



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Tu Nedhe)

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Wednesday, May 28, 2008**

Members Present

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Sandy Lee, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Norman Yakeleya.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

Prayer.

Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: Before we begin, colleagues, I would refer to Written Question 14-16(2) asked yesterday by the Member for Tu Nedhe. Rule 39(1) states that written questions are intended to provide Members the opportunity to seek detailed, complex and lengthy information from a Minister on a matter that would not be reasonably assumed to be within the present knowledge of the Minister.

It is my view that the written question submitted by the Member for Tu Nedhe does not meet that definition of a written question, because the information should be properly within the Minister's present knowledge.

Therefore, I rule Written Question 14-16(2) out of order and direct that it be removed from the Orders of the Day. Members are reminded that written questions should not be used as an extension to oral questions.

Thank you, colleagues.

Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Mr. Miltenberger.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 35-16(2)
REFOCUSING GOVERNMENT
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE COMMITTEE

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity today as the lead Minister to provide an update on the activities of the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative Committee. The Refocusing Government initiative is one of five strategic initiatives that form the backbone of our government's strategic plan. These five strategic initiatives have their foundation

in the vision, goals and priorities we developed as a Caucus.

The actions planned under this initiative are to conduct program review, change the GNWT's approach to infrastructure, improve human resource management in the Northwest Territories, improve service delivery and manage the cost of government.

This initiative and its actions will advance us toward our goal of becoming a more efficient and effective government by addressing priorities identified by Caucus under this goal. The strengthening-service-delivery action will also contribute to the 16th Legislative Assembly's goal of sustainable, vibrant and safe communities.

Significant work on this initiative begins this year. We are improving service delivery by beginning the work to implement structural change to boards and agencies in the Northwest Territories. In order to advance our priority of ensuring a more service-oriented approach by the GNWT, we need to have boards and related administrative structures that facilitate working together and allow for flexibility to respond to regional priorities. We also can't have our limited resources tied up in duplicate administrative efforts when these resources would be more effectively used for programming.

We are developing plans to create multi-purpose boards, integrating health and social services, education and housing programs at the regional level and at the community level where appropriate. This work will build off the successes of the service model in the Tlicho region and will impact all areas and communities of the Northwest Territories.

We will bring forward our detailed implementation plans for structural reform by the fall and begin the process of transition. The effort to implement the types of changes we are developing will be considerable. We need to ensure that the GNWT equips the new board with integrated policy, regulatory and legislative approaches and that its financial and administrative systems align from the community to the Cabinet. We expect the new board structure will be operational by April 1, 2010.

There are a number of other activities of the Refocusing Government committee that I would like to briefly touch on. A program review office will be

established whose overall objective is to ensure that programs are meeting their objectives and that government resources are being used efficiently, consistent with the Assembly's priority. In addition to developing a framework for a disciplined system of program evaluation, a number of priorities for target review has also been identified for this year.

We have also initiated work on changing our government's approach to infrastructure, including identifying options for improving efficiency in the delivery of infrastructure projects. This work is being coordinated by Minister Michael McLeod, and he will be providing additional information on other elements of the project.

As part of the managing-the-cost-of-government action, we are examining additional approaches to ensure the cost-effectiveness of government operations. An early priority is to examine options related to lowering costs for travel, such as negotiating discount fares to southern destinations, expanded use of on-line bookings or implementing changes that would lower booking fees and allow the GNWT to access lower fees.

This year we will also begin other work under the improved-service-and-delivery action in addition to board reform. We are taking steps to ensure appropriate support for non-government organizations, which play an important role in delivering services to residents. This will begin this year as we complete our NGO funding policy, identify potential support to different components of the sector and prepare training materials for staff working to support the government's relationship with NGOs.

We are making investments to improve official languages services by piloting a single-window service centre for French and for one or more aboriginal languages. These activities will enhance the GNWT's capacity to deliver public services in the official languages, while members of the NWT official languages communities will have improved access to GNWT public services.

While this provides some highlights for the initial actions we are working on for the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative Committee, it is not everything we hoped to accomplish. We are examining additional options for improving service delivery at the community, regional and territorial levels as we take steps to ensure that services delivered at the community level are of equal quality in all places.

More work is also needed to continue to improve human resource management, and activities are being developed to improve public service capacity in the Northwest Territories and examine innovative approaches to public service delivery. Our employees are critical to our success, and we need to confront our recruitment and retention challenges in our ever-changing labour markets.

As lead Minister for the Refocusing Government initiative, I am confident these initiatives will lead to a positive change for people across the Northwest Territories and help bring our territory closer to our long-term vision.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Hon. Bob McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 36-16(2)
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION TENTATIVE AGREEMENT

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to announce that the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association have reached a tentative four-year collective agreement.

The negotiations began in April 2008 and were concluded last week. The meetings were positive, and both parties are pleased with the agreement.

This agreement makes a number of important changes that assist us in improving overall administration. Ratification of the tentative agreement is recommended, and the process will be concluded by June 16, 2008.

Mr. Speaker: Ministers' statements, the Hon. Bob McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 37-16(2)
MINISTER'S ADVISORY PANEL
ON THE ECONOMY

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, in the last ten years we have witnessed an incredible surge in the Northwest Territories' economy driven by strong investment in non-renewable resource development and, in particular, diamond mining and oil and gas exploration. The prospects of the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project promise even greater economic potential for the future.

As a government we are working to ensure economic development is managed in a way that fosters continued growth, builds business capacity and will allow NWT residents to benefit fully from their participation in the resource sector. It is to this end that I am announcing today the creation of the Minister's Advisory Panel on the Economy to serve as a forum to which we can identify initiatives and practices that will position our residents and businesses to benefit from the enormous potential our future holds.

I have been working closely with the president of the NWT Chamber of Commerce to develop a structure and process that will foster an ongoing dialogue between my office and representatives and leaders of the NWT's wide-ranging private sector and business communities. I have also invited local and community chambers to participate as members of this panel along with industry representatives, including NWT Tourism, NWT and

Nunavut Chamber of Mines and the newly formed Aboriginal Business Association. The size of the panel will be up to 12 people.

The GNWT relies on the input of key stakeholders in the development of its policies, strategies, programs and initiatives. As the Minister of ITI it is my intent to call on this ministerial panel in coming years as a resource that will help to ensure that benefits from the economic development of the Northwest Territories are maximized for all NWT residents, their families, businesses, and communities.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister McLeod. The honourable Mr. Miltenberger.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 38-16(2)
PREMIER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the Hon. Floyd Roland will be absent from the House for the remainder of the week to attend the Western Premiers' Conference in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker: Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MOU BETWEEN TOWN OF INUVIK AND
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just on the outskirts of Inuvik there's a gravel quarry, and this quarry was transferred from the federal government to the territorial government a number of years ago. Since then the GNWT has harvested hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of gravel. There are two pits there. We call them the upper pit and the lower pit. They've harvested that from the lower pit, and this pit is within the municipal boundaries of the town of Inuvik.

A little while ago there was an MOU being worked on by the Town of Inuvik and the Department of Transportation. After many discussions and drafts and dialogue back and forth, the Town of Inuvik thought they had an MOU, an agreement, in place. Apparently, this is not the case.

In the first draft they had, there were a few issues that the town had with the MOU. They brought those back to Transportation. They managed to get six of their questions answered. The seventh question was on the setback from the road, which was 100 feet, and that dialogue went on back and forth for quite a while.

During breakfast in Inuvik with the current Minister, the superintendent of Transportation and the mayor, we got the understanding that we had a

gentleman's agreement as to the final condition on the MOU. Apparently, we were one gentleman short in that meeting, because the draft went out and came back to the Town of Inuvik with more conditions and more stipulations on it.

My understanding is that the MOU is just an understanding between the Town of Inuvik and the Department of Transportation as to access and all the other stuff with the gravel pit, and for it to get to the point of where it is now is just not acceptable to the Town of Inuvik. We understood we had an agreement, and I think the Minister would agree with me on that. The last remaining condition on the MOU we thought we had taken care of, but now there are, like, 33 more conditions and sections in the whole document. I think the legal department got their hands on it and made a mountain out of a molehill.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Transportation at the appropriate time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES REGARDING
AFFECTED EMPLOYEES

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about the process surrounding the potential job reductions in our public service. I want to restate the disbelief on the part of my constituents who got notices and then approached me, having to be told I had no idea their jobs were potentially affected — people who had worked, many of them, for the GNWT for over 20 years. It was bewildering to have to tell them I did not know their jobs were impacted.

The normal process for any job loss in a Member's riding would be a letter from the relevant Minister giving the name, job title and reasons why the position was being eliminated. After employees had received their notification, it took three weeks for the GNWT to respond to Members, giving them a list of the positions affected in their constituencies. Naturally, then came the request for some kind of explanation why things were handled the way they were.

I want to provide some examples of some very valid concerns that have been raised with me and for which I did not have an answer. If there are four people working in one shop, all doing relatively the same function, why would the GNWT tell them they're all affected employees and then conduct a competition to fill three of the positions? Would it not have been better to canvass the four employees to see if anyone wanted voluntary separation or early retirement? Early retirement might cost the government if they were offering retirement without any penalty to pension benefits, but how would that cost compare to the severance

they would be paying to the employee who was being eliminated? Those are answers we don't have.

What grounds would be used to decide the three successful candidates? If they were all equal, would it be based on merit? Would it be based on seniority? If it was based on seniority, potentially you'd be losing employees with fewer years of service and soon thereafter losing the employee who had the seniority, perhaps even six to 12 months later. All this while we say we are struggling to recruit and retain workers and keep some status as an employer of choice.

Let me provide another curious scenario. An employee receives notification of being affected. They have the credentials to provide a service that's similar to a lot of other people who work in the same shop. They are in the prime of their career. Another employee with similar experience and qualifications comes forward and asks for voluntary separation, assuming that the affected employee would then be able to fill that position. In my mind, that would solve a problem for two employees: the one who wanted to leave and the one who wanted to stay. But the employee requesting voluntary separation is denied the request. Then the question arises: what was the motivation for the position-eliminating in the first place? Was it cost savings, or were the reductions a licence to remove employees no longer wanted for some other reason?

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I've asked before and have not got an answer, what recourse does the affected employee have? In fact, the government could be cited for wrongful dismissal. How many employees without the benefit of the protection and the advocacy of their union in this instance would have the resources to seek a legal opinion and take the GNWT on? What kind of unbearable work environment would that create for them going forward?

These are real cases. They are questions I don't have answers for. I've tried to pursue some answers from the Minister of Human Resources, but I have not had satisfactory responses. Again, today, I will try to get some clear indication about the process by which these affected positions were identified.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ABORIGINAL HEALTH CARE COSTS

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, it's been raised a number of times in this House that the 2 per cent cost-escalator cap by Indian and Northern Affairs has placed significant difficulty on our hospital and physician services we provide to status Inuit, Indian and Metis people. Today I wish to state for the record that I'm also very concerned about the failure of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to acknowledge their fiduciary responsibility to provide health care to status aboriginal peoples of the North.

It is also concerning to me that the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is, by placing an annual expenditure growth cap of 2 per cent, effectively downloading its fiduciary responsibility, its treaty responsibility, to the Government of the Northwest Territories. Over the last nine years the total difference between the GNWT on what they're paying for health care costs for eligible aboriginal people and what the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is willing to pay is approaching \$100 million.

Over the last five years the amount owed to the GNWT has ranged from \$12.2 million to nearly \$16 million per year. This works out to an average funding shortfall of approximately \$15 million a year. Using a rough cost of \$100,000 per PY, that is enough money annually to fund 150 government positions. This is money that could be used to fund things like that teachers' agreement the Minister just announced, nurses, a daycare program. As well, it could have helped protect the laid-off folks we all know about today. This \$15 million could have mitigated some of these unpalatable budget reductions we're seeing before this House as we continue to go through them. We are in no position to be subsidizing our federal government, especially in light of our financial situation.

An agreement needs to be moved forward, and an agreement needs to be negotiated. We need to start to do something today, because if the federal government is not willing to pay for their treaty rights — that's right, their fiduciary rights to northern aboriginal people and to Inuit people — then we should start talking about and negotiating to give the Department of Health back to them, because that is truly their responsibility. These are negotiated treaty rights, and they're guaranteed.

So in closing, I will have questions for the Deputy Premier, because I think this problem goes to the highest office of this Assembly. Somebody, if we are owed that type of money, should be....

Mr. Speaker: Your time for the Member's statement has expired, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Ramsay.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL DEFICIT

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to speak again today about Stanton Territorial Hospital. Yesterday I spoke about the fact that the hospital has built up an accrued deficit of \$11.5 million over the past few years. I questioned the Minister yesterday in regard to what plan the government had to address the deficit, and she mentioned the fact that it will be coming before the House under Supplementary Appropriation No. 4 during the life of this session. I look forward to her disclosing what the government's plan is at the appropriate time.

I want to talk today about what I see as a lack of accountability and a lack of due diligence in the oversight and operation of what is supposedly the flagship of our health care system. Mr. Speaker, not only has the hospital amassed this huge deficit of \$11.5 million, the Minister stated yesterday that FMBS has been paying the payroll at our hospital for the past 12 pay periods — roughly equivalent to six months. If FMBS is paying the \$4 million to \$4.5 million in payroll every month, what is the hospital doing with the money that was budgeted or allocated for salaries? If FMBS is paying the payroll, how could they ever get that money back? We're talking about in excess of \$20 million and counting. Where is that money going to come from, especially in this lean time of reductions?

Mr. Speaker, the employees are going to continue to get paid at the hospital. That's a certainty. It'll come from somewhere. However, what this leads me to believe is that, again, there are some very serious problems in the governance, management and direction that the hospital is being operated under. The Minister said yesterday that she has hired or appointed a public administrator who would have a very broad mandate to look into everything from management to programs, the development of a master plan, human resources and the deficit. Thankfully, the Minister admits there are problems there. But how are these problems going to be addressed in a three-month time frame? The problems run deep.

At the appropriate time today I will have some more questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HOMELESSNESS IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES

Mr. Jacobson: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I briefly mentioned homelessness in the smaller communities. Today I want to say that this is an issue common to many northern communities. Some people end up in larger centres like Yellowknife and Edmonton, but we do have some

who fall through the cracks and are homeless in their own home communities. Even though I have heard new budget pledges to build new, affordable houses, we are concerned that there will still be homelessness for some.

I'll be asking the Minister responsible for public housing if the department has any reliable information on the number of homeless individuals in the smaller communities and if that issue has ever been addressed by senior departmental managers.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
COMMUNICATIONS PRIOR TO
CLOSURE OF HIGHWAY NO. 1

Mr. Menicoche: Mr. Speaker, I wish to talk about the Highway No. 1 emergency road closure on May 4 and 5, 2008. There were a couple of washouts that caused great inconvenience and distress to Nahendeh travellers. I do want to say that I do recognize the travelling public and safety of transportation infrastructure is key. But what happened in this instance is that information to the travelling public was very lacking. I don't believe there was any strategy in place for this road closure, for this emergency.

Many constituents called my office repeatedly, stating that they had no answers. They had no knowledge of when the road was going to be opened or resumed or if it had, indeed, been closed.

For instance, I had two busloads of children returning to Fort Simpson from a hockey tournament in Grande Prairie. They had phoned ahead. Everything seemed to be fine. They arrived in Hay River only to be told the road was closed. They were quite infuriated, because they did phone ahead. Somebody should have informed them at that time that there were potential problems on the road. They would have made alternative arrangements to drive back to Fort Simpson, which they did, Mr. Speaker. They waited around and tried phoning people all day. They made many, many calls to the Transportation offices in Hay River and Fort Simpson but didn't get any answers. So they made a decision to drive from Hay River back to Grande Prairie over to Fort St. John up to Fort Liard and back to Fort Simpson, that way having an extra two days of travel and 17 hours of inconvenience just to get the children and the parents and the coaches back to Fort Simpson.

Once again I'd just like to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that a better, more efficient communications strategy, on-time updates and a contact point or call centre would have alleviated this. Not knowing is the worst thing for people, and timeliness of information is also important. This is an incident

that my constituents are not happy about to this date. I did get a response from the department, but the events did not correspond to the report given to me.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can go back and forth on this issue, but I think it's more useful to me that the Minister....

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Menicoche, your time for the Member's statement has expired.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Menicoche: I think we can go back and forth and dispute facts, but it's more useful to me and my constituents that the Minister of Transportation be aware of this. I look forward to a better prepared communication strategy for the next event.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EMPLOYMENT RATE IN TU NEDHE

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke about the impact the diamond mines have in my Tu Nedhe riding. One of the positive impacts is increased employment for Tu Nedhe residents. Though there are some opportunities for the diamond mines when you look the big picture, the community is very marginal.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that a good majority of the residents who wish to remain and work in their communities are faced with bleak employment opportunities. I know that employment activity in the communities is a function of natural market and economic forces, but I believe the government has a role to play not only as a regulator but to facilitate and initiate employment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, according to the most recent stats from the 2006 statistics, the employment rate in Lutselk'e is only 48 per cent, with a 30 per cent unemployment rate. In Fort Resolution the employment rate is a low 44 per cent, with a 24 per cent unemployment rate. By comparison, the employment rate for the NWT is 69 per cent, with a 10 per cent unemployment rate. As you can see, the unemployment rate is two and a half times as high in Fort Resolution, and in Lutselk'e it's almost three times the rate of the NWT.

Education levels look to be a large factor if unemployment rates are examined further. Eighty-six per cent of the unemployed people in Lutselk'e and 50 per cent of those unemployed in Fort Resolution do not have high school diplomas. Currently in Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e, industry

and local government are the two main agents providing employment. Perhaps the GNWT could play a bigger role in this area.

Later today I'll have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on career and employment development for Tu Nedhe communities.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MINISTER'S ADVISORY PANEL ON THE ECONOMY

Mr. Abernethy: Mr. Speaker, I was going to talk about something different today, but after hearing the lead Minister responsible for the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative Committee, I thought I would talk about his statement instead. I'm happy to see the government is moving forward with refocusing government. I'm happy to hear that the government is planning on conducting program reviews. I'm happy to hear that the government is planning to change the GNWT's approach to infrastructure. I'm also happy they're going to be improving human resource management, improving service delivery and managing the cost of the government.

Unfortunately, I think these things should have been done before this budget came forward. These are the types of things we were hoping to hear and hoping to see prior to the budget coming forward. When the Premier came and talked to us about the need to change the way we do business, change the way the government operates, we were hoping to see that.

What we see with the budget that has come forward is cuts, cuts, cuts, and we don't see these types of things. It would have been better for all of us — it would have been better for the people of the Northwest Territories — if we had held off on many of the budget cuts we're proposing now and gone through this process the Minister was talking about today rather than jumping into cuts immediately. I would love to see this government take back this budget and give us a status quo budget for the next couple of months, another interim budget so they could have the opportunity and the time they require to actually follow these processes and come forward with a decent, responsible budget that will allow the Northwest Territories to prosper.

Ultimately, though, I'm quite happy to hear what the Minister had to say. I think it's just a little too late. I think this needed to happen before the budget came forward. I'll stop repeating myself. I'll now sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
OPERATIONAL POLICIES FOR
LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITIES

Ms. Bisaro: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to discuss the availability of housing policies at both the community and the territorial level. Like most MLAs, the interactions I have with constituents very often centre on housing issues. By the time the constituent gets to their MLA, it's usually difficulties they've encountered with their housing, not happy occurrences, they want to discuss. We've heard references previously from members of the Auditor General's office that applications for housing from NWT residents are not always fairly dealt with by local housing authorities. In these situations, when faced with trying to find some answers, I discovered there are no housing policies or guidelines I can reference. Yet constituents are routinely advised by the LHO, the local housing office, that their requests are being denied because of a policy.

Inquiries to both the LHO and the NWT Housing Corporation offices have provided me with minimal information. I asked for a copy of the policy book — the policies that govern the LHO. I wrongly assumed that an organization such as an LHO would be able to articulate the policies and the guidelines on which they assign housing. I was advised, and I quote, "that they have as few policies as possible, because they want to provide service based on individuals and do not want to spend their time quoting or debating policy." I asked for any policies they have and was advised they couldn't provide them. I was advised by the LHO that they follow national standards. To their credit, I did receive a list of the National Occupancy Standards on which the LHO bases their decisions for assigning housing. That information came to me by an e-mail.

Housing is a basic human right, Mr. Speaker, and the GNWT spends some \$40 million annually to ensure the NWT residents have proper housing. We should be able to articulate just how housing needs for families, disabled persons, single persons and so on are determined. We should be able to articulate the restrictions that exist for some of our residents who apply for public housing, yet I can't access these or any other policies that govern decisions made daily by our LHOs. It is no wonder the Auditor General found unfair allocations of housing. How can it be fair when each LHO operates on a case-by-case basis? How can it be fair when each LHO can set its own rules and guidelines? No wonder we, as MLAs, get so many complaints about housing from our constituents. I hope my experience is an aberration, Mr. Speaker, not the norm.

At the appropriate time I will have questions for the Minister Responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MINISTER'S ADVISORY PANEL
ON THE ECONOMY

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reply — again I am changing my statement today to the Minister of ITI — to the Minister's rather surprising announcement on the Advisory Panel on the Economy. This seems to be reflecting the ongoing and apparently typical modus operandi of this government to keep MLAs completely uninformed and certainly not to include their input. The vision this Caucus came up with was strong individuals, families and communities sharing the benefits and responsibilities of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous territory. The Minister's Advisory Panel on the Economy — well named as the Minister's; certainly not anybody else's that I know of — simply serves the community that is already benefiting from the roaring economy we already have. The basic principles of sustainability are to include economic development along with social sustainability and environmental sustainability. Those three pillars must be there for something to be sustainable — and to benefit all members of the Northwest Territories.

Let's look at how this panel was formed. This Minister worked with the president of the NWT Chamber of Commerce — which I am sure has been enjoying the growth, as it should, but has a focus, as does all the development that has resulted in the homelessness, social issues and environmental issues this society is dealing with today.... Ten years ago and more there was an economic development strategy. A panel was put together that actually included representatives of the social and environmental community.

Mr. Speaker, we are regressing incredibly, and it obviously has gotten me very upset, because I know we can do so much better. There has got to be some basic understanding that develops here on this stuff. Let's stop repeating the errors of the past. Let's include representatives on these panels of all three legs of our stool here. Let's try including the input of our MLAs and informing them so we can make sure such initiatives actually have some strength in them and aren't destined to failure.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TECHNICAL CHALLENGES WITH
DENE LANGUAGE FONTS

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, today I will speak about the ongoing issue of Dene fonts. With the fast pace of computer technology and the loss of the ability to convert and print existing Dene language

documents, aboriginal language communities have difficulty producing new resource documents, because the Dene fonts are not compatible with present-day software.

The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute as well as the government urgently need Dene fonts incorporated into the Unicode system. That way, everyone who opens any computer program can read and write documents with the Dene language and with the appropriate spelling.

Mr. Speaker, we are running out of time. This government urgently needs to deal with the technical problems and create solutions to solving this problem.

With the government seriously stating their support for aboriginal languages, it needs to demonstrate action by helping to maintain and revitalize our Dene languages. The time of lip service is over. If we want to save our cultural heritage and Dene languages, we have to do it now.

The Dene font issue goes back some time. In 2003 a Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act included recommendations with regard to Dene fonts in its final report — and I was a member of that committee.

The Gwich'in cultural institute is recognized for its quality work and its dedication to saving and revitalizing the Gwich'in language. The institution has made appeals and recommendations, providing names of experts to assist the government with creating Dene fonts with compatible, up-to-date technology, but with no response.

The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute had hoped that finally something would be done during this week, in which a meeting was scheduled for yesterday and today, and were dismayed this government had cancelled that meeting until later on in the summer. This would have included government experts and regional aboriginal language coordinators.

These groups are very disheartened to see the government back off again with this commitment.

Officials are trying to reschedule a meeting....

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Krutko, your time for the Member's statement has expired.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues.

Again, this shows how we end up year after year talking about an issue and saying, "Yes, it is important," but at the end of it all you have nothing to show of success, achievement or results on these matters.

In the meantime, every day, technology keeps changing, and outdated existing Dene fonts become almost impossible for community organizations to use to develop resource materials.

I will be asking questions of the Minister responsible for official languages at the appropriate time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Mr. Speaker: It is my pleasure today to welcome four of my constituents to the gallery today. We have Roy Courtoreille, regional vice-president for the UNW. Dawna O'Brien, Pam Jones and Leon Nason are in the gallery today. Welcome to the House.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I can see a number of people from my constituency of Thebacha: Mr. Al Dumont, Mrs. Lynn Dumont, Paul McAdams, Loretta Laviolette, Marilyn Napier and Ethel Chalifoux. I'd like to welcome you to the Assembly.

Mr. McLeod: I'd like to welcome to the Assembly two constituents of mine down from Inuvik: Val Robertson and Rosa Kayotuk. Welcome to the Assembly.

Mr. Menicoche: I'd like to recognize my constituent from Fort Simpson, also with the UNW here in Yellowknife, Ms. Candy Brown.

Hon. Michael McLeod: It's not very often I get visitors in the gallery, so I'd like to recognize a couple of people from Fort Providence: Loretta Landry, who's with the Housing Corporation, and Peter Canadien, who works for the hamlet in Fort Providence.

Also, a number of people from Fort Smith. Pam Villeneuve, Marion Napier, Ethel Chalifoux and a former instructor, Paul McAdams, are joining us today. Welcome.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I'd like to recognize Sheila Laity, Gayla Wick and Paul Goldney, all Yellowknife South constituents.

Mr. Speaker: If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in here.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 204-16(2) MOU BETWEEN TOWN OF INUVIK AND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I was talking about an MOU. I thought that agreement was made between the Town of Inuvik and the Department of Transportation, but apparently, that's not happening. This has been two, almost three, years in the making for a simple little MOU.

I'd like to direct my questions today to the Minister of Transportation. I'd like to ask the Minister if he's aware of the status of the MOU as of today.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mahsi. Mr. Speaker, as the Member has alluded to in his Member's statement, we had a meeting in Inuvik to discuss this issue with the mayor and the regional superintendent. One issue we did talk about was the issue of the long-standing MOU negotiations that happened in the previous government with the Town of Inuvik and the Department of Transportation.

My understanding is there were some issues that have been going back and forth. There were some delays, in terms of the change of the town council membership and the department's commercial development staff.

The department recently received a letter from the town to respond to some of their concerns. We hope this agreement will be concluded within the next couple of weeks.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I admire about old-timers is that when they say, "We have a deal," their word is as good as a piece of document.

My understanding in this case is that an agreement was reached. We sat at the table and we said, "We do have an agreement." Whether it was on the whole MOU or that particular issue.... My understanding is it was the whole MOU.

I'd like to ask the Minister: was he under the impression that an agreement was reached on the MOU between Transportation and the Town of Inuvik?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that we had a deal to conclude the MOU between the Town of Inuvik and the department. There were issues we felt we could resolve in a short time and have a deal concluded. That was my understanding, and that's the basis on which I'm going forward to see this MOU resolved shortly.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, my understanding was that the last outstanding issue was the setback of 100 feet from the road. That was the one issue that was holding up the whole agreement. Again, I say I was under the impression that we did have an agreement for the whole MOU.

I would like to ask the Minister: what's the reluctance on the part of Transportation to have this MOU finalized?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Certainly there are some legal issues in terms of the transfer. The town wishes to have the use of the quarry before the transfer of the lands, and we are obligated to proceed this way.

There are also issues around the transfer of the lands with regard to MACA being somewhat involved with the issue with the Town of Inuvik, of course. NAV Canada has some issues. Natural Resources Canada also has some issues around the transfer.

We are proceeding to work with the town in terms of the use of the quarry and also proceeding with the transfer of the land. However, there are some legal issues that we certainly have to be cognizant of in terms of giving the final signature on the MOU.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a simple memorandum of understanding between the Government of the Northwest Territories' Transportation and the Town of Inuvik, and somehow the document is getting bigger and bigger. It started off with a few sections. The last count, I think, was 33 sections. Every time, it seems, it goes back to the department there are more sections added on. Pretty soon we'll end up with a document this thick.

I would like to ask the Minister today — and he is the Minister of Transportation; he has the authority to direct his department to get issues resolved — to assert that authority and direct his department to expedite the signing of this MOU between Transportation and the Town of Inuvik. This is something that's been going on for three years, and it's just taking too long.

Would the Minister commit to directing — I repeat "directing" — his department to have this thing finalized within the next month?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, when the Member and I, along with the mayor and the regional superintendent, sat down in Inuvik.... I have asked the department, when the Member was there, to get this MOU dealt with, to see what we can do and what some of the issues are here.

I still maintain that position; let's work on the issues. Those issues sometimes take somewhat careful consideration. We are in an MOU. We have to look

after the interests of not only the town but the department.

I will give my assurance to the Member here and the Town of Inuvik that the department will do everything within reason to satisfy an MOU that the Town of Inuvik and the department can be happy with.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 205-16(2)
STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL
ACCUMULATED DEFICIT

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. It gets back, again, to what I talked about yesterday and what I had mentioned earlier in my Member's statement. That's the fact that FMBS has been paying the payroll at Stanton Territorial Hospital for the past six months, and they're into FMBS now to the tune of over \$20 million.

I'd like to ask the Minister — and the alarm bells should be going off for somebody somewhere if this is the case, and it looks like it is: does the Minister know what the hospital is doing with the \$4 million to \$4.5 million per month that normally would be spent on or allocated to salaries?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Health, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I want to state, first of all, that the payroll for all of the health authorities — not just Stanton but all government departments and everyone — are first paid by FMBS. That's a regular procedure, so this is not new. Then the authorities have to pay back those amounts. Because of the cash-flow issues with Stanton Territorial Health Authority, they have not been able to pay that back.

As we know, the authority has been experiencing a deficit situation for about five years now and in the last three years more significantly than the previous two. Because they started with a deficit situation, they are falling behind in paying for their payroll. It's strictly a cash-flow issue. As the Member stated, no employees should be concerned about their pay not being paid and such. It's really a strictly cash-flow issue.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, we're talking a little bit about semantics, whether FMBS pays first or Stanton pays. The bottom line is they're not paying their bills. I'd like to ask the Minister again: if they're not paying the \$4.5 million to FMBS to address the salaries question, what are they spending that \$4.5 million on?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, we should remember that we do recognize — and I agree with

the Member — that we do have a serious situation with the deficit situation, and we have to work to resolve those.

The authority has a budget of about \$88 million. Each payroll is about \$2 million. Money comes in; money comes out. They have receivables in their budget, and they are having to pay for lots of things. It's a cash-flow issue.

The accumulated-deficit issue is something I'm working on with the public administrator and the management of the authority.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, the problems at that hospital have been around for a number of years, going back eight years now. I don't know how waving a magic wand and getting a public administrator in there for three months is going to address the problems.

There are some serious issues with management and the operation of that hospital that need to be addressed, and they haven't been addressed to date. I'd like to ask the Minister: what are the plans to address the management at that hospital? That, to me, is where the problems lie.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure there is one black-and-white, short answer to that issue, and I would have to disagree with the Member that there have been major problems there for eight years.

We do agree there is an accumulated-deficit situation. The government has tried to figure out exactly where the issues are. That was the reason the zero base review was initiated last fall. When I came on board, that process was in the works. We have a preliminary report that came out in April that tells us the Stanton authority does not have the money to deliver the 53 programs as funded and running now.

For me as a Minister, instead of subjecting the authority to another extensive review of some kind, I thought it would be helpful to install a public administrator who is familiar with the operation of the hospital, who doesn't have to study the institution for a long time. He will go in and look at the information we have now and see what structural recommendations he could make to me as a Minister so that I could make some changes as necessary and as recommended, with participation from the Standing Committee on Social Programs.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To my knowledge, there was a public administrator there over the past number of years. I'd like to ask the question: what were the former public administrators doing, and what was the CEO doing? Why do we have to get another public administrator in there again to tell us what's going

on when we know what the problems are? It's in management, and we have to take care of that. Can I ask the Minister that?

Hon. Sandy Lee: It is true the Stanton territorial authority has been under the oversight of public administrators, because there has not been a board since 2003. The law requires that, and we have had a series of public administrators.

What's new about the new administrator is that he was given a very specific mandate, a very broad mandate, to go in and take advantage of his experience and knowledge of the operation as well as some of the studies we have done, such as the zero-base review, and to make recommendations to me about precise actions that need to be taken.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

QUESTION 206-16(2)
HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES REGARDING
POTENTIALLY AFFECTED EMPLOYEES

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today I talked about some of the problems that have been raised to me by constituents with respect to the way these position reductions were gone about. I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Human Resources: can he assure the House today that none of the potentially affected employees were singled out for some reason other than budget reductions on the part of this government?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, the process that was followed is that departments made proposals that were reviewed by the Financial Management Board. Those decisions that were made were communicated back to the departments, and the departments wrote up the proposals in final form. The positions that were directed.... It's my understanding that due diligence was followed and an orderly process was followed in identifying potentially affected employees.

Mrs. Groenewegen: So the Minister is saying the departments received their instructions to go and look for ways to reduce their spending, including positions being cut, and that he is confident those reductions came back in a well thought-out manner, and they did not target employees for any other reason than just the review of the program or the service that was being delivered.

In the instance, though, Mr. Speaker — I'm trying to represent my constituents — where a constituent comes and tells me they have substantial evidence that, in fact, that was the case, what recourse does that constituent have? I don't know what to do for them. I could give them the Minister's e-mail address — bob_mcleod@gov.nt.ca — and ask

them if they want to send you an e-mail directly. But what recourse do these people have?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Member knows my e-mail address.

Laughter.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The Department of Human Resources works very closely with all of the departments within the government. In developing the Main Estimates, we worked closely with the departments to ensure the process was followed so that all employees were dealt with fairly, and also, that the merit principle was followed in cases where there was a number of employees who were affected. For example, if there were five people who were eligible for four positions, we would want to make sure all of the employees who were affected were dealt with fairly.

If there are any cases where an employee feels they haven't been dealt with properly, then I would encourage them to raise it with the Department of Human Resources. There is a process that has been developed with the UNW in which they can file grievances as well. So I think there are some avenues for government employees who feel they have not been dealt with fairly.

Mrs. Groenewegen: In this case that I'm referring to — and I'm not naming names — it's particularly concerning because someone else within the same organization, with the same credentials, came forward and requested at the same time that they be granted voluntary separation. So theoretically, their application could have been approved and the person who was losing their job could have moved into that position. But the same manager who identified the person whose position was being eliminated denied the other employee from getting voluntary separation. It would seem this would have to go to some independent, outside higher authority for this kind of a situation to be managed. Is the Minister willing to hear from that constituent in which this incident occurred?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I'm quite prepared to hear from that individual. I should also point out that individuals who want to retire or are close to retirement.... We can't be seen to be coercing them into retirement, because then it becomes a human rights issue. But our existing policies provide for voluntary separation for those individuals who are close to retirement and would like to see themselves replaced by potentially affected employees. Certainly, I would be very pleased to hear about it, because our existing policies do provide for exactly what the Member is telling me.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess what I'm speaking about is fairness and

impartial decision making and analysis of some of these situations that have occurred.

To the issue of voluntary early retirement: I understand what the Minister is saying. They cannot be seen to be coercing people who have had many years of service into departing early. I understand that would be a human rights issue.

However, for those — I'm glad this is on the public record today — who would like to leave early, will the government approve that, even in the instance where it may cost some money? Because I think giving some people early retirement is going to cost less than the severance for some other people who'd like to stay.

And with the concurrence and approval of the rest of the Members of this House, I'd like to ask the Minister for the public record today if the government would be willing to expend the kind of money that would be necessary to allow people early retirement without any reduction or damage to their pension benefits, or added adjustment costs.

Hon. Bob McLeod: As I've told some of the Members, this is certainly an option we're prepared to look at for potentially affected employees. And we are seeking some direction from the standing committees, as we briefed them. If we get some direction, we're quite prepared to look at that.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 207-16(2)
ABORIGINAL HEALTH CARE COSTS

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today I talked about the fact that DIAND owes this government approximately \$100 million. That money could go a long way to fulfilling some of the needs that our Finance Minister's often described, as our expenditures are certainly.... We're not able to keep pace with them.

This is a problem that goes to the highest office of this Assembly. And I'd prefer it not be pawned off to a particular Minister.

I'd like to know what the deputy minister, who would be well-informed on this file, is doing to help play a role and to help negotiate these dollars to be returned to the Northwest Territories, so we can use them properly.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Would you clarify for the record who your question's addressed to?

Mr. Hawkins: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. That's a problem of not getting any sleep. I meant to say the Deputy Premier. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I have some familiarity with the file, this is an issue that's clearly within the mandate of the Minister of Health and Social Services. I will ask her to respond.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to advise the Member that I do agree with him in his Member's statement.

Obviously, this is a big issue for us. They're having progressive actions taken. As I indicated earlier in the session in answering Mr. Abernethy's question on the same topic, the Premier has raised this issue repeatedly with the Prime Minister as well as the Minister of DIAND.

We, at the Department of Health, have communicated with the Minister of DIAND, asking for renegotiations. And we were actively negotiating right up to March 31, when we signed the most recent agreement. I've also indicated that I'm in the process of trying to get a direct meeting with Minister Clement so we could look at ways to renegotiate this agreement.

Remember, this is not just a situation of where the NWT is paying the bills — where we send the bill to the federal government, and they're not paying that. That's not the case at all, Mr. Speaker.

We have an agreement in place, which has a 2 per cent gap. The cost is rising at 5 per cent. We have about a 3 per cent gap we need to address. I and the whole Cabinet and Premier are looking at all possible options to push this file forward as quickly as possible and as strongly as possible.

Mr. Hawkins: It's really nice to hear all possible options are being moved forward to fight this issue, because this is the same Minister it had taken over eight weeks to find out how much that file is. It was a simple question at the time, which was how much money is outstanding to the government.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister has talked many times to the fact that we're broke or our revenues aren't keeping up to pace with our expenditures. I would think that the Minister would be phoning DIAND every day. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell this House: when was the last time this issue was brought up, and what is the response from that Minister who is responsible for this money that should be paid back to the GNWT?

Hon. Sandy Lee: For the record, I should state that when the Member asked about this question, we were actively negotiating this situation, and I had indicated this to the Member. The Member was not clear about whether he was asking questions on DIAND's funding gap, and I had three questions I had to clarify.

Mr. Speaker, I could advise you that the former Minister of Health and Social Services wrote to the DIAND Minister on June of 2007. We again wrote in October of 2007. In early November 2007, the Premier talked to Minister Strahl about this issue when he met, and I believe when the Prime Minister was in Yellowknife that issue was discussed. I have written to Minister of DIAND Chuck Strahl to renegotiate this situation, as well as to Minister Clement, looking for a meeting. I'm hoping we can meet in person before September at the Health Ministers' meeting in Quebec, if we don't get the meeting by then. I hope to be talking to him in person then.

Mr. Hawkins: I've just heard a perfect explanation of nothing-itis. I mean, it's a lot of talk, but no results on this file. If somebody owed me this type of money — and I'm not saying \$100 million — I'd be calling every day. The fact is, it has been over nine years that this file continues to be a problem.

What message does Cabinet need to get through their head? The fact is: stop providing the services they refuse to pay for. Has the Department of Health ever taken a serious look at this file by saying maybe we should stop providing these services; get DIAND to provide the services, and the territorial government will subsidize the additional benefits. It would be a lot cheaper.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I can tell you that when I was on the other side, I was always looking for a silver-bullet solution. But when you are Minister of Health and Social Services, it would not be wise to stop providing health and hospital and medical services to Indian and Inuit people of the Northwest Territories. I've been saying this; I think Members should be very clear that this is not an account receivable with \$96 million written on it that we can post to Ottawa and send a collection agency after them. If that were the case, we would have done that. I think it's really important that all the people out there also understand this issue.

We have an agreement in place that was signed back in 1999, following the health transfer from the federal government, where a cap was placed. We have not been able to renegotiate this. We are trying to do this. Part of the situation, also, is that there is a different understanding between the federal government and us. The federal government believes they are paying this cost through their transfer money, and we want to make a different case on that. The only way to do that is to renegotiate. It's just not about sending a collection agency after them, as we would an invoice outstanding for \$96 million.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, maybe sending a collection agency would be much wiser. I mean, it's \$100 million. Does no one get

this? We're short \$135 million. The Minister's been in the ministerial office almost eight months, and all I've heard is nothing. We need some action on this. What about the serious result of stopping defending the federal government, and what about taking on the role you proclaim you're in charge of and you've always fought for? So where are those results? Show the House this.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't think it would be wise for me to reread what I've read, so let me just state again that the government considers this a very serious issue. We are looking at all options to see how we could reopen this agreement, so we can get the escalator at 2 per cent raised. I have discussed these.... We have to work with the Dene Nation leader, as well as all aboriginal leaders in the North. They have indicated their interest in working with us. This will be front and centre as we move forward to get a better agreement and reopen the agreement to start with, so we can change that escalator provision.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 208-16(2)
COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO
CLOSURE OF HIGHWAY NO. 1

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In reference to my Member's statement on Highway No. 1, I'd also like to indicate that the same type of emergency closures happened on Highway No. 7 and the Liard Highway as well. The same types of things happened there, as well: the travelling public was uninformed and unaware there were issues on the road. When they went there, in Highway No. 7's case, because there weren't enough warning signs, they actually got stuck in the highway because the highway deteriorated really bad there.

I'd just like to ask the Minister: exactly what is the communication strategy when there are emergencies or road closures, and how do we inform the travelling public?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Yakeleya.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For all the highways in the Northwest Territories, the web site is updated, as the resource people working on them are dedicated to informing the public of the most recent, current, updated conditions of the highways this time of the season. I'd like the Member to know that due to the spring thaw, in the spring season there are unforeseen conditions that hinder the conditions of our roads, and with these unforeseen conditions of the spring season — heavy rainfalls and the conditions of the roads — sometimes our staff positions are not manned 24 hours. However, we do keep a close

eye on our roads, as foremen, superintendents and workers are out there — even the travelling public — inform the staff of the conditions of the roads.

Mr. Menicoche: The point I'm coming from is: how do we mitigate these interruptions on our highway systems?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I'll allow the Minister to answer that question.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department certainly is very concerned at this time of the season, as I said, in the springtime and the fall time, in terms of our best ways and best solutions. I certainly look forward to Members' comments and suggestions as to how we can close the window in terms of the mitigation of certain conditions we have. We certainly have those kinds of conditions in my own regions and we have very limited opportunity in terms of our winter road seasons, and these conditions sometimes are very difficult to work with. However, we do have plans in place; we do have systems in place. I look forward to improving our communication awareness in terms of letting the public know these are conditions that could be coming to the roads in their area.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure glad the Minister picked a question out of that.

Laughter.

Mr. Menicoche: One of the other questions I had is: where is the contact point when incidents do happen? Is there one single window where constituents can phone? And how current is the web site as well?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: The department offers a 1-800 number to all residents of the Northwest Territories, and I'll be very happy to send a notification right over to the Member's office for his constituents and all constituents of the Northwest Territories. We have regional operations, and the regional superintendents know there are contact numbers for the driving public. The department continues to look for ways to improve their communication. The web site, I believe, is updated on a daily basis by our staff, and sometimes, even, our staff does come in over the weekends when conditions like this warrant it. We certainly appreciate the patience of some of the travelling public when they have to drive through some of the conditions we have endured for the last couple of months.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. These incidents happened on the weekend. Is there a way for the department to update the information on a weekend? That would really, really help the travelling public.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, I will check with my officials to ensure that with the incidences that do happen after hours and on the weekends, and sometimes in the wee early hours of the morning, there is a contact number for the travelling public to get hold of us if they have concerns on the highways, on our ferries, within our infrastructure. I will make sure this is directed to our officials and get back to the Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

QUESTION 209-16(2)

HOMELESSNESS IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I was speaking about homelessness. Does the Minister responsible for the public housing department have any reliable information on the homeless, the number of homeless individuals in the smaller communities?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister responsible for the homeless, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, there's a distinction we have to make as we talk about the homeless. Or are we talking about individuals who may be hard to house? They are, I believe, in almost every community, including the one I come from. They have had every opportunity. Their families don't want them staying in their houses. They have addictions issues. They have lifestyle issues. So if there is an issue of not enough houses for people, there are waiting lists for public housing.

We do struggle with the issue of hard-to-house, where they have often had programs, and they have often left the houses in considerable disrepair. So yes, it is an issue we struggle with. There is a program for homelessness, so there is funding over winter to ensure there is, hopefully, a warm place for every homeless person if they need it. But it is an issue on which there is no final solution that we have come up with yet.

Mr. Jacobson: Just for the Minister. Let's just pick one and we could start somewhere. These issues are big in the smaller communities. Once you walk out of this building, you see it in downtown Yellowknife. We have to start somewhere. If the Minister and government are willing to work with us, as the Regular Members, to do something about it, I really urge them to.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, clearly we are interested in working with the committees and communities. In Yellowknife we've just opened Bailey House. We have the Salvation Army. We have the Side Door over here for youth. In some communities there are places for those who are hard to house to stay. But clearly, it is an issue, and we are willing to work with our Members.

Mr. Jacobson: What has the department tapped into from federal government monies on homelessness?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, there was some funding from the federal government that helped, in fact, build structures like Bailey House. It helped us put some money into homeless initiatives in small communities to help cover off those that are needed when it is cold and freezing outside. So we have put what money we have been able to get to use.

Unfortunately, what tends to happen when there is a federal announcement.... It is done on a per capita basis, and the amount of money that actually comes to the Northwest Territories is very small.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Jacobson.

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a question on that, Mr. Minister. In the smaller communities, families that are hard to house, or homeless, become a burden to family members with houses and to grandparents. So basically, we take care of our own. We try to. Will he help them and how?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I'd be very interested to sit down with the Member if he wants to talk about his particular communities in Nunakput. As well, the Housing Corporation would be interested to sit down, along with the other departments that have a role to play here through the business-planning process, to take a look at what's currently there. There is a small community homelessness fund. There's other funding in the larger centres.

Clearly, it is an issue, and yes, it involves families; it involves communities. The government can be of assistance. It also involves individuals who, at the end of the day for whatever reason, make choices they don't often want to change from. We have to consider all those factors. We're interested to sit down and talk about that.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 210-16(2)
MINISTER'S ADVISORY PANEL
ON THE ECONOMY

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to follow up on my spontaneous Member's statement regarding the Minister of ITI's announcement about the Minister's Advisory Panel on the Economy. Does the Minister agree that a strong and sustainable economy is one that actually includes social and environmental considerations best represented by members of those communities?

Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I do agree.

Mr. Bromley: Is it the intent of the Minister's Advisory Panel on the Economy to ensure that it benefits all residents?

Hon. Bob McLeod: That's exactly the reason we set up that panel.

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, our economy is sort of like a freight train right now. We have a roaring economy. There's a lot of people benefitting. At the same time there's a lot of people who are feeling barreled over, as we heard in some of the statements today. There's a number of passengers on this train. Clearly, those passengers who are benefitting are industry representatives, businesses and so on.

Will the Minister invite onto this panel representatives of the social and environmental communities?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The intention of the panel is to create jobs and benefits for some of the smaller communities. The economy is heated here in Yellowknife. I think we benefit from there. We heard the Member for Tu Nedhe talking about the lack of jobs and opportunities in the communities in his riding. Our approach is.... We want to try to provide for all the communities.

I did indicate that the size of the panel would be up to 12 members. We haven't really nailed it down in stone as to who would be represented on it. Certainly, we'd be willing to consider putting representatives, or NGOs, as the Member suggested.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: I'm sure the NGOs will look forward to that, and the members of the social and environmental community.

One last point of agreement I'm looking for: does the Minister agree that MLAs, as the elected representatives of — especially on this side of the House — most of the people of the Northwest Territories, probably should have had some input on this panel, and that their input might have been useful, or at least worth considering and, in fact, consistent with consensus government?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I thought that's what I was doing with this statement. This panel has not been created. I would welcome any input the Members may have. The panel will advise me on areas within my responsibility.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

QUESTION 211-16(2)
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi. Mr. Speaker, today I spoke of the unemployment and employment picture in Tu

Nedhe communities. I'd like to follow up with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

The employment section of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in Yellowknife has career development officers who work closely with Income Support officers as a part of the Income Support Program. How does the department plan to reconcile the problem as far as career development in small communities where there are no career development officers?

Mr. Speaker: Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do recognize the small communities that may not have career development officers, but they are served out of regional offices. Specifically on Lutselk'e and Fort Res, they are being serviced out of the South Slave regional office. There is also, specifically with Lutselk'e.... We have a joint partnership with DEAS, schools and Aurora College.

Just on the career development alone, those officers do provide counselling and, also, workshops in the communities that deal with resume writing, budgeting and educational planning. We do provide those services to the communities of Tu Nedhe and also other small communities.

Mr. Beaulieu: What tools do the career development officers have? I know the Minister's responding as to what they do, but what tools do they have at their disposal for dealing with industry replacing Income Support clients and jobs with industry and industry-related employers?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Our career development officers from the regional perspectives and also the community level have direct contact with the industry, our government — the GNWT, ECE department — and with the local First Nations organizations and also with Income Support — the clients, if that's the case. So they are providing various workshops, like I said earlier, providing certain tools for individuals to enter the workforce, whether it be upgrading or taking on a training-on-the-job program.

Mr. Speaker, we do provide Communities Skills for Work, which prepares our Northerners for work in the workplace, and also community literacy projects, which we provide to the communities. There is also a literacy counsellor at the community level who does provide assistance to the community members. The Community Skills for Work provides education training specifically for people with low literacy skills. We do highlight those in the most isolated communities — low literacy skills. We tend to work with the focus on those individuals at the community level.

Mr. Beaulieu: Does the department have, as a standard, an assessment of the skills of the unemployed people in the smaller communities — or unemployed people, period, I suppose?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: We do have data on information that the Member's referring to. I'll be more than willing to share that with the Member. It's been updated every now and then from certain communities. In some communities there is high unemployment. Some communities, specifically on training and education, the post secondaries.... We do have that data at our Department of ECE at our disposal.

Mr. Beaulieu: Can the Minister provide this Member with a plan on what happens with the Income Support program and the clients in the Income Support Program in the area of career and employment development?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: There's been some changes within the Income Support area. We are developing a new initiative, "ready to work," for those individuals who are employable. So that's one of our initiatives at Education, Culture and Employment. I'll be more than willing to share that with the committee and the Member once it's produced. I'm also willing to share that information the Member has requested, certainly.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 212-16(2) TECHNICAL CHALLENGES FOR DENE LANGUAGE FONTS

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I spoke about the increased difficulty the communities are having in dealing with the outdated existing Dene fonts with the current computer software that is out there. The lack of commitment from this government to help solve this technical challenge our language communities are having and try to find ways to be able to work with those communities....

My question to the Minister is: does he agree that he is responsible for the maintenance and revitalization of aboriginal languages and the ability to use the Dene font in developing curriculum, such as school curriculum, and to provide those community organizations with the tools to do their jobs?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: It is important to deal with this particular issue the Member has raised. One of the areas we've been dealing with is the language boards: the Aboriginal Language Revitalization Board and the Official Languages Board, which deals directly with the community and the

leadership at the community level — the educational leadership.

Certainly this is one of the priorities of the group we work closely with and with our department. The Dene font the Member has referred to has been discussed for a number of years now, as the Member alluded to. The Dene fonts available may have been outdated, but that has been recognized from the language groups. We are in the process of having a meeting this fall to deal with that matter. Mahsi.

Mr. Krutko: As I also illustrated in my comments on this matter, this has been going on for some time. I sat on a committee five years ago that recommended this be dealt with. Yet today, we're still talking about it. It has to do with trying to find the technology to, basically, deal with existing software that's being used in computers so they're able to use that software to deal with the Dene fonts.

I'd like to ask the Minister, exactly, does he have the capacity in his department, or should he find an expert in that area to deal with the computer software challenges we're facing in regard to...? The technology is the problem; it's not the meeting with the language groups. I'd like to ask the Minister: do you have the capacity to deal with this through the technical difficulty?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I think we do have that capacity with the Official Languages Board giving us some advice on moving forward with this particular piece of work. It is important for us. We are, as a department, looking at the technology sources. The First Dene and also the WinMac Dene fonts are in the Macintosh area. So we are moving into today's technology. That is what we are faced with today. We are looking at options to move forward on this particular item on Dene fonts. It is recognized that we need to work with that. That's what the aboriginal language groups are working with, with our department. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Short supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to this issue I have been approached by the Gwich'in cultural institute to raise this issue in the House. They've been working with the department, making recommendations. They've even suggested people who have that expertise to work with their department who are working in other jurisdictions in Canada. I'd like to ask the Minister: why aren't you taking the advice of those language organizations that have made these recommendations and acting on them?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: I think we are acting on it. The recommendations that were brought forward by previous governments will be compiled. Those types of discussion will happen August 12–13, 2008, here in Yellowknife. It is an important

discussion that we want to move forward on. Like we've said, this has been ongoing for a number of years now. I think it's time to move forward. I'm looking to that, and my department is looking forward to working with the aboriginal groups on this issue. Mahsi.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, that's the frustration that everyone's feeling around here. It's because the meeting that was supposed to take place yesterday and today was cancelled by his department. Now they're telling the people, "We were going to talk about this issue yesterday and today, but wait till the fall. We'll talk about it then."

People can't wait that long. I'd like to ask the Minister: exactly why isn't his department realizing this is a critical problem we're having in our communities — dealing with preparing documents and information — because of this situation? Yet there's the technical ability as government to solve it by way of having expertise in-house to fund that solution. I'd like to ask the Minister if they can come back to this House with a schedule of exactly how soon you can react on this and, more importantly, if we will see some positive results and not wait for another conference next fall.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, it is this fall. With respect to moving forward on this, I'd like to listen to the aboriginal language groups as well — the board that we've established. Apparently there have been some challenges for them to meet. It may not have been that easy because there may not have been the board members available. We will continue, like I said, this fall. August 12 is the scheduled meeting, and we'll do what we can as Education, Culture and Employment to make that happen.

I'd like to see that happen. I'd like to meet together with the Official Languages Board and also the Aboriginal Language Revitalization Board and highlight this as one of the priorities for the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 213-16(2) POLICIES GOVERNING THE ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are addressed to the Minister Responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. I spoke in my Member's statement about my inability to get hold of copies of policies that relate to the allocation of public housing at the request of various residents. I go to the Minister of the Housing Corporation because I feel that the Housing Corporation is the parent corporation for the local housing authority.

So to the Minister: I would like to ask whether there are established, written policies that govern the allocation of public housing — whether or not those policies exist.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, there are policies — some in great number, some of considerable age, which is why we're doing the policy review — and I make the commitment to the Member that she can have access to any Housing Corp policies she would like.

Ms. Bisaro: I am pleased to hear from the Minister that I can have access to the policies, but I guess I'm going to ask him through his office if he would provide me with copies of those written policies, because I can't seem to get them from anywhere else.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I'd be happy to sit down with the Member and have the Member go to the Housing Corporation. She can pick which ones she'd like. We'd be happy to make sure she gets copies of those.

Ms. Bisaro: No offence, but rather than sitting down with you, I'd rather have the book and do it on my own time.

Laughter.

Ms. Bisaro: However, that said, I'm glad these policies are being revised. I would like to know when we can expect a revised copy of this policy book, which I can't get a hold of.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, this work is underway as we speak. One of the things that has happened since we started this new Assembly is... There has been a working group that brings in the LHOs of districts and headquarters to start looking at these policies. Some of them date back almost 35, 40 years.

While I accept with a degree of good grace the rejection of the Member to my offer, the offer is there to have her go over to the Housing Corporation, and she can look at the walls and shelves of binders. She can let us know what copies she'd like, and they'll definitely be provided.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the fact that we have walls and shelves of binders and policies simply points out the difficulty that residents have in getting a fair housing application done.

I guess I have to ask the Minister again: how does a local housing authority make a decision on an application for public housing from a resident if there's nothing concrete for them to go to except walls and shelves full of documents in Yellowknife?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, those documents are very concrete. We've taken to heart the issue raised by the Auditor General about how these processes work. We need to better connect with district offices, with the LHO and with headquarters. We'll work at that. We're looking at the processes in terms of making sure they're clear and applied fairly wherever you are.

I'd just add at this point as well that as we look at the amalgamation of health, social services, education and housing boards into a community service model, multi-purpose board, that is also going to bring together the ability to better coordinate the activities that affect, in many cases, often the same constituents or clients.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The time for question period has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to Budget Address, day 5 of 7. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 6-16(2) STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL PROGRAMS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2008–2009 DRAFT MAIN ESTIMATES

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Social Programs is pleased to present its report on its review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates.

The standing committee is responsible for the oversight of the departments of Education, Culture and Employment; Health and Social Services; and Justice. These departments expend 60 per cent of the GNWT operations budget in providing services to residents of the Northwest Territories.

The committee met to consider the departmental and Draft Main Estimates between April 1 through 11, 2008.

The committee will be reading at length from the report during consideration of the Main Estimates. Mr. Speaker, that concludes our introductory remarks on our report.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that the Report of the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates of the Standing Committee on Social Programs be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod.

Motion carried; Committee Report 6-16(2) received and deemed read.

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Department of Health and Social Services

Introduction

The committee met with the Minister and her officials on Wednesday, April 2, 2008, and Thursday, April 3, 2008, to review the Draft Main Estimates for the Department of Health and Social Services.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$309.822 million in operations expense and \$32.414 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2008–2009.

We would like to thank the Minister and her officials for appearing before the committee and responding to the committee's questions and concerns.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates.

Nurse Practitioners

Members of the committee are very concerned with how nurse practitioners are being utilized at NWT hospitals and how they are being integrated into the NWT health care system.

It is understood all nurse practitioners that have had their education or upgrading paid for or subsidized by the department could be employed in front-line positions at community health centres.

There are a number of nurse practitioner positions that have been funded on an ad hoc basis, utilizing one-time federal funding pots. These positions have been acknowledged to reduce hospital stays and associated costs and improve patient outcomes.

The department and health authorities should be using nurse practitioners to improve patient outcomes throughout the NWT health care system and making the necessary program and funding decisions to best utilize our nursing resources. It may also be necessary to re-profile existing vacant nursing positions to accomplish this goal.

Committee members are aware that considerable expense was incurred between the cost of training

and the development of enabling legislation and an implementation plan.

It is time to follow through, and we expect to discuss the use of nurse practitioners and review a definitive implementation plan during the review of the 2009–2012 business plans in September 2008.

Telehealth and the Medical Travel Policy

It is noted from examining forced-growth figures in previous Main Estimates and supplementary appropriations that medical travel costs are increasing at an alarming rate. Some of these costs, like increases in airfare and charter costs because of the rising price of aircraft fuel, are outside of the control of the Department of Health and Social Services. The areas where the department can control costs are related to the number of patients using medical travel and the frequency of that travel.

Members of the committee were concerned with the proposed downgrading of support for Telehealth and the potential negative impact that will have on medical travel costs.

Members of the committee believe that wherever possible, the use of Telehealth to consult with other health care professionals is preferable and more cost-efficient than sending patients on medical travel. In order for this to occur, it is important that Telehealth programs in the two territorial hospitals be delivered in a coordinated and focused manner. For this reason, the committee recommended that two Telehealth coordinator positions, one at Stanton and one at the Inuvik Hospital, be retained.

The committee was pleased that the department reinstated the Telehealth coordinator in Inuvik. However, committee members remain concerned that even though there may be qualified persons to operate the Telehealth equipment at the Stanton Territorial Hospital, without a person in a coordination role the equipment may not be utilized to its full potential.

Committee members will be tracking the usage of Telehealth through the business planning and results reporting processes.

Stanton Master Plan

It is noted that there is no long-term planning in place related to the future of the North's flagship health care facility, Stanton Territorial Hospital.

At this time committee members are being asked to approve piecemeal capital projects without any inkling of how these projects interrelate to a master development plan for Stanton.

Members of the committee are aware that some wards are overcrowded and that patient privacy is slowly being eroded. We also hear that medical and administrative staffs at Stanton are being asked to work in less than ideal conditions.

The Minister has committed to following through on the development and finalization of the Stanton master development plan and has made it one of the priorities of the newly appointed public administrator for Stanton.

The committee wants to make it very clear that we will have great difficulty in recommending future approvals of capital projects for Stanton in the absence of the master development plan.

Support for Home Care and Respite Services

The committee supports the home care programs offered through the health authorities and their partners. These programs are instrumental in keeping people in their own homes for as long as possible and keeping health care costs under control.

The committee is also very pleased to support the expansion of respite care services to communities outside of Yellowknife in the 2008–2009 fiscal year. Many families do a fantastic job in addressing the medical and care needs of their loved ones — but these same people need a break every once in a while.

On a related matter, it is noted that policies under the Income Support Programs administered by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment do not allow employed persons to stay with family members renting public housing, when those family members may require some assistance in maintaining their independence, without using the employed person's income in calculating the rental rate.

It is known that seniors living in their own homes utilizing home care and assistance from family members to maintain their independence are less of a cost to government than those who move into government run long-term care facilities.

The committee will be making a recommendation to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to change Income Support policies, so that with appropriate approvals from medical professionals, persons who move in to provide assistance to family members in social housing will not impact unit rental rates.

Electronic Medical Records and Interoperable Electronic Health Records

The committee notes that the Department of Health and Social Services is solely responsible for the costs associated with the development of the electronic medical record and that Canada Health Infoway is paying the bulk of the costs associated with the development of the interoperable electronic health record.

It is hoped that the eventual rollout of these two systems will help the medical community in accessing information and improve patients'

medical outcomes, while at the same time reducing the administrative costs and burden for the Department and Health Authorities.

It is hoped that the committee will be able to see the implementation of these new systems during the life of the 16th Assembly.

Future of Health and Social Services Authorities

It is apparent to Members of the committee that our current method of administering health and social services by using regional authorities is unsustainable going forward.

A health authority with 42,000 residents in southern Canada would be a very small health authority. In recent years, in most provincial jurisdictions, it is likely a health authority of that size would have been rolled into a larger authority.

The fact that the NWT has seven health and social service authorities means that many administrative functions are duplicated and that some economies of scale by such things as centralized purchasing are not being realized.

In addition, it is understood that having seven different employers of health care workers has made it difficult for workers to temporarily work in other communities if the same health authority does not employ them. It is supposed that a single employer of health care professionals would make the system more flexible in responding to emergencies and staffing shortages. Members also believe that a centralized single employer would result in better outcomes for the funding that is currently spent on recruitment and retention by allowing for greater mobility for our health care professionals.

The original intent behind regional health authorities was to build regional governance capacity. Members believe that between the development of the institutions of the territorial government, the non-governmental organizations and the various aboriginal governments and development corporations, that this capacity now exists and that a strong case can be made for consolidating operations into a single board representing all regions of the NWT.

It should be clear to all residents of the NWT that if Members of the Legislative Assembly are faced with a choice of cutting health and social services programs or changing governance systems to save money, Members will choose to save programming for residents.

Phase 2 of Family Violence Strategy

The committee was pleased to see that the Action Plan on Family Violence has moved from being coordinated by the Department of the Executive during its development and implementation to being delivered by the department and its authorities.

The department will be spending nearly \$1 million to enhance emergency services in regions with no services and to increase funding for existing shelters and programs.

This is an important step in ensuring the safety and welfare of northern families. The committee looks forward to reviewing results of our increased investment in future years.

Recruitment and Retention Issues

The standing committee has reviewed information provided by the department on bursaries and paying for seats in medical schools for doctors. It is not apparent that the people of the Northwest Territories are receiving value for money in sponsoring these medical seats, as past experience indicates that very few of these doctors are returning North — even with return-of-service agreements in place.

The reality is that other jurisdictions are so desperate for doctors that they are more than willing to foot the bill to pay out a return-of-service agreement. Although the original intent made sense given the problems in recruiting doctors, the situation has evolved into one where the Department of Health and Social Services is paying to train doctors for other jurisdictions.

NWT students are being accepted into medical school on their own merits regardless of whether the Department of Health and Social Services is paying to reserve seats for NWT medical students.

For this reason, the committee recommended that the Department of Health and Social Services examine eliminating paying for seats at medical schools. The department agreed with this recommendation and will be phasing out paying for seats at medical schools as the current students graduate.

Federal Fiduciary Responsibility for Indian and Inuit Health Care Costs

It is noted that the federal government has capped forced growth for health care costs for Indians and Inuit at 2 per cent per annum. With increases to health care costs averaging 6 to 7 per cent annually, the amount the territorial government is responsible for is increasing at an alarming rate. Information provided by the Minister of Health and Social Services estimates the amount in dispute is approaching \$95 million.

This money could be used to enhance existing health care services or to develop new programs or infrastructure.

It is obvious to members that it would be reprehensible as a government to restrict the services available to eligible Indians and Inuit to correlate to the available funding from the federal government.

The Minister and the Premier are encouraged to work with their territorial and provincial counterparts to lobby the federal government to live up to their fiduciary and treaty obligations to provide health care to aboriginal Canadians and to develop a long-term funding solution that recognizes the increased costs in delivering health care.

Support for Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) deliver many programs and services on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Services and their authorities.

Subsequent to our discussions with the Minister, she provided the committee with a list of the NGOs that have entered into multi-year funding agreements with the Department of Health and Social Services. It was noted by committee members that these multi-year agreements are for organizations that are territorial in nature, have an advocacy role and require core funding to fulfill their obligations to an identified class of people, such as seniors or the disabled.

Committee members are more concerned with NGOs that enter into funding agreements with the Health and Social Services authorities to provide programs and services to community residents. Members have heard that these NGOs are facing difficulty in retaining qualified staff because of uncertainty over year-to-year funding and that too many of their resources are being utilized in preparing yearly reports and funding proposals to justify or request program spending or funding.

It was felt by committee members that where practical, three-year funding agreements would provide enough certainty to NGOs for them to recruit and retain qualified program delivery staff and reduce the administrative burden on the NGOs.

Health and Social Services authorities need to be more proactive in dealing with the NGOs that deliver programming and services on their behalf to the residents of the Northwest Territories. The administrative burden placed on NGOs to report on activities and prepare annual funding proposals can be unrealistic and detract from the NGOs' ability to actually deliver the services for which they have been contracted.

Committee members are aware that work is underway by a Cabinet committee to examine ways to support NGOs while ensuring that government gets value for money. As well, the examination on the future role and need for regional Health and Social Services authorities may provide an opportunity for improving relationships with NGOs.

The committee looks forward to measurable progress during the life of the 16th Assembly.

Support for Territorial Dementia Facility

Members of the committee look forward to the opening of the territorial dementia facility in Yellowknife. This is a welcome addition to the spectrum of services available in the North and will keep families closer to their loved ones in a safe, caring environment.

Assisted Living Facility in Hay River

There are many Northerners in southern Canada living in assisted living situations, far from their families and home communities. The Department of Health and Social Services spends a significant amount every year in meeting the needs of these residents. It is important to note that these costs are increasing yearly and that the point has been reached where it makes economic sense to deliver more of this programming in the North.

While it still may be marginally cheaper to contract with southern operators of assisted living facilities, the fact is that once this money is paid out to these contractors, no net benefit to the NWT's economy occurs. By basing these services in the NWT, the wages paid to employees and the money spent on obtaining local services and products will at least contribute to the economy of Hay River.

As a committee, we look forward to the opening of this new facility and hope that it may serve as a template for the development of facilities and services for northern residents who may require assistance in meeting their day-to-day living arrangements. Members also look forward to families being able to reintegrate themselves into the lives of family members who will be repatriated from southern Canada.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment Introduction

The committee met with the Minister and his officials on Monday, April 7, 2008, to review the Draft Main Estimates of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$293.914 million in operations expense and \$24.508 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2008–2009.

We would like to thank the Minister and his officials for appearing before the committee.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2008–2009 budget-planning cycle.

Wage Subsidy Program — Apprentices

The department proposed during the Draft Main Estimates review to eliminate all wage subsidy programs. Members of the committee were very concerned that funding to subsidize apprentice wages was included in this proposed reduction.

While the elimination of the Training on the Job and the Youth Employment Program subsidies is regrettable, it is clear to committee members that the same economic conditions that led the department to implement these programs no longer exist. The NWT economy is booming, and more and more students are graduating from high school and taking advantage of post-secondary educational opportunities. In addition, many of the large employers in the non-renewable resources sector are being good corporate citizens and are investing in education and training for their employees. All of these factors have lessened the need for the GNWT to offer wage-subsidy programs as a way of fostering economic growth.

However, committee members believe that companies that hire apprentices still need to be subsidized to encourage them to continue to hire and train apprentices. Of particular concern to members are the small business operators, the Local Housing Authorities and municipalities that hire apprentices which, in recent years, have lost many of their qualified trades people to the opportunities and higher wages offered by the large multi-national, non-renewable resource companies operating in the Northwest Territories.

Apprentices and the time spent by journeypersons in instructing them and supervising on-the-job activities do not contribute to the bottom line of companies. It is generally acknowledged that apprentices do not start to contribute to the bottom line of a company until they are in their third year. This is why the subsidy program does not subsidize fourth year apprentices.

There is a shortage of qualified trades people in the North, and it is contributing to the higher costs that governments and residents are forced to pay in constructing or renovating infrastructure, homes and businesses.

Members note that the department is planning to invest in improving opportunities for students in high schools to be exposed to the trades and in ensuring that trades programs are delivered through Aurora College, using up-to-date equipment and technology.

In addition, members had the opportunity to see mobile trades training in action on a recent trip to Inuvik and were impressed with the opportunities this type of innovative approach will offer adult learners and students still in secondary school. The committee supports the department's plan to invest a further \$200,000 per year in delivering this program.

The committee could not reconcile these increased investments that will encourage students to pursue trades training with reducing the potential number of available apprentice positions.

The committee recommended that the department reinstate the apprentice wage subsidy for companies/organizations in the NWT that employ fewer than 100 people. The members were pleased that the department agreed with this recommendation and reinstated \$1 million to the budget to subsidize businesses for the hiring of apprentices.

Responsibility for Public Housing

Members of the committee are still hearing from constituents that the transfer of responsibility for social housing from the NWT Housing Corporation to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is not working and is causing hardship for many families.

It is acknowledged that any time there is a major shift in how government delivers a program, there are bound to be program-delivery issues. The department has recognized that there are problems and has told the committee they are working toward implementing solutions and improving communications with stakeholders.

While the effort is appreciated, it has to be made clear to the department and the government that the members of the standing committee will need to see tangible proof of the improvement in program delivery before the review of the business plans in September of 2008 in order for there to be continued support of this program transfer.

If improvement is not readily apparent, the committee may consider recommending, with renewed vigour, that the responsibility for all aspects of social housing be returned to the NWT Housing Corporation and its Local Housing Authorities, who have proven they can deliver the program and have the confidence of community residents.

Child Care User Subsidy for Students

Members of the committee were very concerned to hear that the department would be eliminating the Student/Child Care User Subsidy program that provides subsidies to students while they attend post-secondary institutions in the NWT to care for their children while they are attending school.

In discussions with the Minister and his officials it became apparent that this program was undersubscribed and that the regular Child Care Subsidy Program would also be applicable to students with children attending post-secondary institutions in the NWT.

Members also confirmed that money received for Student Financial Assistance would not be used in determining program eligibility under the regular Child Care Subsidy Program.

With this understanding, the committee is prepared to accept this reduction, as there should be no

adverse effect on students with children pursuing post-secondary opportunities.

Eco-Literacy

In reviewing the presentation and discussion with the Minister on the proposed Main Estimates and potential new departmental initiatives, it became apparent to the members of the committee that the issue of eco-literacy was not addressed.

To become ecologically literate is to understand the principles of organization that ecosystems have developed to sustain the web of life.

In this century ecological literacy will be a critical skill for politicians, business leaders and professionals in all spheres. It will be one of the most important components of education at all levels, from schools to colleges and universities, to the continuing education and training of professionals.

Members are aware that many teachers are incorporating eco-literacy in their lesson plans but are of the impression that this is done on their own initiative and not as a required part of the curriculum.

The intent behind developing such a curriculum is to foster the experience and understanding of nature. Being ecologically literate, or eco-literate, is to understand the basic principles of ecology and to be able to embody them in daily life and in the lives of human communities.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs would like to see the principle of eco-literacy incorporated into the curriculum for all school-age children and strongly encourages the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to begin the planning process for inclusion in the 2009–2012 business plans.

Child Care Facilities

The availability of suitable facilities in many of the smaller communities in the Northwest Territories has hampered the abilities of these communities to create new daycare spaces so that all residents can participate in wage economy or further their education.

The Children's First Society in Inuvik and the various non-profit organizations running daycares in Yellowknife and other NWT communities are hard-pressed to come up with economical solutions to their space requirements, because of the aforementioned lack of infrastructure and the effects of inflation and a strong economy on rental rates in the private rental markets. It is clear to committee members that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has to take a larger role in helping daycare operators meet their space requirements.

Innovative solutions involving industry, aboriginal governments and development corporations, local governments and other GNWT departments and corporations need to be researched. All spare infrastructure that exists at the various levels of government need to have its suitability for use as a daycare facility determined.

Partnerships between the NWT Housing Corporation and aboriginal development corporations to allow for the inclusion of daycare facilities in infrastructure that may be built using loan guarantees is one example of a potential approach that may provide benefits to all involved parties.

Central governments traditionally step in when the private sector or junior levels of government cannot respond to the needs of the population. The committee would suggest this is the case with ensuring that NWT parents have reasonable access to quality, affordable daycare in their home communities.

The North's robust economy is providing many opportunities for residents of the NWT. It is a shame that primary caregivers with children under the age of 12 are denied the opportunity to participate in learning and economic opportunities because of a lack of daycare opportunities.

We should be concentrating efforts on making sure that all persons who live in the Northwest Territories are employed. Increased availability of quality daycare programs would help.

The committee is hopeful that the department will consider a renewed effort in developing quality daycare spaces as part of the 2009–2012 business planning process.

Child Care Subsidy Program

Committee members support the Child Care Subsidy Program, which allows low-income earners who are parents to participate in the wage economy or pursue post-secondary studies.

There is still a concern on how the policy to not provide the subsidy to daycare operators when the child is absent because of sickness or family emergencies is negatively impacting daycare operators.

It is noted that if a child is sick, they are not allowed or supposed to attend daycare and that the daycare operating costs remain the same, regardless of whether a particular child attends or not.

Members believe that stable funding equals a stable daycare operation and that this regressive, punitive policy should be rescinded. We look forward to further discussions on resolving this issue during the review of the 2009–2012 business plans in September of 2008.

Income Security Program Reform

During discussions on respite care programs delivered by the Health and Social Services authorities, it became apparent to members there was a disconnect between the services offered by the Department of Health and Social Services designed to keep people living in their own homes for as long as possible and the policies that guide the delivery of income security programs.

For example, it is possible for a family to hire someone to live with their grandmother to assist in meeting her day-to-day needs without impacting the public housing rental rate she is charged.

However, using the example of a granddaughter employed at the Northern Store, moving in to assist, Grannys' rental rate would go up depending on how much the granddaughter made.

It seems ludicrous to committee members that a stranger can move in without penalty, yet a family member is denied the ability to help a loved one without having the family incur extra costs for rent.

There are considerably more costs involved to move someone into a long-term care setting than could be gained through increasing social housing rents in situations like these.

The committee is not advocating a free-for-all approach and believes there is a role for the medical profession to play in determining eligibility and need, and for home care to provide on-going monitoring to ensure that such an arrangement is working out.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Social Programs recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment modify their Income Security programs to allow employed family members to stay in a family member's social housing unit without incurring rent increases where such an arrangements would improve quality of life and allow for continued independent living.

Utility Costs at Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre

It was noted by the committee that the department expects to save \$14,000 in utility costs in 2008–2009 because of renovations and upgrades to the electrical and lighting systems at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. The department is to be commended for this.

This is an example of how the retrofit or replacement of existing infrastructure using available energy-saving technology can result in savings for the GNWT. If we were to extrapolate this type of savings to all of the major infrastructure projects for similar-sized buildings like schools and hospitals, the amount could be quite significant.

It is important that all capital projects consider energy saving and sustainability as guiding principles in their design and construction.

Student Financial Assistance Program Reductions

The department will be reducing the Student Financial Assistance loan allowance by \$1.5 million. Members were concerned that this would have a negative impact on the amount of funding that students could access. In discussions with the Minister and his officials it became apparent that this was related to uptake and that the department has sufficient funding to meet the requirements of students in 2008–2009 and for the foreseeable future.

With the understanding that no students will be adversely affected by this proposed reduction, the committee is prepared to support the department.

Renewable Energy Technician Program

With accelerating impacts of climate change and fossil fuel costs, this government has recognized the need to increase our use of renewable energy, such as solar, biomass, wind and hydro. This need is emphasized in our Energy Plan and Greenhouse Gas Strategy. There are increasing opportunities for community applications as "off-the-shelf" technology becomes available, yet the technical expertise is missing. This gap needs to be addressed. Doing so will contribute to achieving this government's education goals, its economic goals through the development of the local economy and economic diversification, and finally, in achieving its environmental goals through greenhouse gas reduction, adaptation to climate change and community self-sufficiency. There are a few such programs available nationally that could be drawn upon, or even partnered with, in the initial stages. Youth today are interested in this area of expertise but frustrated with the lack of practical programming available.

In addition, existing trades programs like the building maintainer, electrician and plumber and gas-fitting courses that are offered through Aurora College need to incorporate this new energy-saving technology into their curriculum.

The committee looks forward to discussing and incorporating renewable energy technology programming into the 2009–2012 business planning process.

Sustainable Communities Program

The vision and goals of this Assembly revolve around healthy and environmentally sustainable communities. Communities that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable do not just happen; they require comprehensive planning and skilled attention in many areas — from full-cost accounting to building community spirit, developing self-sufficiency and leadership, and the

encouragement of a strong local economy that meets its basic needs utilizing largely local resources.

A sustainable communities program at Aurora College could draw upon several of its existing courses, perhaps slightly modified as well as others added, to round out the need for a comprehensive curriculum. Graduates would add considerably to community capacity and would be inspired to return to their communities to practice their skills and inspire others.

The committee looks forward to discussing and incorporating such programming into the 2009–2012 business planning process.

Department of Justice

Introduction

Members considered the Draft Main Estimates for the Department of Justice on April 10, 2008. The committee would like to thank the Minister and his officials for appearing before committee.

The committee noted expenditures of \$91.976 million for operations expense and \$1.690 million to be spent on capital projects for the fiscal year 2008–2009.

Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2008–2009 Main Estimates.

Proposed Correctional Facilities and Renovations

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs could not reconcile closing the Arctic Tern Young Offenders Facility in Inuvik, a facility that only opened in 2002, with constructing a new Territorial Women's Correctional Facility in Fort Smith.

The committee does not dispute that the current Territorial Women's Correctional Facility in Fort Smith is not suitable, past its useful service life and needs to be replaced.

The committee also does not dispute that the Arctic Tern Young Offender's Facility has structural issues related to its foundation that may prove to be insurmountable and render the facility unsuitable for continued use as a correctional facility. It is also recognized that the facility has been severely underutilized since it opened because of changes in the way youth are sentenced.

However, in the absence of an engineer's report that clearly outlines costs, options and potential remediation solutions for the foundation issues, it would be irresponsible for the committee to endorse a plan that essentially writes off a purpose-built government asset like the Arctic Tern Young Offenders Facility.

The Minister has informed committee that such an engineering report will be completed sometime this

summer. Should that report bear out the department's assertion that it may be uneconomical or unsafe for the Arctic Tern facility to continue as a correctional facility, the committee is prepared to support a supplementary appropriation for planning the replacement of the Territorial Women's Correctional Facility.

This was the reasoning behind a recommendation made by committee to the Minister Responsible for the Financial Management Board to eliminate the \$300,000 in the infrastructure plan for the planning of the replacement of the women's correctional centre. The recommendation to delete was rejected by the FMB on the advice of the Department of Justice.

If it is economically feasible and safe to continue using the Arctic Tern Young Offenders Facility as a correctional facility, committee believes the department will have to rationalize the construction of a new correctional facility.

Options like renovating the River Ridge facility or Arctic Tern facility for use as a women's correctional centre or maybe just renovating the River Ridge facility for use as a women's correctional centre and moving the current River Ridge cognitive program to Inuvik, or a combination of using Arctic Tern as a women's facility and building a smaller facility in Fort Smith to address capacity issues, need to be examined.

In the minds of committee members, it is apparent that the department is committed to the closure of the Arctic Tern Young Offender's Facility as the easiest way to meet a significant portion of its contribution to the reduction exercise. Whatever happens, there is still going to be ongoing operations and maintenance costs, and in the worst-case scenario demolition costs for the Government of the NWT. The costs may not be borne by the Department of Justice, but it will still be cost to government.

Unlike the Department of Justice, the Standing Committee on Social Programs is not prepared to write off a \$16 million purpose-built facility until it is patently clear that this is our only option. Nor are we prepared to support the construction of a similarly priced facility until this determination has been made.

Recommendation

The committee recommends that \$320,000 for the Territorial Women's Correctional Centre be deleted from the infrastructure acquisition plan for the Department of Justice.

Recommendation

The standing committee recommends that \$613,000 be added to the operations budget for Corrections and Community Justice to continue

operation of the Arctic Tern Young Offenders Facility.

Recommendation

The standing committee recommends that the Department of Justice undertake a facility review that will outline the present condition of existing correctional facilities and the future space requirements for the correctional system.

Court Workers

The department is proposing to delete four court workers in order to realize a saving of \$365,000 over two years. Statistics provided by the department seem to indicate that the caseload some of these court workers have is too low to justify their positions.

Committee members note that two of the positions are in smaller communities, one position is in Fort Smith and one position is in Yellowknife.

It is obvious to committee members that if there has been an increase in the number of cases going to court, there should have been a corresponding increase in the number of applications processed by the court workers. The statistics presented by the department seem to indicate the Court Worker Program model was flawed from its very beginning.

It is also noted that this budget also asks for ten positions in court services and one additional Territorial Court judge for a total cost of \$1.25 million under forced growth.

While the department managed to make a compelling case on the need for these new positions, the same cannot be said for rationalization used to justify the reduction of services at the community level.

The committee recommended the department reconsider these reductions and look for other opportunities to utilize these court workers in the communities doing other things such as supporting the activities of Community Justice committees.

In rejecting this recommendation, the department indicates its intransigence in embracing approaches that may be outside the current practices of the department. Their response is that because the court workers help the accused in accessing legal aid, there would be a "conflict of interest" if they were to be involved in delivering victim services programs or assisting Community Justice committees. It should be pointed out that any restorative justice program has two components to deal with in that there is a victim and the perpetrator. It was obvious to committee members that the department is not willing to look at other opportunities to utilize these positions at the community level.

Members of the committee believe that court workers are the community's vital link to the

criminal justice system. When a court circuit comes to town, they are essentially strangers, and court workers assist in ensuring that the accused show up so that the court's time is not wasted.

So on one hand the committee is being asked to support enhancing the ability of the courts to deliver justice through the hiring of ten new positions and another Territorial Court judge, and on the other we are being asked to support the reduction of justice services at the community level.

Recommendation

The standing committee recommends that \$91,000 be added to operations expense for Corrections and Community Justice so that the four court workers will continue employment and the department will have further opportunity to expand the court workers' duties and role in the communities.

Community Justice Programming

The department is proposing to reduce the available funding for Community Justice activities by \$350,000 and not staff a position that was supposed to support these Community Justice committees for an additional savings of \$83,000.

Again, the committee was disappointed that the department seems to be concentrating its efforts and apparent spending patterns on supporting the criminal justice system in those communities with stand-alone court facilities, to the detriment of our smaller communities.

One of the stated goals of the department is to "Increase the capacity and role of communities to address justice issues." Cutting available resources and support services to Community Justice activities runs counter to such a goal.

The department points out that a portion of this reduction is because, historically, all of the allocation has not been spent. The committee would point out that this could mean communities need more support from the department in developing programming and effective Community Justice committees.

A committee recommendation to reinstate this funding was rejected by the department.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs cannot support the erosion of programs at the community level and the loss of opportunity for these communities to access funding to grow Community Justice programs and the activities and roles for local Community Justice committees.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Social Programs recommends that \$433,000 be added to the operations budget for Corrections and Community Justice so that funding for special projects,

Community Justice committee funding and support positions can be returned to last year's level.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Social Programs recommends that if the department is unwilling to continue funding Community Justice activities at 2007–2008 levels, the \$942,000 in forced growth under court services to hire ten additional court officers be reduced by \$433,000 in order to fund Community Justice activities.

Programming Staff at North Slave Correctional Centre

Members of the committee were concerned to hear that the department was proposing to reduce programming staff at the North Slave Correctional Centre. The committee's major concerns with this proposed reduction centred on inmate wellness and the ability of the remaining programming to meet the requirements of the federal Corrections Service.

The department's response indicates that there will be no reduction in the types of programs offered or in the frequency of offering to inmates, and that existing staff will assume other duties.

Committee members have difficulties in accepting the department's assurances, as members are always concerned when dedicated program delivery staff is eliminated and prevention programs are affected by budget considerations.

It is with some reservation that the committee is prepared to accept the lay-off of program delivery staff for offender programs.

Law Bursary Program

The department is proposing to eliminate the Law Bursary program over the next two years. This program gave some support to students while they attended school and provided some opportunities for articling and summer employment.

While it is sad to see the program end, the reality is that there has been no real net benefit to the NWT or the Government of the NWT, as the majority of recipients have not returned to the North to practice law.

The Student Financial Assistance Program remains one of the most generous in Canada and is more than adequate in meeting the financial needs of students wishing to pursue the study of law.

Paradoxes of Budget-Cutting Exercises for the Department of Justice

In the 2005–2006 Main Estimates the Department of Justice proposed the elimination of court registries in Hay River and Inuvik. At the time, the department argued that the volume of work did not justify the positions or cost to keep the court registries facilities open in these two communities.

The previous Standing Committee on Social Programs, in conjunction with the other Regular Members of the Assembly, successfully argued that there was a cost to making sure that justice was available and geographically accessible to all residents of the NWT, and the elimination of the court registries in Hay River and Inuvik was staved off.

Three fiscal years later, the volume of work is such that the Department of Justice has asked for ten new positions in court services, of which the communities of Hay River and Inuvik will be getting two court officers each.

Judging from the budget-cutting proposals put forward by the Department of Justice in this Main Estimate, it is obvious to members that there is a trend in the department to put forward simple solutions involving the closure of facilities or the elimination of services to achieve the bulk of required cost-savings, rather than having to examine overall program delivery efficiencies.

While this may make it easy to achieve the cost-cutting targets, it is obvious that without any long-term, systemic approach to budget reduction exercises, any cost-savings that are realized may result in increased costs to the department in future years.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs will be looking for evidence of such an approach when we review the 2009–2012 business plans in September.

South Slave Drug Interdiction Task Force

Communities south of Great Slave Lake have proposed the formation of a task force to interdict drugs that are brought into the Northwest Territories on our highway system.

As this is the primary method of transportation for drug dealers and is an opportunity to curtail the availability of drugs in communities that are further north, the Standing Committee on Social Programs would be willing to support such an approach.

We look forward to discussing this with the Minister during the review of the 2009–2012 business plans.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 6-16(2) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion carried: Committee Report 6-16(2) received and referred to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Motion is carried. Committee Report 6-16(2) will be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive rule 93(4) to have committee report 6-16(2) moved into Committee of the Whole today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive rule 93(4) and have committee report 6-16(2) moved into Committee of the Whole for today.

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Speaker: Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with Bill 8, Tabled Document 37-16(2), Committee Report 5-16(2), Committee Report 6-16(2), with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I call the Committee of the Whole to order.

In consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 8, CR 2-16(2), CR 3-16(2), CR 4-16(2), CR 5-16(2), CR 6-16(2), TD 37-16(2). What's the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen?

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee wishes to continue with the consideration of Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 2008–2009, and we would like to continue on with the Department of Human Resources and possibly get into the Department of Justice today. Thank you.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Is the committee agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): With that, we'll take a short break and begin with the Department of Human Resources.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I'll call the Committee of the Whole back to order.

MAIN ESTIMATES 2008–2009 DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): At this time I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Human Resources if he'll be bringing in any witnesses.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Yes, I'd like to bring in some witnesses, please.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that the Minister bring in his witnesses?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witnesses in.

For the record, Minister, can you introduce your witnesses, please.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my left I have Sharilyn Alexander, acting deputy minister of Human Resources, and on my right I have Shaleen Woodward, the director of human resources strategy and policy.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome witnesses. We are on page 2-59, Human Resource Strategy and Policy, and also we have received additional information from the Minister, which I believe has been circulated. Any general comments in regard to page 2-59? Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Yesterday in some of your comments you mentioned the Hackett Report. My timing might be a little wrong on this — it might have been the previous fiscal year, not last fiscal year — but I believe that report cost about \$400,000-plus, and I believe that you funded that from within. I'm curious. If you were in fact able to find that money from within, it may suggest that there might be some room or some additional saving possibilities within the department itself. I was wondering if you could talk a bit about where those dollars came from and whether or not that provides room for some additional savings within the Department of Human Resources.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The Hackett Report was funded at the time when Human Resources was still under the Department of Financial Management Board Secretariat. There was more flexibility with resources, and one of the issues with Human Resources is that we don't have that flexibility, so if we wanted to do something similar now, we wouldn't be able to.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Strategy and Policy, page 2-59. Operations Expenditure Summary: \$4.855 million.

Department of Human Resources, Human Resource Strategy and Policy, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$4.855 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Human Resource Strategy and Policy, Active Positions, information item. Page 2-61.

Department of Human Resources, Human Resource Strategy and Policy, Active Positions, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Management and Recruitment Services, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.341 million.

Department of Human Resources, Management and Recruitment Services, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.341 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: I'm not sure if this is the area it falls under, but I just wanted to ask the Minister and his officials a couple of questions. I wanted to ask the Minister how many job competitions are being run now through the GNWT, through HR.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, I think it's in the neighbourhood of 500 staffing actions.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Chair, with 500 job competitions being run right now, we're proposing to lay off some people. I just want to know: has a hiring freeze been considered by the departments rather than laying off employees?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Certainly, when there was early talk about possible budget reductions, there were a few departments that initiated their own freeze. We felt that was premature and would adversely affect government operations, so we gave direction that they were to continue with normal activities until such time as they received direction and approval of budgets by this body.

Mr. McLeod: I still find the figure of 500 new competitions, in light of what we're doing now.... We're looking to bring on 500 people on the one hand. On the other hand we're looking to lay off 135 employees. I'm sure those 135 employees could have fit within that 500.

I'd like to ask the Minister: when the announcements were coming out that there were going to be some staffing reductions, were any competitions cancelled as a result of this announcement?

Hon. Bob McLeod: My understanding is that there were some competitions that were cancelled as a result of that.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Chair, again I will say that you're looking at the fact that we're proposing to lay off 135 employees with these competitions. Of 500, I'm not sure how many of them are essential to the operations of the government, other than maybe nurses, teachers and a few other essential services. I still find it mind-boggling that we're looking to bring on 500 new people. There are 500 competitions out there, and I'm not sure what they are. I suppose I could find out; I've just got to go on the web site.

I'd like to ask the Minister if there's an opportunity here, maybe, to revisit this whole scenario rather than lay off 135 employees. Why not cancel a couple of hundred job competitions and maybe look at keeping these 135 employees, or as many as we can keep? I wonder if there's an opportunity here to revisit that and come back to this committee with some options.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I think, when we talk about the number, I was referring to the number of competitions on an annual basis, so I expect that number would probably go down this year. A lot of the competitions are in areas that are hard to staff: positions such as nurses and so on. On that basis I think it would be difficult to take the approach that the Member is mentioning.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just one other point I think I would like to make, or maybe a question to ask, is: with all these competitions that are out there, I'd be curious to know — and I suppose the Minister can supply me with the information after the hiring is done — how many of these new hires would be from outside the Northwest Territories?

I'm sure the Minister would commit to providing me with that information once the hiring is done, because, again, I will say that... Looking at all these job competitions, and we're proposing to lay off all these employees, I would probably be safe to assume that 75 to 80 per cent of these employees are long-term Northerners. I don't know how many — 41 per cent, or something like that — are aboriginal.

I'd be really curious to see, once all the firing is done, how many folks were hired from outside the Northwest Territories. And if we have a few, then that should cause this Assembly a lot of concern.

Hon. Bob McLeod: As I mentioned, it would depend on what kind of jobs we're advertising for. For jobs that are hard to fill, we normally take whatever we can.

With regard to the potentially affected employees, they would get first priority on the hiring. And with the affirmative action policy we have, that would still apply as well. So I would expect that we would still hire people from the Northwest Territories on that basis.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Members, we're on page 2-63, Management and Recruitment Services, Operations Expenditure Summary. Next on the list I have Mr. Bob Bromley and Mr. Abernethy, then Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Following some of the words from Mr. McLeod from Inuvik Twin Lakes, I'm wondering if the department considered additional mandatory leave days in the summer.

My impression — and it's just that — is that productivity has actually gone up during mid-winter in relation to the so-called Donnie Days that employees still enjoy. That's leave without pay. But it allows some extended family time. It's got to be healthy for families as well as labour relations and so on. I know there's interest out there in our brief but beautiful summer season.

If employees had access to.... Say if we wanted to stay open all the time, but choose six out of the ten Fridays in summer, or Mondays — choose what you like — over the course of the entire government, that would probably produce some of the savings — maybe all of the savings — we're looking for from this department. Has the department considered that, or would you consider that in the near future as one option to pursue? That would possibly bump up productivity as well as labour relations and savings on dollars.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, certainly that was something that was looked at, not something that Human Resources would be responsible for. But we did provide some input to the Financial Management Board Secretariat.

I think there's a number of considerations. One is we would have to negotiate something with the unions for it to occur. With Donnie Days, there was a rollback in wages.

I think the biggest consideration is the fact that we do have a significant number of facilities and operations that operate 24-7, 365 days a year. And those facilities, by giving more days off, would result in additional costs to the government and more difficulty in finding people to fill in for those days off. So having said all of that, this is looked at. For this budget it wasn't considered for being put into place. I'm not saying that's out of the question for future years.

Mr. Bromley: Again, I'm always looking for a new approach from this government, and some innovation. I think that's what our public is asking for too. I'm sure the Minister and others are aware there are reports coming out showing that productivity actually goes up with various schemes, such as shorter work weeks and so on. This also results in direct savings. Between those things, I would think that increased productivity and the money saved on 5,000 employees, or whatever we have, taking six days off should account for those 24-hour services. I'm hoping the Minister could have his staff start looking into that sort of thing, to see what the opportunities might be. I have one other point, but I'll stop there for now in case there are comments.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, I just want to make a couple of points. The majority of the employees concur with more time off. That would certainly be

something we would look at. I'd like to point out that 58 per cent of our workforce works shift work, in 24-7, 365-day-a-year facilities, so I think in those areas it wouldn't save us money, because we would have to probably pay more. I guess the other consideration is that for those employees at lower levels of the wage scale who work for the government.... I would think that a rollback of one week's wages would probably have some implications for them. But I think that if employees want more time off, that would certainly be a consideration.

Mr. Bromley: I appreciate the Minister's comments on that. I too would be interested in the research on that. I would just note that the average wage of employees in the Northwest Territories is 50 per cent above the Canadian average, and I suspect that if you just took the GNWT employees, it would be even greater than that. Our cost of living, especially in our larger centres, is more like 20 per cent higher. So I think there would be some room for some exploration there.

Mr. Chairman, the other question or frustration I have is that I feel I'm sort of finessed into dealing with this situation of vacant positions when, really, what we had been expecting was that layoffs would have been based on program review. I'm sure it doesn't help labour relations and recruitment to base things on this rather than showing we're looking to improve effectiveness, efficiency and so on. Again, that's just a comment. I'm hoping to see the program review finally implemented as fast as possible and, also, layoffs not resulting from the random selection of vacant positions but actually being based on program review and increased efficiency.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, the Premier did talk to that very point yesterday in response to a certain question and is really looking forward to the program review as well.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): On page 2-63, Management and Recruitment Services. Next on the list, Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Looking at the Mains on page 2-63, I notice that in this section, Management and Recruitment Services, the only reductions that seem to have occurred are a small percentage in travel and a small percentage in materials and supplies, as well as the elimination of one vacant position.

Yesterday I talked about efficiencies and how large organizations with less staff are able to manage their human resources services — organizations with far more staff than the GNWT has. I was wondering if you could help me understand or go through the process you went through to identify reductions in this area through identifying efficiencies and increasing the effectiveness of this division. What is in the books? Obviously, there

were no reductions in this area. I am mostly curious.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Alexander.

Ms. Alexander: Mr. Chair, we looked at a number of things in this area to determine whether or not we could accomplish some efficiencies. Certainly we have done some internal restructuring. We have created a dedicated recruitment unit. We have put in place some functional recruitment officers, and in so doing we were able to reduce one position of an HR assistant by spreading some of that workload among others. We have also looked at other ways we can be more efficient and effective in recruitment services, such as looking at the eligibility lists to reduce the number of competitions we have to hold, looking at under-filled positions where possible. So there has been a conscious effort to streamline, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Abernethy: Have you explored new technologies that are available that might assist the staff increase their efficiencies and increase productivity?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, we are looking at a number of areas. Certainly in the area of staffing, we are looking at moving away from recruiting through the papers and moving more toward the Internet and computers like other jurisdictions do. We are looking at those kinds of areas. Certainly we think that with the vast expanses of the Northwest Territories, that would be one area where we can grow and reduce our costs.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list I have Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, on page 2-63 of the Compensation and Benefits section we recognize that one position has been deleted. My first question on this specific area is: what position has been deleted? Furthermore, what analysis was done to come down to the fact that this position has been deleted, and was it filled at the time that the decision was made to delete it?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The position was a human resources assistant. It was filled with a casual at the time, and it was felt we could spread the workload among the other three people.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, does the Minister mean an analysis was done or an assumption was done?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Well, I guess the analysis that was done was identified as an area in which we could get away with one less person, so I guess you could call that an analysis. I am not sure how detailed an analysis the Member would have been looking for, but we did look across the department

to see if there were areas where we could make reductions, and this was one area.

Mr. Hawkins: I guess what I am getting at is the fact that you define a position by looking at dollar value and make an assumption that because it is an assistant position, maybe it's not that important. And they ask themselves — well, whatever they probably do. And when I say "whatever," I assume you know what they do.

I'm just saying I'm sure we could divide these up and make people pick up those duties, versus an analysis, which, in my interpretation, would be where they actually break down what this person specifically does and then try to put some time allocations behind it before they then saddle someone else with those responsibilities.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, I guess we didn't want to create more work than we needed to. Based on the knowledge of the programs, we felt we knew in what areas we could make reductions. I guess, essentially, we did an analysis without formalizing it.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I didn't think Donnie Days fell under this, but another Member raised it and I just want to seek some clarity, if I can, because the Minister did respond to those questions earlier. My area of concern, just for clarity, is: does the contribution a member pays into Donnie Days — in other words, they get reduced salary but theoretically take those days off with pay.... How does that affect students, terms and casualls? Would they pay into that reduced-salary pool, which would theoretically guarantee them those days? Or are they losing salary? And if they are, is there a way for them to recoup that potential loss? I ask because they don't necessarily qualify for those days.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, the way it works for full-time indeterminate employees is the reduction is taken off the top, and then the employees are paid over the 12 months of the year, so they really don't notice the difference.

For casualls and summer students who work less than four months, it doesn't apply to them.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, in this section, you do supports for human resources planning and employee recognition. I'm wondering how much work has been done in this section to date. I don't want to go back to its fruition or over the last 20 years, but how much work is being done to identify employees who are in the twilight of their career? When I describe it that way, let's make the assumption that they're a short couple of years away from retiring, so that's the type of people I refer to as "twilight." How much work under the resource planning area are you doing to recognize that type of staff and that number of staff?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, we have an employee recognition program that recognizes staff when they achieve certain levels of service in terms of longevity.

We also have an employee recognition program where employees or teams can be recognized by their peers. We call it the Premier's Awards of Excellence. We provide for long-service awards for each department on an annual basis.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that detail from the Minister. If he could provide some further detail: when we have a section described as supports for human resource planning in the management and the recruitment services area, that would be part of their duties. I'm just trying to get a sense of identification. What work are they doing to help identify those folks who are defined as being in the twilight portion of their career, in the context of numbers? Were they followed in departments, in the sense of how many employees have one year left, how many have two years left, in the sense of the description of those who are looking at short days?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Alexander.

Ms. Alexander: Mr. Chair, we do a couple of different functions with respect to human resource planning. In the management and recruitment services division, the client service managers provide assistance and guidance to program managers in their human resource planning. They work with the human resource succession and workforce planning individuals who are in our corporate structure to provide departments with information on exactly what their workforce is made up of, the composition, the number of employees who could certainly reach retirement or be eligible for retirement in the next five or ten years. Then they work with managers on looking at how they are going to plan to fill in those jobs as individuals leave.

As part of their human resource planning, the client service managers look at what the appropriate method is to assist them in filling vacancies as they are coming up.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Ms. Alexander. Next on my list, I have Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Beaulieu and Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of questions on this section. The first question is: where are we at in terms of the development of a comprehensive human resource strategy government-wide?

I think HR should be the lead department in this, for obvious reasons. I don't think departments should be going off and haphazardly adding positions in areas of our operation. If we don't have a comprehensive human resource plan, we don't

know whether or not we should be hiring more people in the social-envelope areas, or policy analysts in offices in downtown Yellowknife. We haven't gotten to that level of detail.

We don't know where we should be growing our operation. We don't know if we should be looking at scaling back hiring in certain areas. We just let departments do what they want and, to me, that's not good enough. I think we need a comprehensive human resource plan government-wide — a road map, something to follow.

Especially with the implementation of self-government and land claims, we should be looking at areas of our operation where we can devolve positions to aboriginal governments across the land, and we're just not doing that type of work. That would come out of a plan. If we had a plan, it would fall out of that.

So the first question I have, Mr. Chairman, is: where are we at in terms of the development of a comprehensive human resource plan?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we have been working on the development of a comprehensive human resource plan. I think we have a number of drafts. We have a deputy minister-level human resource committee that works with our department, and it's something we'll be putting a lot more effort into completing.

We have been spending a lot of time on modelling with regard to trying to determine what the impacts of self-government and land claims will be in the event that — when and if — aboriginal governments start to draw down on the delivery of programs and services. We've been in discussions with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations and others — the Department of Executive — to talk about how self-government would affect us.

Part of our delays in dealing with the impact of self-government on the Government of the Northwest Territories was the fact that we needed some clear indication from the federal government with regard to the Labour Code of Canada, as to whether successor rights would have to be extended to GNWT employees who go to work for aboriginal governments when programs are drawn down and delivered by aboriginal self-governments.

Those are areas that are starting to take form and will certainly be a large part in the human resource strategy we will be developing.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister for that. I think it is only a matter of time before the aboriginal governments that are out there, and the ones that are going to settle land claims, begin drawing down their authorities and powers under the land claim agreements.

Any work the Government of the Northwest Territories can do at the onset, and that's today.... If there's some work already been done.... I think the more work we do in this regard, the better off we'll be tomorrow in an effort to save us resources.

And that's just the thing, Mr. Chairman: resources are scarce. In a territory the size of the Northwest Territories, with a population of 42,000 people, we can't afford to duplicate efforts in looking after our people, whether it's an aboriginal government or the GNWT. We need to be on the same page when it comes to delivering services for the people we represent.

I want to thank the Minister for his response and I certainly would.... I know I haven't seen any of this type of work come through any committee I've been involved in, and I'd certainly like to see where that work is at. If the Minister could share some work with committee, I'd certainly like to see it.

The other question I have, before I wrap this up: I'd like to know if the government has any type of idea about how many unfunded positions there are government-wide. I think there were 26 just at Stanton alone. What is our strategy to deal with unfunded positions?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Acting Deputy Minister Ms. Alexander.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Sorry, Mr. Chair. This is something we try to deal with on a regular basis. For administrative ease — and dealing with some of the ins and outs of staffing and people moving and people going on transfer assignments — it's a lot easier, at times, to create positions. Generally, as a department, we work with all of the departments to try to clean that up on an annual basis, so we go through and eliminate these vacant positions that are just on the books. They're not really doing anything, they're not costing us anything; it just makes it a lot cleaner, administratively, to remove them from the books.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, I'm not talking about actual vacant positions. I'm talking about unfunded positions that actually have bodies, warm bodies, in positions that are unfunded. There's nothing on the books for these positions, yet they exist and they have people in them. Like I said, there are 26 at Stanton. I'm wondering if the Minister knows how many positions are like that throughout the government's workforce.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, this is something that.... I think every department has unfunded positions, and different departments take different approaches to it. Some departments only cost out positions at 75 per cent or 80 per cent; other departments just rely solely on turnover in staff. As a government, I think, we have 20 per cent turnover. Sorry; I stand corrected. It's 14.2 per cent turnover, so you can generally count on at least that

much. As another rule of thumb, generally some departments sort of go with about 10 per cent unfunded positions.

We've been trying to stay on top of it, but I don't think we know exactly how many unfunded, staffed or filled positions we have within the government.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, that's information I could get a later time. If the Minister doesn't have that at his disposal, that's fine.

One other thing before I go — I've got a minute left. I just wanted to touch on the Hackett Report. One thing that was contained in the Hackett Report was... When they looked at the business processes at the Department of Human Resources, one of the things that stuck out for me was, in an organization comparable in size to the GNWT they would need four times fewer employees to deliver services to the workforce. That always stuck in my mind. If a comparable-sized organization can deliver the services, and deliver them effectively, with a third less of the workforce, then what are we doing? And how are we addressing that?

If we can take a look at this area, I think it's something we should be doing. We're going to self-service; we're going to self-reporting. Maybe there are ways and means. Again, this gets back to that analysis we talked about. If there is an analysis out there, and we can reduce in certain areas, and we can make a case for it, then that's something I'd be willing to look at.

Maybe I could ask the Minister what plans they have in that department, in Human Resources, to take a look at that Hackett Report and try to compare themselves to other organizations of similar size and how they're delivering services to the clients.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chairman, as I recall, the Hackett Report — and I'd have to look at it in more detail — when comparing to other organizations.... I think they were comparing it to similar-sized organizations in the United States, or larger centres that readily have access to fully trained, fully certified human resource professionals and, also, have lighter workloads and variety of job requirements than we have here in the Northwest Territories.

Certainly, that would be an area we would aspire to. I think that if the infrastructure in the Northwest Territories — or the technology — improved so that we could rely a lot more and be a lot more dependent on computer technology and wireless technology, all of those things would go a long way to reducing our human resource requirement.

Also, what we're finding is that, in the Northwest Territories, we have to spend more time on training and so on. To get to the ultimate, I guess, as the Hackett Report pointed out, we would need a very

stable, highly trained workforce. This is something we're aspiring to and we're working toward.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Next on my list I have Mr. Beaulieu and then Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm kind of waiting for the right spots in the budget to come up, in order to ask some questions, but I think the questions have been fairly general, so I'll go through my list here.

First, I'd like to talk a bit about the self-service system that's in place with the GNWT. I feel like the self-service is an exercise of frustrating employees. I wanted to know if the department has done anything to evaluate the feasibility of going back to the simple system that was in place previous to the self-service system, or if they've looked at other options that are more economical and easier to operate — "other options" meaning other systems that maybe can just be purchased and it works; it doesn't have to be purchased and then all of the support services that surround the self-service system would have to be purchased and committed to, and all of those things.

I'd like to know if the department recognizes the fact that the self-service system is frustrating employees all over the GNWT; and secondly, if they've looked at other systems or considered going back to the old system.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've had self-service in place for over a year now. I think it would be worthwhile for us to review it to ensure it's working properly and also to make sure it's accurate. We've found that after some initial periods of growing pains and getting employees to try it and to realize it wasn't as hard as it was made out to be — all they had to do was get on-line and start trying it — they could deal with self-service on a regular basis. What we're hearing is that people on shift work and so on are paid in a more timely and accurate manner. Because of the different things we're hearing out there, I think it would be worthwhile to do a review.

I don't think there's any turning back. The old systems that were in place were customized systems that I don't think could be resurrected, if we wanted to. I think we've got past the point of no return with regard to self-service.

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Minister. I think the self-service system is more than just pay. I think that's the only time I've heard anything positive said about it: that it's easy and it's timely for shift workers to get their pay. There are all kinds of other problems with the system that can't pick up a person who works through a holiday without that person having to enter into the system and so on.

Also, within the management of the GNWT, unless you have another backup system — a pack of paper system, which is what we had already before we spent all this money on this system — you really can't keep track of your employees unless you keep going back into the system. It's time-consuming and not easy to manage. I'm not really seeing this system improve, but I'm not working with it now, either.

From what I hear from GNWT employees, this system is not good. It's another one of the things, I think, where the government has committed to spending a tremendous amount of money on a system that wasn't necessary. We have a whole bunch of things like that that have happened in the government, such as TSC and amalgamation of Human Resources — period.

In any event, I want to go on to another line. The Department of Human Resources is providing support for HR planning along the lines of what the Member for Kam Lake was talking about. Specifically, I want to ask the department how many departments in the GNWT actually have comprehensive human resource plans.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I think every department in the past with their business planning has had to have a human resource section, which would lay out statistics and also some other intentions.

Mr. Beaulieu: I'd like to know how much involvement in human resource planning the Department of Human Resources has. I don't see a human resource plan as something that has some statistics in it and some intentions. I see a human resource plan as something that's comprehensive, that looks at career development, internal careers — looking at exactly what types of human resources will be needed to continue operations and so on — a comprehensive human resource plan. The support for human resource planning....

Maybe I should I get the Minister to answer that. How much involvement is in human resource planning? What is meant by human resource planning that the department is supporting?

Hon. Bob McLeod: At one time we were set up where we had a human resource planner for every department. What happened was that we expected the departments to take the lead on developing human resource plans, because unless management develops their plans, there is no ownership.

So as such, we work with departments — generally, departments that have staffing problems that need to address specific issues. We work with them on planning with regard to comprehensive human resource planning where we would have a specific plan to deal with employees from recruitment to retirement. This is something we provide advice on,

but we don't have specific comprehensive plans for every department.

Mr. Beaulieu: I don't have much time left, so I'll be more, I guess, to the point with this question. Human resource planning: is there an across-the-board standard the department provides to other departments — including such things as an affirmative action plan or policy inside the human resource plan, any sort of cross-cultural training that may be required for southern recruits and so on — like you said, from the time they start their career until their career is over?

That's good. That's, I guess, some career-pathing. I guess my question is: does Human Resources have a standard or a framework that each of the departments can follow when they develop their human resource plans?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, I want to point out that when it comes to human resource planning, it's a shared responsibility between the departments and Human Resources. We work with the departments, generally at their request. So we work with a number of departments.

We don't have any specific standards, because generally we deal with developing plans to address some specific human resource situations.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, I have another line. First of all, just before I close off on the human resource planning, I think it's essential that all departments that develop human resource plans are operating with the same system. If one department has a comprehensive section in how affirmative action is applied and how they apply affirmative action, then all departments should do it. If one department has a requirement to cross-culturally train their employees who come from the south, who are hired from the south, then every department should have it. Okay? That's enough said on human resource planning.

Some more cost-cutting measures I would like to propose — that is most likely, again, in the overall human resource section — are awards. I don't agree with all the awards: the Premier's award, the deputy ministers' awards — all those awards.

I find those awards create more of a problem at the employee level than is beneficial. I don't really believe that employees in the GNWT strive to win the Premier's award every year. However, somebody gets selected to win that award. So that means that in a department where you have 50 people, one guy gets a Premier's award, is blessed with the Premier's award, and everybody else gets nothing.

I think that if there's any cost at all to the awards, deputy ministers' awards.... Any of that, I think, should be completely taken out, because it causes

more problems than not. I think the GNWT people would be just as happy to see those things gone.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I guess in Human Resources it's understood that employee recognition is one of the biggest motivators in a workforce. Most employees would prefer that their work is recognized rather than get an increase in wages or monetary rewards. So on that basis, I think the Employee Recognition Program we have is relatively cheap for the amount we gain by it. The employee recognition programs are reviewed on a regular basis, and certainly we'll take the Member's recommendations into consideration.

We do know that whenever employee recognition comes up, there's always the discussion that some employees are recognized and others aren't. I guess another way of looking at it is maybe to restrict it to generic employee recognition, but that's something we'll look at the next time we review the program.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Next I have Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to just follow up on the last question from my colleague to my right. I fully support employee recognition programs. I think there's a lot of value in them. But there are many ways of recognizing employees, and I have to agree with Mr. Beaulieu; I don't think the Premier's awards are sought after. I don't think they're high on many employees' lists of coveted awards. So I would agree that probably ought to be dropped, and if necessary, if you want to keep the money, put it into other methods of recognizing employees.

There are a couple of things I'd like to ask. It's been mentioned; we've talked about human resource planning, and I sense the department doesn't orchestrate human resource planning, but it does indicate they support human resource planning for various departments. I'd like to ask some questions about the costs that are involved in hiring local nurses. I think it's well recognized — it's been mentioned by other Members — that we pay, it seems, an exorbitant amount of money to provide enough nurses in our health centres, in our hospitals. Many of them are not hired on a permanent basis. They fly in; they fly out. We pay their costs in pretty much every area. I'd like to know whether or not the department has worked with the health boards, the various health authorities, to try and increase the pool of float nurses and what sorts of efforts the department has put into trying to reduce the costs for locum nurses at all health authorities.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is an area in which the department has been working very closely with Health and Social Services and Stanton to not only reduce the rapidly growing costs

but also to develop our own northern workforce. I think that over the past three years or so this program has been in place we've been very successful. Agency nursing fees are down 70 per cent. Projected costs have decreased by about \$1.5 million. We do have 422 nurses in the casual nurse float pool. These are further broken out into two categories: a pool to cover the community health nurses and also hospital nurses. I think one of the biggest successes has been the Aurora College nursing program, which generates about 20 fully trained nurses on an annual basis.

Ms. Bisaro: I applaud the department for reducing the agency fees and the efforts they have put in to try to reduce these expenses in the last few years.

To the comment about Aurora College nurses, I have heard via the grapevine and anecdotal information, I guess, that although the nurses are graduating from Aurora College, they are not necessarily being employed. So there is a bit of a negative to the fact that these kids are graduating.

You mentioned casual nurses, and I need to know if those are casuals employed by GNWT, or if locum nurses or agency nurses — whatever you want to call them — are considered casual or not. I'd like to know how many nurses we are currently flying in, flying out and paying all of their expenses. I'll leave it at that.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, at my constituency meeting, when we talked about nurses graduating from Aurora College, I was subjected to the same comments that all of them were going south because they weren't being offered appropriate jobs within the health care system. When I checked into it, I found out there were maybe two or three that hadn't accepted jobs within the NWT, and two or three were going south for different reasons.

As to the number of agency nurses, there used to be 13 or 14 on an average day, and now there are maybe three or four coming in from the south.

Ms. Bisaro: Three or four a day is still an awful lot.

I'd like to ask the Minister about questions raised earlier about Donnie Days and pay for Donnie Days. I have a specific question with regard to affected employees. If an affected employee happens to be terminated — if this budget is passed and an employee happens to be terminated in October, or whatever the date is.... This employee has been having their salary reduced from, let's say, the first of January to the first of October. If they are terminated as of the end of September, they will presumably be due funds for a portion of the Donnie Days they are not going to be using — sorry; all of the Donnie days, but it's a portion of their salary. I'd like to ask the Minister whether or not that's been considered by the department and what recourse the employee has.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We do have the benefit of previous arbitrations that have ruled that when an employee terminates, they are not entitled to those funds that are attributed to Donnie Days.

Ms. Bisaro: Okay. Thank you for the information. That surprises me. I expect you might get one or two more grievances.

Lastly, I'd like to ask the Minister.... It was mentioned yesterday — it has been mentioned again several times today — that there is evidence of a report called the Hackett Report. I'd like to know from the Minister whether or not that is a document that is available to the public.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, we'll check into whether that report was released publicly. It appears that some of the Members may have seen it. Certainly, I would want to share it with the Member. I just have to confirm whether there are any restrictions on the circulation of it. I don't see why there would be, but I'll just confirm that and let the Member know and give her a copy of it.

Ms. Bisaro: I guess if it hasn't been released as a public document, I would request of the Minister that he consider releasing it to me and other Members as a confidential document, for our eyes only.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, I'd be pleased to do that. I'd just give advance warning that the document is about ten inches thick.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): We're on page 2-63, Management and Recruitment Services, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.341 million. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Other Members have started into areas I'd like to pick up on where I had questions as well. Maybe I'll just work backwards. It sounds like we had the same organization showing up all at our similar constituency meetings. They showed up at mine last night, by the way, in force. Just for clarity, I think the Minister had mentioned, to some degree, there was a reduction in locum nurses and the funding being allocated for that program.

Now, I thought he said something to the effect that there's been a \$1.5 million reduction. If that's correct, what is the total budget that is being allocated for the locum nurses program? Furthermore, could he be a little more clear on what "three to four per day" means, how that breaks out regionally — whether Stanton has three out of the four or whatnot? Can he give us a further breakdown on that?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, when I was referring to a reduction of \$1.5 million, I was referring to expenditures. Because we weren't

utilizing as many high-priced agency nurses, we were saving \$1.5 million.

With regard to the graduates from Aurora College, 15 of 18 eligible northern registered nurse graduates applied for graduate placement in 2008: 11 Aurora College degree graduates, two Aurora College diploma graduates and two southern educational institution degree graduates. Ten graduates accepted their offer of employment, all in acute-care facilities: one in Inuvik, seven at Stanton and two in Fort Smith. Five graduates declined their offer of employment: one in Inuvik, two at Stanton and two in Hay River. Of the graduates who accepted employment through the program, two were P1 candidates and five were P2 candidates. That is some of the information with regard to employment.

With regard to agency nurses, "three or four" would be across the system. I suspect most of them would be in the more remote communities.

Mr. Hawkins: I appreciate the Minister using my time to answer Ms. Bisaro's question. That said, maybe I could ask the Minister to answer my question, if he doesn't mind. Mr. Chairman, my question was: how much is the budget for locum nurses?

Hon. Bob McLeod: We don't have a budget for locum nurses in Human Resources.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I've said at least a couple of times that I haven't been getting a lot of sleep, but I'm really curious on the creative accounting: how you could reduce \$1.5 million from a non-existing budget. I'm not that tired.

Maybe we could work with it this way: with the historical figure that we've been spending for this locum budget over the last two years — because you would have had to take \$1.5 million from somewhere, and how can you tell me that's a reduction...? So you must have some estimate or be able to frame it up as an eligible cost you've been budgeting toward.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I don't think you need to attribute it to lack of sleep. The money for locums is paid for out of Health and Social Services Authorities. I don't have access to that information. We do know that the Minister of Health would have it, so.... I don't know if you can ask that question now or if you can wait until she appears in front of the committee.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): If you like, Mr. Minister, you can refer the question to the Minister responsible for that information.

Mr. Hawkins: That's okay. Instead of tying up the Human Resources Minister on this, we'll use that valuable time to make sure we get the full answer from the Minister at that time. I just would hope the Minister would bring it with her at that time.

As well as the details of — some breakouts of where the locums are situated and whatnot.... That being said, I suspect that the Minister of Human Resources.... Did he play a role, not specific to the nurses but territory-wide? When it comes to government employees, does Human Resources track overtime and allocation of hours? Specifically, the reason I raise that is in the context of things like corrections officers where they have to utilize a lot of extra turns and casuals, and sometimes there are a lot of cases of overtime. It's a similar quagmire when it comes to the nursing field. They're always calling people in. In regard to trying to find people through the overtime process and whatnot, do they track any of that?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I think the question you're asking will appear on page 2-82 under Employment Services in regard to overtime and whatnot. If you like, you can hold your question until then, but if the Minister would like to answer it now?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Generally, the overtime is tracked by the departments. We work with the departments to develop policies that would apply across the board so all employees are dealt with consistently and fairly. For example, we have a government-wide policy that restricts the amount of overtime you can carry and also how much you would be paid out. We've run into problems in the past with people leaving the government who have carried a lot of overtime with them. We track it on that basis.

Mr. Hawkins: I find it interesting that the Minister has, on a number of occasions, highlighted the fact that not just his department but a number of departments don't fund positions at 100 per cent. That may be an extremely clever accounting process. I recognize that — I think he said earlier — we have a 14.2 per cent turnover. That may be the theoretic approach to not implementing full salary in the department, knowing very well that they'll never use it. But yet, it does bring in the question about whether that's a proper formula process.

I know the clock's ticking now, so I'm going to squeeze two questions together. I know the Minister will take more than a minute to respond, I'm sure. Why don't we have a policy that says one employee, 100 per cent salary? I think that's a true articulation of what's actually happening there. If it's not used, I'm of the belief it should be returned. The public is demanding a more accountable sense rather than that money is allocated to pay for a warm body in a seat. That's what it's intended for, not for who knows what.

Mr. Chairman, my other question really is — although I'm running out of time and I don't know if anyone's after me, but I'll just assume there is.... I'd like to explore this unfunded position a little further. I was highlighting some questions yesterday about who we are paying, who's really on the books.

Some concerns I have are: what is the policy for unfunded positions? The way I see it, a departments should be declaring every single person in the budget. It's the way we prove this book called our budget. If it's not in the budget, it shouldn't be there.

I'd like to hear the details of the policy, if one exists. If one doesn't exist — and I'm concerned that we don't have one, and.... Essentially this House is approving this budget. We account for every single employee, yet you're able to fund full-time employees, possibly with the benefits. Not just your department; you said, across the board, that they're throughout the government. Do we really have a grasp on how many unfunded positions are out there, and what's the policy that drives them?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I guess it all boils down to how much detail the Members want to get into. Generally, the approach that has been taken is we let the managers manage. The expectation is that they come in within budget, and they manage on that basis. To micromanage every department for every single position would be excessive, but certainly what the Member is talking about is essentially a budgeting issue. If that's the direction the Members want to go, then certainly we would communicate that back to the Financial Management Board, or the Minister responsible for that area, and they could approach it on that basis.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): We're on page 2-63, Management and Recruitment Services, Upgrades, Manager Summaries: \$7.341 million. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I didn't hear any details as to if there's any policy — whether it exists or not — on unfunded positions, to understand what the clear practice is.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I indicated that was a budgeting issue. This is the direction.... When the call letters go out, the Minister responsible for budgeting could ask every department to identify each position. The general approach is that the departments are free to budget as long as they come in within budget.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, if I were to ask the Human Resource Minister, and I probably will.... Let's assume this is an ask. Does the Human Resource Minister have any grasp on how many unfunded positions there are out there in the government and what it's costing the government?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, we know how many positions we have in the government. The expectation and the requirement is that all departments have to come in within budget, so it's not costing the government incrementally any more than they've already budgeted for.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, could I assume that "know" in the context of anywhere but this Minister's

department, whereas he does not know how many unfunded positions are out there.... Can I understand that he's not aware of what that costs the government?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Just a clarification on the question that's being asked. Under page 2-52 we have Active Positions, but I don't think we have a page that talks about inactive positions or positions that aren't there. Again, it more falls in line with that section, but the Minister could answer the question.

Hon. Bob McLeod: As we know, Mr. Chair, how many positions are out there with regard to which are funded and unfunded is a question best posed to individual departments.

Mr. Hawkins: I just want to get to the sense of one thing the Minister had mentioned about the micromanagement process. I wouldn't want to think that I've got time, or I would hope that every Minister doesn't have time, to micromanage every single position. But money's funded for positions. The way you make it sound is that we reward them if they find a way to cleverly come in, whether it's the fact that they haven't filled a position on purpose or the fact that they haven't been able to fill a position because no one has wanted it. But the fact is that any money left over shouldn't be seen as a reward, giving carte blanche to a way to spend it, in that by just saying, "As long as they spend within their budget," that's fine.

I'm of the belief that when we approve Human Resource money, it should be allocated to Human Resource money. In this particular case, if their budget isn't allocated, I think it creates that flexibility to do those things that maybe the Minister is alluding to.

What I'm trying to stress here is the fact that, as well, we have unfunded positions. I'm not saying I'm against them, though it may sound like it. I wouldn't want to give you that sort of taste in your mouth, that that's my position. It's not necessarily that; it's the fact they're not on the books that causes me concern. When we talk about not funding positions properly, that causes me concern, and that also causes me concern from a management point of view. When you're budgeting these things, have you budgeted them properly? That, I think, comes into question.

So, Mr. Chairman, there's no question to this; whether the Minister wants to comment or not would be his choice. But, that said, my issue with it is that we fully account for positions that we employ people for and they get recognized. My fear is that positions that may or may not be left vacant are there, and that money is being used outside of what I would describe as the human resource process, which I think it should be allocated for.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I would just want to point out again that under each department there's a list

that says Active Positions, but I think both of you are right. I think the question has to be put to the appropriate department as we go through each activity under Active Positions. Each one has a determinate full-time position, determinate part-time, and then you have seasonal positions. I think the question — that question you're asking for — is not in the purview of the Minister; it's in the purview of each department. I think it's important that that question be asked of every department as we go through this process.

Hon. Bob McLeod: For the Department of Human Resources, we provided all the Members with a complete breakdown of every position that was funded or unfunded or vacant or filled. With regard to how positions are costed: when positions are filled, people are paid at different step levels. How you cost them for budgeting exercises is within the purview of individual managers. If it's felt that every position should be budgeted at 100 per cent of the pay scale, well, then, you have people, new hires, who are generally hired at, I don't know, 65 per cent, 70 per cent.

So all those things have to be taken into consideration when you're budgeting for your salaries.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): We're on page 2-63, Activity Summary, Management and Recruitment Services, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.341 million.

Department of Human Resources, Management and Recruitment Services, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.341 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): The next two pages are in regard to Management and Recruitment Services, Active Positions, information item, pages 2-64 and 2-65. Agreed?

Department of Human Resources, Management and Recruitment Services, Active Positions, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Page 2-66, Corporate Human Resources, Activity Summary, Corporate Human Resources, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.689 million. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 2-66, under Employer of Choice, we see detail that breaks out quite a bit further, which is fine. My question really is about staff retention. I'd like to know what the employer of choice, in the section about staff retention.... What do they produce, or what do they propose to maintain — or I should say retain? — staff?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We administer a staff retention policy, which is a policy

whereby we try to keep all of our staff who are in an affected position.

Mr. Hawkins: But what does it produce? I'm trying to understand. I mean, is it a think tank of people who sit there and come up with ideas? I'm trying to get some detail as to what this function really is. Is it a policy that just says we like people and we want them to keep working for us? Or is it something where they sit around; it's a think tank where they try to find a process to make sure employees are happy in their workforce and feel their contributions are recognized, and they strive to make sure that employees feel they're part of something bigger but not forgotten?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, we have people who work with individuals who are affected. They contact them. They meet with them in the department. They work with them to develop their skills for interviews, resumé writing and so on. They also try to match affected people with jobs and with departments.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you. Would this also be a section that works on strategies to come up with new ways to reinvigorate our public service under the theme of Employer of Choice?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Human Resources. Assistant Deputy Minister Sharilyn Alexander.

Ms. Alexander: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this unit does look at ways we can work with employees, look at ways we can, as an organization, retain employees. We do a number of things — look at trends, look at what's happening in other jurisdictions — while trying to come up with innovative ways we can work in that area.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you for that answer. That's what I'm looking for.

What are the trends or innovative ways the shop has been looking at under this section of Employer of Choice — that one would define as trends or innovative ways in other jurisdictions, whether they're large employers or just other regions outside the GNWT that are having an impact so the employer is perceived as the employer of choice?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, I guess the biggest trend we're noticing is that our workforce is aging, and within ten years I think about 40 per cent of our workforce will be retiring. What we're noticing in the demographics is that the younger workforce is much different from the workforce we've been dealing with. They're younger, they're more focused on a work-balanced approach, and they also are looking for challenging work. They're more focused on jobs that are best for them as individuals. It's a trend that we think is going to impact our whole approach to staffing.

With regard to Employer of Choice, we've said on many occasions that the GNWT is not the preferred place for a lot of people to work. I guess that was something intentional, that the government wanted to make sure happened, because there were always complaints that government paid too much and took employees away from other sectors.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I take the Minister's numbers when he cited that in ten years we'll have 40 per cent of our workforce retire. That's approximately 1,920 employees. That causes you to wonder if we need to do 135 layoffs, although I know that the number is being significantly reduced through drives. Of course, I'll recognize that. That was my issue earlier, which I never really got an answer to. I wanted to know how they've identified how many people are retiring in that bracket. So that said, it's odd we can come up with a number now but couldn't earlier.

Mr. Chairman, I'm trying to get a sense of how they're implementing any of these initiatives and where they're bringing them forward. As well, I have some questions on the details. Under this section as well we have summer employment programs for students. I'm wondering how many new programs have led to hiring this summer and how's that changed — what's it changed by versus previous years.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, with regard to the number of employees and potential retirement, that was based on the analysis of employees and pension information. We're assuming that most people will retire when they reach a certain age.

With regard to summer students, 205 summer students have been hired. Our numbers are probably a little lower than in previous years. I think a lot of it can be attributed to the fact that this year we have an interim supply, where the money runs out at the end of June. So our expectation is that if we put on a full-scale direction to departments, we'll get more summer students hired. In an average year we hire about 325 summer students. Last year was one of our better years. We hired 353 summer students.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, although I don't see the word "survey," I suspect this is the same area. It's not under Employer of Choice. I assume it's under this Corporate Human Resources section, which is what probably conducts the survey specific to the employee satisfaction survey.

Now, I do see in the detail where it talks about surveys and interest surveys, but recently there was a survey done — I think in February — and, oddly enough, it seemed to have coincided with the release of that 135-person lay-off notice as well as, of course ironically, with the \$135 million reduction. I was just wondering when I had a chance to briefly go through the survey and I noticed that.... Well, I didn't see too many people happy. It looked like a

lot of people felt they were not being appreciated in the system. It looked like a lot of people didn't understand how they fit in the system or were recognized throughout the system.

I'm just wondering what the Minister is doing with that survey, because I thought it was quite a shocking thing to see how many unhappy people we had in the public service. Yes, there were some happy people, as you could see from the survey remarks, but in large part it wasn't a positive look. What's the plan to turn that around? I mean, there must be some strategy.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The survey the Member is referring to is an employee satisfaction survey, and this is something that is conducted across Canada in all the provinces and territories. We've all agreed we would do surveys every two years. The first survey was done in 2006, and also it was done again this year, 2008.

I'm pleased to note that the respondents have increased by about 10 per cent. Perhaps it was the UNW advertising that caused more people to complete the survey. My reading of the survey results — and we are still doing additional analysis, and the letter I wrote to the Members was circulated in the surveys — was that we would be doing more analysis to try and interpret some of the findings and also to compare our jurisdiction to other jurisdictions. In many areas the results have improved, so we're quite pleased to see that. Certainly there are areas where we can improve, and this is something we will be focussing on as we move along.

Mr. Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Next on my list I have the Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yesterday, when I first started talking about the Department of Human Resources, I pointed out that the Premier indicated that Community Health Nurse Development Program is going to be increasing. However, when I look at the Main Estimates for the Department of Human Resources, I see they're eliminating one of their vacant nurse educator mentor positions. I'm wondering if they can help me understand how eliminating the positions that support the Community Health Nurse Development Program are in fact enhancing the Community Health Nurse Program, also keeping in mind that as we move forward through this binder and see the Department of Health and Social Services, we'll see there is a cut to the Community Health Nurse Development Program within the Department of Health and Social Services. As you are the administrator of the program, I'd like some clarity on how the program is being enhanced if, in fact, it is being cut.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I think the reduction of one-half of the nurse educator mentor will affect our

ability to provide hands-on services to the authorities. We recognize it will reduce our ability to do that, but we will be focusing our efforts entirely on supporting new nursing graduates. Our expectation is that over the next few years the number of graduate nurses will be reduced. For example, next year with the intake of the program the expectation is that there will be seven graduates as opposed to the 15 or 20 this year.

Mr. Abernethy: That's great. That helps me understand the nurse educator mentor with respect to the students, but it doesn't answer the question even remotely with respect to the Community Health Nurse Development Program. My question was specific to the Community Health Nurse Development Program.

Hon. Bob McLeod: My understanding is the funding is more closely aligned with the uptake of the program now.

Mr. Chairman (Mr. Krutko): The Member for Great Slave.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You're saying it is being reduced and the program is being cut even though the Premier did indicate in his statement that it was in fact being enhanced?

Mr. Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Alexander.

Ms. Alexander: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do still have nurse educator mentors who are dedicated to the Community Health Nurse Development Program, and they will still continue to focus on that program. Where that reduction will be impacted is the nurse educator mentors who are focussing on the support for the northern graduate students.

Mr. Abernethy: Related to this area but not specifically the nurse educator mentors anymore: on the next page — it's related to this page as well — it indicates that maximizing northern employment is being reduced by \$800,000-ish. Can you tell me what kind of review or program evaluation was done to identify areas in which maximizing northern employment could be cut, given the strategic plan of this Legislature, which is to support youth and maximize northern employment?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The reductions were in the Graduate Transition Program. This was an internship program for private industry. Rather than cutting some of the programs that directly impact the public service, a decision was made to eliminate the program that supports the private sector for interns. This was offered through ECE but was funded by Human Resources. Also, the reduction in the graduate placement program for teachers and social workers will now bring the program funding in line with the historical uptake. We also would reduce the number of graduate workshops. We would reduce the in-person component of it, and we would focus on having

these workshops but delivering them electronically. We also recognize that it would reduce the number of students who can be subsidized, but it's not a significant reduction.

Mr. Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list I have Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to ask the Minister about the Employee Recognition Program. This government is supposed to be about prevention and engaging our employees. I hear a lot of frustration about wasted energy, wasted resources, inefficiencies in programs. A lot of employees have individual observations and experiences to offer that aren't necessarily part of their job descriptions. When we started the reductions exercise, I think it was recognized as a valuable source of information. We put out a call, and in fact we got a lot of good suggestions from employees in our public service. It seems like there should be opportunities for that in the Employee Recognition Program.

Perhaps there is a specific program on that, but I think our priorities this term have been set at lowering costs and reducing climate change — that is, greenhouse gas emissions and fuel consumption — and increasing the effectiveness of government. I'm wondering: has the department made recommendations on this government-wide and, of course, within their own department — a specific Employee Recognition Program that would focus on recognition in some way or another, financially or status, some sort of status, or whatever. I'm sure HR knows better how to recognize employees in the area of achieving our goals of lower cost and improved effectiveness.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: This is certainly something we could consider. I know that in the past energy conservation was a goal that was expected of all deputies, and it was part of their performance measurement. We also had a program where employees could submit ideas for reducing costs and they would get monetary rewards based on how much money they saved the government. That program was eliminated about five years ago because they weren't getting any suggestions after awhile. I think initially it was well received. We do have the Arctic Energy Alliance environmental awards, but I think it would be worthwhile to look at developing something for energy conservation awards. It could be a subset of the Premier's Awards for Excellence perhaps. This is something we could take forward for next year.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you for those remarks, Minister. Of course, the City of Yellowknife has really enjoyed quite a few savings through such a program, savings that are ongoing. Just to be clear, such a program was not on the plate as part of the

opportunities for reductions and efficiencies in the exercise that got us to this budget. Is that correct?

Hon. Bob McLeod: It could still be considered as part of the strategic initiatives and as part of the business planning process for next year.

Mr. Bromley: I'll take that as some sort of commitment. I appreciate that. I wonder if the Minister would consider bringing a draft forward at some point during this session so we could have some input into that and start that process. It's one of those things that the earlier we start it, the bigger the returns we could realize. I just want to emphasize that the employees have expressed an interest in that sort of thing through their regular MLAs and possibly through Members of Cabinet as well.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We'll look at our budget for employee recognition, and we'll work with the Department of Environment to see whether we can develop this.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and the Minister. Obviously, this is something every department could be engaged in and enjoy the fruitful returns of, I'm sure.

Hon. Bob McLeod: That would be something I'm sure all departments are interested in.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Next on my list I have Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have two questions. This section includes Organizational Development. The information we received indicates there will be a reduction of a competency officer.

I will back up. In the information we received today that lists Employees and Vacant Positions and so on, I see a listing for an organization design officer, and the telephone listing for the department lists two employees in the organizational department, one of which is the manager and one of which is a succession and workforce planning consultant. I'm just wondering if I could get clarification on whether our information is wrong — that there is nobody called a competency officer — or if I could get some indication from the department of just exactly which position has been earmarked for reduction.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a competency position. It's been vacant for some time, and that's probably why you couldn't find it in the phonebook. It's a position that's been eliminated. We still have the remaining organization design officer who will continue this work. I think that developing proper competencies is something that is very important to make sure jobs are classified properly and evaluated properly. It makes

a significant difference in our ability to hire and staff positions so we have the right competencies.

Ms. Bisaro: I guess I'd like to know where it is in the document we got today, "DHR Vacant Positions April 21, 2008, Funded." I don't see a competency officer. Maybe the department could direct me to the particular page where I would find it.

Hon. Bob McLeod: It's not on that list, because it's been inactivated and been removed.

Ms. Bisaro: Okay. Thank you. That brings me to another question. If it's been inactivated and removed, has the funding not also been removed? Does this mean we're reducing \$100,000 for a position that really hasn't been funded?

Hon. Bob McLeod: For the purposes of this budget it has been removed.

Ms. Bisaro: I'll try another question. In a document we received today as well, called Status of Potentially Affected Employees, the second item on that list has: Justice relief employees added in Inuvik, plus-4. I'd like to ask the department what those employees are, what their work is. What work do they do? Which employees are those?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Those are four relief employees who had been notified they were potentially affected or impacted but had not been included on the list or had been missed on being included on the list. So that's why they've been added.

Ms. Bisaro: Can the Minister please advise me where these employees work?

Hon. Bob McLeod: My understanding is that these four relief workers worked at the Arctic Tern facility in Inuvik.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I have.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize that I haven't been here the whole time, so forgive me if this question has already been asked. What's the status of the new whistleblower legislation that could be in the works or contemplated, with the idea that whistleblower legislation might allow people in the public service to report areas that could be interpreted as wastefulness or practices that are not conducive to value for money? I'd like to ask the Minister: what is the status of whistleblower legislation in our government?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The previous government had directed that the Department of Human Resources consult other employees and employee representatives on the feasibility of whistleblower protection. We received 69 responses. Of the 69,

59 were generally in favour and 8 did not indicate support. We are still reviewing the information we have and trying to determine whether it's an area we want to proceed with. We haven't included it in any deliberations, but with business planning coming up for 2009–2010, this is something we could look at.

As the Member may know, there are a number of issues we would have to resolve if whistleblower protection is to be provided. How would we deal with anonymous complaints? If people are not willing to identify themselves, how would we deal with that? There are also multiple complaint venues. Currently people can file complaints in a number of areas: grievances, Workers' Compensation, human rights, et cetera. So there are already a significant number of venues for employees to complain or report wrongdoing. We'd need to analyze whether another venue would be appropriate or required.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Over the years, I've known of situations that existed. They were fairly well known. It didn't seem like the government could get a handle on them or document them or do anything about them. And the people who worked in those divisions didn't really want to say anything.

I think there's a contradiction there. To say you could have whistleblower protection for people to make complaints anonymously or identify situations anonymously — well, if they can do it anonymously, you don't need whistleblower protection because nobody would know who did it, right? I think the idea is to let people feel they could step forward — they could bring something to the government's attention, to the department's attention — and they would not suffer reprisal as a result. I think that's the gist of whistleblower protection. I wouldn't get hung up on whether it's anonymous or not. It's just an avenue that needs to be there, whether people choose to take it or not. I guess they would weigh their options.

I think the more opportunities we have for people to feel like they're engaged in the process.... Sometimes when there's some wrongdoing going on, say even at the management level, it kind of demoralises the whole organization that's underneath that. Sometimes, even, it sets a standard. Let's use an example: a manager is — I don't know — using a government facility like a shop or something in a community to service their own vehicles, maybe their friends' and their family's. And they say, Well, I'm doing it; if you don't say anything about it, then you can use it too. Then you sort of get buy-in and everybody starts getting into questionable practices with government resources. It tends to have a bit of a domino effect. We've all heard of situations like that.

I think it would be good to pursue it and keep the issue alive, keep proceeding down that path.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We'll continue to work in that direction.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): We're under Corporate Human Resources, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.689 million. Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to go back to the position of competency officer. I'm not understanding how we are saving \$100,000 if the position has been deactivated and removed from the list, which I think were the words of the Minister. If it's no longer part of the department staffing list, how are we saving \$100,000?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The budget has been reduced by \$100,000.

Ms. Bisaro: I understand that, Mr. Minister, but I don't understand.... You're reducing the budget by \$100,000, which presumably you don't have because the position is already gone. I fail to understand the explanation, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Well, that's why we have funded positions. If you have 100 positions and you have a million dollars — each position's worth \$10,000 or whatever — if you reduce by one position on the POI side, you reduce the money side by an appropriate amount. You eliminate one PY on the one side. So if the competency officer costs \$100,000 or his salary is \$100,000, then you would reduce the salary dollars by \$100,000.

Ms. Bisaro: I guess I need to ask if I can see a list of funded positions for the Human Resources Department for '07-08.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We can do that on the same basis as we provided this list.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you. I think I see where Wendy's going with this question. I want to try and re-ask the question in a slightly different way.

You've identified a competency officer to be eliminated. The budget hasn't been approved. We're in the process of reviewing the budget. Yet you've already taken the steps to eliminate it from your organization, which suggests to me that you have already cut the position. Given that the budget isn't approved, why are you eliminating the position from your system already?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Because it was a vacant position. To me it's a moot point, but if it's important that it be activated, we can reactivate it.

Mr. Abernethy: I think it's less important that it's activated. I think it's more interesting that you've taken the steps to move beyond the budget process and begin implementing things that haven't been approved by this House. Just a comment, but I

think it might have been a bit premature and approaching the inappropriate.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I appreciate that from the Member. I agree it was probably inappropriate, and we'll reactivate it and get it back to the list.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Corporate Human Resources, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.689 million.

Department of Human Resources, Corporate Human Resources, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$7.689 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Information item, Corporate Human Resources, Program Delivery Details. Agreed?

Department of Human Resources, Corporate Human Resources, Program Delivery Details, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Page 2-70. Corporate Human Resources, Active Positions, information item.

Department of Human Resources, Corporate Human Resources, Active Positions, information item, (page 2-70) approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Corporate Human Resources, Active Positions, information item.

Department of Human Resources, Corporate Human Resources, Active Positions, information item, (page 2-71) approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Client Services, Operations Expenditure Summary, information item.

Department of Human Resources, Client Services, Operations Expenditure Summary information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Client Services, Program Delivery Details, information item.

Department of Human Resources, Client Services, Program Delivery Details, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Page 2-76, Client Services, Active Positions, information item, page 2-77.

Department of Human Resources, Client Services, Active Positions, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Page 2-78, Employee Relations, information item. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, I'm just wondering if the department's done any analysis on what I would consider a growing problem, and that is stress leave and extended medical leave by employees, and whether you can trace some of this stress

leave or extended medical leave back to departments. If we can correlate the use of stress leave and medical leave back to some departments, I think we need to examine the root causes of employees needing extended periods of time away from work.

I find this type of leave being more and more necessary, and employees having to go to doctors and get doctors' certificates for extended periods of absences from work. I'm just wondering if the department's done any kind of analysis on where the stress leave is happening and the extended medical leave so fingers can be pointed at the departments that are guilty of their employees needing to take time away from work like that. I can think of one department specifically, and that's Justice. We'll have the Minister of Justice here before too long, but maybe the Minister can answer that.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, we do keep track of employee leave, and we do use it as a management tool to, in some cases, detect problem employees. Also, I don't think we've done an analysis of stress leave, but we could do that. We do have a review of people who are on stress leave for extended periods to determine whether they need a change in venue or whether we'll have a medical doctor review their situation. But in terms of doing an analysis of the areas or departments that have the most stress, I don't think we've necessarily done that yet.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, just because an employee accesses stress leave or other leave doesn't necessarily make them a bad employee, and I wouldn't want anybody to think that. I think in many cases it's bad management, and it's the employee feeling victimized in the workplace or harassed or intimidated or whatever you want. There are many reasons employees seek stress leave and extended medical leave.

I also wanted to ask the Minister.... If that type of analysis hasn't been done, I think that'd be something worth providing to Members of this House — which departments have more employees who have accessed stress leave and medical leave — and break it down and show us, as a percentage, which departments are getting more employees requesting stress leave and medical leave. I think that's important for us to know as legislators. This side of the House acts as the oversight accountability committee, and we really need to have this type of information so we can start directing questions at the Ministers who are managing the departments to try to figure out what's going on.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I don't think we break out leave according to stress leave; it's usually sick leave or extended leave. I think we can do an

analysis by going through and reviewing the documentation for extended leave or sick leave.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister for that. I think it'd be a useful tool. Some of my colleagues have called some.... Not all workplace environments in the government are toxic, but some of them out there are toxic. People are having to access sick leave and disability leave and whatnot in greater numbers than I can ever remember. I think it's a systemic problem. If it's management or if it's.... The finger has to be pointed somewhere, and ultimately someone has to be accountable for the increased occurrences in stress leave, disability leave and extended medical leave. So I'll look forward to that report.

The other question I had was in terms of grievances. I know some employees out there who have been waiting in excess of two years to get a grievance heard and a decision rendered. To me, that's really not acceptable. I want to ask the Minister how many grievances there are and what is an acceptable time frame to have those dealt with accordingly.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Chair, there are presently 242 outstanding grievances. I think a large part of the problem is that the employees have been filing grievances at the highest level. There's no opportunity to resolve grievances when they're filed at the third level, so it all has to be handled through arbitration. As such, it takes time and is something we'll have to work with the union on to try to bring this down to a manageable level. The union has indicated they're prepared to spend time to bring the numbers down.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the Minister for that and would encourage him to keep the dialogue going with the UNW and the other unions to ensure that grievances are dealt with in a timely fashion.

I'd like to ask the Minister: are there guidelines in place for dealing with grievances? Is there a policy where you would deem two years an excessive length of time for folks to wait to get a grievance dealt with? Should we set up at least some guidelines or some standards that we judge ourselves by? Are there any in place already?

Hon. Bob McLeod: There are guidelines, but they're generally more along the lines of first-, second-, third-level grievances. The first level should be handled right at the local workplace: sort it out there, and if it can't be resolved there, it gets picked up. I think if we're going to have timelines, it should be based on the realistic opportunity to reduce the number of grievances. If we have 250 outstanding grievances and they can only resolve them through arbitration, we only have so many arbitration officers. The union has agreed to set aside one week of every month up until the end of 2009 to deal with arbitrations. I don't know how long

it takes to resolve an arbitration. Assuming one week for arbitration, depending on the number of arbitrations.... Unless we could have some control over the work, it would be difficult to set a timeline on it.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I would like to recognize the clock. It is now past 6 p.m. Under our rules we are to adjourn at 6 o'clock, so with that I would like to rise and report progress. I'd like to thank the Minister and thank the witnesses. With that, we'll rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Can I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, please. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 37-16(2), Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. A motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Item 23, third reading of bills. Item 24, Orders of the Day, Madam Clerk.

Orders of the Day

Principal Clerk of Operations (Ms. Bennett):

Orders of the Day for Thursday, May 29, 2008, 1:30 p.m.:

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements
- 3) Members' Statements
- 4) Reports of Standing and Special Committees
- 5) Returns to Oral Questions
- 6) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
- 7) Acknowledgements
- 8) Oral Questions
- 9) Written Questions
- 10) Returns to Written Questions
- 11) Replies to Opening Address

- 12) Replies to Budget Address (Day 6 of 7)
- 13) Petitions
- 14) Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
- 15) Tabling of Documents
- 16) Notices of Motion
- 17) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 18) Motions
- 19) First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2007–2008
- 20) Second Reading of Bills
- 21) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 8: Appropriation Act, 2008–2009
 - CR 2-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Public Housing and Homeownership Programs
 - CR 3-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2006–2007 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner
 - CR 4-16(2): Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates
 - CR 5-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates
 - CR 6-16(2): Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates
 - TD 37-16(2): Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2
- 22) Report of Committee of the Whole
- 23) Third Reading of Bills
- 24) Orders of the Day
 - Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, May 29, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.
 - The House adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

