happen and I'd hate to see a Deh Cho Bridge déjà vu all over again.

So, is the Minister going to say to the House clearly that no decision will be made in absence of the Members being able to fully participate in the decision?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: There may be a decision made prior to the writ dropping, to continue the operations, to continue the construction of the Inuvik-Tuk Highway. There will be no decision made after the writ is dropped until after the election of the 18th Assembly. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From my last question, it's certainly seen as it can be an

obstruction of the freedoms and rights of a Member to do their job if we are not able to participate fundamentally in a meaningful way on decisions of this magnitude. We're not talking about a \$100 decision here; we're talking about a \$32 million decision.

So, how does the Minister expect that we will be meaningfully involved in some type of decision between October 8th and October 25th prior to the election starting, because everybody knows October 8th is the last sitting day. So if they do not have any decision on what to do on this project, whether to give money or not to give money, we're not going to be involved and we cannot allow that to happen. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: One of the reasons that we're going through the claim process is to determine what the claim would be. Currently we know, one thing we do know is that the majority of the potential claims would be in the future. It's something that would be looked at as year three and year four construction winds down. So, what we've done is we've divided the potential claim. There is actually no claim yet, but the potential claim has been divided in two. It's \$12 million for the construction to date. That's what we're engaging in now. The \$20 million potential claim is for the coming construction.

What's happening now is the project company is indicating that there is potential. If the weather is similar to what the weather has been in the last two years, there's potential for a claim on the last two years of construction for \$20 million. But what we're looking at currently and what we're meeting with the project company today on is the \$12 million that has become an issue for them to date. So, the construction to date. That is not yet a claim and may not be a claim if we're able to work with the company to get the construction going and using the money that's approved in this House to continue construction. They mainly need to start construction and that's what we are hoping to do now.

After October 8th, I'm hoping that there is no requirement for a decision, but nothing is going to happen in the \$232 million, that's for sure. We're hoping that we can have a decision on the \$12 million before the 8th. If we don't, we're hoping to have a decision before the 26th when the writ will drop. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 894-17(5):
SUPPORT FOR A WOOD PELLET INDUSTRY
IN THE NWT

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's quite encouraging that we're seeing the dances of the proposed wood pellet plant moving forward. I think there's cause for excitement and there seems to be a

sense of being positive in terms of the optimism that it is generating.

I wanted to take a business approach to this whole project and ask the Minister of ITI in terms of his role with his department in playing a support capacity. My question is to the Minister of ITI.

What support role, if any, does ITI have in terms of moving to establish a wood pellet plant in the NWT? Mahsi.

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

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like other government departments, we've committed to support the development of the wood pellet industry here in the Northwest Territories, and we do have programs related to business start-up. Our South Slave office has been busy in talking to folks who want to get into trucking the harvest of timber and other pursuits related to biomass. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: My question is: How can the Minister ensure we have more biomass-related business initiatives in the NWT? Mahsi.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, we're very excited about the prospect of the pellet facility in the South Slave. We will take direction on the development of that facility in the ensuing business opportunities for business start-up in the South Slave related to that new biomass facility. So, we're waiting for ground to break on that and the opportunities that it will bring. Thank you.

MR. NADLI: The Minister has indicated that his department is playing a role in terms of assisting communities, more so for communities that are directly impacted by a project of this nature, whether it's going to be positive or negative.

Could the Minister outline in terms of the availability of programs for funding that are available for communities that could perhaps access funding and research and discuss locally in terms of strategies in terms of mitigating a project of this nature? Mahsi.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, we've worked with communities with business development officers, economic development officers, to identify opportunities for folks to get into business. We have our SEED program, a loan program, as well as we have the BDIC for folks who are interested in getting some of these opportunities that a new biomass facility is going to bring to the Northwest Territories.

In the Member's riding and in the South Slave, these jobs are desperately needed. We understand that. That's why government fully supports the development of that wood pellet facility in the South Slave. Thank you.

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

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've experienced a forest fire over the past two years. It's

really affected communities along the highways. So we have, in some places, fallen trees and burnt out areas. In some cases they are close to communities.

Would the Minister commit his department to work with communities that are interested in salvaging the burnt wood that is closely situated to their community or along the highway? Mahsi.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Forest fires aren't always bad. As we know, they produce more mushrooms and we've seen some economic benefit from that. As well, Mr. Speaker, with the trees that have burnt, there are opportunities to harvest those for biomass as well. We've had some discussions with folks who are interested in doing just that. I would encourage folks, if they are in the Member's communities, if they want to approach the Department of ITI, we would be interested in talking to them about harvesting that resource. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 895-17(5):

STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICIES

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be following my statement about northern students and student financial assistance, questions for ECE. The first question I have is I know we are dealing with students who have lived in the Northwest Territories, grew up in the Northwest Territories, have left their jurisdiction for a period of time and now have to re-establish their residency. We aren't talking about some person coming from the South who has nothing to do with the Northwest Territories; we are talking about Northerners coming back. I want the Minister to commit to changing that residency for those northern students to three months. Will he do that?

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated earlier to Ms. Bisaro, these are areas we are currently exploring. Residency has been the topic of discussion recently as well. Even though we've made some changes, there is always room for improvement within our policy. So the residency requirement, 12 months residency versus three months, we need to explore those options. What will be the ripple effects? What would be the benefits, pros and cons? I have already committed that this is an area that we are going to be exploring.

MR. BOUCHARD: The Minister has indicated that it's a policy. The point is you don't need to evaluate it. We don't need to monitor it. We need students to come back. We need Northerners to come back to the North.

Why do we need to monitor this? Why not give our staff the ability to change that? The Minister has the power to make that with the swipe of his pen.

Can he commit to changing this policy right here? Don't monitor it. We are getting Northerners back to the Northwest Territories. It should be a no-brainer. Will he commit to that?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: If it was that easy, I would have made that change yesterday. We are, as my department, working diligently on the particular policy that we have in place. It's been in since 2000, so 15 years.

Obviously, we are supporting our Northerners coming back to the North. When a Northerner lives in the South, whether it be Alberta or a provincial jurisdiction, they are sponsored with 12 months' residency. They have the same residency as we do across Canada. So once they live in southern Alberta, as such, they will qualify for financial compensation to go to school. So, we need to be very careful how we approach that. We are currently looking at that, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

MR. BOUCHARD: Again, Mr. Speaker, the comments are "monitor, we'll look into it." Let's just commit to getting Northerners back here. This government has a mandate to get 2,000 more people into the Territories. We need to figure out how to do that. Whether it's the legislation or it has to be brought to this House, let's bring it to the House. Let's get that changed. We know it's an issue. We know students go out and see the world after they are done high school. They are gone for a year. Those are the type of people we are dealing with as well. The Minister is giving the example of one person. We need to be flexible. We need to be able to change the student financial situation for the individual.

Is this Minister prepared to look at individual's needs for student financial assistance? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I want to make it clear that we are supporting our northern students to return to the Northwest Territories. That's the very reason we have increased and enhanced our SFA program. We have increased the basic grant from \$1,900 to \$2,400; increased the basic grant on books from \$400 to \$550; increased current remission rates by 50 percent; a \$2,000 northern bonus for our students, a bonus for our students to come back to the North and explore the North. Those are just some of the enhancements that we've initiated in 2015. We continue to make improvements as part of the SFA program, one of the best in the Northwest Territories and Canada. Mahsi.

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

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the Minister; I think we have a great SFA if you fit into the cookie cutter and this is the way you did it: You went to Grade 12, next year you go to school. But if you don't fit into that cookie cutter system that we have, you're in trouble. You are going to have to fight and scream for every dollar and you are going to have

to fight with your own territorial government to get support. We are looking for flexibility, not a stringent box.

Will the Minister commit to making this SFA flexible for those people who don't fit into that box?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Again, yes, I will be looking into it. We have to be very mindful. Our northern students go south and they get sponsorship and they come back north to go to school. We have to be careful that we don't double-dip. They get compensation, say, from Alberta government. At the same time, we sponsor them within the three months residency as is suggested here. Those are areas we are exploring, pros and cons, the benefits to our students. Whatever we do, provincial and territorial jurisdictions are watching us. Any changes we make, obviously we will need to work with them. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 896-17(5):
GNWT FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we await for the Financial Administration Act, or the FAA, to come into force in April 2016, there still seems some questions around the foundation of documents that sets up requirements the government must meet in borrowing money in serving its debt. This is the updated Fiscal Responsibility Policy, which was also referenced earlier today in the fiscal update.

Mr. Speaker, this policy was brought in in 2008 and was only found as a pamphlet online. It was never properly enacted as a policy of government, which makes its very existence very difficult for Members, very difficult for the public to find and, to be truthful, to actually understand it.

Until this new FAA comes into force, changes to this policy may only be made unilaterally by the Minister of Finance without any consultation of his Cabinet colleagues or Members of this House. So my questions today are for the Minister of Finance.

There are six Canadian provinces that have passed the Fiscal Accountability Act, taking their rules and policies and placing them into law. So, aside from small modifications made to the new FAA, would the Minister at least agree that the GNWT's Fiscal Accountability Policy needs to be updated and properly enacted in a more formal manner? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOLYNNY: That went too fast. I could barely hear the answer of the Minister. The Minister, during some of the FAA discussions, agreed that within the new act to have a Fiscal Responsibility Policy vetted through the Legislative Assembly process. But it still

begs to ask why this policy has not been enacted as a big P policy of government.

Can the Minister indicate why this policy has never been given the same level of attention, and what is the department planning in this regard?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We're turning our attention here as we conclude the capital plan, of course, to planning and being involved in the transition process to identify issues and challenges. As part of that, there will be a proposed legislative agenda, so we are prepared to look at policies that are outdated. We've agreed to renew, for example, legislation that we adopted as mirror legislation as part of devolution. This policy, and I agree with the Member, it's time for it to be looked at and, as he has indicated, formalized in a much more big P way.

MR. DOLYNNY: I got that response loud and clear and I appreciate it. With the new work underway by the Department of Finance in preparation for the enactment of the Financial Administration Act, which is on April 1, 2016, the premise of my concern here today is that fiscal accountability is too important to leave to mere policy. Rather, it should be enshrined in law.

Has the Minister given any consideration to the merits of passing a fiscal responsibility act?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The type of elevation and evolution of the current policy is one where we're open to discussion. The issue of a piece of legislation versus a formalized policy, there are distinct differences and probably merits to each approach and we're prepared to have that discussion.

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

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The New Brunswick Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act goes as far as to impose a \$2,500 penalty on Cabinet Ministers who fail to meet their financial targets.

Given that our Ministers operate in a vacuum, can the Minister indicate what penalties, if any, are imposed on our Ministers who fail to meet their financial targets?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: This is a consensus government that we operate in. There are mandate letters given to each Minister by the Premier. We work closely with committees. We have reviews of business plans. Of course, we are, in effect, a minority government and we serve at the pleasure of the Legislative Assembly. We have numerous checks and balances in terms of making sure that ministerial accountability is upheld.

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

QUESTION 897-17(5):
NWT GRANDPARENTS' RIGHTS

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I think we would all agree that grandparents play a very important role in the lives of their grandchildren. In a follow-up to my Member's statement, I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

In situations that I'm aware of – and I raise this concern on behalf of some grandmothers in Hay River – when they are denied access or visitation or are considered a priority for custody of their grandchildren, they not only deprive the grandparents but they deprive the grandchildren of a very important influence in their lives.

I'd like to ask the Minister, what is the status of NWT grandparents' rights in terms of visitation and caregiving in the Northwest Territories at this time?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Minister of Health, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I need some clarity before I can actually answer that question. Is the Member talking about through divorce proceedings or custody proceedings, or is the Member talking about through child and family services?

If the Member is talking about services through child and family services where a child may be apprehended or placed in different custody, the grandparents, great-grandparents, uncles, brothers, sisters and other persons qualify as extended family, and under child and family services we work with the extended families, including the grandparents, and where appropriate we can use the fostering process to actually have grandparents foster children.

Under child and family services we absolutely respect the role of extended families, including grandparents, and we work with those families to ensure that they have access to children and we support those visitations and/or placements as appropriate.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'm also wondering: in the case where the parents of those grandchildren are obstructing the rights of the grandparents to visit or to be granted custody of those grandchildren in a situation where they're taken into care, what do we have in legislation that precludes that from happening, where a mother or a father of children would obstruct grandparents from being able to have access to and visitation rights and custodial rights when necessary? What do we have to address that?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I can only really answer the question in the context of child and family services. If we're talking about a divorce situation or a situation out of child and family services, you might be better positioned to ask the Minister of Justice that particular question as he is responsible for courts and those procedures.

Within child and family services, the social workers work with the families and we try to ensure that families are involved, families are engaged in the processes of supporting children. As the Member knows, we are moving forward with Building Stronger Families, which focuses on the family unit and trying to provide supports to families so that they can raise their children in a healthy, loving environment with the supports that they need, and those extend to extended families where appropriate.

But with respect to court proceedings or divorces, I am unable to answer that question. You may want to ask the Minister of Justice.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I recited other jurisdictions in Canada today in my Member's statement that actually expressly recognize grandparents and clearly give them opportunities to pursue their rights.

Will the Department of Health and Social Services look at that new and emerging legislation in other jurisdictions and consider amendments to the Children's Law Act to formally recognize grandparents in territorial family law?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: If I remember correctly, the legislation that the Member is referring to is specific to family law, which is specific around divorces and custody issues that are going through the courts and not necessarily child protection. Within child protection we have provided significant rights and responsibilities for extended families that include grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters. Once again, I will certainly take the information the Member is presenting and have the Minister of Justice take a look at it.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I recognize that we're nearing the end of our terms here and this is not something that's going to happen in this Assembly and the 17th Assembly, but if the Minister could commit to working with the Minister of Justice even in the remaining days here to at least begin the research and interjurisdictional research into what is happening in other jurisdictions in Canada, perhaps we could then get a fresh start in the 18th Assembly in looking at implementing that so that our legislation is keeping up with other places in Canada with respect to grandparents.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'll commit to meeting with the Member after the sitting today to get the specific details. We, as the Department of Health and Social Services, I, as the Minister, have committed to the families and working with families, and I recognize that family law and divorce is a responsibility of the Department of Justice and I am sure that our two departments can work together to find a solution that the Member is referring to.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written

questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Mr. Blake.

Petitions

PETITION 6-17(5):
SUPPORT FOR CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR NEW
DISTRIBUTOR FOR FUEL, GAS AND OIL
PRODUCTS IN AKLAVIK

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier today, I have a petition here signed by the people of Aklavik.

We the undersigned citizens, homeowners, hunters and trappers, community governments and recreational vehicle users are concerned about the high cost of heating fuel and gasoline, hereby support a call for proposals for a new distributor of fuel and gas and oil products in Aklavik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Mr. Dolynny.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 21-17(5):
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE
2013-2014 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present Committee Report 21-17(5), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2013-2014 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report.

MOTION THAT COMMITTEE REPORT 21-17(5) BE
DEEMED READ AND PRINTED IN HANSARD,
CARRIED

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 21-17(5), be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Committee Report 21-17(5) will be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety.

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations ("the committee") has completed its review of the 2013-2014 Northwest Territories Human Rights

Commission Annual Report. The standing committee thanks Mr. Charles Dent, chair of the NWT Human Rights Commission ("the commission"), and Ms. Deborah McLeod, director of human rights, for their appearance before the committee on May 28, 2015.

2013-2014 Annual Report

About the Human Rights Commission

The NWT Human Rights Act sets up three independent but interrelated branches: the commission, the Office of the Director of Human Rights, and the adjudication panel.

The Human Rights Commission is made up of three to five members of the public, each for a term of four years. They are appointed by and responsible to the Legislative Assembly for the general administration of the act. The commission members serving in 2013-14 were: Mr. Charles Dent, chair; Mr. Yacub Adam, deputy chair; and members Ms. Bronwyn Watters, Ms. Marion Berls and Mr. Roger WahShee.

The Office of the Director of Human Rights includes the director and commission staff who are members of the public service. This office is responsible for the administration of the complaint process and for the delivery of education workshops and the promotion of human rights throughout the NWT.

The adjudication panel is composed of at least three lawyers appointed by the Legislative Assembly, each for a term of two to four years. The adjudication panel hears complaints referred to them by the director as well as appeals of the director's decision to dismiss complaints. The adjudication panel members serving in 2013-2014 were: Mr. Adrian Wright, chair; and adjudicators Mr. James Posynick, Ms. Karen Snowshoe, Mr. Sheldon Toner, Ms. Joan Mercredi and Mr. Louis Siebert.

The committee wishes to thank all members of the commission and the adjudication panel for their service in 2013-2014.

Message from the Chair

The message from the chair provides a summary overview of the accomplishments of the Human Rights Commission during the fiscal year.

In this year's message, Mr. Dent opened his remarks by noting that 2013-2014 was a year of change for the Human Rights Commission. He welcomed new staff members and thanked outgoing members. He noted that the Human Rights Commission began a program of rebranding to create a new look and tone for the commission, including a new slogan and a social media presence. The new slogan "Let's Talk" is intended to invite conversation and encourage discussion about human rights topics. The commission hopes to foster a culture of kindness, tolerance and acceptance, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The commission celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2013-2014. As well, work began on a comprehensive

review of the Human Rights Act, which will include consultation with stakeholders and the public and is scheduled to take place in 2014-2015. Mr. Dent indicated to the committee that the commission has taken note that other jurisdictions have included genetic discrimination to their list of prohibited grounds of discrimination. The commission takes the position that genetic discrimination could amount to discrimination on the basis of a disability or perceived disability. MLAs were encouraged to consider whether this should be added as a prohibited ground under NWT legislation. Committee members took note of this recommendation.

Community Outreach

The NWT Human Rights Commission has done excellent promotional work to inform citizens of their rights and responsibilities under the Human Rights Act. This work includes attending tradeshows and conferences, conducting presentations and workshops for employers, and outreach to schools.

The commission attended trade shows in Fort Smith, Yellowknife and Hay River and participated in a services marketplace during a meeting of community justice leaders. Workshops and information sessions were provided to a number of organizations and agencies, including the YK Housing Authority, the Salvation Army, Hay River Health and Social Services, Local Government Administrators of the NWT (LGANT), the NWT Seniors Society and Aurora College education students in Fort Smith.

The standing committee was pleased to see that commission representatives continued their practice of visiting communities across the NWT in 2013-2014. The committee remembered Mr. Dent's indication, in last year's review, that the commission planned, in 2013-2014, to complete its goal of visiting all 33 NWT communities in its first 10 years. When questioned about this, Mr. Dent advised that they did complete all of the planned community visits; however, they were slightly delayed in getting into a few communities, having rescheduled at the request of these communities. Despite this small delay, the standing committee commends the commission for its achievement in visiting all NWT communities and for its dedication to community outreach.

Rounding out its community outreach efforts in 2013-2014, the commission presented a financial contribution to Ecole St. Patrick for their NWT Best Buddies Chapter, the first in the Northwest Territories, aimed at creating a safe and inclusive school environment. The commission also attended the NWT Pride celebrations, celebrated International Human Rights Day on December 10th, and presented the 2013-2014 Human Rights Commission Accessibility Award to Power Surge Technologies Ltd., of Hay River, for incorporating accessibility features into its new building.

The standing committee was, as always, impressed by the scope of public education and outreach undertaken by the commission in 2013-2014.

Websites and Social Media

As part of its rebranding program, the commission's main website nwthumanrights.ca was reorganized and revitalized to make it more user-friendly.

In discussing the commission's website and social media projects with the standing committee, Mr. Dent noted that the commission had seen a drop-off in the use of the Teachers' Toolkit website, which provides teachers with resources for discussing human rights topics as part of the social studies curriculum for grades K-12. Mr. Dent advised that the commission is looking at ways to make this resource more accessible.

The commission launched its own Facebook page in 2013-2014, by holding a Facebook Action Week leading up to the celebration of International Human Rights Day. The commission encourages the public to join them on Facebook by liking their page at facebook.com/nwthrc.

Internal Development

As previously noted, the commission began work on updating its visual identity and on a comprehensive review of the Human Rights Act as part of its internal development in 2013-2014.

As it has in years past, the commission again hosted an audio conference presented by Lancaster House. Based in Toronto, Lancaster House is a leader in providing information on labour, employment and human rights law for employees, employers, professional organizations, unions, management and legal practitioners in Canada. In November 2013 the commission hosted a Lancaster House audio conference on accommodating multiple holidays in a multicultural workplace. These conferences are available from any community in the NWT and access is provided free of charge.

As well, the commission continued its work in the area of process improvement. This year this work was undertaken as part of a three-agency working group – with members from the commission, director's office and adjudication panel – tasked with finding ways to improve the process for people who make complaints under the act.

Inquiries and Complaints

The NWT Human Rights Act protects people from discrimination in employment; access to public services; tenancy, including business leases; membership in a trade union or professional organization; or in published materials such as signs, newspapers or other advertising.

In 2013-2014 the director of human rights received 327 inquiries, compared with 309 inquiries in the previous year. This figure does not include inquiries made at public outreach events. Of the 2013-2014

inquiries, 174, or 53 percent, originated in the North Slave region, compared with 51 percent in the previous year.

At the beginning of 2013-2014, there were 25 existing complaints with the director's office. Thirty new complaints were filed during the year, compared with 15 new complaints in the previous year. Sixteen of these 55 complaints were resolved, leaving 39 open complaint files at the end of fiscal year. Of the 30 new complaints, 19, or 63 percent, originated in Yellowknife.

The NWT Human Rights Act identifies 21 grounds upon which discrimination is prohibited. A person may allege discrimination based on more than one ground in their complaint. Again this year, disability was the ground with the highest number of complaints – 47 percent – as it has been for the past nine years. The standing committee remains deeply concerned by the high number of complaints of discrimination on grounds of disability.

Hearings and Decisions

The NWT Human Rights Adjudication Panel is separate and independent from the commission and hears complaints, referred by the director, and appeals of the director's decision to dismiss complaints. Through the hearing process, adjudicators objectively examine evidence presented to them, to determine if discrimination has occurred. They also decide on an appropriate remedy if discrimination has occurred.

During the course of 2013-2014, the adjudication panel closed one file by mediation, one by adjudication and two by other processes, ending the year with 14 files outstanding. All decisions made by the adjudication panel are public and may be viewed by clicking on the "decisions" link on the commission's website at nwthumanrights.ca.

Looking Forward

This section of the report reiterates the commission's plans for the coming 2014-2015 fiscal year, noting community visits planned for Nahanni Butte, Trout Lake, Fort Simpson, Inuvik and Sachs Harbour and trade shows planned for Fort Smith and Hay River. In addition to the plans the commission has already identified for the 10th anniversary celebrations and the comprehensive review of the Human Rights Act, the report notes that the commission will also be involved in a Safe and Caring Schools Working Group led by ECE as part of the Education Renewal and Innovation Initiative.

Financial Summary

The budget for the commission is reviewed and approved by the Legislative Assembly's Board of Management. The Legislative Assembly pays the salary for the director and deputy director, honoraria for the Human Rights Adjudication Panel, and rent expenses for the commission. These items are not

included in the commission's financial statements.

Statement of General Operations for the year ended March 31, 2014 shows:

- The majority of the commission's revenue comes from the GNWT via an operating grant of \$250,000. This funding remains unchanged from the previous year.
- Total revenues less expense reimbursement equal \$228,813, an increase of 3 percent from the previous year.
- Expenses decreased, dropping from \$206,966 to \$181,139, a drop of 12.5 percent from the previous year.
- Some other items of note in the commission's financial statements include:
 - advertising and promotion costs which remained relatively consistent at just over \$10,000 for the year;
 - a 48 percent decrease in the honorarium paid to the commission chair and a 39.9 percent decrease in the honoraria paid to commission members; and
 - a 29 percent increase in legal expenses.
- Revenue over expenses totaled \$47,674, leaving the commission with a surplus again in 2013-2014.

The standing committee noted that the commission's financial statements show no travel expenses for the commission chair or members, despite the fact that travel took place. When questioned about this, Mr. Dent explained that the travel costs were covered under the line item for expense reimbursement. The committee felt that, in the interests of transparency and accountability, this information should be broken out in the financial statements. Committee members suggested that Mr. Dent work with the Legislative Assembly's corporate services division to find a way to more clearly present the commission's travel costs in its financial statements.

Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Government Operations congratulates the NWT Human Rights Commission

for another successful year. Members applaud the efforts of its members and staff, particularly in the area of community outreach, for promoting a culture of kindness, tolerance, inclusion and respect in the Northwest Territories to benefit all residents of the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Dolynny.

MOTION TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT
COMMITTEE REPORT 21-17(5),
CARRIED

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Committee Report 21-17(5) be received and adopted by this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Motion is on the floor. Motion is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee Report 21-17(5) is received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Dolynny.

Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Mr. Abernethy.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 308-17(5):
GNWT RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORT 17-
17(5): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BILL 44:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE HOSPITAL INSURANCE
AND HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION ACT

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following the document, entitled the "GNWT Response to Committee Report 17-17(5), Report on the Review of Bill 44: An Act to Amend the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act." Thank you.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 309-17(5):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES CHINA STRATEGY
AND ACTION PLAN

TABLED DOCUMENT 310-17(5):
26TH ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015
VICTIMS ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TABLED DOCUMENT 311-17(5):
ANNUAL REPORT ON THE
ACTIVITIES OF THE RENTAL OFFICE:
APRIL 1, 2014 TO MARCH 31, 2015

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents, entitled "Government of the Northwest Territories China Strategy and Action Plan," "26th Annual Report 2014-2015 Victims Assistance Committee of the Northwest Territories," and "Annual Report on the Activities of the Rental Office: April 1, 2014 to March 21, 2015." Thank you.

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

TABLED OF DOCUMENT 312-17(5):
2014-2015 STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL
OF THE NWT ANNUAL REPORT

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled "2014-2015 Status of Women Council of the NWT Annual Report." Thank you.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 313-17(5):
2014-2015 61ST ANNUAL REPORT:
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LIQUOR COMMISSION

TABLED DOCUMENT 314-17(5):
2014-2015 61ST ANNUAL REPORT:
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LIQUOR LICENSING BOARD AND
LIQUOR ENFORCEMENT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents, entitled "2014-2015 61st Annual Report: Northwest Territories Liquor Commission" and "2014-2015 61st Annual Report: Northwest Territories Liquor Licensing Board and Liquor Enforcement." Thank you.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 315-17(5):
ANNUAL REPORT 2014 WORKERS' SAFETY AND
COMPENSATION COMMISSION OF NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled "Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission Annual Report 2014." Mahsi.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 316-17(5):
TWO NEWS ARTICLES ON
CONVERTING CARBON EMISSIONS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents I want to table. It's "\$20 Million Carbon XPrize: Pulling Money Out of Thick Air" and it's XPrize wants technology to convert carbon emissions into viable resources.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 317-17(5):
RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE 148TH ANNUAL
MEETING OF THE
CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a copy of the resolutions adopted at the 148th annual meeting of the Canadian Medical Association this fall, including Resolution 49, Recognizing the Health Benefits of a Strong Predictable Price on Carbon Emissions; Resolution 82, Committing the Canadian Medical Association to Divesting Itself of Investments in Fossil Fuels; and Resolution 83, Calling on the Canadian Medical Association to Explore Investments in Renewable Energy Solutions.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Mr. Bouchard.

**Notices of Motion for
First Reading of Bills**

BILL 69:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ACT, NO. 2

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 2, 2015, I will move that Bill 69, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 221-17(5), Sessional Statement; and

Tabled Document 281-17(5), Northwest Territories Capital Estimates, 2016-2017, with Mr. Bouchard in the chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you. I call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee, Ms. Bisaro?

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We wish to continue with Tabled Document 281-17(5), NWT Capital Estimates, 2016-2017, with general comments and then the departments of Education, Culture and Employment; Environment and Natural Resources; Industry, Tourism and Investment; and Justice, time permitting. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. We'll continue after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Welcome back, committee. I will call committee back to order. As I indicated earlier, we are going to continue with the Capital Estimates, 2016-2017, that's Tabled Document 281-17(5), and we will ask the Minister of Finance if he has witnesses he would like to bring into the House. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I do have witnesses.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Mr. Miltenberger, if you would be kind enough to introduce your witnesses into the House.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Russ Neudorf, deputy minister of Transportation; Paul Guy, deputy minister of Public Works and Services; and Sandy Kalgutkar, deputy secretary to the FMB. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger, Mr. Neudorf, Mr. Guy, Mr. Kalgutkar, welcome back to the House.

Committee, when we last left here we were doing general comments and next on my list I have Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a few quick comments. I'd like to give some more updates as we go along and I'll go through some of the issues that I think are important and that I'd like to see more information on.

I was dealing with the Hay River Woodland Manor and we know that there's an expansion being

planned, being designed as we speak. Obviously, I think there's going to be some carry-over from that money because we never broke ground this year, and if I could get an update on how that currently stands and when we expect to put the shovels to the ground for that project.

I know we're completing the Hay River Health Centre. Obviously, that's key in that we know that it seems like we're ahead of schedule and now we're kind of back on schedule, so maybe just a quick update where that would be at.

My concern, as well, is we talked about capital and we talked about what's gone on but what might not be in the budget. We know that the medical clinic is going to be renovated for administration and we know there's going to be shortage of administration. So I'm just wondering if the department has assessed what they want to do going forward for those admin positions. Some of these are going to need leases or we're going to need a building. Have we got a cost-analysis for some of that stuff?

I assume something that's not in the budget and we've obviously talked about us getting involved in and trying to commit to some dollars to the dredging. We talked about it in the House that it's a federal responsibility, but we know that it's been a federal responsibility, as well, and we've gone ahead and committed 25 percent to that type of project now. We're doing that for the Tuk-Inuvik Highway; we're trying to do that for the Mackenzie Valley Highway; so I mean that's a federal responsibility and I think we need to commit to some of that money to dredging of the Hay River harbour.

The upgrades to SMCC, South Mackenzie Correctional Centre, obviously I can't see any major retrofits for that facility and it's getting to an age where we should be looking at that and getting that information in the budget.

Some of the Members have already talked about our communities asking for more infrastructure. Hay River is one of those bigger communities that has a deficit in infrastructure and it needs additional funding for that and those levels have been consistent for many years. We need to increase those capital infrastructure dollars so that those communities that are really behind the eight ball on some of that infrastructure need to, you know, finish some of that stuff up, catch up.

Again, some transportation stuff, we see the Transportation Strategy there. Regarding the Build Canada Fund, we've seen some of that planning going forward and the concern would be that we haven't paid too much attention to the main highway, Highway No. 1, coming into the territory. We've talked about Highway No. 1 out toward Simpson but we haven't talked about keeping the current roads up to speed. Highway No. 1 hasn't been one that has been talked about, I think. We'd started a program for widening it. That looks really good and is very

effective for the trucking industry. We all know where the majority of our trucking industry comes from. It would be nice if we upgraded more of that road to that standard.

Another area is, obviously, schools are important. We've just renovated Diamond Jenness, but there are two schools we have in the regular system that need some upgrades. They're starting to get to an age where they're going to need upgrades.

The other one is the French school. I know we have some discussion and we have some court cases going back and forth and we know there's going to be demand there. In either Yellowknife or Hay River, is there anything in our budgets for capital on that? Instead of planning for some of that stuff, we're waiting for the courts to just tell us we're going to have to stroke a cheque to fix this problem. Over that short period of time, we wouldn't really want to. Why wouldn't we put this into a budget? Why wouldn't we start planning for it? Why wouldn't we put it into the four- or five-year plan, because we know that we're going to be responsible for some of it.

Another step that I'm glad to see is the parks upgrades. We're seeing more and more parks upgrades and we've been getting nothing but compliments about our parks. We've had some people in the South Slave and in the Dehcho and the people who are just pleased to see those kinds of facilities and it's good to see some of that stuff.

The last thing being, you know, some of the health facilities in Yellowknife, we're upgrading them. Stanton Hospital is going to become a priority here real quick and I think we need a better understanding how that's going to work, how that's going to roll out over the next 30 years. That's going to happen, the old facility versus a new facility. What are we doing with that old facility? Is it going to become an empty building that we're going to have to start to fill? Are we going to look to replace off-site services that we currently have in Yellowknife and put them into the old hospital? Some of that stuff that's more practical for our government, we should be using that as opposed to just leaving it and letting the market decide what's going to happen. Our concern from the regional perspective is just like when we built the big tower downtown recently and we called that the devolution building for a while. There are issues that the regions are concerned with, that there's more and more coming into Yellowknife and that if we built the facilities to that standard and put in a lot of vacancies there, then that's just promoting it. The GNWT and operations will continue to find space and lease more space in Yellowknife and I'm concerned that that will defer and break down some of the issues that we've been trying to get decentralized.

So, Mr. Chair, those are my main comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. We'll allow the Minister to reply. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll respond to some of them and then I'll ask Mr. Guy to respond to the Woodland Manor and update requested on the health centre and Mr. Neudorf to touch on dredging.

The municipal funding, as we put it out yesterday, has been kept at \$28 million, in spite of our attempts to do passive restraints but it's important to protect that funding.

The issue of building Highway No. 1 to the border and the need to increase widening, I'll note that as well.

I'll ask, once again, Mr. Guy to touch on the other schools that possibly need upgrades. The French schools, we're not in a position to do what the Member has suggested at this point. We have to, in fact, take a wait-and-see attitude.

I appreciate the comments on the parks and I'm sure the Minister of ITI will appreciate those comments. We, after our briefing last night, have the offer and the request for a further sit down with Members, so we we'll be happy to do that when the Members have that time.

I'll ask Mr. Guy to touch on a number of these other items, Woodland Manor, the hospital, upgrades to SMCC. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. I will now turn it to Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, all the upgrades to Woodland Manor, we've received our most recent proposal submission from the proponent on that project on September 18th of this year, so just over a week or so ago. This proposal is now being reviewed to verify it meets program requirements by ourselves and the Department of Health and confirm it's within the financial limits that we have for the project. If that's acceptable, then we'll award the contract. Once that's done, the project design will proceed over the winter and construction will start early in the spring and complete it throughout the following year. We expect it to be completed and ready for occupancy in early 2017. That's Woodland Manor.

The next one I have is the Hay River Health Centre. That project is nearing substantial completion. The contractor has submitted a request for substantial completion inspection, which we have done. During that inspection, and this is normal, we've identified a number of deficiencies in the work and those are now being corrected by the contractor and we expect to have those resolved very shortly. They're down to a few remaining items on their list of things to do. Once that's done, they'll be granted substantial completion and it will be available for us to take over the keys and for the authority to start their process of moving in.

In terms of South Mackenzie, I'm not sure where that is in the capital planning process or whether it's been considered for mid-life retrofit, but we do consider it as a core piece of government infrastructure and we are making investments through both our regular maintenance and the Deferred Maintenance Program in that particular facility. We're also doing an evaluation on it, I believe, to see if it is a potential candidate for a biomass installation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Guy. I believe I heard the Minister indicate to go to Mr. Neudorf. I will concur. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On dredging, it's been talked about in the House before. It is a federal responsibility. The Minister has written on several occasions to try to get some attention and had some discussions. Officials... (inaudible)... we continue to meet in various forms with the operators and the federal government regulators to try to get their attention, but unfortunately, we've had minimal success. The one suggestion was to get the Hay River harbour authority, get them active and seeing if they could make some requests for funding. That might be helpful. If there ever was a response, then I'm sure the government could consider providing a share of funding, but unfortunately, until we get any type of positive response then there is no opportunity even for cost sharing.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Continuing on with the general comments, I have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few comments on the capital, starting with education here. The Moose Kerr School is not going to be on the plans here until 2019, but just from what's happened here with our capital process with Moose Kerr School, it is up for major retrofit or replacement, and that's the same case we had here with the Stanton Territorial Hospital. I hope in 2019 that we follow the same practice as we did and replace Moose Kerr School when the time comes. I'm sure we'll see the cost savings there.

Also under health, the health centre in Tsigehtchic was built in the mid-'80s. It still has the same linoleum as it did when they built it, many of the same features. It clearly doesn't look like very much has been done to that except blocking the unit. The 35 years is almost up, so when the time comes I hope that they do replace that building as well.

Just a couple other things with housing. I'm glad to see we are doing a lot of retrofits within my riding and replacing a few units in Fort McPherson. But as I mentioned quite a few times, we are doing a good job retrofitting and replacing units, but there's a big demand for housing, and even the Finance Minister has been pleading for people to move back to our territory. But where are many of these people going to live with some people on a waiting list for up to three or four years? Are we going to build tents for them?

What's this government's plan? I mean, we need to build more units. That's the bottom line.

The other thing was under airports. For many years the community of Tsiigehtchic has been wanting an airport in the community, especially for freeze-up. We are doing a better service now with the ferry and building ice crossings, but for emergency purposes it would be great to have an airport, plus it creates employment.

Residents in my riding are very happy with the recent Building Canada Plan putting money back into the Dempster Highway, Highway No. 8. As we all know, the community of Aklavik would also like to have their road to Willow River put in place. We're doing a great job there and I commend the Department of Transportation for providing funds to the community to actually purchase a bridge, and we're hoping that that bridge can be put in place this winter when the time comes. We can't wait until April as, you know, new year funding. They have to make sure that the community has those funds in place in February to make the most of our winter season.

I see under Transportation, as well, under the marine division, the Louis Cardinal hull upgrade. Many of my constituents want to know when are we going to receive a new ferry. Even a couple of years back the engineers felt that the hull was due for replacement. I'd like to know when we're going to get a new ferry.

Those are the comments that I have for now.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Blake. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll respond to some. On the Tsiigehtchic Health Centre, we'll take note of the Member's concern suggesting that it be replaced as opposed to repaired.

The issue of housing and building more units, of course, is one that we're going to struggle with as we put more money in, but a lot of that is going to be eaten up by the cutbacks of CMHC. That's on the list. We hear that from every community.

I'm going to ask, Mr. Chairman, if Mr. Guy can talk to the Moose Kerr School, and I'll ask Mr. Neudorf if he could touch on the transportation issues tied to the Tsiigehtchic Airport, the Willow River Road and the new ferry to replace the Louis Cardinal.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister. We'll go to Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In addition to the foundation repairs we've made to the Moose Kerr School, we've also done a significant amount of other work to that facility through our Deferred Maintenance Program. We've completed the upgrading to the roof, the gym floor has been replaced, a general electrical upgrade, ceiling replacement in the gym. We've also completed upgrades to the heating and ventilation systems, plumbing repairs, flooring replacements,

drywall repairs, playground equipment. Those are all since 2008, and we've invested approximately \$2.18 million in maintenance on that facility to keep it in a serviceable condition until such time as it can be brought forward for replacement in the capital plan.

Based on the current facility condition and the program requirements, ECE, I believe, has identified it in their capital needs for consideration for renovation or major upgrading in 2018-19, so it is, I believe, a high priority for the department.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Guy. Next we'll go to Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the Tsiigehtchic Airport, that request has been brought to the department's attention over the past number of years. Our response is it's an affordability issue about infrastructure and they're just over an hour from a major airport in Inuvik.

The Aklavik Willow River Bridge, the Community Access Program has provided contributions to the community over the past several years to purchase the bridge. I think the total price is about \$2 million to install it. So that will become a bit of a challenge for the community as they're looking to move forward under the Community Access Program because that program, of course, is only \$1 million a year and it serves all communities in the NWT.

The replacement of the Louis Cardinal Ferry, we continue to retrofit that ferry as needs require and inspections are done on a regular basis and it continues to meet the demands that are placed on it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Blake, do you have some follow-up questions?

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just on the Willow River Bridge, I don't see the point where the department provided this bridge. Installing it was \$2 million and all we get on a yearly basis is \$200,000. I know the department did provide a bit more than that this past year, which was great, but it's time for the department to step up here and provide the \$2 million to actually put this in place. You know, we're throwing around \$200 million or \$300 million here on one highway. A little infrastructure that means a lot to the community would really go a long way here. This is better than 1 percent of what they're spending here.

The other thing is with the airport. I know Fort McPherson is an hour and a half away and yet they have an airport. The reasoning why we can't have an airport in Tsiigehtchic doesn't make sense. We're an hour away, yes, but in an emergency situation, which we have many times, it's up to the community to organize bringing people in, in an emergency. I mean, it's not up to the health centre. They've got a lot of play in this. It's the people. They take their own responsibility to ensure the safety of the residents and I really don't appreciate that answer I received.

But, once again, at Moose Kerr School, I hope we do end up replacing that when the time comes, such as we did with the Stanton Territorial Hospital. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The fiscal reality is what is driving us all and it's evidenced quite clearly in the capital plan and we have a much longer list of infrastructure projects than we have money. The issue of prioritizing or having to make choices is always before us. So I appreciate the Member's frustration on some of these requests.

The Willow River, I'm not sure what the opportunities are. I haven't talked fully to the Minister of Transportation if there are ways, but we're now faced with political choices and we've capital planned and flexed the process and everything has been through. Any new add-ons are going to have to be the subject for the 18th Assembly and in keeping with it, as well, the typical choices that we're going to have to make about our funding, but we'll definitely have the list of needs that have been identified by the Member for his communities. The Moose Kerr School is going to be on the list for, at the very least, a major reno. So we'll hope, as the Member does, that all the reviews will come up in favour of a replacement. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Committee, we're on Capital Estimates, 2016-2017. Next I have Mr. Dolyunny, followed by Mr. Moses.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I welcome the department here today. I just want to first talk about the economic landscape. As you heard earlier today from the Minister of Finance on the fiscal update, I think it's important that we view this capital expenditure budget, but I think we need to be wary of some of those high-level issues that we heard and I think many of us know as well.

We know that this current government, the 17th Assembly, struggled in balancing expansion of growth and keeping it in mind with revenue growth. That's been mentioned many times. This is even more pronounced now when we see our GNWT revenues flat for the next five years, as has been forecast, and yet we're still seeing capital spending at the 2 percent level. Another way of looking at it is we have a two to one relationship there. This proportion of relationship will only mean that our short-term debt financing will go to appease our capital appetite in the next couple of years if we continue down this pathway.

As we've heard the Minister earlier today, we cannot continue to go down this deficit spending path as we end the 17th and go into the 18th. We need to make sure of specific investments for our economic future, we know that's a given, but continuing to increase our

borrowing limits for both short term and long term is not a solution to ensure such a future.

As we've heard, we've got to live within our means and live within our fiscal capacity, and we've got to make sure expenditure growth is controlled. Mr. Chair, I say, without prejudice to the current Minister of Finance, we have to get this House in order, because from my perspective, we're heading down a path where I'm not sure if we're going to be able to maintain all existing assets as they are and meeting all the legislative requirements that are before us. So I speak caution as we move forward.

As for the current capital plan before committee and for the sake of not repeating some of the same comments of my colleagues of yesterday and today, I can tell you that there have been some issues with the Public Works and Services department so-called red flag list. As you heard yesterday, committee talked about a lot of confusion in this area, and I have to echo those comments. We're seeing planning studies being done and completed in one year and then showing up as being proposed in the next. A point in question, the Fort Simpson Health Centre was one and the Tulita Health Centre are examples of this confusion. So, the question is, why? Is there any way you can clean it up?

I have a suggestion for the department. If you want faith and committee's ability to trust this red flag list information, you have to make sure this data is accurate moving forward. We can't flip-flop from year to year. Second, if we want to proceed, and in the interests of consensus government, the list should be a public, living, breathing document. A lot of the stuff is happening behind the scenes and I think the public would be enriched knowing some of this information that should be at their fingertips. So I challenge the government to set that standard high as we begin the 18th Assembly shortly.

Changing gears, tapping into the Building Canada funding is important. Committee does fully support your efforts. However, as we've heard time and time again, committee has tried to influence and provide some feedback on the project priorities. As we've heard in communication back and forth, sharing your completed list with committee is not asking for our input. So I'm asking, as we move forward, can committee have at least some degree of input as you make your list finalized as you are applying for these much needed funding dollars? Again, a suggestion for improvement for the 18th Assembly.

As committee did appreciate the briefing yesterday regarding the newly proposed P3 Stanton Hospital, it's unfortunate that we can't share this with the public. So I challenge the department, I challenge the Minister to try to get this out as soon as we can and provide all those options that we talked about.

One of the things that struck me, and a question that has not been quite rectified, is the issue of funding. Why do we not look at other options for funding for

this rather than a P3? I like to use the example, Mr. Chair, the building we're in right now, the Legislative Assembly. This was done under what was referred to as a public bond. This was an opportunity that money could be raised by Northerners, invested by Northerners and where money stays in the North. I'm really suspect why we didn't try to use that type of tool to move forward. There was never really a discussion point and never really finalized. Again, I'm hoping that we're not too far down this garden path that we can actually maybe look at that before we embark on this very expensive P3 initiative.

I know that the department has done a lot of... (inaudible)...money analysis, but everyone knows that this P3 hospital project will not be cheap in the long run. Jobs will more than likely go to lots of Southerners and our local businesses will be left on the sidelines, literally with table scraps. This has held true. We know that there have been issues even in Hay River recently with the same proponents who are looking at building a hospital in Yellowknife.

There are issues in Hay River with many businesses being left high and dry and I'm not sure if there are litigation issues in the works, but I can tell you that it does concern me. Knowing that that is the microcosm of what is to come for Yellowknife, I do think we need to have that high level discussion. So again, what guarantee do we have to protect local small business operators that are being shut out of this project? I think that's a question many businesses have and I know they've asked me.

On the subject of this new hospital, I know, again not getting into details, it's not as public as it should be, but what has been mentioned a little bit here is the re-profiling of the old hospital now. What has not been discussed and talked about is the fact that if this building, this hospital, now gets re-profiled to whatever it is. Whether it's retail, commercial space, or even space the government may use in some type of form or arrangement, right now, and my numbers are a little old here, Mr. Chair, but not less than a year ago when the new office building that we constructed came on line there was well over 150,000 square feet of commercial real estate vacant in Yellowknife and that basically represented about 14 percent of vacancy. Again, I don't have the statistics of how much vacant space the re-profiled hospital might offer to the environment around Yellowknife, but my quick calculation, just trying to figure out, it could be up to another 10 percent of commercial vacancy added to an already 14 percent market, thereby lifting the overall commercial vacancy rate to over 20-something percent to be fair.

In the world of investment, this puts an imbalance in any economy and creates a lot of dissension amongst landlords, large landlords and smaller landlords, and what really happens is that larger landlords are usually able to make do during these tough economic times. It's the smaller landlords that don't. These are

the landlords that are going to struggle if we're putting this much more vacancy on the market. So I caution, and again, I'd like to hear the high-level discussion, if that has been researched as to do we have concerns that by doing that we're going to be creating even more imbalance in an already very tight, very tough marketplace which is commercial real estate. So, again, a bit of a loaded question, but one which gravely affects many of the larger and smaller landlords in the city of Yellowknife.

At committee, as we've heard, parks upgrades, I think the chair mentioned that earlier. I, too, want to commend the department for the multitude of park upgrades we're seeing throughout the Northwest Territories. However, with one caveat, that these beautiful parks it seems that, with climate change I guess, if we want to use it in that loose term, we have the ability to use our parks for longer periods of time. One of these parks closed in the middle of September when really many people camp well into September, even in early October, so I challenge the department as they're doing their operational plans with their contractors that we need to look at lengthening the opening and the earlier opening of our parks so that the public can actually enjoy a lot of the infrastructure that we've provided.

Finally, Mr. Chair, there's been some concern for years that the government's plan for long-term care beds will not fill what we call the impending demand, given the dramatic aging of our NWT population. Now, we've heard how difficult it is to predict and we've heard that there have been many commitments and many planning studies involved, but we haven't really seen a lot of specific investments. Now, the budget does have some good news, and I would welcome the department's overall view on how they're dealing with this impending issue of aging in place. Also, with the aging of the NWT population, how are we going to be able to find long-term care beds?

I'll stop there for now, Mr. Chair. I know there are a few questions in there and I definitely have more questions as we get into departments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regards to the red flag lists, what has happened, the amount of money in the capital plan is varied and we went, most recently, from one hundred and twenty-five back down to seventy-five, which meant that things on the list had to be re-prioritized. You can only do a certain number with \$75 million, which is a very small amount of money when you have an overall budget of \$1.8 billion and we do have input throughout this process with Regular Members and one of the things where we could point to is the ratio over the money for the Build Canada Plan was switched to put a few more dollars into the communities instead of transportation. Transportation initially got most of the money, they still got most of

the money but I think it's now 85 percent. It could be argued that it should be more, but there was a move of another 5 percent to make sure that we tried to put some more money into the communities.

The issue of the local business, it is a priority as was pointed out by Mr. Kalgutkar. There is a clause in the contract that we could hold the proponent accountable for that's going to allow us to keep track of that. There are checks and balances. There's going to be oversight required, and as we indicated, if you have names of business that are experiencing difficulty, if you could give them to us we would follow up with the businesses and the proponent to see what can be done.

The issue of re-profiling the current Stanton. There are a number of options as we discussed yesterday. What use may be available, some of it may have an impact on the market as that work is fleshed out that particular market impact variable will be dealt with.

I appreciate once again the comments and commendation to the parks folks. I'll let Mr. Dolynny pursue the issue of the parks opening with the Minister of ITI.

As well, the issue of the long-term care beds aging in place, are there going to be enough. We have a very big proposal on the table in Yellowknife plus we have to as well figure out the home of the extended care piece that is being moved out of Stanton. So I anticipate, as the Member said, when health comes up he would be asking those specific questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list I have Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know my colleagues have said a lot in a whole bunch of different areas within the departments. One with the cost of living in the Northwest Territories is continuing to get higher. As we see a slow economy, it's really affecting a lot of our communities, more in particular the Sahtu, up in our region, the Beaufort-Delta. I guess, you know, the one benefit is when we do create a lot of these infrastructure projects, especially the bigger ticket items, that it is creating jobs, it is creating a skilled workforce in the communities and throughout the Northwest Territories, so there is a benefit there and I know that there is a concern that this government is the main employer for the Northwest Territories and it does reflect in our budgets moving forward. But as the Minister stated earlier today in his statement, this is something that we can't continue to sustain, we've got to find other ways to create that kind of revenue and get our people working. So I won't really get into the cost of living but, you know, there are some opportunities for home and business owners to look at getting some infrastructure incentives to lower their cost of living.

I'm glad to see in this budget the continuation of the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link and seeing all the

benefits from that and it'll be great when that comes to more of a reality when it's all finished and it's up and running.

The same with the Inuvik-Tuk Highway. I know there have been a lot of concerns and discussions here in the House recently. I think we're certainly going to see the benefits of that construction going on and I know there are some difficulties with the weather and unforeseen little delays in the project, but one thing that I think the government did a good job on is creating that oversight and getting the project manager on board perhaps a little bit sooner than later would have been a little bit more beneficial to the whole project in itself in getting things done and some of the oversights in the environmental side of things. But that's one project, like I said earlier, that when we invest in some of these infrastructure projects it does benefit the territory and benefit people, especially up in the Beaufort-Delta and for future projects and other resource development.

Continuing on, I know there were two other kinds of projects in the community of Inuvik. One is that airport road from the airport into the community. I think this is the worst that I've ever seen it in all the years that I've driven it and have been driving it more lately than I usually do getting out to the airport. We had an accident on that road this past summer. It was an unfortunate accident, and before it gets any worse I think we need to create a bigger investment. I know they were talking about chipsealing it, and I know that when you chipseal it you have to continue to do the work over and over rather than putting that one big-time investment in to try to get it done in a proper way so we wouldn't have to continue to do the maintenance on it but, once again, with the permafrost and all those other issues. But I know that road has been in the worst condition that I've ever seen it in. I do know the airport facility is also on the books and that we've also got funding going into the runway, so I'm looking forward to seeing that study and how this government can support both the runway and the facility.

I guess another area of concern was just in terms of education. One good benefit was the note on the planning studies for the Yellowknife schools. I know that's been a big concern for Members here in Yellowknife. I was glad to see that the dollars were being contributed to that. But other areas, we just came out with the feasibility study for early childhood development and the benefits of investing early on in life and what it will do for the government in so many different areas and possibly looking at seeing how we can create daycares in the communities. It doesn't mean that every community needs to have one, but if we can look at creating something moving forward, because that feasibility study did prove a lot and show a lot in terms of our early childhood development.

You heard some concerns here about the Stanton Territorial Hospital. A big investment. A big project. I

wasn't in the government when the Inuvik school got built but there were some concerns from the community, and you heard it from Members here in terms of contracting and local employment, and I want to make sure that those things are not overlooked when we're creating such a big project, especially with a slow economy. I think that our northern contractors, our northern residents need to benefit from a huge project like this.

A lot of the other stuff that I had on the list here Members have said already and I won't reiterate some of their comments. We'll get into detail, but I just wanted to make a few general comments on the budget.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. We'll turn it over to Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue of cost of living and the role of the territorial government and the importance of our capital program, I agree with the Member's comments about that, about the value and the role they play.

I appreciate his comments on the fibre link as well as the Inuvik-Tuk Highway. We will move that project to completion. We will sort through things that need sorting and we will continue on with that. Airport road is in bundle two of the Build Canada Fund. The runway study, there is work being done, I believe, in conjunction with the federal government to look at lengthening it for use that interests the federal government.

Investing in daycare is one of those issues that's tied up in available funds that aren't already subscribed to and our limitations.

We've had a lot of discussions about Stanton and the issue of its impact and the need for local opportunity. Not wanting to repeat all my comments in regard to Mr. Dolynny's same question, we are very live to that issue and we intend to see the maximum benefit that can be under this project in terms of local opportunity.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Does committee agree that there are no further general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Does the committee agree to proceed into detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Before we do so, I'd like to thank our guests here today, Mr. Neudorf, Mr. Guy, Mr. Kalgutkar and, of course, Minister Miltenberger. If I can get the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort our witnesses out of the Chamber.

Committee, as agreed earlier, we are going to turn our attention now to the capital estimates, Department of Education, Culture and Employment. With that, we'll turn it over to the Minister to see if he has any

witnesses he'd like to bring into the House. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, committee. If I can get the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the witnesses into the House.

Minister Lafferty, if you'd be kind enough to introduce your witnesses to the House, please.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I have with me, to my left, David Stewart. He is the deputy minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Also, to my right, Olin Lovely. He is the assistant deputy minister, corporate services, with the Education department.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Thank you for joining us, Mr. Lovely and Mr. Stewart. Welcome back to the House.

Committee, if I can turn your attention to your capital infrastructure workbooks, we are going to be doing Education as indicated. We're going to be on page 13. With that, we'll defer that after consideration of the activity detail. I'd ask your indulgence to turn to page 14, education and culture, infrastructure investments, \$6.627 million. Does committee agree? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to clarify, so when you mention one page we're also including the descriptions that are on the following page? Yes.

I don't have a question particularly about these projects. I do want to state again that I'm very pleased to see that we have planning study money for two schools in Yellowknife. Particularly, in my mind, J.H. Sissons is very much overdue. Mildred Hall is a continuation of a renovation from quite some years ago. But if we could get Sissons on the renovation list in terms of capital planning sooner rather than later, I think it's something that is definitely needed. I'm glad to see that there is planning money there and I hope it will come to fruition as a capital plan in the capital plan in the next budget year.

I just want to comment, as I did in my opening remarks, about the amount of education infrastructure in general, and there just is not much in this budget. We have some 45 or 49 schools; I can't quite remember. But you look at this page and there are really only three schools that are getting any kind of an infrastructure boost, so to speak. We've got a mid-life retrofit in one school, we have an addition in another, and we have some interior upgrades in a third one. Everything else is bits and pieces. We've got planning studies, we've got the sewer line at Sir John which is being fixed, and Lord knows it's been talked about by YK No. 1 for probably 10 years now, so I'm very glad to see that in there as well.

But there's minimal large infrastructure projects for education in general, and out of our 40-some schools to have only three on this list and one of which is interior upgrades tells me that we're not doing enough to maintain our schools and we're not doing enough to make sure that our schools are kept up to the standard that they need to be.

I just make that as a general comment, and I would hope that in the next couple of capital budgets that there's going to be an awful lot more money put into school additions, renovations, new schools where necessary. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. More of a comment, but I will allow the Minister opportunity to reply. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Yes, on a going-forward basis, the planning study has been in the works for some time. Members have raised that issue in the House. It's here before us and it's going forward.

A capital plan for 2015-2016, obviously there are other pressing issues, as well, in the Northwest Territories. I have to remind the House that we spent well over \$150 million over the past five years. So we've had our turn and there are other significant projects on the go. I agree with the Member that as we move forward, we should be putting more emphasis on our schools, whether it be renovating and so forth. I fully agree with her that that will be our focus as we embark on future prospects. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Ms. Bisaro, are you concluded?

MS. BISARO: I'm good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Continuing on with detail again, we are on pages 14 and 15, which are the project listings on Education, Culture and Employment. I have Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. With the Charles Tetcho School addition, I am pleased we are addressing the concerns of the larger student population in Trout Lake. I know that the community agreed to the school addition with reservations because that is their community hall and they are losing it. It needs to be said, Mr. Chair, that I am pleased that we are addressing the student population and the growth of the community of Trout Lake; however, we are losing the community hall. Maybe with the Minister's support, he can raise with his Cabinet colleagues that moving forward in future capital plans we are going to have to be looking at a community hall to meet the needs of Trout Lake because they do use this facility six days a week and the whole community is involved. In small communities people gather around and this is one of the focal facilities that brings the community together.

The question I have is capital upgrades to support lockdown procedures for safe schools. I would just like to know what the plans are there for improving our lockdown procedures. Thanks.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. With respect to the Trout Lake school, the last time we visited, I went there with my staff and also Mr. Menicoche and the school representatives. I wanted to see with my own eyes what's been referred to as a community gathering. The school is also attached to the community hall. We took that into perspective as well. The community obviously wanted us to address the school because the student population is increasing. Obviously, it was the wish of the community to move forward on that addition. Mr. Menicoche obviously stated concerns, as well, about the community hall and how we can address that. Those are discussions we've had with other departments, as well, MACA and PWS. It is a concern that's been brought to our attention as well. We will continue to work towards how we can rectify that situation.

With regards to safe schools and lockdown procedures, obviously we have been working very closely with the divisional education councils and the schools regarding the existing public address systems – it's called PAs – and the lockdown procedures. Many of our PA systems are deficient and require upgrades and replacement. Those are areas that we will continue to focus on to provide even more support to the schools to put those into perspective, upgrade them as well.

Unless I missed out on key topics, Mr. Chair, those are some key areas the Member was referring to. Mahsi.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Certainly, even though we're living in the North and we have small and remote communities, I always see in the news schools being locked down or severe incidents happening, so I am pleased we are moving forward with this. Perhaps the Minister could say how he's handling the smaller communities. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Obviously, there is a process in place. We've been at this for some time now. We are working with divisional education councils and obviously working very closely with the Department of Public Works and Services to confirm this is the highest priority projects for my department to move forward on. Safety is always a big concern and priority for my department and also the GNWT. That's why this is before us. Safe schools has been a very important process we have been working with. Again, I just want to re-emphasize we are working with all school boards to make it a priority for the other 49 schools as well. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Again, we are on pages 14 and 15 of the Education, Culture and Employment section of the capital estimates. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I welcome the Minister and his staff. I appreciate this opportunity. I think I support many of the comments I heard from my colleague Ms. Bisaro. I'm happy to see some of the work going on in our schools in the smaller communities, Lutselk'e certainly and some of the others that have been mentioned already. I am very glad to see the sewer line finally being fixed at Sir John Franklin. That's something that's been there for years and I know has been an issue.

Again, I appreciate the Minister putting forward some planning money for a couple of Yellowknife schools that are long overdue.

I just want to make sure the Minister heard my comments earlier about the need to actually provide a new school in Detah, replace the Kaw Tay Whee structure which is a couple of portable units established there about 30 years ago. Since then they've gone from a few classes up to 10 classes and it's a four-room school. So Kaw Tay Whee is not able to have any longer the language and culture program they used to have because there is simply not the space to do that. So, again, four rooms, 10 classes.

In association with that, the Detah school, Kaw Tay Whee, does not have a sprinkler system and I would like to ask the Minister, is that not a standard for our schools? Should our schools not have sprinkler systems to ensure the safety of our children? Mahsi.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. There were several issues brought to our attention by the school principal. My department has been working with the principal to resolve those issues, whether it be a site investigation. PWS has obviously been working with them as well. They have contracted the PSAV architect as late as this month, September. So that work is ongoing.

The sprinkler system obviously is part of the discussion, I believe. It's also, from the principal's perspective, brought to my department's attention and PWS is aware of that as well. My department is doing what we can to work with the school and also the school board, the principal, to resolve those outstanding issues that are brought to our attention, Mr. Chair. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: I know Minister was out earlier today, I believe, or perhaps that's coming up that he's doing a presentation at the school. So I'm hoping he will have an opportunity to look directly at the school himself. I know he's familiar with it.

I guess I would ask when we might expect to see some of those things happen that are under

discussion and if the Minister will commit to getting a new school on the capital plan for Detah. Partly the situation is that without having a proper facility there, parents are having to bus their children into Yellowknife. As an example, I met, at a constituency meeting a couple of days ago, with a family with teenage daughters who get bussed in, but the bus leaves at such a time and school starts at such a time that these kids are left sort of footloose and fancy-free in Yellowknife for an hour, and that's plenty of time to get into trouble. I think I certainly would have if I had that opportunity at that age.

This is a separate community; it's recognized as a separate community and we need to recognize that in providing appropriate facilities. The same thing goes for housing, which is another topic. But we don't want people moving away from their families because we don't have proper facilities there. So, there are a couple of questions there. Maybe I'll just mention the hope, or seek a commitment to also get Aurora College Yellowknife Campus on the capital plan. I know perhaps the Minister has toured that building, as committees have, and it is one crowded facility. We can't expect them to be doing good work in those sorts of quarters for very long. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Obviously, in the meantime, those concerns and issues that have been brought to our attention, we'll continue to work on with the principal and the school board. With the new school that the Member is referring to, obviously that's an area that I need to work with PWS. My department is willing to meet with the school board to talk about the next step and how that's going to look. We're reaching out to the community. We want to sit down with them and develop a plan. Obviously, there's a process in place that we need to follow in order to come to this table. So, we're more than open to discuss that with the school board. As I've indicated, we're reaching out to them as well.

The Aurora College is an area that has been brought up on numerous occasions in the House. Just recently our Finance Minister highlighted that the Stanton facility we'll be vacating to a new establishment, so that's an opportunity that we want to explore further how that's going to look. We're going to have an existing tremendous amount of infrastructure space. That's a discussion that we want to have. We've been approached by Aboriginal governments, as well, the business arm. They wanted to build a facility for us and lease it back over a long period of time, 30 to 40 years. So we're awaiting for those types of discussions to happen. These are the exploratory options that we're currently discussing with the parties involved. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks for the Minister's comments and commitments there. I appreciate that. I agree; there are some exciting opportunities coming up with the Stanton building and so on.

I guess maybe just to confirm, I believe I heard the Minister say he was committing to meet with the Detah District Education Authority about the possibility of a new school and the process that will be required to achieve that. So if I can just get confirmation that he will be setting up that meeting, and if it's possible to do that during the life of this Assembly by October 23rd, that would be great. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, I did commit that we want to meet with the DEA for Detah to start the discussion. So we're more than open to have that type of discussion. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Continuing on with questions on this activity, I have Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple comments in this section here. I'm glad to see that we're putting some funding into some of the smaller communities and the schools that they have. But I know in some of the past work that I've done when I've gone and done work in the schools – presentations, workshops, those kinds of things – there's always areas of concern, renovations that needed to be made. In some cases there were schools that had mouse problems and rodent problems. I just want to make a comment that I think there should be an overhaul in the overview of all our schools, especially in the small communities, that that is a safe working environment for our teachers but also a safe place to get an education for our students. I think that's a project that needs to be done by the department. As I said, mainly in the small schools is where I saw it, so I think that's something that needs to be addressed.

This government has also taken a really good stance in terms of adult education, and this area deals with community learning centres. I'm not sure what our inventory... I think we have 23 community learning centres; I'm not too sure. But if that's the case, there are some communities that don't have a learning centre, and whether or not that will be put into the books because we do have a lot of adults out there who do need that upgrading. Even in some of our learning centres that are in communities now, they also need some upgrading. I know the Aurora College is looking into programs similar to what the Beaufort-Delta Education Authority has in terms of e-learning and putting that infrastructure in place. So students who don't want to go to Yellowknife or Fort Smith or Inuvik can get some type of education through an e-learning program through their community learning centre. I think that needs to be addressed moving forward.

As mentioned earlier with the early child care centres, if you look into the feasibility study that was tabled earlier this summer, one cost of child care centres was mentioned that a capital expense of eight to 15 million dollars would be required. However, they could be housed in surplus space in elementary schools. So

I think that if we are looking at building any type of new schools, that's something that we take into consideration, or any existing schools now, that we identify surplus space to look at developing some of these child care centres. The economic benefits that come from universal daycare that was said in this study, there are some really great benefits and I think that needs to be addressed. It would be great if it could be addressed before this government finishes this term.

The one other big thing that I just wanted to bring to your attention was the renovations, once again, at East Three Elementary with the dental facility. I'm not sure if there's an update on that and if there was any kind of funding dollars to get that room up to code, up to standard so that the dentist can start practicing there.

I haven't had an update on that in a while. So, if we could get an update and whether that's going to be something we're going to be addressing in the future. As the Minister knows, questions in the House with the dental care, issues that we have throughout the North, that's probably one of the contributing factors as well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolyunny): Thank you, Mr. Moses. We'll turn it over to Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. The 49 schools that we're responsible for, any issues or concerns brought to our attention we have to work with PWS, Public Works and Services. We have addressed a lot of them, but they are continuous challenges that we're faced with, whether it be the mice and other issues that the school boards bring to our attention. So, we'll continue to work with that through Public Works and Services and to deal with those matters immediately.

The community learning centres, this is an area that Aurora College is responsible for under their umbrella. If there's a request that comes in from the college, I believe the Member is correct that there are 23 community learning centres and that there's an appetite for adding a couple more into the remote communities that may not have it. That's the discussion that we need to have with Aurora College, with the identified community and put that forward. We haven't really had that type of discussion, but I'm open to discussing that if it arises.

Early childhood, the Member is referring to whether it will be new schools or existing schools that have experienced a surplus of space that could be possibly early childhood or a child centre could be made available. I believe that's been discussed in the past, as well, and we're doing what we can to maximize that opportunity. This will also be addressed with the school boards, as well, that we represent throughout the Northwest Territories. We feel that the early childhood is a priority for us, as well, and also for the school boards. So, if it hasn't been made a priority when a space becomes available, then that needs to

be addressed by the school board and we will be reminding them of that as well.

The East Three, the dental area, the Member is correct that it's been brought to the floor, as well, and it's going to be addressed in the future. My understanding was that I thought it was dealt with, but I could be mistaken as well. We need to follow up on exactly where that is. Like the Member, it's been a while since we last discussed this particular subject and I will make a commitment to provide the Member with the latest information and how can we move forward on that. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Continuing with questions, I have Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of comments, questions as well. As you know, both Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson have a fairly new school in each community, but our school in Tsiigehtchic is fairly small for providing nine grades with the new junior kindergarten that's coming into effect here. We only have four classrooms in our school, and trying to control that many children in different grades, some teachers have to deal with students, like three grades. They've got one grade, you know, my hats off to those teachers trying to control the environment. Something needs to be done in the future in the schools such as Tsiigehtchic.

Also with Moose Kerr School in Aklavik. As I mentioned earlier, it is up for retrofit or replacement in 2019, but in the meantime a parking area is really needed. A lot of people are parking right on the public road. It's just a matter of time until we have a child that runs out at recess and gets hit by one of the vehicles; it's just a matter of time. It seems like that's what the department is waiting for, some serious accident to take some action on this. We have some people who are driving off the road, you know, right up on the lawn just to have a safe place to park, but in this day in age it costs maybe \$10,000 to \$20,000 to resolve this problem. I don't see why the department is not taking any action on this. It's been almost a year since I brought this up. It's time that we take some sort of action and make a safe environment for our children at the schools. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Blake. We'll go to Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Tsiigehtchic, we have to keep in mind the utilization of the space. There are 49 schools that we're responsible for, but we are working closely with the Beaufort-Delta District Education Council and we identify the capacity as 27 percent versus a 90 percent capacity in other schools, it becomes a priority for this Assembly. But we're mindful of that and at every opportunity, if I visit a community, I like to visit the schools to see the capacity itself, to see what the real issues are. So that's what we'll continue to do.

The Moose Kerr School that the Member highlighted earmarked for retrofit in 2018-2019, they're still on target, but there are areas that the Member has addressed. The public area of parking. Obviously, we're not waiting for a student to get hurt and our first priority is the safety of our students. That's the very reason why we're doing a technical assessment really soon to deal with that matter that's been brought to this House. We'll keep the Member informed and also the school board on the progress we're making on this particular area. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Continuing on with questioning, I have Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some questions and a few comments. First, it's good to see some of the schools that are getting on there. Obviously, I've heard Mr. Menicoche talk about that facility a few times. I guess this department is not much different than all of the other departments that we look at. We're talking about capital infrastructure and how it's being assessed and I think the Minister talked a little bit about that, but how the different schools get assessed on when they're going to be retrofitted or when there's going to be a new school being built and how is that communicated to Members.

This capital budget for Education is no different than a bunch of other capital budgets that we have where the Members may see that it's on the '16-17 budget, but when Public Works and Services and the department re-evaluate on an annual basis, that number could drop down to 2022, 2021. So, I mean, when we're evaluating this stuff and when we're changing the dates of these retrofits, are we notifying the Members of the changes and why? Like, which schools are being bumped ahead and which ones are being bumped back? That would be my first question as far as that discussion.

Are we communicating those changes, when it comes off a red circle list, or when it's on the red circle list and it gets bumped down or back a year or two, are we communicating that with Members?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. We'll turn it over to Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. As part of the capital planning process, obviously there is a process that we have to follow. There are five steps that have to meet the criteria within the capital planning process. If one of the projects that we push forward doesn't get approved, the Members should be notified. If it's not happening then we need to deal with that. I totally agree with the Member that we should be communicating with the Members. If a project that has been identified as a red flag but didn't make the hopper, there's got to be a reason why, and maybe we need to improve that communication. We'll do our part as the department if we haven't done so in the past.

I'm hearing the Member that we need to be notifying those individual projects that may not make it to the final stages, why and why not. Those are communications that we need to improve on.

MR. BOUCHARD: I appreciate that commitment to communicate with Members if their projects are getting dumped back. I would recommend that to all the Ministers when they're coming forward on this discussion. I think that's going to be a factor I'm going to bring forward, because we've seen that in this deliberation of the capital budget when we've reviewed it, that some of those projects, those dates seems to switch and some Members are saying, when did that happen, we didn't hear that, I didn't hear that. If we could start to communicate that when that does happen.

Obviously, I'm concerned about, as I mentioned, the two schools in Hay River. I know we just did Diamond Jenness Secondary School, but we have Harry Camsell and Princess Alexandra. Obviously, you guys have the list of all of the schools and where they fit in the mid-life retrofit, so I'd like to know exactly if the department has that information of when the two schools in Hay River would be deemed ready for mid-life retrofit.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We have more detailed information here if I can get my deputy to just elaborate more.

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

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just in terms of the schools in Hay River, as the Member noted, Ecole Boreale was constructed in 2005, so it's about a 10-year-old school, so it would be a while before it would be in a retrofit situation. Diamond Jenness was just completed in 2012. In the case of Harry Camsell, it was constructed in 1990 and had a renovation in 1996, so it would be starting to get to that point where I think it would be getting towards that point of looking at another retrofit, although obviously it has to be assessed against all the others that are in that timing as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Stewart. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's one other. Princess Alexandra is the other one. I'm not sure if he has that on the list there somewhere.

MR. STEWART: Sorry about that. It is an older school but it was renovated in 2002, so it's about 13 years since the last renovation there.

MR. BOUCHARD: I didn't catch the last part of Mr. Stewart's comments. Sorry.

MR. STEWART: The renovation at Princess Alexandra was 2002.

MR. BOUCHARD: You mentioned Ecole Boreale, and I mentioned to the Minister under general comments, and I'm just wondering about the development and

the planning that we're doing with the French schools in both Yellowknife and Hay River. We know that we're in a situation that we've been told that we have to spend money. We've been told that we don't have to spend as much money, but we know we're going to have to spend money eventually in the whole system.

Are we just burying our head in the sand and ignoring this issue or are we somewhere down the line, even if it's four or five years down the line, putting some sort of dollar figure to those two schools as far as their requirements for expansion, requirements for gymnasiums?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. This particular school, Ecole Boreale, has been in the works for quite some time now, even going through court proceedings and so forth. We're not ignoring that issue. We are talking to the appropriate parties. Obviously, we need to be prepared of what the outcome will be with the court case. We don't know what the outcome will be, so we're trying to stay in close contact with the parties on how we can move forward in the meantime.

My deputy may have been involved to some degree on the discussion with the school board, and if there have been any steps taken he can elaborate more, but I believe we are just currently waiting for the court outcome. At the same time, we are in discussions with the school board.

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

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Minister said, as the Member would know, there was an appeal of the court order. The Francophone representatives have indicated that they are appealing to the Supreme Court of Canada, and we're waiting to hear from the Supreme Court as to whether they're going to take up that case or not. The Francophone Association suggested to us that we should wait until we get that answer back before we proceed from there, and we agreed with that proposal that we'll hold off on starting anything until we hear whether the Supreme Court is going to take the appeal or not.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Stewart. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: I guess I have this question for Education, as well as all the other Members, and some of the other Members will ask some of the same questions. I know we've had meetings with the Parent Action Committee how they can make it move forward, the Ecole Boreale process, but is the department looking at ways like private partnership agreements? I know education probably hasn't been the keenest area in to do this, but if a proposal comes forward with some private funding to put in 10 percent or 20 percent of the cost, are we looking to do that

and would that move the process forward in putting it on the capital budget?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bouchard): Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Minister Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Over the years we've been following the process when it comes to capital infrastructure, but just recently there's been some interest from community, whether it be the business arm wanting to provide some opportunity for us. Those are just the recent discussions that we are currently having and potential prospects of either building new schools or the college and so forth. Those are discussions that, as a Cabinet, we need to have. Anything we do goes against our borrowing limit so we have to be mindful of that.

My department is working very closely with PWS as well. Anything we do, PWS would have to be involved. I hear where the Member is coming from and we have been exploring those areas as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Minister Lafferty. Continuing on with questioning, I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the time and certainly the clock of the day is running out, I'm going to be really brief and then I'll report progress from thereon in.

The issue I wanted to highlight and say is that I'm very excited to see that the two schools have made the capital plan this year, and I think that couldn't have been done without the great work of all Members on this particular side of the House. I know that each Member was very gracious on supporting that these two plans, one for Mildred Hall and one for Sissons, got on the books. I know it was raised by many of my colleagues over the years and it has taken its time, but it's one of those challenges, getting your project on the books. I know it doesn't mean immediately that there will be a new school built or a new renovation. You have to start with a plan. I have even talked to the school board about it. In order to be able to know what we're dealing with, we have to start with a plan. That's the way you do business.

I just want to stress how grateful I am to the government for supporting these two initiatives. I am sincerely grateful for the extra push I got from all the Yellowknife colleagues and certainly community colleagues as we all collectively got behind these initiatives. I would be remiss to say that the Sir John project of fixing the sewer line is obviously key. They've had troubles for a number of years on that piece of infrastructure and I'm glad ECE is there. I certainly look forward to the good work they'll do going forward on these two initiatives and we'll see where it takes us. When the timing is appropriate, we will address the challenges at Mildred Hall and Sissons. Like I said earlier, we need a plan and that's what this is going to do. I can assure you the two

schools are very excited to know that their schools haven't been forgotten.

The last point I wanted to say is one of the challenges we've always had with schools is you have to hit the magic number. My argument is I don't necessarily think that shouldn't apply, but it shouldn't apply in every circumstance. What happens here is if your school is 10 students short of meeting that next level of getting your renovation, what we do at the same time is ignore the asset as a whole. One of the initiatives we worry about with capital investment is saying we have to protect the asset. Obviously, we protect people and resources and the asset. By letting schools get old, deteriorated and say if you only need 10 more students we would do a renovation, we have to stress about the other opportunities there within, which is to say the asset always has to be well maintained and safe. I'm not talking about safety when it comes to dangers, but I am saying safe in the context of how it's used.

I just want to say thank you to the department for helping us as well. Again, Members came when this problem needed to be faced and they got behind it. So, thank you to everyone.

I just wanted to provide some comments. At this time I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dolynny): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I would like to thank our guests today. Mr. Lovely, Mr. Stewart, thanks for joining us and, of course, the Minister for joining us as well. If I can get the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort our witnesses out of the Chamber, I will now rise and report progress. Thank you, committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 21, report of Committee of the Whole. Mr. Dolynny.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 281-17(5), Northwest Territories Capital Estimates, 2016-2017, and would like to report progress. 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? Mr. Ramsay.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK, COMMITTEES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (Mr. Ball): Orders of the day for Thursday, October 1, 2015, 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
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 48, An Act to Amend the Mental Health Act
 - Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act, No. 2
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 45, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act
 - Bill 49, An Act to Amend the Deh Cho Bridge Act
 - Bill 56, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015
 - Bill 59, Estate Administration Law Amendment Act
 - Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act, No. 2
 - Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Public Airports Act
 - Bill 62, An Act to Amend the Coroners Act
 - Bill 63, An Act to Amend the Victims of Crime Act
 - Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Co-operative Associations Act
 - Bill 65, An Act to Amend the Safety Act
 - Minister's Statement 221-17(5), Sessional Statement
 - Tabled Document 281-17(5), Capital Estimates, 2016-2017
21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, October 1st, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

