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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Thursday, June 5, 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. Floyd Roland, Hon. Norman Yakeleya.

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

Prayer.

Speaker's Ruling

Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. I will now provide my ruling on the point of privilege raised by the Member for Hay River South on Monday, June 2, 2008.

The role of the Speaker when a point of privilege is raised is twofold. First, the Speaker must determine whether the point of privilege was raised at the earliest possible opportunity. I find that Mrs. Groenewegen did raise her point of privilege at the earliest possible opportunity.

Secondly, the Speaker must determine whether a prima facie breach of privilege took place.

In stating her point of privilege, the Member for Hay River South referenced the following comments made by the Member for Thebacha on May 30, 2008, during debate on a motion to delete a capital project from his constituency from the Main Estimates.

"And as we keep open minds to look at all the options, one of the options that hadn't been considered is we're talking about repatriating a bunch of adults into a supportive living structure that has yet to be built. Has that been considered as a possibility for Arctic Tern? I don't know. But clearly it's a circumstance that strikes me as interesting and somewhat ironic."

Mrs. Groenewegen went on to say, and I quote from the unedited Hansard from June 2:

"I believe the Member for Thebacha's comments were made to intimidate me as I attempted to carry out my duty...as a Member to vote the way I wished on this potentially contentious motion."

In responding to the point of privilege, the Member for Thebacha stated, and again I quote from the unedited Hansard:

"My one comment on that issue was that there's an option that hasn't been considered that I think is fully valid, and in fact, other Members, when it was discussed with them, agreed that it should be worth at least looking at.

"In the course of debate...I raised that comment and I raised that option. It was done within the context of broad debate. It was no threat."

We are thus left with two competing interpretations of the spirit and intent of the Member for Thebacha's comments. In the absence of further evidence I find it difficult to come to any clear and certain conclusion as to what exactly he was getting at.

Breaches of privilege are serious and should only be found to exist in rare circumstances. Intimidation and instruction of a Member is one of the most serious breaches of parliamentary privilege. When such actions are found to have occurred with absolute certainty, they should be and have been met with serious consequences in this House.

While the Member for Hay River South was justified to raise the matter, I am unable to find a prima facie breach of privilege with the evidence before me.

Members, the events in question occurred in Committee of the Whole. In reviewing the transcripts in the context of the point of privilege, I was surprised and concerned by the tone and context of the debate that day. The debate was frequently unrelated to the matter at hand, and in some circumstances it reflected upon previous votes of the House. False or hidden motives were attributed to some Members, and comments were made that were likely to and, in my view, intended to create disorder in this Chamber.

The debate before you is important and can be taxing. I want to urge each of you to exercise restraint and self-control when debating issues in this House. A failure to do so would be inconsistent with the traditions of consensus government and could usher in a new era of conflict and confrontation in the Legislative Assembly. The people we serve expect better from us as elected leaders. Thank you, Members.

Orders of the Day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Yakeleya.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 53-16(2) DRIVE ALIVE: SUMMER SAFETY INITIATIVES

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, we all know the terrible effects of transportation accidents. This is why we continue to enhance the Drive Alive! Transportation safety program — to ensure the public has the information to make good choices when they travel in the NWT.

I am very passionate about this issue. We are particularly committed to our young people's safety, as we all want them to grow into strong, healthy adults who can contribute to the northern way of life. Today I want to share some of the ways we are helping to increase the safety of young people, especially when they travel.

It has been proven that our children are very vulnerable when drivers do not pay full attention when driving in school zones. Although we have lower speed limits in school zones, some drivers fail to reduce their speed and place our children at risk. Changes to the Motor Vehicles Act regulations will double the fines for offences in school zones and construction zones. We are following the lead of a number of other jurisdictions that have found that increasing fines further assists in reducing speed in these critical zones.

We recently had a writing contest asking young people to share ways they and their families can reduce the risk of accidents and injuries when travelling. The winning entries are now posted on the Department of Transportation Web site youth page. I'm very impressed with the quality of these essays. Clearly, they gave a lot of thought to this important issue, and it demonstrates the quality of our young people and their teachers.

Nikita Larter from Thomas Simpson School said, "If you are traveling with two or more people, you are not only trying to keep yourself safe, but everyone else."

Nadine Menacho from Chief Albert Wright School said, "On the road, we can wear our seatbelts, and babies should be in a car seat.... On the water, we can wear our life jackets.... On trails, we can wear our helmets.... When we do all of these things, we can make it safer for us."

These are some of the worthy suggestions, and I hope people will listen to the wisdom of our young people.

One area of concern this summer is the safety of young people on bicycles. Sometimes our children do not drive as well as they should, and I encourage drivers to pay extra attention to kids on bikes. I'm very pleased to tell Members that as a result of a very generous contribution from BHP Billiton, 500 bicycle helmets will soon be available to young bicyclists across the territory. Drive Alive! is working with the Department of Health and Social Services to distribute these helmets across the Northwest Territories, and I want to acknowledge my colleague the Minister of Health and Social Services for the valuable assistance her department is providing.

This summer preschool and young school-aged children, along with their parents, will have an opportunity to learn more about transportation safety through a children's activity book promoting safe choices. Each Member will receive copies of this book for distribution in their constituencies.

I encourage the Members and the public to keep an eye on the Department of Transportation Web site for important safety messages and to drive alive. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 54-16(2) PROTECTED AREA STRATEGY

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Protected Area Strategy helps NWT communities protect special areas of land for the long term. The strategy is the collective effort of both federal and territorial levels of government, aboriginal government and organizations, industry, and environmental organizations.

Through a variety of legislative tools and processes the strategy enables communities to identify and protect culturally and ecologically significant or core representative areas of our territory. For example, a chosen area can be preserved under the Territorial Parks Act as a cultural conservation area, a heritage park, a natural environment park or a wilderness conservation area. These classifications were determined through extensive collaborations with our partners in the Protected Area Strategy, including aboriginal representatives, environmental organizations and the federal government.

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment has created an information package to help communities understand the processes and tools that are available for establishing territorial parks as a means of protecting our valuable lands. I have forwarded this information to Members of this Assembly, and ITI representatives are looking forward to meeting with communities who would

like to learn more about how territorial parks can be used as a tool in the PAS process.

We depend on our land and natural resources for our wealth and our livelihood. Land management options such as the creation of territorial parks under the Protected Area Strategy are one way that we can work in partnership to manage our lands and resources for the future.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INUVIALUIT FINAL AGREEMENT 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pride that I rise today, for today is a special day for all Inuvialuit everywhere. Today is the 24th anniversary of the signing of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

Back in the early '70s a group comprised of both young and old Inuvialuit realized that if they did not get organized, they might lose their rights as Inuvialuit people, so they established the Committee of Original Peoples' Entitlement, also known as COPE. In 1974 they entered into formal negotiations with the Government of Canada. After ten years of negotiations, on June 5, 1984, COPE and the Government of Canada signed the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. This was the first comprehensive land claim agreement signed north of the 60th parallel and only the second in Canada at that time.

The Inuvialuit agreed to give up exclusive use of their ancestral lands in exchange for certain other guaranteed rights from the Government of Canada. The rights came in three forms: money, land and wildlife management. The Inuvialuit would now have legal control of 91,000 square kilometres of land, including 13,000 kilometres with subsurface rights to oil, gas and minerals, including the right to hunt and harvest anywhere in the claim.

The basic goals of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement are to preserve Inuvialuit culture, identity and values within the changing northern society; enable Inuvialuit to be equal and meaningful participants in the northern and national economy and society; and protect and preserve Arctic wildlife, environment and biological productivity.

With the signing, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, IRC, was established and was made responsible for managing the rights and benefits of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

I was 11 years old when that important agreement was signed, and I remember it being a day of celebration. I know it was something important. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to acknowledge those who played a role in that historic day.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

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

Mr. Speaker, the past and present leaders are Mr. Peter Green, Nellie Cournayea, Charles Hoagak, Andy Carpenter Sr., Sam Raddi, Robert Kuptana, Billy Day, Nelson Green, Eddie Gruben, Mark Noksana, Bertha Ruben, Renie Arey, Annie Gordon, Agnes Semmler, Elsie Klengenber and Robert Delury.

I ask my fellow Members to join me in wishing everybody a happy Inuvialuit Day.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EARLY ENTRY TO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about an issue in the riding here where a parent has come forward with a concern about access to kindergarten. Before I go into my statement, I should make it absolutely clear that there's been no breach within the system, and of course, the school board is providing full and fair access within their rules. Before I talk about what needs to be done, I should also stress that the Department of Education is working fairly as well.

Now that I've laid that out... To be honest, Mr. Speaker, we all know the rules around entering kindergarten. You have to be five before the date of December 31. Well, what happens in the case when you're born not days after December 31, not months after December 31 but a few minutes after the date of December 31? That parent would have to wait a full school year before their child could access kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta considers an option where if you are in that type of situation, you can go through a little bit of a review, and the school board looks at your situation and does some tests on some kids. What they do is evaluate if that child should or could enter that school year. They do a bit of a functional review. They work with the parents, and they find a way to say, "Is this considered a reasonable option?"

Mr. Speaker, we don't have that type of option here in the Northwest Territories. We have a school board that would be willing to take a child who just happens to be five moments after the cut-off date, and we have a parent that would really like to do that. I know we have an education system that would like to provide those types of opportunities, but the problem is that we don't have a policy to allow that type of negotiation or discussion or any type of flexibility in that process.

Today I rise on this point because I have a parent with that predicament right now. They would like the education system, through the Education Minister, to come up with a policy and possibly a solution to build some flexibility in that type of review. We're not talking about bending rules for one person. We're not talking about bending rules that would breach any type of policy. What we are talking about building is flexibility into a system that is sensitive to the needs of children and parents.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately, the Department of Education needs to build a framework so this policy could be looked at by a school board. I think this is ultimately a school board decision worked out with the parents. We don't have rules, like Alberta does, to allow something like this to even be considered.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you, and I will have questions again for the Minister later today.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INUIVALUIT FINAL AGREEMENT 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to congratulate the Inuvialuit and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation on this important day, the fifth day of June.

Mr. Speaker, some 24 years ago the Inuvialuit of the Beaufort-Delta signed a land claim agreement with the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories. They've gone a long way since then. From being hunters, harvesters and caregivers of the land, they are now owners, land owners and managers. They also have control over developments that happen in the Beaufort-Delta region from their land management regimes in regard to Inuvialuit land administration through their wildlife boards, through their environmental review boards and also through land and use planning.

The land claim agreement is a devolving document. As we all know, the Inuvialuit are continuing to work on political development and also ensuring they also have a say in regard to the political devolution of what happens in the Beaufort-Delta region.

In regard to some of the major achievements they have through companies such as NTCL, Canadian North and other subsidiaries, the Inuvialuit were able to acquire, build and sustain by way of their economic arm the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Again, Mr. Speaker, they are still working with the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories in the area of political development.

With that, I'd like to congratulate the Inuvialuit people of the Beaufort-Delta and remind them that this is your day. You have gone a long way in the last 24 years.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELIMINATION OF BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with interest to the Ministerial statement made by the honourable Member Michael McLeod yesterday on improving the GNWT's capital planning and delivery process and elimination of the Business Incentive Policy, or BIP, as we know it.

There is no doubt in my mind that the capital planning and delivery process does need to be improved, but eliminating the BIP is not the way to do that. I think that any improvements to the capital planning process and delivery should be done in consultation with those in the industry who reside and have money invested on the ground here in the North. I think they and their opinions could be a tremendous asset to undertaking such a review.

It was only a short while after the Ministerial statement was made that I had my first communication from a northern contractor on the need to retain the BIP. Mr. Speaker, the flaws in the Minister's reasoning are confirmed by the fact that without the BIP even more contractors will move south for the lower operating costs and better networking opportunities. This would mean a loss to the NWT economy of jobs and a loss to the GNWT of the taxes, the workers' pay and the transfer payments we get from Ottawa for the workers and their families. That is just to name a few of the benefits that would be lost.

If the BIP is gone and companies from the south can bid against our northern companies that have stayed and invested in the North, then the northern companies will be less competitive because of their higher operating costs. If the BIP is scrapped, contractors will be seriously looking at relocating to the south, along with the many permanent jobs they provide in our communities.

There has to be middle ground to be found. We have already lost a lot of our capacity when the larger contractors opted to move operations to Alberta to take advantage of opportunities there. We do not want to lose our medium-sized contractors for the same reason.

Mr. Speaker, some of the changes proposed by the Minister, like making sure the capital budget is approved in time to take advantage of winter roads and barge scheduling and improving the class C estimates process, have been discussed in previous government by committees. It is good to see the government would be moving forward on those things. However, there needs to be more consultation on the ending of the BIP program. There needs to be an understanding on the part of the government of just what the actual consequences of eliminating the BIP would be, not just theorizing that by removing the BIP suddenly more contractors will be interested in tendering on government infrastructure projects.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GUIDELINES FOR SEISMIC LINES

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As fossil fuel exploration rolls across the Northwest Territories, people are noticing rapid growth and cumulative effects on our land. We have only to look beyond our border into Alberta to see what can happen when we fail to ensure best practices in non-renewable resource development. In view of this, Environment and Natural Resources, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Environment Canada are to be commended for their decision to develop NWT guidelines for seismic lines.

Wide and straight seismic lines have environmental consequences, such as the almost complete loss of boreal caribou in Alberta. Yet that appears to be exactly what our ENR is recommending for adoption in the guidelines. Wider lines cause cumulative impacts from habitat fragmentation, direct habitat loss and severely extended recovery time. In contrast, low-impact seismic line widths of three to zero metres alleviate many of the above concerns.

Guidelines are not meant to entrench the status quo or to support poor practices. Rather, they are intended to set the bar, to promote best practices and to increase the chance of achieving management goals.

Compared to other jurisdictions in Canada, the oil and gas industry is relatively new here, with a still modest footprint. There is time to learn from others'

mistakes and provide progressive and meaningful exploration guidelines.

The science is clear. Seismic lines of six-to-eight-metre widths in the lowland black spruce areas of boreal forest in Alberta showed no significant recovery after 35 years. Recovery here, where our boreal forest is even slower growing and more fragile, would be much longer.

To minimize cumulative effects, the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board is recommending meandering seismic lines of widths no greater than 2.5 metres with additional limits on linear density. Yet ENR's draft guidelines recommend more than double this width, with little recognition of the need for meandering low-density considerations. This is in contrast to Minister Miltenberger's proclaimed interest in not repeating the mistakes of our southern neighbour and becoming Alberta North.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that some community contractors may have picked up some old equipment that carves out six-metre-wide and larger seismic lines, but as we know, these impacts are direct, accumulating and extremely long term. A progressive best-practices approach is needed to fulfill our mandate of responsible management for our current and future generations.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Bromley: Guidelines are meant to establish the standard and promote progress toward achieving our goals. On the subject of guidelines for seismic lines, this Minister needs to commit to limiting cumulative effects and revise these draft guidelines with that in mind.

I will have questions for the Minister. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INUVIALUIT FINAL AGREEMENT 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with my colleague and fellow Inuvialuqtun from Nunakput and another one from Inuvik Boot Lake, I'd like to also speak to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement today.

Years ago the Berger inquiry stalled the development or any talk of a pipeline, and I think this was a good thing. It gave the aboriginal governments an opportunity to take some time and get their claims settled in case development does

happen. Eventually it will. I think that was a big move, and a lot of the claimant groups, in the meantime, have settled claims. They've put themselves into positions to benefit.

The Inuvialuit, after some growing pains and under the guidance of Nellie, have done just that. We've all benefited from the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. They've made some investments, and that comes back to us in the form of dividend payments.

The Inuvialuit still respect the old way of life. They still respect the culture. They try to promote the culture and living the old way of life but are also visionary enough to know that development could happen. So they, along with the Gwich'in and the Sahtu, have joined forces to form the Aboriginal Pipeline Group.

Now, that would put them in a position to become players and benefit from any building of a pipeline. Eventually our gas and oil will be needed, so in my opinion, a pipeline will go ahead. How soon, we're not sure. But I like the fact that some of the claimant groups have decided this is going to happen, and they're putting their people in a position to benefit from the resources from our land.

They still continue to practice the old way of life. They continue to promote it among their young people. So I think this is a great day for the Inuvialuit, and I think it's a great day for claimant groups across the Northwest Territories. I look forward to — once all the claims are settled — celebrating these types of days for years to come.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CABINET COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last couple of weeks there has been a lot of talk, both inside and outside of this House, on consensus government and whether or not it works.

I believe in consensus government. I feel that it can, and does, work. However, for it to be effective, it will take cooperation from all Members: those on Cabinet and those on this side of the House. Unfortunately, open two-way communication and open dialogue does not always occur.

Prior to the Territorial Leadership Committee, Members seeking Cabinet and Premier positions talked consistently of open dialogue and working together. After the completion of TLC the open conversation and productive dialogue existed for a time — unfortunately, not for long.

Cabinet continues to suggest that they have continually included Regular Members in decisions

and direction of the government. As a Regular Member, I feel this isn't always true, and here's an example. Yesterday, as quoted from the unedited Hansard, Mr. Ramsay asked the honourable Mr. Michael McLeod — concerning the implementation of BIP — if he could come back to Regular Members and sit down with stakeholders in the area so we can work on this together and come up with a solution. According to the unedited Hansard from yesterday, the honourable Mr. Michael McLeod made the following comments: "I would commit to the Members, and I think all my committee colleagues would commit, that we would share the information with Regular Members on where we plan to go and the decisions that we're moving towards as the information comes in." This is an exact example of what Members on this side of the House are making reference to.

Once again we're being told by Cabinet what's being done — not included in the decision making, not being permitted to work together in the best interests of the people of the Northwest Territories.

Today I would like to encourage the Premier and Cabinet to think about their commitment to working together during the TLC. Working together is critical for the success of this Legislature and the consensus government. It's time to re-find our way.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CRYSTAL MILLIGAN

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to use my Member's statement today to acknowledge a constituent of Frame Lake. Crystal Milligan, daughter of Gary and Carol Milligan, is today receiving her master's degree in international development and management, with a specialization in public health from Lund University in Sweden.

The Milligan family are long-term Yellowknifers, and Crystal grew up and was educated in the North. She was an outstanding student who not only performed well in the classroom but achieved excellence in sports and other activities — a truly well-rounded individual. Crystal represented the NWT more than once in interprovincial or international sports competitions, such as the Arctic Winter Games.

Crystal spent the last two years studying in Sweden. For her thesis — the title of which is a mouthful, but I'll try it anyway — From Conceptions to Capacity: A Phenomenographic Study of Health Personnel and Their Conceptions of Child Sexual Abuse and Health Services.... I told you it was a mouthful. For her thesis Crystal did six months of fieldwork in Esteli, Nicaragua.

But Crystal's not one to rest on her laurels. She will be returning to Canada shortly to prepare for a six-month funded internship with CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency. She will be working in Kigali, Rwanda, on gender policy and gender mainstreaming issues with the organization Youth Association for Human Rights Promotion and Development. She will be done her internship in February or March of 2009, and then maybe she'll stop to rest for a bit.

I am pleased to be able to highlight the significant accomplishments of an outstanding homegrown Yellowknifer, and I join with her parents and her brother in expressing pride in her achievements.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON KAM LAKE ACCESS ROAD

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to speak today about a subject that Members have heard me speak about almost since the day I was first elected as MLA for Kam Lake in 2003.

That issue, Mr. Speaker, is the Kam Lake bypass road. This long-awaited, much-anticipated piece of public infrastructure finally looks as though it will be going ahead. The access road into Kam Lake Industrial Park will link the industrial park and Highway 3. It will address the issue of public safety, as there will be less truck traffic on Old Airport Road, and in the event of an accident or hazardous material spill at the top of Kam Lake Road there will now be an alternate route into and out of the industrial park. It will open up the west side of our airport for future development, and it will also allow the City of Yellowknife to access more industrial land for development.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware an MOU was signed earlier this year between the City of Yellowknife and the Government of the Northwest Territories on this bypass road. I want to thank the federal government for providing the GNWT with the multi-year, multi-million-dollar Building Canada Fund, which was the catalyst to finally getting the bypass road to the stage we're at today. Funding from the Building Canada Fund, coupled with money from the City of Yellowknife, will eventually get this road built. I would also like to thank Mr. Yakeleya and the DOT department for brokering this MOU.

Mr. Speaker, the question now is when and how the funding will be allowed to flow so this important piece of transportation infrastructure can finally be built.

I will have questions for the Minister of Transportation at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HIGH COST OF LIVING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

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

Today I would like to talk about the cost of living and its impact on residents in smaller communities. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight of the 15th Legislative Assembly conducted pre-budget community consultations on what the government spending priorities should be. These consultations confirmed that the number one issue was the cost of living. It's not a new issue but one that continues to remain high on the public agenda.

Many residents in larger communities tend to have different perspectives on cost-of-living issues from those in small communities. In the larger communities basic daily expenses such as fuel, electricity and food are generally in comparison with larger centres in the south, thus having minimal impacts on a household's total disposable income.

In smaller communities these basic daily expenses have a much larger impact on household incomes. For example, Mr. Speaker, a two-litre container of milk costs \$7.89 in Fort Resolution and \$7.98 in Lutselk'e. This is similar for other items such as Pampers, formula, bread and meat items.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, the impact of limited income on a single mother with three children when one container of milk costs \$8, Pampers cost \$30 and one case of formula goes for almost \$90? The cost-of-living perspectives are certainly different among those living in larger centres from those living in smaller communities.

Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's Budget Address he specifically acknowledged the cost-of-living issue and said, "Taking actions to provide long-term solutions to address this reality" and "address the factors that impact the cost of goods and support individuals and families."

When a family from Lutselk'e wants to do some Christmas shopping, it'll cost them over \$1,700 before they even get a chance to walk through the doors at Wal-Mart. Mr. Speaker, transportation costs in and out of the community are an everyday reality for residents in fly-in communities like Lutselk'e. How will this government address these factors, and how will this government support individuals and families to minimize these impacts?

It's good to hear the Premier talk about energy-efficient programs, enhancing programs for building

affordable housing and funding major changes to the current income-support programs.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Beaulieu: For those residents living in smaller communities, Mr. Speaker, these initiatives have minimal impact on the daily grind of managing the high costs that come with living in smaller communities. So I ask once again: how will the government support individuals and families to minimize these impacts? In the Budget Address, reducing the cost of living was one of the five strategic initiatives. These initiatives were developed by all 19 MLAs, with mandates from their constituents. Later, I will have questions for the Premier.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF DEH CHO YOUTH WORKER POSITION

Mr. Menicoche: [English translation not provided].

Mr. Speaker, I would like to state that I am pleased the government has reinstated the regional senior recreation coordinator position. The services that recreation staff provide are very important to my constituents, as we have seen through the numerous petitions, letters and media reports.

The regional sports and recreation office in Deh Cho has one more valuable member of its team that was identified as part of the cuts and has yet to be reinstated. This is a youth worker position. This position is unique to my region and provides much-needed support to community recreation and sports programs in the ten communities in my riding. Deleting this position would be a step backward and leave a big gap in service for the youth of the region. I ask that the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs reconsider the decision to eliminate the youth worker position in Deh Cho riding.

Mr. Speaker, good recreation and sports programs focus on the strength of the youth, help build confidence and self-esteem, and support healthy choices, which are key priorities for youth identified by this 16th Assembly. In order for us to get there, we need to enhance youth sports and recreation services in the community, not reduce them. Mahsi cho.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INUUVIALUIT FINAL AGREEMENT 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, I want as well to follow along with my colleagues from the Inuvialuit region and my colleague from Mackenzie Delta in recognizing Inuvialuit Day here in the Northwest Territories. We've heard lots of discussion about the claim process. In 1984 the idea was to start bringing authority to the rightful people — the jurisdiction and the land. This agreement has done that and shown time and time again the fact that when you bring authority to the North and to the people, things can get done and they can move on with many decisions. Much like that, we talk about the North and the development of the North. When we get this kind of settlement done, a conclusion brought to the table, we can start building and moving on, much like the Inuvialuit have.

Mr. Speaker, there have been past statements I've made in this House as a Member, and I talked about how one day we were the haulers and the cutters of wood and now we are business owners and involved in that. So I just want, again, to recognize, along with my colleagues, that today is Inuvialuit Day, and the fact that, as we've talked about getting authority in the North.... When you look at the settled claims, they're an example of that progressiveness by aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories. We will look forward to continuing to build on those types of initiatives.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize one of my leaders in Mackenzie Delta, Charlie Furlong, Chief of Aklavik. Charlie's one of my mentors; I think we got involved in politics in 1984 with the formation of the Mackenzie Delta Regional Council back then. It was my first step into politics, where I was the vice-president and Charlie was the president. We're talking about going back 24 years; that's quite a while ago. Charlie is on the campaign trail, as we all know. I wish Charlie all the best on the trail. Best of luck and thanks again, Charlie.

Hon. Floyd Roland: I'd like to recognize some visitors to Yellowknife. They're here for the Matco barbecue to celebrate 20 years of the company being here in Yellowknife. No stranger to many of us here, I'd like to recognize the president, Mr. Ray Anderson. Joining him today is Mr. Lorne Stockley,

vice-president of government services for United Van Lines, based in Mississauga, Ontario; his wife as well is with him, Shirley Stockley. As well, Mr. Ed Keelaghan, sales manager of Matco — I hope I got that last name right — and Ms. Jenine Cerny, marketing coordinator for the company.

As well, I'd like to welcome Chief Charlie Furlong.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I'd like to recognize a very successful businesswoman and one of the best constituency assistants in the business, Ms. Denise Yuhas.

Mr. Ramsay: I, too, would like to recognize Mr. Ray Anderson of Matco Transportation and the folks from United Van Lines who are here with us this afternoon. Ray is a former business mentor of mine — a fine, upstanding business person located in Kam Lake Industrial Park. As well, Mr. Anderson is a big supporter of the Kam Lake bypass, so I'm glad to see him here today.

Hon. Michael McLeod: I'd also like to recognize Chief Charlie Furlong, whom I've had the opportunity to work with during the days of the Dene Nation and Métis Nation joint leadership. He is now a candidate for the Gwich'in opposition.

I'd also like to recognize Ray Anderson and thank him for joining us. I'm sorry we couldn't make your barbeque.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: I'd also like to recognize Ray Anderson, who has the operation in the Sahtu region. Congratulations on your 20th anniversary.

I also recognize the Chief of Aklavik Dene Band, Mr. Charlie Furlong.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Not to be repetitive, Mr. Speaker, but I'd also like to recognize Mr. Ray Anderson, who was a colleague of mine when I was involved with the NWT Chamber of Commerce and who contributed greatly to that organization. Also, Matco is a resident in my constituency of Hay River South in Hay River.

Mr. Speaker: I don't think we've missed anyone in the gallery today. If we have, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings.

Item 7, acknowledgments. Item 8, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 263-16(2)

EARLY ENTRY TO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my questions to the Minister of Education. Earlier today in my Member's statement I talked about the need

for flexibility. I have a constituent problem where they are trying to get a child in potentially a little early to kindergarten, but the policies we have existing today don't allow that type of flexibility. My question specifically to the Minister of Education is: would his department look at developing a policy so some type of review could happen, just like Alberta has set up, so that if a child is able to or it's warranted under special circumstances, they could allow a child to enter kindergarten — enter the school system — just a little bit early?

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

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: With respect to the Member's question, we do follow the Education Act, and our legislation clearly highlights that we do accept children to enter kindergarten at age five before December 31. Those are the rules and regulations we've been following for a number of years now. We are following the Education Act.

Mr. Hawkins: It comes as a great relief to me and probably this House to see that the Minister of Education follows the Education Act. What I'm asking is that the Minister go back and take a look at the act and see if they can create some flexibility in the policy. Alberta has a policy where if your birthday just falls a little past that December 31 date, the parents, in conjunction with the school board, do a review with the child to make sure they're able to and if the school board can allow that child. It's a school board decision. That's really what I'm asking for. Would the Minister be willing to go back to his department and discuss coming up with a policy to build that flexibility into this situation so we can move forward just like Alberta?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: In order to look at those areas of concern the Member has raised, certainly our department can look into other jurisdictions, the policies we have on hand and what other jurisdictions are involved in, whether it be accepting those students that are born after December 31 or, based on their criteria, their testing of those children to enter the school system. This type of work can certainly take place. I can certainly work with my department to initiate that process.

Mr. Hawkins: Can I accept that as a commitment from the Minister?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Certainly, like I said: I will work with my department and get back to the Member on what we find in our investigation and research with other jurisdictions throughout Canada.

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

QUESTION 264-16(2)
RENEWAL OF MINING COMPANY
LAND USE LEASES

Ms. Bisaro: Mr. Speaker, my questions are addressed to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Several months ago I spoke in my Member's statement about the lack of any legislative requirements for holders of land leases to provide security to the GNWT to ensure that land remediation is done once the leases are ended. Here in Yellowknife, Newmont Mining Co. holds several leases for the now closed Con Mine property. Portions of these lands are of great interest to either the City of Yellowknife or the Akaitcho First Nation. To the Minister: can he advise how many leases are currently held by Newmont Mining Co. for Con Mine?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the leases are still being held by Miramar Con Mine, and they are in the process of being assigned to Newmont under the terms and conditions that are currently in place. The number of leases we're talking about is five different leases.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you to the Minister for advising me that they are not yet with Newmont but still with Miramar. What are the dates of expiry for these leases, and can they be renewed by Newmont and/or Miramar on their expiration?

Hon. Michael McLeod: There are a couple of different expiry dates for these leases. Three of them are expected to expire by 2011, and the other two are, I believe, 2021.

Ms. Bisaro: The second half of my question was whether or not these leases can be renewed by Newmont at expiration. I'd also like to know if Newmont, or Miramar, has given any indication of their intention to renew any or all of these leases.

Hon. Michael McLeod: I didn't answer the second question, and I apologize for that. Yes, the leases can be renewed. At this point I don't have any indication whether there's going to be an application to extend the leases or renew the leases upon expiry. The leases are currently in good standing, and we expect them to be transferred over.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: I'd like to know, then — to the Minister — whether or not the department is going to be pursuing this issue with Miramar or Newmont, whenever the licences get transferred over, to determine their intentions in regard to renewal of

leases. It's of great interest both to the City of Yellowknife and the Akaitcho First Nation.

Hon. Michael McLeod: I can't say with any certainty the extent of our responsibility to inquire to that effect. I will, however, have my staff have a general discussion with the company and see what some of the general plans are, and report or advise the Member on what the results are.

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

QUESTION 265-16(2)
GUIDELINES FOR SEISMIC LINES

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of ENR. I want to start by saying that I've heard the Minister's concerns about cumulative defects, and I understand his commitment to ensuring we actually avoid another Alberta North situation. I'm wondering: will he ensure that the guidelines for seismic lines that are being drafted are not business-as-usual and do reflect a more progressive approach to that situation?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, the intent, as the Member has indicated, is going to be to work with the federal government, Environment Canada as well as with IMAC. There's a draft coming out in June, and we're going to look very carefully at the feedback to the third draft. Our intent is to allow the work to be done but in a way that minimizes the footprint. We'll be taking the feedback we get very seriously.

Mr. Bromley: The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board has done a comprehensive review of projects that have submitted proposals for development in Campbell Hills and other areas. They've established guidelines like 2.5 metres and so on. Would the Minister ensure those standards that are set are given some weight in that consideration?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, we listen very carefully to the concerns raised in this House and the recommendations made. As we speak, we have staff in the department making note of the issues. I will commit to making sure I talk to the deputy and, as we proceed through this process, that those concerns are definitely kept in mind.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for those comments from the Minister. I'm wondering if the Minister would agree to share that draft with me so I can share that with my constituents when the drafts are ready for further consultation.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, the plan is to have the third draft ready for public consultation release. I have yet to see it myself. As soon as I have one in my hand, I'll make sure I get some more copies, and I'll share one with the Member; as well, I will send one to the Chair of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee.

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

QUESTION 266-16(2)
HIGH COST OF LIVING
IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I talked about the cost of living and its impact on residents in smaller communities. I would like to follow up the statement with questions to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's Budget Address, he specifically acknowledged the cost-of-living issue and talked about "taking action to provide long-term solutions to address this reality." I'd like to ask the Premier: what actions within the context of the small-community issue is he referring to with the mention of long-term solutions? What time frames has he identified in these areas?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The area of reducing the cost of living incorporates quite a number of areas, whether it's energy, housing packages or rents in a number of areas. We've laid out a package under the lead in this area of reducing the cost of living. Minister Lee will be working with the departments. As well, we can consider working with Members on specific initiatives. I think it would be a good opportunity. But we need to look at resolving the maximum-rent issue through, for example, the Housing Corporation and how rents are set in our communities. We'd like to start that work in '08-09, so this year.

We're looking for alternative energy. For example, natural gas conversion is an option in '09-10. As for alternative energy studies and work, whether it's run-of-the-river hydro, things of that nature, some of that work is ongoing now. We want to continue that process as well.

For example, the housing strategy aimed at quality infrastructure is a public housing repair investment. We want to aim at starting something there in '09-10. There are quite a number of other initiatives under transportation, whether it's widening of highways and airport extensions, realizing that does help in the cost of living when goods are landed in communities.

Mr. Beaulieu: In his Budget Address the Premier also states that the government will address the factors that impact the cost of goods and will support individuals and families. I'd like to ask the Premier: keeping within the context of small communities, what factors is he referring to? What kind of supports will be available for individuals and families?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, we've yet to come up with a final product, but here's where we're looking at going. One of the areas I talked about is the maximum rent in our smaller communities. That needed to be balanced out when we looked at our housing initiatives across the Territories.

The other one falls into, for example, the income security reform piece with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. That is looking at things like a healthy food basket, as well as the income security programs that reflect on our seniors and those who are disabled in the Northwest Territories, and looking at how we deliver that level of programs and services in our communities.

We've also discussed the area of the Food Mail Program. That's delivered by the federal government — Canada Post — and there are increasing concerns coming from communities who say that's not really benefiting their community as it was supposed to. We're going to have to look at how we proceed and gauge at that level as well.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier: is there anything that's happening right now in this area that would impact the cost of living immediately?

Hon. Floyd Roland: We do have quite a number of programs that were operated and will continue to be operated by the Government of the Northwest Territories. We will need to sit down with Members, especially in communities where there's high cost of living and access is difficult, to review those programs and how they can either be enhanced or altered to work better in those communities.

There are programs, for example, in today's environment that are available to all people across the Territories that have a bigger impact in those highest cost communities. The Territorial Power Support Program helps people for the first 750 kilowatt-hours, the Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Program as well; and then our Income Support program, the food basket.... Now we have to look at, I guess, what would be termed as those on lower incomes working in communities that are feeling the very brunt of the increased cost of living and how we come up with programs. We need to sit down and have some discussion and debate on those.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. To assist the Premier in reducing cost-of-living initiatives, and again keeping within the context of small communities, will the Premier commit to establishing a joint committee of representatives — with Ministers and Ordinary Members — to look at and identify the high-cost-of-living factors and their impact and ways for this government to support individuals and families to minimize these impacts?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, I would say that that would be a good avenue to work on. The fact is, as a government we talk about sustainable communities and delivery of programs and services. Minister Yakeleya, for example, is going to be the lead on the regional and community delivery initiative, so we could probably work in that area to try to set up some terms and look at different avenues. So yes, I would be willing to engage at that level and see what we can come up with together.

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

QUESTION 267-16(2)
TEACHING POSITION VACANCIES
IN BEAUFORT-DELTA REGION

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On numerous previous occasions I spoke about the shortage of teachers in Nunakput. This continues to be a great concern for many parents in my riding. I'd like to ask the miniature — Minister — of Education, Culture and Employment to tell me: what is the status of the placements?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was beyond the miniature status.

Laughter.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: I'd like to thank the Member for asking that particular question, because it has been a concern for the Beaufort-Delta, and it has also been a concern for our department. Our department, as I said, along with the Beaufort-Delta school board, is pursuing the filling of the principal and the teacher positions. There were five principal positions that were vacant, but the good news is that all five have been filled to date. Of the 26 teaching positions that were to be filled, there are only four outstanding at this point. We've come a long way since the last question from the Member.

Mr. Jacobson: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister commit to keeping the communities informed on these last four placements?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to keep the Member informed of the status of these positions that are being filled. It is the expectation that these four teaching positions could be filled by the end of June. We will keep the Member posted on our progress.

Mr. Jacobson: Can the Minister tell me what plans the department has in place to ensure that in the future the department takes a proactive approach rather than a reactive approach to these issues?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Our department, along with the school boards in various regions, does monitor the teachers and the principals and the high-profile positions that are to be vacant. At that point the request goes out, and that's when the recruitment drive goes into full action. Certainly, we'll continue to monitor that. The teachers and professionals give notice, I believe, in early spring, so at that time we know for sure. Certainly we'll keep working hard in these areas with the Members and also with the regional perspective. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 268-16(2)
ACCESS TO GRAVEL SOURCES
FOR AKLAVIK

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. It's in regard to a motion that was passed in this House on accessing gravel sources for communities, especially in the communities of Aklavik and Tuktoyaktuk. I see you've taken care of the problem for Tuk, but you haven't dealt with the problem for Aklavik.

I had the opportunity to speak with the Gwich'in Land Administration. They do have a pit-management plan that this government is part of. They've done core samples on the pit outside of Aklavik. There's an extensive gravel reservoir there that has been accessible for quite a few years. I'd like to ask the Minister: exactly when can I see some movement in regard to this government allowing Aklavik to be treated no differently from the community of Tuktoyaktuk?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Yakeleya.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department is fully committed to working with various levels of industry and government in terms of improving our transportation system. It is also

committed to giving capacity to partnerships in the community.

As I've mentioned to the Member, I'm prepared to go into Aklavik and sit down with the community to scope out what needs to get done to work on the issue of Aklavik gravel pit.

Mr. Krutko: Meetings are all great and well, but at the end of the day we can meet until we're blue in the face. My issue is: what is this government going to do in the meantime?

This pit has been accessed going back to the mid-'80s. It's part of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claims Agreement. It was part of an overlap agreement between the Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit. It's identified in those land claim documents as a gravel source. Yet I see nothing in regard to why this government is not recognizing this as a gravel source like any other gravel source in the Northwest Territories.

This government has been spending money on access to the gravel source for years, yet we hear, Let's have another meeting. I'd like to ask the Minister: exactly when will we see the dollars that are going to be needed to put this road into this gravel source?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go into Aklavik, have a discussion with them, make them offers in a partnership process. We had identified in our proposed budget, through the lead Minister of the Building Canada Fund in terms of the research and development fund, that there is going to be some dollars there identified in terms of working with Aklavik.

It's an extensive process. We want to get the work done. We certainly want to work with the people of Aklavik. There are other needs — investments — that are also competing with the Aklavik gravel source initiative. I am prepared to go into Aklavik and work with the community to see what we can do within the life of this government. That's my commitment to the Member and to the people of Aklavik.

Mr. Krutko: The Minister can go into Aklavik all he wants. At the end of the day, all we're going to do is talk.

In regard to this project, we have major projects for community access roads. Projects that weren't even part of the planning process are getting money through federal infrastructure funding by way of bypass roads.

I'd like to ask the Minister: when will I see dollar signs in this budget or some direction from that Cabinet that there will be capital expenditures on this road to Aklavik? I'm not meeting unless I have that answer.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before and I'll say it again, I'm very, very optimistic and would like to sit down with the people in Aklavik and look at the issue. When it comes to Building, we in my department have identified research dollars going into this particular project.

We do have competing issues out there right across the Northwest Territories on transportation issues, gravel issues, airport issues, new roads and existing roads. So let's be fair here. Let's see what we can do within this lifetime and sit down with the lead Minister of the Building Canada Fund. Let's see what we can do. I know I want to move on this issue, and I'm prepared to go into Aklavik — as I said before — to see what we can do within the time frame of this government.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister Yakeleya. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, there were some 21 items that were sent to the federal government. I'd like to ask the Minister: did you meet with every community that those 21 projects were addressed for? Did you get the permission of those communities to get those projects in place? Do you have a written agreement with every one of those 21 projects before you send a letter to Ottawa?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: I will certainly take into consideration the concerns about projects of the Members from the other side. I have listened from the time I've been sitting on this side here. They have been advanced in the past government. They have looked at issues where projects have been on the books for 12 or 15 years. They are coming forward, and I am looking at the plans. Certainly I'd be happy to work with the Members in terms of their projects for their regions and their communities and where best to put our investments in all of the Northwest Territories to improve our transportation system.

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

QUESTION 269-16(2) KAM LAKE ACCESS ROAD

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Transportation, and it gets back to my Member's statement and something I've talked of a number of times in this House: the Kam Lake bypass road, the city of Yellowknife bypass road.

For reasons I spoke of in my Member's statement, the road is much anticipated, it's long overdue, and I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation: how much is this road going to cost and who is going to be paying for what?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Yakeleya.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say to the Member for Kam Lake that he has been very persistent in this area, as have other Members from Yellowknife. On this specific project there's an estimated number right now of \$7 million to build this road. I'm very happy that the Department of Transportation and the City of Yellowknife have reached an agreement on an MOU to construct the bypass road from Highway No. 3 to the Kam Lake area.

Mr. Ramsay: I thank the Minister for that. Again, I thank the Members who have supported this project along the way, and also the City of Yellowknife for their patience in all of this.

I'm just wondering again: how much money is the GNWT actually contributing to the Kam Lake bypass road?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: As I said before, the agreement has been reached by the department and the city. The negotiations took some time to complete, and then the agreement of the MOU, which states the terms of the financial agreement. Fifty per cent of the estimated \$7 million is coming from the GNWT.

Mr. Ramsay: The \$3.5 million the Minister talks of coming from the GNWT, is that from the Building Canada Fund? My understanding is that the City of Yellowknife is paying \$3.5 million and the Building Canada Fund is paying \$3.5 million. I thank the department and the Minister for brokering the deal, but how come the GNWT is not involved in this financially?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: I do appreciate the thanks from the Member. The bill cannot fund the project, having not been approved yet. The lead Minister is working with his counterparts to conclude those financial arrangements.

We are anticipating this will be a project that will go ahead. The funds will begin through the department to work with the City of Yellowknife in terms of building this important bypass road.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Minister has any idea when and how the federal funding from the Building Canada Fund is going to flow through this department and to the City of Yellowknife so they can leverage their \$3.5 million, and get this road started and constructed.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Once we have signed the final funding arrangements with the Government of Canada, through the Building Canada Fund project, then the lead Minister would

renegotiate the project. Certainly the department would be on side with the lead Minister in terms of concluding these important projects we see from the Northwest Territories.

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

QUESTION 270-16(2)
ELIMINATION OF
BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I brought up in my Member's statement, I have questions about what the government's plans are for our Business Incentive Policy. I understand that Minister Bob McLeod, with ITI, is going to be putting together an options paper to look at that.

I feel like I'm having déjà vu, because it feels like every government I have been involved in has tried to figure out a way to kill the BIP. Then ensued a very long and heated debate, and then a decision not to do it — for very good and sound reasons, I might add.

Someone has already alluded to the grandfathered nature of our BIP under the free-trade and interprovincial trade agreement. If we do away with it, we will not get it back in its current form. I think it is important that we look very seriously at this. Now, I'd like to say, Go out and do extensive consultation, but I happen to know that just a very few short years ago we went out and did very extensive consultation at a fairly good price. I would like to ask the.... At that time, I should say there was an agreement to set up a monitoring program to monitor the BIP for three years so that a cost-benefit analysis could be done. What is the status of that monitoring and that report?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have set in place a contacts registry, which makes for a very transparent contracting and tendering process. That registry has been in place for four years, and so we will be tabling a report in the next week or so.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Michael McLeod's comments in his Ministerial statement yesterday has already generated a lot of questions out there in the public. Prior to the budget session I had been asked by several constituents if there was anything coming up on the BIP. I assured them there was not, in terms of the reductions exercise. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know: is this proposal to have BIP eliminated on capital projects imminent? Is it something that is already decided? Is it just something being contemplated? Where are we at in the process of making any kind of a

decision about that, and where was the participation from this side of the House?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The question with regard to the BIP was raised on several occasions. The Premier raised it in his budget speech. It was a prominent piece of budget speech. A briefing was provided to the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning, I believe, in which the review of the infrastructure was presented as well as the matter of the business incentive program. The committee has completed a report and has recommended that the Business Incentive Policy be rescinded, and I have been tasked with developing options to see how we can do that.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Just to be clear, when the Minister said that the Priorities and Planning Committee was briefed, well, first of all, I don't remember that. There might have been one line on one slide. But quite apart from that, when he says the committee made a recommendation to rescind the Business Incentive Policy, let's be very clear: that is not a standing committee from this side of the House. That's one of the Ministerial committees — let's make that clear, Mr. Speaker — in which we are not invited to participate, correct?

I would like to ask the Minister, so that people out there understand, how much money do you think you could save by rescinding the Business Incentive Policy versus how much money you think it would cost us in terms of lost revenue, taxes, jobs, people? How much would it cost versus how much we are going to lose?

Hon. Bob McLeod: We talked about the contracts registry earlier and, according to the contracts registry, the premium for 2007–08 is \$220,000, approximately. The fact that this premium is so low reflects on the fact that we have had significant departure of businesses from the Northwest Territories; the fact that there is no competition on contracts and tendering; the fact that with large capital projects we are lucky if we have one or two companies bidding on them, which has resulted in significantly large bids, some as much as 100 per cent over estimates of costs. That is the nature of what we are trying to deal with, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see this is going to be another long and protracted debate on this topic. Having the departure of businesses out of the North and having such a low premium, as indicated by the amount of \$220,000, businesses have left and gone south. So why don't we get rid of the BIP and then we'll just get rid of the BIP for the rest of the businesses. We'll send the rest of them south. The rationale for this is not sound.

What kind of consultation is going to take place prior to any decision being made about the Business Incentive Policy? I would also like to ask the Minister.... Well, I'll just leave it at that. That's one question. What kind of consultation is going to take place? Oh, the other thing is, is it going to affect, right now.... Is it anticipated to affect all contracts or just capital project contracts?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I just received direction to look at options yesterday, and I expect the process will be taking place for several months. We are looking for at least 2009–10. I don't think we're looking at eliminating our preference policies totally. We want to maintain our local and northern purchasing, and we want to find ways for truly northern businesses to benefit from government spending. As such, we will be looking at ways to provide incentives so that truly northern businesses can benefit.

I think that another aspect is that when you look at the businesses, we have about 1,200 BIP businesses, and 76 per cent of the BIP businesses are located in the larger regional centres. I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but what I'm saying is we have to find a way so that the businesses in the smaller communities can access these contracts. We will be looking at that as well.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

QUESTION 271-16(2) SENIORS' SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to see in the Finance Minister's Budget Address that the budget for seniors' supplementary benefit was being increased by \$155,000. I'd like to direct my questions today, if I could, to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I'd like to ask him: of the \$155,000, what's the overall budget figure for the senior citizens' supplementary benefit?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. That seniors' supplementary benefit for 2008–2009 means there's \$2.575 million today.

Mr. McLeod: I thank the Minister for that. I'd like to ask the Minister if all senior citizens who are getting pension cheques from Ottawa automatically qualify for this benefit.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Our department works closely with the seniors and also with the federal government. Based on their eligible income, they would have to be assessed as well. I can certainly get more detailed information on the actual process for the Member.

Mr. McLeod: I think where I was going with my question was whether they automatically qualified or did they have to apply for it. I think the Minister may have answered part of that question. They applied for it and it's Means-tested.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: I would have to get more clarification from my department on that. We do work with the federal government on that particular item. I'm more than willing to do that, to share that information with the Member.

Mr. McLeod: I thank the Minister for that. I'd like to ask the Minister to commit to providing this Member information on how many seniors this assists and the amount of money seniors are getting by community. I'd also like to know if this increases every year as per the cost of living.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Certainly, over the years the number of seniors who are accessing the funding has been fluctuating. In 2006–2007, according to what we have on the stats, the seniors receiving a senior citizens' supplementary benefit were at \$1,219. On a year-to-year basis it does fluctuate. I can certainly provide those stats to the Member.

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

QUESTION 272-16(2)

EMPLOYMENT FOR SUMMER STUDENTS

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Summer students are very important to the North, and this government does a great job in supporting them from the education point of view. Many summer students come back to the North looking for summer employment. They hit a lot of brick walls when they pound the streets because summer jobs are few and far between. Recently summer student jobs have been trimmed back a fair bit. That being said, what the government and, of course, the subsidy the government provides the public sector to encourage them to hire those students....

I'd like to know what the present status is in this government as to how many students we have hired right now. What is the wage subsidy we're providing to private sector employers to make sure our returning summer students, our hopes for the future, are employed?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for Human Resources, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I'm pleased to report that, so far this summer, the Government of the Northwest Territories has hired 220 summer students.

Mr. Hawkins: It's been a long session already, so I appreciate — me forgetting to mention which

Minister — that you knew which one I was talking about.

Mr. Speaker, I think in past years we've hired at least 150 more summer students. I've heard out there in the public that the private sector is not being funded to help pick up that shortfall of students that they normally get a subsidy for in that sense.

I'd like to know what the subsidy normally is provided to private sector employers to make sure they can help pick up that shortfall of summer students who don't get employment out there.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We used to have a program whereby we would make up to \$5,000 available on application per student, and that program is no longer in existence.

Mr. Hawkins: I appreciate the answer there from the Minister. The program no longer exists and, as I understand it, we've hired in the range of 150 fewer students this year. Has the government then moved on or considered any other initiative to make sure some of these returning students to the North have an opportunity for gainful employment? They provide a real value to our community as well as to the economy. Has the Minister looked at establishing or revisiting this program to make sure that trend is reversed?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I believe the highest we've ever achieved in hiring summer students was last summer, where we reached 351 summer students. Once we get through the budget and the levels of funding have been finalized, I expect we'll be starting a big push to hire summer students. We'll be sending out notices this week to departments to encourage them to start hiring more summer students. That's the way we'll be proceeding.

Mr. Hawkins: With all due respect, just so we have all the facts on the table, there is almost a 40 per cent drop between what we hired last year and what we're presently hiring this year. I appreciate the Minister saying there's going to be some notice, but we'll be in a situation where that's too little, too late. A number of these students could be providing desperately needed relief to the departments through some of their projects, and students need money; I mean, let's not kid ourselves. They need money for their education; they need money to make sure they can get out there. So, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister press forward on this issue to make sure that that notice is launched right away, as well as do some public education to let students know that opportunities are coming forward?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we'll be notifying the departments, through the Ministers, that hiring of summer students is a big priority for this government, and we'll be encouraging all

departments to maximize the number of summer students they hire.

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

QUESTION 273-16(2)
PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask questions of the Minister of ITI this afternoon on the Minister's statement this morning on the Protected Areas Strategy and some of the legislation and tools the strategy and his department have. Under his discussion of the Territorial Parks Act he mentioned the different categories, cultural conservation area and so on. I'm wondering how many parks have been established in the natural environmental parks category and the wilderness conservation area category under the Territorial Parks Act legislation.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has come out only recently. I think the legislation was just passed in the last year in the last government. I don't think we've had the opportunity to establish any parks under this new legislation.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you to the Minister. I wondered when that legislation came in. I knew it was relatively recently. I'm aware that the communities of Deline on the Ikaahuk conservation area, and the community of Wrigley on a conservation area near there, have expressed interest to the department in using this legislation to sponsor conservation areas. I'm wondering if the department is supporting these community requests and the requests for support to establish these areas.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The PAS process has eight steps involved, and the Deline protected area is well advanced. The Tetlit'Zheh proposal has been submitted, requesting ITI to act as a sponsor. We're presently at step 3 of the eight-step process.

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, it seems that these categories of the Act are not really in line with the mandate of Industry, Tourism and Investment. They're much more in line with the mandate of Environment and Natural Resources. We pointed out before some overlap in mandates and conflicts of interest, if you will, between the two departments. Is there a plan to straighten out this legislation and move that over to where it obviously belongs in ENR?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, my government just completed a two-year process of splitting up

the Department of RWED into the Departments of ITI and ENR, and considerable discussion and effort went into that. At that time, it was determined that the responsibilities as outlined in the legislation the Member referred to be housed in ITI.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister for those remarks. I can't see the reason for that, obviously. As I pointed out, there's a conflict in mandate; they don't line up here. I'm wondering if the Minister could provide me with the reasoning behind that decision.

Hon. Bob McLeod: The reasoning is the fact that ITI has the responsibility for parks. And the legislation for parks has provided this tool to help establish conservation areas and so on. I think people in the Northwest Territories feel it has been long overdue, whereby our government does need tools so we can establish and protect areas that are important to the people in the Northwest Territories. That was the rationale for putting it with ITI.

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

QUESTION 274-16(2)
ELIMINATION OF
BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow-up to my questions to Minister McLeod, I did find the reference in the budget here. It says: "The GNWT intends to consider the elimination of the Business Incentive Policy," and it talks about that not having any implementation until 2009–2010 fiscal year. That's why it didn't grab my attention, because it is not — to the question I asked you before; I'll answer it — imminent that this is going to change.

To the statistics that Minister McLeod quotes when he says that 76 per cent of the BIP is taken advantage of in the large centres, and 85 per cent.... Those statistics.... I guess my question is: what's your point? I mean, the communities you name: Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik.... Most of the people live in those communities, so what's the purpose of stating those statistics?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's just a statement of fact — 76 per cent of all the contracts go to companies in those four communities. That's all it is: a statement of fact, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I thought it might have some relevance to the consideration of eliminating the BIP, and I just didn't know what the connection was, so thank you.

It's just a statement of fact. Well, that's an interesting fact. I think that everything is relative to the people who live in those larger centres. They are still, in many times, small companies, medium-sized companies, that are struggling, that are looking at competing with big-box stores or southern suppliers. The BIP goes some ways toward ensuring that those dollars are spent here in the North to provide Northerners with jobs, and that money goes around in our communities. I just wanted to state that.

To the consultation that took place previously — very costly, very expensive consultation: will that be dusted off and considered? These folks who are being consulted might be getting weary of this, and I'm sure the answers will all be the same.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I can remember going back at least three governments, maybe four governments, that have looked at the BIP issue. We will certainly utilize all of the information that was used in all those previous governments.

I guess I should point out that the landscape has changed, and the Government of the Northwest Territories is not as significant a player when it comes to contracting. Also, we have the advent of MOUs with aboriginal corporations, aboriginal governments.

All of those things have changed, so I think it's a very appropriate time to look at this whole issue.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, indeed, the landscape has changed and will change very significantly going forward. For a community like Hay River, which is close to the Alberta border, you don't have to go very far south until you can tap into much more cost-effective business overhead. Just go to High Level, Alberta. There's natural gas. There's much, much cheaper power.

I don't think we want to drive businesses that have invested in the North out of the North, and there's some real merit in keeping them in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister: if he thinks that \$200,000 is such a small amount of money, or paying at a premium anyway, because the landscape has changed and we're not the big players anymore.... If it's only a \$200,000 premium, why bother with such a small amount? Why make such a drastic change for northern businesses competing for a savings of \$200,000?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I guess the BIP premium of \$200,000 is a reflection of the problem I see in the Northwest Territories with the lack of competition

resulting in significant cost overruns on major projects.

As I mentioned yesterday, the Business Incentive Policy is not the only avenue to provide for northern preference. There are other ways of doing so, and we've indicated that we will be looking at other ways of providing for northern preference.

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

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly be looking forward to this Minister including Regular MLAs in this discussion.

For myself, Mr. Speaker, I believe we should be strengthening incentives to northern companies to stay in the North, to start in the North. We have been just constantly diminishing our support to northern business. I think that this, in fact, needs to be strengthened and enhanced.

I'd like to ask the Minister: will he commit today, on the record, that Regular Members of this House will be fully consulted on the options before any implementation takes place?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I'd like to re-commit to that, because I recognize that we need to build significant relationships and support if we're going to get anywhere with making any changes. The most important people to work with would be the Members on the other side.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

QUESTION 275-16(2) ELIMINATION OF BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY

Mr. McLeod: Thank you. I'd like to follow up on the questions some of the Members were posing on the Business Incentive Policy. I'd like to ask the Minister.... I just heard him, in an answer to Mrs. Groenewegen's question, say northern interests will be well looked after. I'd like to ask the Minister if he meant negotiated contracts by that statement.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I'd be as definitive as that, but as part of the change in the landscape, it's a fact that we do have Memorandums of Understanding with at least two aboriginal governments whereby the government has committed to work toward a guideline of achieving 50 per cent of contracts with

the aboriginal governments. That has changed the landscape of contracting.

Negotiated contracts and sole-sourced contracts are still policies of the Government of the Northwest Territories, so they are part of the mix as well.

Mr. McLeod: There are many companies up here that have been here for a while, but they're not in partnership in any MOUs. I'd like to ask the Minister: what happens to those companies?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The practice so far, with the two Memorandums of Understanding on government contracting, has been that we are committing to tender 50 per cent of contracts in those areas where we have Memorandums of Understanding.

Mr. McLeod: I appreciate his answer, but the fact is that a lot of these companies qualify for BIP. I'd like to ask the Minister: regarding contracts that go out now, is there an indication that we're getting a lot of tenders from outside the Northwest Territories? Speaking from experience, I know the BIP policy does help you when you're in smaller communities. It might be a 5 per cent difference in the smaller communities, which is not much in the overall big picture, but it does help the smaller communities. I know that for a fact.

I think that was my question to the Minister: is there an indication, on tenders that have been out, that we're getting a lot of out-of-territory bids on them?

Hon. Bob McLeod: We're still very early days in this review, but our experience is that on the contracts that have been tendered we have very limited response. For the majority of them — up to 60 per cent — there are only two companies that respond, and in about 15 per cent we have no companies that respond.

In the areas of the larger contracts — and possibly because of the fact that the Business Incentive Policy has been in place for 24 years — there is very little interest expressed by other companies, because 20 per cent is a significant number to overcome.

In goods and services, I think, with the advent of the Internet and so on, there's probably more interest shown in those areas.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister McLeod. The time for question period has expired; however, I will allow the Member a final supplementary. Mr. Robert McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I'd like to ask the Minister if the NWT Construction Association.... Did his department talk to them at all about how they feel about the Business Incentive Policy?

Hon. Bob McLeod: It is our intention to talk to all the stakeholders in the Northwest Territories. The Department of Public Works has had ongoing discussions with the NWT Construction Association, not specifically with regard to the Business Incentive Policy but more as to contracting and construction in general. We have talked to the Chamber of Commerce. We will be talking to all of the stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister McLeod. Item 9, written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 8, Tabled Document 37-16(2), Committee Report 6-16(2), Committee Report 7-16(2).

By the authority given me as Speaker by Motion 10-16(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with Mr. Abernethy in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, committee. We'll be calling Committee of the Whole to order. We have a number of items in front of us. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I understand it, the committee would like to continue review of the Department of Health and Social Services and, if there's time, continue with Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Does the committee agree?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We'll take a short break and then return with those items.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, committee. We'll be calling Committee of the Whole back to order.

MAIN ESTIMATES 2008–2009
DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee, do you wish to bring witnesses in?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, please, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Please have the Sergeant-at-Arms seat your witnesses.

Can you please introduce your witnesses to the Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my left is the deputy minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Gregory Cummings. To my right is Mr. Derek Elkin, director of finance.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee.

We left off yesterday on page 6-19, Activity Summary, Program Delivery Support, Operations Expenditures Summary: \$31.363 million. Are there any questions? Are we agreed?

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Program Delivery Support, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$31.363 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Page 6-21, Activity Summary, Program Delivery Support, Grants and Contributions, Contributions: \$14.521 million. Are there any questions? Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Sorry, Mr. Chair. Did we skip over 6-20, or you said 6-19 and 6-20 and I wasn't listening?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Pages 6-19 and 6-20 are related, similar content. So we were given 6-20 content on 6-19. Do you have questions you want to ask on page 6-20?

Ms. Bisaro: Yes, I do.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): All right, Ms. Bisaro, please proceed on page 6-20.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some of this might have been covered yesterday, but I did want to ask the question, since I raised it in my opening comment.

A number of the reductions for this department relate to professional development for nurses. I wondered if I could get an explanation from the Minister as to how we're going to.... Sorry. First of all, whether or not there's a full uptake on the professional development that is provided for our nurses for them to advance their learning and to

take educational leave and so on. If there is, by reducing these funds how are we going to encourage them to stay with us for long service, to advance in their areas of expertise and to, therefore, provide better health services for our residents?

Hon. Sandy Lee: There were discussions on this in the last two days. The reductions are mostly to do with bursary programs, and incentive programs that are administered by Human Resources on behalf of Health and Social Services. Historically there has been under-subscription. The reductions are much less than the new initiatives.

We are investing \$1.5 million to expand the community health nurses program, as well as the Nurse Practitioner Program. So on balance, we are doing more than compensating for the reductions.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: That's it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Are there any further questions on page 6-20? Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I view this as the crux of the whole department, of course — program delivery support. I want to talk briefly about a subject I raised in general comments: the support of the voluntary sector.

People should note that the voice of the sector, Volunteer NWT, has been silenced, and agencies are being forced to reduce programs and services — for example, YWCA — or have second thoughts about much needed programs and services. For example, the Salvation Army is starting to back away from running the Bailey House.

As a government, our support for this sector is becoming emptier and emptier; no resources attached to commitments. Social and economic consequences of a collapsing voluntary sector will reverberate throughout our jurisdiction, and we'll be picking up the pieces at even greater costs.

How is this Minister going to address this situation, which is, frankly, deteriorating further and further? Do we not realize that their costs go up at the same time? Do we not realize the efficiencies that they bring? These are largely volunteer people with credentials anybody would be proud to have in their organization, and they're working at a fraction of the cost, and the wages, et cetera. So I'd like to know how the Minister is going to address this situation, and I'll be talking to other Ministers about this as we go.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do agree with the Member that the work of NGOs is

crucial to the delivery of programs and services in the Territories. Obviously the volunteer sector, and I think the Member is including the NGO sector as well, has different categories of NGO groups in the Territories.

The Department of Health and Social Services has not reduced any grants and contributions to any of the groups the department is responsible for funding. Most of them are through health authorities, but we have over \$1 million we do fund from the Department of Health. In fact, in the last year there were a number of situations where extra money was found to fund the YWCA, YACCS and organizations like the Salvation Army and lots of other organizations. They are getting funding from not only the Department of Health but lots of other organizations. I want to say that under the fiscal situation we are operating I have made it a priority to make sure that NGOs are treated very much the same way as the front-line services. We have to make great effort, actually, to maintain the funding for NGOs at their current level. I believe the Premier has stated in his budget statement that there will be some more work done on looking at the NGO sector and volunteer sector and work on a new initiative.

Mr. Bromley: I don't doubt that the Minister and the department have been helping out with the occasional bail out here. That's exactly what it is. This flat level of funding does not address the situation these agencies face. An esteemed employee and a political and values leader in the North, Mr. Jim Bourque, had a saying I can't fully repeat here, but he used to say, "You can't eat like a bird and something like a horse." That's what we're asking these agencies, these volunteer groups and non-government organizations to do. We're asking them to continue providing these major services with decreasing resources. I'm not saying the Minister isn't correct that they're getting equal funding; the value of that funding is providing less and less support.

Again, this is hugely efficient. This is probably the most efficient use of dollars and resources for us. So I'm asking the Minister to do more than flatline funding.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I can assure the Member that we're not flatlining at all. We are increasing our funds to our NGO groups at 3 per cent, which is the growth target we have for the entire budget, even for the authorities. We are increasing funding in the department for NGOs by \$21,000, Beaufort-Delta by \$23,000, Deh Cho Health by \$67,000, Fort Smith by \$80,000, Hay River by \$8,000, Stanton by \$74,000 and Yellowknife by \$133,000.

I just want to remind the Member again that we did find extra money for YWCA. This is why you probably haven't heard much from them. There

were some requests there, and vocal requests, for extra funding. We did cover that. Under the new strategic initiative Building Our Future, we have committed to the second phase of the Family Violence Action Plan. There are two components to that program that we believe could assist with other shelter programs such as YWCA. YACCS is another example where the government stepped up to the plate and increased the funding so they could have their increased funding.

When we're talking about forced growth and fuel, those are all very specific issues we deal with on a case-by-case basis. There is flexibility within organizations such as YACCS, which is quite large compared to many other organizations, but also there is flexibility within the authorities to look at their money to accommodate that. I don't think it is correct to say it's flatlining, but everybody has to look at the budget they have. We do recognize that the NGOs are a very important part of our program service delivery.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you to the Minister for those remarks and pointing out that support. I was using the terminology that has been used by others. It's good to have the words "maintaining funding" defined to include the 3 per cent.

On the YACCS situation, as I have mentioned before in the House YACCS has applied for forced-growth costs for fuel and utilities and so on and been declined. But it's ultimately been recovered through deficit funding from the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, who then has to go into deficit themselves and seek recovery of it. This has been going on for a few years. I'm wondering, and this is probably traumatic for all, if that's not something that could be addressed progressively and brought into the fold so it's not always on a deficit basis. It would be easier for all.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I appreciate the comment. I don't think there were questions.

Mr. Bromley: I was pointing out the situation and asking if that could be resolved so that these non-government organizations don't have to carry these costs into a deficit situation which is then finally reimbursed by the authorities, which have to go into a deficit situation themselves and seek recovery from the department. I'm wondering if we could just acknowledge the existence rather than going through the agony of that process. It would probably be cheaper as well. Is the question clearer there?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I will take that advice, and we will be looking at — how can I say this? The forced-growth issue, especially one that's been driven by increasing fuel costs and such, is something that is relevant for government expenditure all across the Territories in all organizations and departments and

authorities. Right now all our authorities are engaged in controlling growth. The NGOs will be faced with a similar exercise, but we have to look at it in each program area and its organizations and try to manage it as best we can. I do understand that pressure the NGOs are under to deliver their services and programs under these circumstances.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question in regard to the long-term care and planning. I know that at the Aklavik seniors' facility, there was supposed to be a bunch of renovations to the facility. I'd just like to know where that stands in regard to the plans of the department.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'm not aware of major renovations being planned with the long-term care facility in Aklavik. It's a building owned by NWT Housing Corporation. I can take that under advisement and get that information for the Member.

Mr. Krutko: I believe it was in previous years. I know last year they were supposed to do a bunch of work on it in regard to the foundation and whatnot, and on the Charlotte Vehus facility. I'm just wondering why it is that it's not part of the capital plan that was there previously. Was it because of cuts?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't believe there were any reductions in work for that facility as a result of the reduction measure. I understand there were some revisions done to that facility two years ago.

Mr. Krutko: Are they looking at expanding other types of care facilities in communities, such as seniors' care facilities, independent-living facilities and level 2, level 3 facilities? I know you're talking about a dementia centre for Yellowknife. But again, are there plans to look at care for seniors who are aging? I'm just wondering: do you have any plans in place to look at the whole area in regard to seniors' care facilities in communities, so that people don't have to leave their home communities to go to, say, the larger centres for seniors' care?

Hon. Sandy Lee: There are no plans to build new long-term care facilities for seniors. But the department and I as Minister are very committed to.... We understand that we need to have a very good long-term plan to respond to the demographic needs of the NWT population, which we know is growing in line with the national trend. Baby boomers are getting older, and that's the biggest bulk of the population. We do have an older population in the NWT whose needs we need to meet.

There are ways of meeting those needs, and the building of the facilities is only one option. We are looking to increase the services available in communities, such as home care programming, to increase the chances for seniors and others in need to be able to stay in their homes in their communities as much as possible.

Mr. Krutko: Presently there's an arrangement between the Department of Health and Social Services and NWT Housing Corporation to provide seniors' housing in communities. The Housing Corporation builds and manages it. The Department of Health and Social Services pays the O&M on those facilities, such as seniors' housing. That's what I'm talking about. I'm asking because it's a dual-departmental responsibility: is there any plan to build more seniors' housing through the arrangement between the NWT Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: In the Department of Health and Social Services, our first priority is to deliver as close to home as possible. That's why we emphasize home care services. I believe, in most cases, the arrangement we have with the type of housing the MLA is speaking about is that the Housing Corporation builds and maintains those buildings and the Department of Health and Social Services makes arrangements to provide the necessary home care services so people requiring support can continue to live safely in those circumstances.

Mr. Krutko: I think as a government we should be doing everything we can to deal with our housing situation in communities, but also to ensure we do have barrier-free houses in communities for our aging population. I think that as a government, sure, we can provide home care, but if we don't provide the environment for people to age and also to accommodate the mobility issues that come with aging, you have to at some point make a decision that these people are going to need a special type of housing.

I'd like to ask the Minister exactly.... I know I've raised this with the Housing Corporation — to look at different types of housing for different segments of our population. I think seniors' housing, by simply putting a facility in a community, opens up more housing accommodation for other members of the community by way of allowing families to be able to have access to houses that seniors may live in. If a senior moves into, say, a dwelling that is designed for seniors, it opens up that housing in that community for families and other members of the community. So again, I'd like to ask exactly why it is that we're not doing more to enhance that type of

housing in communities so people can stay in their communities to be close to their families, and also to ensure they have houses that are designed and meant for barrier-free access for people who are aging.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I think the discussion here is veering a little bit into the overall housing needs for seniors and the different spectrum of needs for seniors; it is one I have not really had a chance to look at closely. I will make the commitment to the Minister that I will be talking to the Minister of Housing and looking at some of the profiles of communities.

I do agree there is a lot that Health and Social Services can do to work with Housing. I was just in Fort Resolution, for example, where they built independent units for seniors. The only way — and a better way — for the seniors to live in those units is to increase the home care support. We understand there are lots of seniors who need a little bit of help to live independently with some help with home care. But they don't necessarily have to be in 24-7 care, and that is in line with a bigger and long-term objective we have as a department. I look forward to having more discussions on that and looking across the territory — an all-community profile — and seeing how we can best meet the needs of seniors.

Mr. Krutko: Just a question in a different area in regard to rehabilitation. I'd just like to ask the Minister: do you have some figures on the cost of rehabilitation and how much money is being expended for alcohol and drug treatment in the Northwest Territories and outside the Northwest Territories — how much we spend for NWT treatment and also how much we spend for southern treatment where you refer people to southern treatment facilities?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, for the year '07–08, we have spent \$5 million for adults in southern treatment.

Mr. Krutko: Can the Minister tell us how much we spend in the Northwest Territories for treatment?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I don't have that information handy because, obviously, our hospitals, our clinical places, our Nats'ejee' K'eh programming, Sally Ann — a lot of them we fund by core funding. For example, Nats'ejee' K'eh we pay, through Deh Cho Health Authority, \$800,000-plus. We wouldn't be calculating to see how much all the programs are spending, but we could attempt to get that information for the Member.

Mr. Krutko: I believe there was questioning the other day in regard to Mr. Hawkins, about people being referred to the Stanton Hospital in regard to mental health. They were put into the psych ward and whatnot. That is another cost associated with

alcohol and drug abuse. You know, this government is paying for it, so I think that before we conclude this department, it would be good to get that information to see exactly how much money we are really spending in the alcohol and drug treatment area. I think maybe it is time we re-look at the whole idea of clinics and at treatment facilities in the Northwest Territories, like we had prior.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if we could get the kind of information the Member is suggesting before the budget is wrapped up, but we will make an effort to do that. But you know, a lot of those services are part of the essential services we provide through our Health and Social services expenditure.

What I do want to tell the Member, and I have said many a time in the House, is that I am very interested in revisiting our mental health and community wellness program as well as the mental health services that Stanton Hospital is providing, and how that connects to the rest of the communities. Also, I have mentioned a number of times about looking at the job descriptions and duties of these wellness workers and mental health specialists in communities, so that we give them the best tools and the necessary powers and authority to serve the clients who come to them in a more holistic and multidimensional way. It's a project I have not had a chance to really finish yet, and I'm hoping I'll be able to come to the Standing Committee on Social Programs in our new business plan with some discussion package for the Members to put their input and feedback to.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. On page 6-20 are there any other questions? Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are we on 6-20 or 6-21?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thanks, Ms. Bisaro. We're on 6-20. If we're done with 6-20, we can move to 6-21. Agreed?

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Program Delivery Support, Program Delivery Details: \$31.363 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We're on 6-21, Activity Summary, Program Delivery Support, Grants and Contributions, Contributions: \$14.521 million. Are there any questions? Ms. Bisaro.

COMMITTEE MOTION 29-16(2)
 TO REINSTATE STANTON HOSPITAL
 TELEHEALTH COORDINATOR POSITION
 AND ASSOCIATED CONTRIBUTION FUNDING
 FOR A TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$210,000,
 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES,
 PROGRAM DELIVERY SUPPORT
 (COMMITTEE MOTION CARRIED)

Ms. Bisaro: It's not a question but I do have a motion, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee strongly recommend the government take immediate action to reinstate funding in the amount of \$210,000 for the proposed elimination of the Stanton Hospital Telehealth coordinator position and the associated contribution funding provided to the biomedical unit at Stanton Hospital under the Department of Health and Social Services under the Program Delivery Support activity.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. A motion is on the floor and is being distributed. The motion has been distributed and is in order. To the motion, Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We discussed this somewhat yesterday, but I think it needs to be reiterated; the points need to be made again. It's important that we don't reduce our Telehealth coordinator positions any more than they already have been. The department originally reduced these coordinators to one coordinator in Inuvik. I believe firmly that we need to have a coordinator position at Stanton as well as one at the hospital in Inuvik. I also believe the use of Telehealth will have an impact on the cost of medical travel for our residents. I think I said the other day I can't quite believe the amount of money we spend on medical travel. I can only see that Telehealth, and the extension of Telehealth, is going to make inroads on this huge expense we have for medical travel and moving people around from communities to see doctors, for consults and so on.

The coordinator position is valuable in that it will encourage staff in health centres and regional hospitals to use the equipment more, to make it a standard in the way they operate, so that it simply becomes part of their daily work. I think that without a coordinator, without somebody to take the idea — the action — in hand and actually promote it; to visit people, encourage them and provide support to them; this is not going to go forward. I see that Telehealth and this particular program are going to be of benefit to us. It's definitely going to reduce our costs in terms of medical travel, and I think it's also going to make it better for people in the communities, in that they won't have to be constantly travelling from a community to a larger centre to see a health specialist. So that said, this is why I've made that motion.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): To the motion, Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to be supporting this motion. I've heard a lot of the conversation. I've heard the responses from the department. At the end of the day, given our increasing costs and challenges around medical travel, I honestly believe Telehealth is going to be one of our solutions. It may not be utilized to the degree it should be now, but that doesn't mean it doesn't work. I hear the department saying, basically, There are other people to run the equipment; we don't need those people anymore.

Eighty per cent or more of the Telehealth that's going on right now is going through Stanton. To take somebody out of Stanton who's a dedicated champion — and I mean champion — somebody who can get out there and work with the doctors and nurses and provide training and encourage and motivate individuals to use this equipment... The equipment will not be used to the degree and the extent that it should.

I understand there's somebody in the department. You've said it over and over again — that that position is more of a territorial coordinator responsible for trying to get the infrastructure and technology out to the territory as a whole, getting it into the communities, encouraging and motivating organizations such as the RNANTNU as well as the Medical Association to buy into the product. It is a valuable position as well. But at the end of the day, you need a champion on-site in Stanton, where turnover among staff — nurses, doctors, PTs, OTs, all those types of positions who can and should be utilizing the equipment — is high. You need to ensure they are trained, prepared and understand the benefits and value that such equipment and technology will provide. Without that on-site champion where, once again, 80 per cent or more of the Telehealth occurs, it will peter out. It will not have the strength, and it will not have the effect.

Currently out there, there are all sorts of things running through Stanton and the Telehealth unit. We're doing discharge planning. We're doing mental health consults. We're doing physiotherapy consults. We're doing physiotherapy follow-ups, occupational health and therapy consults and follow-ups, perinatal consults, genetic counselling, pediatric home nutrition support. We're doing pediatric surgery follow-ups. We're doing patient diabetes education consults and follow-up, family visitations, family meetings, clinics, consults with physicians.

There is a significant amount of training. Some of the associations who are out there are working with our champion on-site to coordinate training for associations — the Physiotherapy Association, the nursing association, the stork program, which is

being delivered in many of the other authorities and hospitals around the Territories. They are working with the champion we have at Stanton to ensure the equipment is up and running. There are meetings going on; there are educational opportunities that exist. All of these things need somebody to help all these lay people use this equipment efficiently and effectively.

I'm supporting this motion because I believe getting rid of the champion at Stanton, who should be supporting the entire southern half of the Northwest Territories.... We've already agreed this is an important position, and you have reinstated the position in Inuvik to take care of the northern part of the territory, to do similar things to what I've just described. To leave the southern half of the territory hanging without a champion who could provide the training, ensure the equipment at Stanton is up and running and support those people in other communities and other hospitals around the territory is a bit short-sighted, I believe. That's why I'll be supporting this motion. I think we need to keep our champions. I think we need to ensure we're using this more than we're currently using it and thereby reduce some of our medical travel costs.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Next on the list, I have Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Bromley. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, will be supporting the motion that's before us. I agree wholeheartedly with my colleague Mr. Abernethy and what he had to say, and I won't go over everything. I did want to start off by saying that over the years — and it goes back probably about 11 or 12 years now — the government of the Northwest Territories has spent millions and millions of dollars in the area of Telehealth. It's a substantial investment the government has in this area. In my mind, we have to protect that investment. Just leaving it to its own devices without the champion, as Mr. Abernethy said, is a step backwards.

I think if we're looking at the area of health care costs and rising costs in that area of our operation, it only makes sense that you would look to Telehealth as a way and means to cut back on costs. Why we would target...? You know, I never understood why we were targeting the position in Inuvik and the one at Stanton in the first place. I'm glad to hear the department has reconsidered the coordinator position in Inuvik. They should have, and I'm glad they've done that. But the one at Stanton is definitely necessary, and it was alluded to earlier. Eighty per cent of the work in Telehealth in the Northwest Territories goes through that hospital, and this position is much needed. When we're trying to save money it makes no sense to be cutting an area where potentially — and it has a huge potential, Mr. Chairman, to save this

government tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical travel.... Again, I just don't understand the rationale that the government uses — or the department uses, for that matter.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): To the motion, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understood the reasoning the department presented on this. But I felt the evidence was weak, given the potential benefits of full uptake of the technology. I'm especially talking, also, about medical travel, which, given the cost of fuel and so on, is likely to soar. So I would encourage the department to put in place a really good monitoring effort and to document the uptake — the wide uptake of this technology and the savings to medical travel, especially if they really do believe it's already accomplished here. Provide that evidence, and on that basis, I would see this as an opportunity for some early savings in the near future.

I'd like to make sure that's in place because, again, savings on travel has the benefits of both dollar and environmental gains. I'd encourage the department to demonstrate fluency and wide uptake.

I don't know if there are other speakers, but I'd like to request a recorded vote on this.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): To the motion, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be supporting this motion. In brief, I have some experience setting up a conference-call centre from when I used to work for the federal government. I remember that one of the reasons they did this was the money they could save in travel. And the immediate relationship they could build, in the sense of doing work, was great.

I see this as an extension of that sort of thinking, where they have these fantastic tools. We were able to get people who are sick and whatnot to be able to get that relationship built up with experts and to do that work.

Mr. Chairman, that can only work with the appropriate staff and the appropriate people in place to do this. It causes me some concern at this time to see this deleted. I fear we would be putting that system in jeopardy, or the system could be put at risk. It takes a while to build up these things. As has been cited by other members of this committee already, the concern is there that the fully operational.... The success of this could be put at risk, and I don't want to see that.

Mr. Chairman, I'm just going to close by saying not much more can be said because it's already been said. I would hope the government would reconsider this. If this is the way they want to go, by

reducing this area, I would need a little more evidence at this time. I can't support that. That's why I'll be voting in favour of this motion.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): To the motion, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the comments of the Members. For those Members who were not here, I have been committed to the.... When this debate was going on, about eight years ago, I remember when the Telehealth project idea came up as a new idea. I was a supporter of the Telehealth program. I believe it has a bright future in the North. I believe the North is particularly designed for the kind of services Telehealth provides.

At the same time, it will be very difficult for the department or for us to reinstate this funding if it means we have to take it from other positions that might be considered more essential. Now, we're talking about choices and relative choices. As it was stated in our budget session here, the department went through 19 position reductions; eight of them came out of Directorate. Because all the reductions came from headquarters, it amounts to 12.5 per cent of the labour force. I'm not sure if we could reduce any other positions in that area.

Their suggestion is that if the coordinator position is not at Stanton this programming will come to a halt. I don't think there is evidence to suggest that. I also don't think there's evidence to suggest medical travel expenses will go down because there is a Telehealth coordinator at Stanton. What we are trying to do is.... The Telehealth coordinator position at headquarters will be re-profiled, so that position should be the champion for this program. We understand that for the Beau-Del regions that person has to serve eight communities and that person will do more of the northern work.

As stated earlier, we have to make choices about how we could best use our resources so we continue to deliver the programs. If the work can be done by someone else, in some other way, then we should look at that. Now, a nursing job can't be done by a non-nurse; social work can't be done; doctors' work can't be done; physiotherapist, occupational therapist or any other medical and health work cannot be done by someone else. I think we have presented very good evidence to suggest the Telehealth program can continue and expand and be implemented without having a qualified Telehealth coordinator position. I don't think there is any threat or any chance this program will be jeopardized in any way. We just have to find different ways of doing that.

I do appreciate the Member's thoughts and comments on this, but I think we need to be mindful of the relative weight we have to put in. If this reinstating means I have to reduce a nurse position

or some other positions that cannot be done by somebody else, that would be a difficulty. But I will — we will — consider the motion, and we'll have to judge them in relative terms.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): To the motion.

An Honourable Member: Question.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Question is being called. I have been asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

Principal Clerk of Operations (Ms. Bennett):

Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Robert McLeod, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Beaulieu.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): All those against the motion, please rise. All those abstaining from the motion, please rise.

Principal Clerk of Operations (Ms. Bennett):

Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): The vote is ten in favour, zero against, and seven abstentions.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): We're on page 6-21, Program Delivery Support, Grants and Contributions, Contributions: \$14.521 million.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Program Delivery Support, Grants and Contributions, Contributions: \$14.521 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Information item, Active Positions, Program Delivery Support, page 6-22.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Program Delivery Support, Active Positions, information item (page 6-22), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Information item, Active Positions, Program Delivery Support, page 6-23.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Program Delivery Support, Active Positions, information item (page 6-23), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Health Services Programs, Activity Summary, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$175.476 million. Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask a question relative to the fees and payments listed under Details of Other Expenses. There is an

increase in other expenses from the Revised Estimates last year to this year of almost \$4 million. The Fees and Payments have risen \$2.5 million or so. I wondered if I could get an explanation of the reason for the increase and, secondly, what the fees and payments are generally used for.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Health, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The fees and payments are for out-of-Territories hospitals, out-of-Territories physicians, out-of-Territories hospitals transfer of Canadian Blood Services to Stanton. Those are hospital and health services out of the Territories. The budget amount for the increases is \$3 million for out-of-Territories hospitals; \$1.2 million for out-of-Territories physicians; and \$4.6 million for out-of-Territories hospitals, where we have seen a 30 per cent increase in the rates the southern hospitals charge us.

Ms. Bisaro: I thought I heard numbers of about \$7 million in increase there, but the fees and payments have only gone up about \$2.5 million. I'm a little confused. Could I get an explanation, please.

Hon. Sandy Lee: May I get Mr. Elkin to clarify?

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The increase between the Revised Main Estimates and the opening Main Estimates is the difference between what we got in funding in 2007–08. In 2007–08 we received supplementary funding of \$4 million for out-of-Territories hospitals and \$1.3 million for out-of-Territories support physicians.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro — Minister Lee. Oh, the other way around? How about I do it completely the other way around, then? Thank you, Mr. Elkin. Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank Mr. Elkin for the explanation. It certainly helps. I just have to repeat we're comparing apples and oranges, and it makes life a little difficult.

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

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I raised some issues in general comments and am following up for some more specific feedback from the Minister on emergency care provisions.

A number of people, often with 30 years' experience in emergency services in our hospitals, are raising the issue of the need for security in those places. As our world gets more and more into drugs and cocktails of drugs, there are some very dire situations. We're extremely vulnerable in this way, and this needs to be resolved. I'm wondering

what the Minister is doing to address that. That surely must have been profiled with her already.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do understand and appreciate that these are issues the Member has brought to our attention. We have forwarded them to Stanton Territorial Hospital. I do understand they have security clearances there. At least after hours they have security guards there. It's an issue I'm prepared to have a fuller discussion with the public administrator about when we next meet. We're trying to meet quite regularly for the next few weeks.

Mr. Bromley: I would encourage that discussion, of course. I know there are sometimes security people there, but they're not really trained. They're essentially doormen. I think there's some real services and expertise needed to handle fairly large and emotional people.

Following up further on emergency care, another issue that has come up with medical staff is that there are no longer clerks on in the evening and the night-time hours. Especially on weekends when they're very busy, the nurses and doctors end up doing the administrative work at a time when they really should be looking after people. I think this has been raised with the Minister. I'm wondering if she's had discussions — I suppose it would be, again, with the public administrator. I'd appreciate comments on that.

Hon. Sandy Lee: On that issue, I think we need to look at the Yellowknife consolidated clinic. In this budget it's a capital item. Now that the DPW has recommended — and it's in the books as the lease option — lease improvements, the tender will go out when the budget is passed. The expected opening time is October of '09.

That is relevant, because the emergency unit of Stanton is not being used for what it was designed for. It was supposed to be for an emergency in a hospital. But as the Member is well aware, as is anybody who lives in Yellowknife and those who use services from out of Yellowknife, we are accustomed to going to that emergency unit for everything. With the consolidated clinic, what we hope to do is expand the hours of services so that we will have a clinic open there from 8 o'clock in the morning until midnight, if at all possible. People will know to go there, so the emergency unit at the hospital will be used only for hospital emergencies.

The new place will be furnished and fitted and designed to handle those emergency issues. I think the proper use and proper design will go a long way in addressing the security issues and staffing issues and administration issues.

Mr. Bromley: I did catch the Minister's reference that when the budget is approved, the contract will go out. Just kidding there.

I'm very supportive of the consolidated clinic. I understand the reasoning the Minister has provided there, and I'm anxious for that to be in place. I hope the Minister will look to dealing with the situation in other ways in the short term, between now and October of '09 or whenever that clinic is in place.

Moving on to another subject here, I'd like to just mention the health care cards. There are 42,000 people, roughly, in the Northwest Territories and 44,000 cards out there. Of course, just issuing and administering those cards costs dollars. If the additional 2,000 are used, the costs would be greater, and there'd be pressure on our systems and so on. I'm wondering if the Minister has come up with a solution that's reflected in the budget here today, and what's being done on that situation.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't believe there is a particular or a specific increase to address that situation. It's part of the operation. There is a scheduled renewal of cards next year, and implementation is going forward with that. Since questions about the number of cards versus the population have been raised, the health insurance administration office in Inuvik has been working with the Audit Bureau to go through all the records to see if there are any anomalies. We have been able to reconcile the numbers quite substantially. I don't have that information with me, but I would be happy to provide that info. We don't expect that there will be extra money needed to do that work.

Mr. Bromley: One last point on community nurses. We've had a number of vacant positions, and some that have been vacant for a long time. Obviously, people then need to travel and so on, so the downstream costs are significant. Is there a plan to address those long-standing issues?

Hon. Sandy Lee: The nursing shortage, obviously, as well as shortages of other health care professionals, is something I am charged with and working on constantly every day, as the Minister, of course. I could report to the Member that we have improved the vacancy situation in many communities. We have increased the casual nurse pools NWT-wide. We have, as of the latest figures, 422 registered casual nurses who work in communities, which has allowed us to decrease the agency nurses situation. And with the last stats I saw, I believe we have been able to decrease some of the vacant positions in our communities.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have some questions in this area, so I'm going to ask my questions and hope I'm not too far off into the

wrong section. These are specific to my riding, Tu Nedhe. What I'll do is just ask a series of questions one at a time.

My first one: I recognize I have had several discussions with the Minister on this issue, but I'm wondering if there is any strategy or any plan to look at a way to keep the elders in the community instead of sending them out of the community. I know I've had discussions with the Minister, but, Mr. Chair, I'm trying to figure out if there's been any movement in that area or any plan to have any sort of movement in that area.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I do not have a concrete plan that I could report to the Member on right now.

I had the privilege of visiting the Member's community about a week before the session. We have been preoccupied with sessional business, but I want to tell the Member that I found the visit very informative, and I got full appreciation of the community's desire to not only keep their elders in the community of Resolution but to make the elders' community facility a vibrant and functioning place. I was able to meet a lot of different community groups who seemed to tell me the same thing but in different ways and on different issues. I think we need to look at a lot of different factors. I am very interested in working with the Member and the community to see what is the best, optimal way of providing the services to elders there.

So hopefully, within a short time of being out of session, when I have time to really concretely work it out, I'd be happy to come and talk to the Member.

Mr. Beaulieu: The other area that affects my communities of Res and Lutselk'e is the area of community wellness. The alcohol and drug workers in Tu Nedhe are wondering if the department has looked at increasing the comfortable accessibility of those programs.

I think that program continues to run in the communities, but there are some people complaining about location and also the fact that A&D workers don't make a whole lot of money for the work they are required to do.

I'm wondering if the department has had an opportunity to look in this area. I think it's an area where, if it were fully functional and the people accessing that service were comfortable with the confidentiality — not of the office, but of the area; right now it's in the band office.... I recognize that there are leases and everything there, too, in probably both places, but I'm curious to know if the department has done anything or has even examined this area as far as money to the A&D workers and the location of their offices.

Hon. Sandy Lee: For Fort Resolution, I understand that the mental health worker there is employed by the band office. Yellowknife Health and Social Services, which administers the program for Resolution, provides funding to the band and the band hires. I understand that that person is paid at a lower level than would be the situation for a comparable level of employee — same job — in another community, like Lutselk'e. But I do understand that the department does provide training for that. We have to work with the band office and the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority to see how we could come up with a solution to work that out. It's one we have to continue to work on.

Mr. Beaulieu: Just the last area, I suppose. I'm just wondering if the department would be looking into the whole home care area. When the Minister and I did travel into Fort Resolution, the community had talked about home care. A lot of the community members talked about home care and maybe improving the service of home care, changing the mandate of the people who are doing the home care in Res and Lutselk'e. The community there would like to see more staff added to home care.

I was wondering if the department had some sort of plan to examine the whole home care program, weighing the benefits of that against maybe individuals who would otherwise — without the little bit of assistance living comfortably — either be displaced from their homes or cost more money medically into the future if home care support were to be reduced or not changed, or if the home care program were not up to speed with the needs in the community — the various needs and so on.

My question for the Minister is: has she and her department looked at the home care program for increased support to the small communities?

Hon. Sandy Lee: As I said earlier, the home care program NWT-wide is an important component of service delivery, especially if we want to focus on keeping our elders and other people who are in need of health and social services in the communities. I think Fort Resolution is luckier than other communities in that they do have a complement of home care workers who have been given training and have gone through the training.

I do appreciate, having visited the community, that we need to do more work on that. It's work we need to do in every other community, because home care programming in some communities is relatively new. It will take continued effort for the community to know exactly what the home care worker's job is — that they're formalized, that they're trained — and that there's buy-in and communication between the community and the home care workers. I understand the community advocate position is right now being reinstated.

Through that person, whoever the new person is, and with the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, I do commit to the Member that we will work and give support necessary to make sure the program is rendered and provides the services people need.

Mr. Beaulieu: This last area I wanted to speak of is a little more complicated — for me, anyway. There always seems to be indifference, I guess would be the best term to describe it, in how the social workers.... The social workers have a policy to follow. It doesn't exactly fit with the way the people in the small aboriginal communities see the action that should be taking place under certain circumstances.

If there were — I'll use an example I've used previously — an area of child protection, how the department goes about protecting the child is sometimes not how the community would envision the child being protected. So although I don't have a specific case, a hypothetical example could be that there is a child care issue and the individual, the child, is taken out of the home. In small communities it's hard to find foster parents, so often the children are moved out and into non-aboriginal homes in other communities, sometimes even in the south. I don't think that's the case right now with the children from Tu Nedhe, but I am wondering if the department is going to take a look at this huge problem.

I'm sure other MLAs will talk about how some of their communities are an extreme case. Looking at a way to tweak the policy, or maybe even look at the standards of the individual social workers as far as education requirements go — from that to the local individual who has worked in the community in various capacities — may be excellent for working between the families and the communities, where an individual with a PhD, who is obviously very well qualified and is an expert at delivering policy.... If that's what the standards or the qualifications are, then you hire the person with the higher education standard, except that person is not culturally sensitive to the community issues in this area, the protection of children.

I am wondering if the Minister is going to have her department reconcile that somehow. I think there'd be a big cost reduction. First of all, I think there'd be a huge cost reduction if fewer kids were apprehended for their own protection. I'm not saying don't protect the kids; I'm saying find another way. They are feeling protected but pretty sad because they're protected a long way from home. So again, I am just wondering if the Minister is going to look into that area.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I have given my commitment to the Member that I will undertake to do that and work with the Member to get more.... It will be a

back-and-forth exercise on what the Member has in mind in terms of the objectives he wants to achieve. I think it should be noted that currently, as of May 2008, there are 625 children in care, and only 37 of them are in southern places. Over 420 are in their own homes with some kind of agreement — a voluntary service agreement, which is an agreement between Social Services and parents to improve the situation that has caused them to be in care or extended families.

I appreciate that we need community involvement. That's why the legislation was changed in the last Assembly to allow Plan of Care committees to be set up in communities. That's a vehicle for the communities and community people to be involved. If there are other community people who want to be involved, that's always a good thing.

I think, though, we should also be mindful of the fact.... The fact we need to consider is that the top protection matters are highly legalized, still, in all of the provinces in Canada. The test is always the best interests of the child. It's highly regulated and legalized, and there are step-by-steps these health professional workers must follow. They operate independently from even the legislators; we cannot interfere in that. But respecting that, obviously I am open to working with the Member to see how best we could incorporate the desires and interests on the part of the community to be involved in this process.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is the largest part of the Department of Health and Social Services; this is the part of the budget that actually flows all the money to all the different authorities. Just in comment to the actual budget document itself, I know the Main Estimates are prepared in a certain way, but it would be nice to actually see the breakdown of the authorities in this document. I know that's probably not going to happen, but as far as digging in and trying to get details, there's nothing in here on the authorities, which is really too bad considering it's where most of the money is going.

This leads me, obviously, into my line of questioning. We know the vast majority of the money is going to the authorities, which is probably where it should be going — the front-hand delivery, the delivery part of the department. But I understand, in looking at this, that we see only about a 3 per cent increase, and we know the national average for growth in healthcare is 6, 7, 8 per cent, depending on where you're going. It's certainly a lot higher than 3 per cent. I understand the need to turn around and rein in our spending and cap our growth, but I wonder if such a radical switch in health is going to be healthy for the health

system. It's like driving down the highway at 100 kilometres per hour and turning 90 degrees without skidding. It might be better to take a bit more of a gradual turn on this one and get to our 3 per cent growth over the next couple of years rather than trying to nail it all in the first year and causing a whole lot of difficulties.

Having said that, you're doing it; you're going to do what you're going to do. You're going to cap it at 3 per cent, and we're going to see where the chips land. There's no detail in here. Can you tell me — let's pick Stanton as an example — as a result of forcing them to maintain growth at 3 per cent, what programs and services are expected to be cut within Stanton Territorial Health Authority?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the Member should be aware that while I appreciate his comments, it's been an accepted practice — actually it's a rule — that every year the health authorities have to submit a balanced budget to the Minister. There is nothing new there. The practice is the same this year. The growth projections are capped, and the authorities have been asked to live with 3 per cent growth. Final decisions have not been made about how that is going to be implemented or how that is going to be broken out, so I do not have that information right now to give to the Member.

Mr. Abernethy: Oddly enough, I completely understand what a balanced budget is, and I completely understand what forced growth is. I know that the authorities get their budgets and are told to bring in a balanced budget, which includes forced growth. I also know that — with Stanton as an example — it never seems to happen. There always seem to be major overruns, and an \$11 million supp this year is an example. Quite possibly it means you've never budgeted those authorities appropriately and they were always underfunded, always driven into the hole, which means they weren't funded properly. This year, you're only giving 3 per cent, which is pretty normal but isn't realistic, necessarily. What I'm asking is: what's being cut out at Stanton as a result of this direction?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, no decisions have been made about what is being cut or not.

Mr. Abernethy: On the street, obviously, we're hearing a lot of stuff about things being cut at Stanton. We're hearing about some nursing jobs. We're hearing about some jobs in OR. We're hearing about some programs. I know I'm going to get the name of this program wrong, but I'm going to throw it out there anyway. I believe this is a women's program — or something like that — that

provides services on a territorial level. That has been tagged as something that can be deleted at Stanton. Can you verify that any of these are, in fact, on the block?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't think it would be proper for me to verify rumours or what's on the street, but I am aware there have been media reports by the president of the UNW local at Stanton suggesting that the nurse practitioners' positions were part of the budget cuts, that the Northern Women's Health Program was part of the budget cut. I have tried to correct that information on every occasion I could. Those are staff funding, of which the Member is very well aware from his past employment experience. Those were time-specific programs. All of those are reinstated.

The Northern Women's Health Program is part of the new positions being created with staff funding. Those NP positions are ones we've had lengthy discussions on. We have made it clear to all of the authorities that we encourage them to work with us to incorporate these NP positions wherever possible. There's no question that, given that health care costs rise higher than 3 per cent, we have to look at every penny and every program to see how we could live within our balanced budget and minimize the impact on program and service delivery. That's been my mantra in budgeting the department budget as well as the authorities' budget. I am in the process of reviewing that, and there have not been any final decisions made in that regard for any of the authorities.

Mr. Abernethy: During the 2008–2009 fiscal year, are there going to be any staff cuts at Stanton as a result of these budget reductions across the territory? What are the realities of the budget? Are there going to be cuts at Stanton during this fiscal year?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I repeat my answer. The final decisions have not been made. We know that the health care costs rise higher than 3 per cent. They're being asked to work within the balanced-budget scenario. I know all of the authorities have worked to put a budget together. Their final decisions have not been made, so I cannot answer the Member in any more detail.

Mr. Abernethy: Let me try it in a different way. Are cuts at Stanton a possibility? Are job cuts at Stanton a possibility as a result of the budget reduction exercise going on in the GNWT right now?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, my understanding of the Stanton operation is that they are in charge of administrating 53 programs, with about 80-something per cent of funding from the territorial government and the remaining from outside revenues, including a big receivable from Nunavut.

They're block funded by the territorial government, and there is a lot of flexibility on how they could manage those 53 programs: a lot more than, I believe, some of the other places.

I think it may be true that there would be a good strong case to be made that they may need to get some rebasing, or they may be able to reorganize their programs and services and minimize the possibility of reduction. That is the work that the public administrator and the CEO are involved in and that I'm involved in somewhat. So I cannot tell the Member right now whether there will be cuts or not.

Mr. Abernethy: Given that you clearly understand the value of health care; given that you clearly understand the importance of nurses, social workers, PT/OT, doctors and physicians; and given that you clearly understand the challenges they face on a daily basis and that the staffing number is already low enough at Stanton as it is — which affects the quality of care — would the Minister commit to no job cuts at Stanton as a result of this budget-cutting and reduction exercise going on in the GNWT at the current time?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I am not the administrator of the hospital. I don't run the hospital. They run 53 programs. Obviously all of the money appropriation decisions are made here. The Member knows I work very closely with the Standing Committee on Social Programs, especially in regard to Stanton issues. I've kept them fully apprised of the human resource plan issue, the public administrative issue and the zero-based review issue. I'd be fully committed to coming back to the Standing Committee on Social Programs to brief the committee as we go forward. But it would not be reasonable and fair for me to be asked to answer that sort of question. I think the Member knows that, because he's smiling.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask some questions, too, about Stanton. I asked the Minister yesterday about unfunded positions and unfunded programs. I'm wondering if she could tell me: who has the authority to institute unfunded positions and programs? Is it the authority? How do we end up still on the hook for paying for those unfunded positions and unfunded programs?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'm not a human resource expert. I've never run a government department. And I'm not now; I'm not suggesting that.

The departments, especially health authorities, are block funded. They get money to run some programs they're assigned to, then there is

flexibility within to deliver those programs. They sometimes use vacancy money to create an unfunded position where it's needed. They operate accordingly. Where there is a suitable level of vacancy, they're able to carry those off. I understand it is an accepted practice within operations like that.

Mr. Ramsay: It speaks again to the accountability factor. I know it was spoken of earlier, and we've had some discussions in the House earlier in this session about the \$11.5 million that's built up in deficit at Stanton and the fact that it's been done before. I wouldn't be surprised if it's done again. It's just like taking an eraser and erasing that \$11.5 million. To me, that's not good enough. It absolutely isn't good enough.

Somebody has to be accountable. Whether it's you, Ms. Minister, or the management at the hospital or the department or somebody at the Department of Health and Social Services, somebody has got to be responsible for budgeting the authorities. If they're chronically underfunded, let us know. These are our front-line health care providers. They need to have the resources to run.

When you spoke earlier of them coming forward and it's an accepted practice to hand in a balanced budget, that's one of the biggest jokes I've ever heard if we allow them to build up these multi-million-dollar deficits. The budget they hand into the department is not worth the paper it's written on, Mr. Chairman. Now we have a situation at that hospital where FMBS has been paying the payroll for the last six and a half months. That's \$26 million.

I'd like to ask the Minister: where is this amount going to be budgeted for?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'm not sure what the Member's question is. Is he referring to the outstanding payroll?

Mr. Ramsay: Maybe the Minister didn't hear the number \$26 million. But the \$26 million question is: where is it going to come from, and how is the authority going to pay that, or are we again going to take an eraser and just take \$26 million? Money is not growing on trees around here lately. I haven't seen any money trees growing out back. So I'm not sure where the Minister thinks we're going to find \$26 million. How is it going to happen? I'd like somebody to tell me.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I think the Members should be assured that we will not be asking the government to come up with \$26 million. As I've stated over and over in the House, the outstanding payroll issue is not related to.... Well, I should restate that. The accumulated deficit that we are expecting to be at \$11.5 million takes into consideration outstanding payroll. Stanton has the outstanding revenues as

well. They have receivables from Nunavut hospital that they're making fairly good progress on.

When you're looking at a cash flow, it is about a \$100 million operation. It did have an accumulated deficit, starting from last year and the year before. The government has funded \$1.3 million, I think two years ago, when the Stanton deficit hit a significant amount, relatively speaking, at about \$2 million. So FMBS did authorize a \$1.3 million infusion of cash.

There is a discussion that began between the Stanton Territorial Health Authority, FMBS and the department to find out what is causing the deficit situation. That discussion led to a zero-based review. The zero-based review preliminary report tells us about how much it should cost to run those 53 programs. Some of them are being underfunded, and some of them are actually not spending the money they have.

My thinking as the Minister was that we need a second layer of analysis to see. You like to think that an operation that runs at \$100 million may have some flexibility to control their finances, but I don't know that for sure. So I agree with the Member that the department and I as the Minister are accountable to the Legislature on the expenditure. I am working on getting my best information to the Member about the status of the operation of Stanton and about what led to the deficit situation. I would think it probably will be partly to do with underfunding, but I need to get specific information as to what parts of it are contributing to that and what portion of the \$11.5 million is involved. Those are the questions I am working on.

The public administrator is looking at all aspects of this question, and I have confidence that he will give us the information we need to go forward.

Mr. Ramsay: I don't know if I'm understanding this correctly: that Stanton Hospital hasn't paid FMBS back for six and a half months. That's \$26 million. How could that \$11.5 million of accrued deficit include all the payroll? That just doesn't make any sense to me.

Again, from a budgeting perspective, where is that money going to come from? What are the outstanding accounts receivable at that hospital? Why don't you tell us that? I could feel a little bit better about the fact that, yes, some money might be coming in. What is that amount?

Hon. Sandy Lee: One moment, please. I believe there are about \$12 million of outstanding receivables that Stanton Hospital is working on, and the largest portion of that is from the Nunavut government. But there are other routine receivables they're working on. They do provide services they could bill other third parties for. I don't think WCB is one of them, but there are other health authorities

that they are to bill, and they do bill and they get money. I just want to emphasize that these are not extraordinary situations, in that it is a \$100 million hospital. They do provide services to anybody who walks into operations. There is a lag in time between the time they bill and the time they collect.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Chairman, the math still doesn't really work for me. I know the Minister has committed to getting back together with the Social Programs Committee to go over the situation at Stanton. I think the sooner that happens the better, so we can try to figure out what is happening there and what is going to be the course for the future.

I agree with my colleague, Mr. Abernethy: I don't want to see people affected out there. I don't want to see services reduced. I want to see us funding that hospital to the level where it's supposed to be funded and finding out what that is.

Mr. Chairman, it's kind of ironic that when the department went out and did the zero-based review and came back with its initial findings of that zero-based review, it's shortly thereafter that we learned the hospital hasn't paid its payroll in six and a half months. That's \$26 million. The last question I have for the Minister is: if they're not paying the \$2 million every two weeks — and that's what the payroll is every two weeks at that hospital — what are they doing with the money? Where is that money going?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I have to say I do appreciate the Member's concerns and questions and the need to get into the information here. I'm providing him with everything I have, but I do have a little bit of a problem with his question, "What are they doing with the money?" They are spending the money to run the hospital. I don't know what else they would be doing.

My understanding of how the authorities are funded is that we approve our budget here, but they don't get the whole \$90 million — or whatever they're getting — in a lump sum. The FMBS keeps that, and they get instalments of money. With payroll, FMBS writes us a cheque for every employee within the governing system, including the authorities, every two weeks. The authorities or departments charge them back. So the money they're not paying back to payroll, that's \$2 million out of the \$90 million in instalments they're working on. They pay for contractors. They run their hospital.

I don't know if the Member could give me other questions to get to the answer he's getting to, but I'm not sure what to say when I get asked, "Well what are they doing with the money?" I have no evidence to think they're doing anything with the money other than running the hospital. They're working really hard to get their receivables updated.

They've been working really hard fully participating in the zero-based review, because they understand that will get them some of the answers they need and that it has implications for other authorities as well. So it's a very complex file we're working on step by step. I've already said many times that I'll be looking forward to going to the committee and presenting all the information we have, and we can make decisions together.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Lee. We're getting quite a list here, so I think we'll move on. May I call next on Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is in reference to the funding for the health authorities as well.

I appreciate that the department has capped their growth at 3 per cent. But when I look at the figures that are presented to us in the budget, I see that funding for hospitals is actually going down from the Revised Estimates last year to this year. My concern is that if the total amount of money that health authorities and hospitals — and health centres, I guess I should say — are going to be receiving is going down — although health centres are going up a bit.... But if money is going down for hospitals, how has forced-growth costs been considered in the grants to the various hospitals and health centres?

We've acknowledged many times in our discussions, in regard to every department's budget, that fuel costs, for instance, are going to be a huge impact on forced growth in every department. There's been some forced growth worked into many department budgets, but we know that fuel prices are going to be going up over the next year, farther than they already have.

I find it really difficult to understand that a hospital or a health centre's been given a 3 per cent increase to their funding, but the total amount they're receiving is going down. I'd like an explanation, if I could get one.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. If I can call on Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: Thank you. The Revised Main Estimates from '07–08 includes a portion of the one-time staff funding, which is approved on an annual basis. That amount changes every year. This is a slight adjustment from the two years between the five-year plan of the staff funding. So from year to year, it may adjust. That would account for a proportion of the change between the revised and the '08–09. From the opening '07–08 to the opening '08–09, we're increasing by about \$5.9 million this year.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you for that explanation. I guess my understanding of the way the '08–09

Main Estimates were developed was that forced-growth costs, which should have included all the costs from sub-funding from '07–08, were included, were added to the base for '07–08, and that the numbers for '08–09 included the base from last year plus all the forced-growth funding they'd received through supps over last year.

If that's not the case in this situation, I guess I would like to hear that explanation. Again, I'm confused. Sure, our budget's gone up from the Main Estimates of last year. But there's some \$6 or \$7 million between the Mains of last year and the Revised Mains. And if that money's been spent — which I'm sure it has, because it's health centres and hospitals — how do we expect our health centres and hospitals to operate with less money than they used in their Revised Estimates from last year?

I'm not sure if I'm clear, because I'm kind of getting myself confused. But I really don't understand these numbers.

Mr. Elkin: The '07–08 revised included one-time funding for Beau-Del and Stanton pending the finalization of the zero-base review. That one-time funding hasn't been included in the '08–09 targets. The Minister spoke to, I believe, \$1.6 million for Stanton. There was, I believe, \$1.3 million for Beau-Del and another 1.3 million for the prior year with Beau-Del. So we had several million in one-time funding to deal with their prior-year deficits for those two authorities. That would account for part of the change as well.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you for the explanation, Mr. Elkin. That makes it a little more clear. But it doesn't help me with my concern.

We're dealing with prior-year funding deficits or overspending — whatever you want to call it. To me that indicates these particular hospitals are not receiving enough money in funding. If it's \$1.6 million we gave them in a one-time grant, or whatever you want to call it, to cover their prior years' expenses, they still have that expense on their books. They are still going to have it this year. It is still, to me, in effect, a cut. Again, I just have to express my concern that we're putting these hospitals and these health centres into a situation where they can't possibly win.

I appreciate that Stanton, for instance, is undergoing a review, but I think our premise is incorrect and we're not giving them enough funding at the beginning of the year. We are going to put them.... Even if we take the eraser, as Mr. Ramsay says, and wipe off the current accumulated deficit, we are putting them in a situation where they're not going to be able to succeed; we are going to put them back into a deficit at the end of this '08–09

year. There's no question there. I just wanted to make that comment.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you for that comment, Ms. Bisaro. Moving on, next on my list is Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Now I am ready. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to start by saying I understand how difficult the Minister's job is. Health is one of the most complicated departments there is. Certainly it's one of the ones that costs the most money and is the hardest to deal with due to national and international shortages and wildly increasing costs in delivery of health care. I also absolutely respect everybody in the department. I have worked with a lot of them. I have seen a lot of them at work, and I know they are incredibly hard-working individuals and deserve a real pat on the back, as do all the people in each of the health authorities: all the nurses, all the doctors. Without them, we'd have nothing.

But there are still challenges. I mean, I guess the fiscal reality is in what's going on out there. There are places that are obviously working a lot better than others, and I'll give you an example. The Sahtu Health and Social Services Authority has gone from being in rough shape several years ago: no nurses, couldn't find staff, running deficits — pretty bleak out there — to the point now where they are pretty near fully staffed on a regular basis. They've got a lot more permanent nurses in the community health centres than they have had in a really, really long time. Things seem to be going pretty good out there. They've gone from being the authority that used agency nurses more than any other agency to being one that hardly uses agency nurses at all. So of all the authorities right now, they really deserve a nice little clap on the back.

The reason I'm bringing that up is because I know a lot's being done out at Stanton right now trying to find some streamlines, to try to find some efficiencies without reducing the quality of the services that are being provided. I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage the Minister and hopefully get her to commit to working through her public administrator at how some of the other authorities are running and to go out to places like Sahtu. I understand it is a completely different business given they are community health as opposed to a hospital, but there are efficiencies they are finding out there.

I think it is time that Stanton looked at some other alternatives, some other ways to deliver their services in efficient ways to gain those efficiencies and ensure that services continue to be delivered in an efficient and effective way.

One way I would also encourage the Minister to consider — and there seems to be resistance to

this one, which I don't always understand — is the value in creating some redundancy within the hospital itself. We hear a lot about the payroll. We hear a lot about the cost escalations in payroll and whatnot, but there would be some real advantages to at least pursuing and seriously considering, with an open mind, the concept of creating some redundancy in there. By that I mean creating some additional positions in Stanton, some additional nursing positions that would be on duty on a regular basis, that could be used to cover factors such as when nurses either call in sick or are away on annual or are away for any other variety of reasons, including training and development. Redundancy would cost you less than overtime and save the authority money over time.

I guess what I am asking is for the Minister to commit to exploring these options with an open mind, not being closed off to them right off the top, and working with your public administrator — who I respect very much and I think was a very solid choice — to look at some of these options, including what's being done in other authorities such as the Sahtu Health and Social Services Authority.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I agree with the Member's observation about Sahtu. It is a success story; the little train that could.

I want to assure the Member that through the Joint Senior Management Committee — which is made up of all the CEOs and which the deputy minister oversees — we are in constant touch with all the CEOs, talking to each other, looking at best practices, looking at ideas. I also have the form of JLC. So the authorities and the department are in constant conversation. I think we should be mindful of the fact that each of those eight authorities is quite different in its characteristic and its operation too.

Lastly, on the point about a float pool of nurses and increasing the number, I did say yesterday that Stanton has nine float-pool nurses. There is a proposal being made by one of the nurses that has been circulated to all the Members. It says we should go to 15. I did indicate that we are doing a cost-benefit analysis on that and that Stanton is looking at the possibility of doing a pilot project of 12 nurses, keeping in mind all of the details that have to go with that. We are not discarding that idea. It's one idea that's under consideration.

Mr. Abernethy: Just as a note, I did indicate that I realize the authorities are radically different and their businesses are quite different.

That's great. I am glad to hear that you are open to the idea of increasing the float pool. My concept was slightly different, in that I was thinking it might

actually be beneficial to extend the wards and units. For example, if you were to increase, say, surgery by a couple of positions, you'd be creating some redundancy within surgery itself, which could conceivably eliminate the need for overtime when people call in sick, because you would actually be slightly overstaffed. And those people.... Given the job descriptions that currently exist, and taking Stanton as an example, the job descriptions currently say that a nurse may be taken off one area and put in another area should demand be there. If you had some redundancy built into actual lines, into individual units, you would be able to use those people in other areas should the need arise, but they'd also be available in that unit should someone call in sick or someone be away on annual. It would just give you a little bit more freedom to help you reduce some of your overtime costs.

In addition to the good work you are doing with respect to the float pool, would you consider other options and explore other avenues to help you reduce your overtime rates at Stanton, thus saving you money in the long run?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I believe we are looking at all options.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. Mr. Abernethy? Moving on, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is in regard to the area of health services, especially in communities. I think the mess you have to face, the dilemma you are having, is to not have the access to your health centre because it's under reduced core services because there's not enough nurses. Because of that, you can only phone in for emergency cases or call the Inuvik emergency department. Or the other suggestion is that they call Telehealth, Tele-care, in regard to that service.

I think that when people see letters posted in communities saying these are the only services they will allow because they won't schedule any appointments or clinics due to the shortage of nurses, it does have an effect on the well-being of the communities. Yet one of the priorities of the government is to provide services to people. When you don't have those services, I think you really appreciate whatever little services you do have. When people talk about amalgamating clinics and walk-in clinics and all these care facilities people are taking for granted, they've got to realize that there are people out there, especially in our communities, who aren't getting the fundamental services that most people take for granted.

As a government, we have to do a better job and use locums or whatever else. At the end of the day, there are some parts of the Territories where they have a very high turnover rate by way of trying for

recruitment, retention. I know Ms. Lee said in McPherson the community has a pretty stable workplace where the head nurse has been there for three years. They are considering at some point moving on. But also through our community health nurse program, where we are training our own local nurses and they're going back to the communities, that's the goal we should be meeting.

But again, half an hour down the road, at Tsiigetchic, they haven't had a permanent nurse there for a number of years. They have a nurse who goes there every other Thursday, and that's the service they get. Yet we have a very large aging population, especially in that small community. A lot of people have to fend for themselves by either going and finding their way to Inuvik.... Something's got to be done to improve that service in the outlying community considering that the level of service is what we get in some cases — there is no service.

I think as a government, again, we're spending some \$27 million on health care centres in communities. We have to realize that sure, we have some challenges, but the fundamental bottom line is everyone should have some basic level of health care. When you don't have any health care services by way of the doctor.... If the doctors are short in Inuvik, you ain't gonna get a doctor's visit to your community; they just can't leave Inuvik. That's the problem I see in the Inuvik region. This issue hasn't got any better since the vision; if anything, it's gotten worse. Every year the Inuvik health board has been running a deficit, year after year after year, and yet we continue to see fewer and fewer services to our communities. I'd like to know where all this money is going if there are no services in communities? Who is spending those dollars that were earmarked for community health care providers — nurses, alcohol and drug, mental health nurses, doctors and whatnot?

The bottom line to me, in this day and age, is that we have a situation where people have to deal with it or file lawsuits against the government by way of health care, or lawsuits against the regional health authorities because of the service we're getting. It seems like it's coming to the point where we're out of talking; we have to basically have something change for the better so that those residents, at least, have some means of health care.

I know you talk about dementia centres and more clinics and everything else coming to smaller communities. But for us, that's dreaming in technicolour. They're great for you, but for us, if you can't get an appointment at the health centre because they're short of nurses, you can't get in unless you're almost dying or half dead before you get there. Then they might take a look at you and medevac you out.

I'd like to know exactly what you are going to do differently from what you've been doing previously, which is a major cost? We're running deficits with these health boards, but the services have been declining. I'd just like to know why it is that we're spending more money in these authorities, and yet there are no services in our communities.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'm not sure that there are no services in communities, but I guess when it comes to health care every citizen in Canada and the Territories always is hoping for more. I think the basic principle we work on is that our residents have access to services, but those services may not necessarily be located in those communities.

We do allocate a large amount of our money to make sure there are nursing services in communities. Even if you don't have a nurse residing there, we do have nursing services in communities, and we will continue to do that. If the Member would like more information on exactly where all the funds are allocated within Beaufort-Delta Health Authority, I'd be happy to get that for the Member.

Mr. Krutko: Well, I find that pretty alarming, if that's the position of this government: that you basically have access to services but it means you have to get it from Inuvik or you have to get it from Yellowknife.

My view is: why is the federal government paying this government all this money to provide services to the residents of the Northwest Territories if you have a Cadillac model in the regional centres but you no health care services in communities, and you have to hitchhike to those centres so you can get services? That's the wrong attitude to have, especially coming from the Minister. You have to have access to services but you have to go to Inuvik to get your services? I think we're going backwards, if that's the case.

I'd just like to ask the Minister exactly what has happened to this government in regard to community empowerment, community initiatives, giving the communities the resources to find their own nurses? Why couldn't a community basically find its own locum services? Give them the money; let them run the services, because they couldn't do any worse a job than what's going on here today.

I'd just like to really take on the Minister's comments about access to services. Meanwhile, there are no services in communities, but as long as you've got access to go to a regional centre, that's the process of dealing with health care?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I think the Member is aware I am committed to working as hard as I can, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, to maintain

the access to services and increase it wherever possible. We are constantly juggling that all the time.

I think the shortage of nurses in smaller communities is not necessarily about dollars, either. We have communities like Behchoko, which is located right outside of a centre that has everything, and we still have a hard time recruiting and retaining health care professionals. It's a constant challenge. It's a national and international issue.

I have indicated to the Members in the House, during the time I've been a Minister, that I am working on looking at that issue in more detail. I am excited about the challenge. I constantly talk to my officials about that, about how can we re-look at the staffing model we have for nurses, doctors and other health care providers to see how we could increase the access to communities with the resources we have. I feel that is possible. I think there has to be something we can do about there being 24 family doctors in Yellowknife and none in Inuvik region at a given time under certain circumstances.

I think the proposal that Minister Miltenberger has in refocusing government, where we will be re-looking at the Health and Social Services board.... These are not cost-saving measures; these are measures to re-look at how we are delivering our health and social services and other programs, to see how to do better with the resources we have.

I'm mindful of the fact that the Premier and Cabinet are totally committed to being fiscally responsible. Going forward, we have to be vigilant in the way we spend our health care dollars and every other dollar. I see it as an opportunity for us to look at new ways of doing that.

I have to tell the Member that I have not got that full plan. I am hoping for, and working toward having, that plan for the next business-plan cycle. I look forward to having more discussions on that.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Earlier some questions were asked about potential layoffs at Stanton Hospital, and I was just curious; the answer didn't come forward. I'm just wondering about the Minister's commitment on that. Quite clearly, the question simply is: as we move forward, are there any layoffs coming forward at Stanton?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have that information. Final decisions have not been made.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you for that. Who makes that final decision? You said that no decision's been made and you're waiting for a final decision. So who provides the guidance to make that decision?

Hon. Sandy Lee: The authorities are required, and they have always been required, to submit a balanced budget. They have given us those balanced budgets. They're under consideration and there have not been any final decisions made as to what's going to be going forward.

Mr. Hawkins: What do you do in a case when an authority provides a balanced budget but does not fulfill on that commitment?

Hon. Sandy Lee: In the past, oftentimes, even in Stanton — if my memory serves me correctly, between 1999 and 2003 — the authority has had a deficit. The practice has been that there is a combination of requiring the authority to try to come up with the money in the following year to balance the budget, and the authority has been able to do that. I'm talking specifically to Stanton, for about three years after that, and then they had more deficits after that.

My answer to the Member is that authorities have the flexibility. They are block funded. They run lots of different programs, of different sizes, whether you're comparing Stanton to Deh Cho or Sahtu. Often, they make internal decisions about their financial status.

On occasion, as was mentioned earlier, Stanton has been given some extra cash. Beaufort-Delta was given extra cash on two occasions. We have Deh Cho Health Authority, which is running a surplus because they are not able to fill most of the positions. These are all different characteristics.

Mr. Hawkins: Who is responsible for that deficit?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I do not know the answer to that. I would think the authorities are responsible for the deficit.

Mr. Hawkins: Would the Minister commit to seeking ultimate clarity as to who is ultimately responsible if there is a deficit?

Hon. Sandy Lee: The authorities are responsible for the deficit.

Mr. Hawkins: Is that a guess? Or has she just been informed through her staff?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Categorically, the answer is firm, 100 per cent yes: the authorities are responsible for the deficit.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you. When we have a deficit, how long do you have to allow an authority to carry a deficit before the department acts?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Technically, these authorities are legal entities. Many of them are run with the oversight of boards, and boards have rules to make decisions about their organizations. Where there are no boards, there are public administrators.

So deficits are the responsibility of the authorities, and authorities could, tomorrow, make decisions to balance their books. Now, we're talking about health care and so, obviously, what impacts our citizens in their health care programs affects us. On many occasions government, through FMB, has provided extra funding, and we work with the authorities to get all kinds of third-party funding from the federal government. But ultimately the financial status of the authorities, and the way they run their programs, are the responsibility of the authority.

Mr. Hawkins: So how long does an authority have to run into deficit before something is addressed?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. Ms. Lee. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If an authority is running a deficit, the expectation is that in the year following the year in which the deficit was incurred, they will provide a deficit recovery strategy to the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Hawkins: What are the expectations of that deficit strategy?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I don't understand the Member's question. Could he elaborate on that question?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Clarification, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Well, Mr. Chairman, I didn't say "stay in debt," because it's obvious there must be an expectation. There seems to be a continuation of allowing the debt to grow. My expectation normally would be — what is the expectation to get out of debt? One would think that would be the obvious question and there would be an answer to that. We're not seeing that so I'm leaving it open, because I'd like to know what the expectation is from this deficit plan.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I honestly do not understand that question. What are the expectations on the deficit? I've stated the deficit is the responsibility of the authority. Authorities have power and authority through their boards, their CEOs, to make decisions to balance that book.

In the past, because of the importance of health care and social services, obviously the decisions they made and the impact of that is relevant to us. We have pardoned that, but I think that asking

questions about what the expectations is not.... I don't understand that question.

Mr. Hawkins: I'll try it again. What are the expectations of the deficit plan if we're allowing.... What are the expectations? I should say, as the deputy minister said, if they run a deficit one year, by the second year they're supposed to come up with a plan. But I'm not seeing that a plan is being fulfilled, so I'm still lost about the expectation. I have a subsequent question that will follow once I understand what the expectation is of that plan.

Hon. Sandy Lee: As I stated earlier, the authorities are expected to submit a balanced budget every year. They are to submit a deficit recovery plan the following year if they are experiencing a deficit.

Mr. Hawkins: Wouldn't the simple answer be the expectation of that strategy is to work themselves out of a deficit?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I think we're saying the same thing.

Mr. Hawkins: Okay. Then we're saying the same thing. That's fine. What do you do when they don't work themselves out of that expected deficit plan?

Hon. Sandy Lee: We have on occasion given extra cash, or we have had lots of authorities who have submitted a deficit recovery plan to the Minister. The Minister approves them, and they work their way out of the deficit and they sometimes incur surplus.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, wouldn't that be perceived as rewarding bad management? If an authority has a deficit, can't seem to get their way out of it by second year and is required to therefore come up with a plan — and we now clearly have, for the record, the expectation is to get out of the debt.... Therefore, if they're not achieving that and the department comes in and pays off the debt, wouldn't that be seen as rewarding bad management?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Only if you assume that deficit is caused by bad management, which I don't think is the case. I don't know of any situations. If the authorities could.... They have explanations as to why the deficit is caused, and then they have a plan as to what they can do. We have professional managers operating these hospitals, health centres and authorities. If a deputy minister of any department projects that there would be a deficit, they have a means of balancing that book, whether you're keeping the vacancies open, not following up on a contract or buying something new, or whatever.

I said earlier a hospital the size of Stanton — where they have 53 programs and almost a \$90-million-

plus budget — does have some flexibility on how to manage those deficits. We do understand, with Stanton, that there has been a significant accumulated deficit that they will not be able to recover in that way.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Ms. Lee. We've all been working very hard here. I think a little sustenance might benefit the discussion, so I'm going to call a short break so we can service that need.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, committee. We'll be reconvening. We're on page 6-25, Activity Summary, Health and Services Programs, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$175.476 million. Are there any questions? Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to access to services, I'd like to ask the Minister: do you have a number — I might as well use my constituency, the Mackenzie Delta communities: Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson — for those who have had to access services from outside the community or had to go to Inuvik for those services? Do you have those numbers?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't believe I have that information handy. Beaufort-Delta is responsible for providing services to all eight communities. I'm not even sure if they would keep track of where all the clients are coming from within their region, but I can undertake to look into that.

Mr. Krutko: In regard to the number of days the health centre is open or being closed because you're short of nurses and whatnot, do you track that information?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't have that handy, but I will undertake to get that.

Mr. Krutko: I think we should make every attempt to find the reasons these health centres are closed, why people can't access services at their local health clinics or health centres and have to make their own way to Inuvik to see a doctor or get medical attention on their own. I think if that's the trend we're seeing, we should have a system in place and make it clear that people will establish clinics in Inuvik so the outlying communities can come in, go to those clinics and receive the service and attention they should.

Since the Minister made a reference that access to service isn't guaranteed in every community as long

as you make the attempt to provide that service, I'm trying to build on that comment. I'd like to ask the Minister if we can statistically show that more people are going to the regional centres for those services because those services aren't being provided in their communities.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I should correct that. If the Member thinks I might have said that access to communities is not guaranteed, that's not what I said. What I meant to say, and I believe what I said, is we have an obligation to provide access to services to everyone in the Territories. That's our legislative requirement. So services are available in communities; it's just that the health care professionals may not be in a community. Also, I do accept the Member's statement that Beaufort-Delta has had significant shortages of doctors and nurses of late, and we've been getting notices about limitations to services in some of these clinics. But there's always information about how to access services. No health centre has been closed.

Mr. Krutko: Just going back to the issue in regard to the deficit recovery plans that are in place from time to time for health authorities that are running a deficit or having problems with their finances, I'd like to know in regard to the Inuvik health authority — where they have been running deficits year after year after year — in regard to their deficit recovery act.... As part of these positions not being filled in communities, is that a cost driver from the deficit, or is that a cost savings to the department? You don't have positions in communities — they're vacant — so those dollars go back to offset the deficit at the headquarters or regional level? Is that driving toward the deficit, or is it assisting to bring down the cost of this deficit because you're not filling those positions?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Not being able to fill the nurses or doctors in these authorities contributes. They're drivers that cause a deficit, because locum doctors or locum nurses are always more expensive than having resident doctors or any other health care professionals.

Mr. Krutko: Just on that, I think that's why it's so important we do everything we can to find ways to recruit but also try to have a stable workforce in those communities, especially health nurses. Again, in Tsiigehtchic, yes; they have a health centre, but the only person working out of there is the community individual, who basically works out of there. But there is no profession, per se, by way of mental health or nurses or doctors who operate out of that centre, where they come in maybe once a week or once a month.

I'm just wondering: what are you doing to ensure those services are being provided, that people's health and their well-being is not being jeopardized by the financial situation in Inuvik Hospital?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I was in the community of Tsiigehtchic in January, and the Member and I had a meeting with the community leadership there. I know that the community would like to see increased nursing services there. I have made a commitment to the Member to look into that. And as I had indicated earlier, I am looking to see how we could better use the health care resources we have and find ways to increase those services.

Mr. Krutko: Just a question in regard to the deficit recovery plan that was put in place by the Inuvik authority. Have they been able to live up to that plan by way of their plans submitted to yourself as Minister, as I heard you mention earlier? I'd just like to know, if they are, why are they running deficits year after year after year?

Hon. Sandy Lee: As I said earlier, not being able to fill their doctors' positions or having had a hard time finding nurses to staff all the vacant positions we have — those do cost money. Those are major drivers of health care and social service expenditures. We have not had, I don't think, a deficit recovery plan at the authority, because they are taxed in their resources to provide the services they do. We don't want to have to face the situation of reducing services.

Mr. Krutko: Can the Minister get a breakdown exactly in those areas where there's forced-growth issues or in regard to these high costs to operate because of shortages of nurses, locums? Can you get a breakdown of exactly why they are running these deficits and what areas these deficits are coming from?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I could undertake to get that information for the Member.

Mr. Krutko: By tomorrow morning?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'm not sure if I could commit to tomorrow morning, but as soon as possible. I think I have found in my role as the Minister that it is not an exact science. Information is not readily available on exactly what's causing a deficit. There is usually a combination of factors. What I could provide the Member is how much money is budgeted for Beaufort-Delta and where that money's being spent.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Krutko. No? All right. Ms. Bisaro

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to speak to the medical travel expense. I understand, as I am looking at these numbers, that it has gone up approximately \$2 million from last year's Revised Estimates. An increase of that sort... Sorry, that brings us to approximately \$12.5 million we are going to spend on moving people around for medical services. I mentioned in my remarks earlier that I think that is a horrendous amount of money. I

see there are an awful lot of options. I feel there a lot of options available to reduce that amount of money.

I'd like to ask the Minister if there are any plans at this point to reduce this expense over the next year and certainly into '09–10. Are there any plans, ideas, anything, in mind to bring this dollar value down?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I can get Mr. Elkin to explain what that increase is for first.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: There's a \$2.1 million increase in the medical travel the department funds to Stanton in '08–09 that is made up of a \$1.5 million increase in the air charter medevac contract, and the \$600,000 increase in the air medevac personnel contract. Just to add, the overall mental health program is approximately \$22 million because we received third-party funding and bill-backs, primarily for monetary health benefits for the remainder of the program.

Ms. Bisaro: Thanks for the information. I understand you know that when contracts get renegotiated, they certainly go up, and sometimes there are expenses that can't be negotiated to a level we would like. It does seem a fairly large increase, \$1.5 million for a medevac contract, but I'll just leave it at that because that's a done deal.

To go back to my original question, if the Minister could advise whether or not there are any plans in place to reduce the amount of money we spend on medical travel.

Mr. Cummings: One of the components of the territorial health act that's funded is a component for pan-territorial initiatives. And under the FAST funding over the next little while, there will be an evaluation of how the medical travel policy and funding is administered in the three territories to look at efficiencies that might be gained.

Ms. Bisaro: Thanks for that. I wonder if I could get a definition of what "the next little while" might be.

Mr. Cummings: That will take place within the fiscal year.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you. Just one other question. I think there's some ability by hospitals, health centres and health authorities in general to change their attitudes, change their practices, to reduce some of the costs we incur for medical travel. I wonder if the department would consider placing a cap on the amount of funds that are available to a health authority, to a health centre, to a hospital, for

them to use for medical travel — in effect, trying to force them to reduce their costs.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Right now the \$22 million Medical Travel fund is located with Stanton Territorial Health Authority, and that's the one that is a high-volume kind of issue area all the time. I am looking at that program to see how we could better run that, if at all possible, because it's something we need to do.

I think we should also be mindful of the fact that it's demand driven. It's not just medevac travel, but personnel — anybody who's taken a taxi from Resolution to Hay River to go to the nurse, or Tsiigehtchic to McPherson. We do have programs in the Territories where when you need it, you will get it. At the same time, we do hear anecdotal evidence that some of the medical travel might have happened where, if it was better coordinated, maximum use of that travel could have happened. I think we do need a systematic approach to see how we could better that, and so I am happy to undertake that and make that part of this review.

Ms. Bisaro: Thanks for that. I am really glad to hear this is going to be looked at, and I hope it's sooner rather later. I guess I would reiterate my point that by placing a cap on the amount of money that is available, it may force people into being a little more creative in their thinking and force them into some economies of scale, which you have referenced already. I would urge the department to consider that. No questions.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Next on our list, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am interested in the seniors' aspect of this activity. We have heard much about how both the proportions of our population in the NWT and the absolute numbers who are seniors are growing, and I am wondering how this is reflected in this budget. I assume, at the same time, the proportion of youth will be declining over the same decade or whatever length of time we are planning for, so I am wondering how those things are reflected in this budget.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't think the past practices have shown, or that we have any evidence to suggest, that demands on the Supplementary Health Funding would go down. That's the reason we have to be constantly challenging to make sure we deliver the programs as efficiently as possible.

Mr. Bromley: I see we are having more seniors' facilities and more seniors staying in the North than there used to be. Is that being reflected here in increased expenditures, or will that be coming up in another activity here?

Hon. Sandy Lee: This Budget Address, this item is speaking to Métis Health Benefits, Indigent Health Benefits and Extended Health Benefits, and it does not speak to the need for facilities or other services needed for seniors specifically, although seniors I think do fall into Extended Health Benefits.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you for that. I'll perhaps bring it up later, but I see seniors are listed here in the first two items, first two paragraphs from the end, three paragraphs describing this activity.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. There was no question. Are there any other questions? Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Has there been any analysis as to why our medical travel is so high as opposed to just paying it because that's the bill they come up with?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: It is an expensive area to operate. You know the medical care, the fuel costs. We just signed a new five-year medevac contract that enhances our services, but it does increase our commitment to that. As we stated in the answer to MLA Bisaro, the Medical Travel program is under review, and I believe it's beginning in June. We will make sure, I am sure, that it's part of that process of finding out what the cost driver is and how we could best meet the future demands and how to do it better. I would be happy to report to the Members on that.

Mr. Hawkins: What scope of evaluation are you going to use when you are taking analysis of this into consideration?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I believe there is a formal review process on this. An RFP ran out not too long ago. I believe it's closing in June. I'd be happy to undertake to get the Member the terms of reference and all of the details on that.

Mr. Hawkins: Can I assume the details are not known, but that things like staffing levels will be part of that analysis?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Things like staffing levels, perhaps. That sort of analysis doesn't require a formal review. That's being undertaken under the medical travel review. I think that as we are working in this fiscal environment, looking at balanced budgets and the pressure on the system, the department is constantly working with the authority about the staffing levels and how to optimize those.

Mr. Hawkins: Does the Minister agree that if the staffing levels were not up to whatever service level that should be provided there, or they should be extended to the next level of service...? Would the

Minister not agree that at times there might be a situation where people are choosing not to make a call but rather choosing the path to call a medevac to deal with a problem? Would that not be a consideration as to maybe why the resources of a particular area may want to be into question and, therefore, linked to the medical travel analysis as she's trying to figure out why it's so expensive?

Hon. Sandy Lee: The Territorial Medical Travel program that's being evaluated right now is a pan-territorial agreement agreed to by the territorial/federal/provincial working group as a part of the THAF program, because, as Members may be aware, there has been additional funding provided to all northern jurisdictions on that medical travel issue.

As to the Member's question about there being more medical calls because there's understaffing in the communities and such, I think the Member should know there are quite a few people working in medical travel, working with the regional centres and health clinics. When there is a need for medical travel involved, doctors are involved, nurses are involved, and there are lots of authorization processes to go through to get those. I think that might be a separate issue.

Mr. Hawkins: Operating under the precautionary principle, one would assume that if a person is just an RN in a particular health centre, and their abilities, as I think I've understood it, are not as high as an NP.... You know, an NP makes different calls on being able to deal with a situation, and they are able to administer certain elements of a drug therapy, as opposed to maybe an RN whose skill level isn't as high, as I pointed out, as an NP, and therefore may not be able to offer that service. So what they end up doing possibly — and I've heard this as a scenario — whereas both the professional levels.... It's not a question of competency but their professional levels. They're able to cause them to communicate with a doctor. Then again, back to that cautionary principle, the call is then made to say, "Well, we're not sure, but we think let's just send this person in," because that's the safest process.

That's why I think the human resource level at these areas should be considered at the same time. Are we staffing them to the appropriate level? Is there an NP in every health centre? I don't know. I think maybe that should be examined. Whether we can staff it or not, that becomes a different type of question. But the fact is: are the resources there at the appropriate level?

Has there been any analysis that the Minister can provide as to how often, and where, most of these medevacs — things such as medevacs, that is — are coming from? Does she rate the community? Do they track how many per community?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The assessment of a patient that presents to any primary care setting is a collaborative process that takes place between the practitioner on the front line and their colleagues, to determine whether or not the service can be provided on site or whether a medical travel or medevac service would be required. We have many, many years of history in the Northwest Territories where community health nurses practise in this way, and they are experts in their field. And certainly, nurse practitioners have an expanded scope of practice in relation to registered nurses and community health nurses. But the decision to use the medevac is a collaborative process that usually involves a nurse or a nurse practitioner and a physician in the receiving facility. I think the answer to the question is that it's a collaborative process.

Mr. Hawkins: Would they not want to consider that human resources should not be part of that consideration and strategy when you consider that evaluation?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I guess, in the larger sense, that is true. I do get what the Member's trying to get to and point to.

As I stated, the evaluation is very specifically to that medical travel. But in the larger picture of how we could improve the medical travel policy we have, we are undertaking that. That's part of the wider work we are doing at Stanton. One of the biggest programs they have is the Medical Travel program. As a part of the restructuring process, we are looking at it. In that sense, obviously, we will look at the human resource component of that. I will report to the committee and the Members on the findings.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. We're on page 6-29, Activity Summary, Supplementary Health Programs, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$20.869.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Supplementary Health Programs, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$20.869 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Moving on to page 6-31, Activity Summary, Supplementary Health Programs, Grants and Contributions, Contributions: \$12.459.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Supplementary Health Programs, Grants and Contributions, Contributions: \$12.459 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Moving on to page 6-33, Activity Summary, Community Health

Programs, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$75.334 million. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. We've heard a lot in our discussions of priorities and goals and objectives and so on about dealing with the need for additional addictions treatment. We've particularly highlighted the need for aftercare services in the communities. I'm wondering how that is reflected in this budget.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: The aftercare program is a part of the entire spectrum of the programs we provide in that area. I don't know if that part is under this area. I'll ask Mr. Elkin if it's in this area or in another section.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: Yes, the addictions programming and mental health are under this program. And when we get to tab 6-35, it's detailed at the end of Grants and Contributions. So it is under this program — the addictions program, specifically.

Mr. Bromley: I didn't quite hear that. I assume that means it's coming up yet. Okay. I see treatment and rehabilitation services for addictions, mental health and so on is part of this activity. I assume it's the appropriate one here.

Thanks for those comments. I'm wondering what the increase for aftercare services would be in the communities provided for in this budget — the new ones, the new focus in this area, as per our priorities, if there are any, for people who have received treatment outside the community and are returning to the community.

Hon. Sandy Lee: We don't have a separate budget item that says aftercare or treatment care or pre-care or anything like that. There are a number of funding grants and contribution numbers under 6-35, which is for money we paid to organizations. We should also remember that under mental health and addictions specialists and community wellness workers, our employees in communities are working but their salary is not included in here, per se. A part of their work is to work with people who might have gone away for treatment and are coming back, or they work on the aftercare part of that. I don't think this budget book is laid out the way Mr. Bromley might have thought of.

Mr. Bromley: I think I'll just wait until we turn the page again and perhaps push through this more.

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

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did want to ask — I think it belongs in here; I couldn't find, really, where else it might go — about the

emergency services funding mentioned by the Minister in her remarks somewhere along the line.

There is \$150,000 for emergency services funding. It's a program that's being done in conjunction with Municipal and Community Affairs. I wondered if I could get some information.

I think I asked the questions yesterday. If this is a joint project, I would like to know how much money MACA has budgeted for this project, and what the total funding is for this particular project, which, from what I understand, will enhance emergency services ground ambulance and so on, for communities to deal with accidents and ambulance requirements outside of their communities.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The \$150,000 that's identified in strategic initiatives for the department is to fund a position and the related O&M to develop the framework for enhanced ground-ambulance services in the Northwest Territories.

Ms. Bisaro: Okay, thank you for that. This is being done jointly with MACA? What's the total funding for the whole project?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, we do not have that item handy. Sorry.

Ms. Bisaro: Can the Minister undertake to get that for us?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, I will. I will also say that I think MACA's portion of that funding is \$200,000 and ours is \$100,000.

The Minister of MACA is organizing a meeting with other municipal leaders in the next week or two to work with the community leaders on how best to go forward on this strategic initiative. I'm sure if I got any facts wrong, the Minister of MACA will be able to correct them.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you for that answer. I'd like to congratulate the Minister on anticipating my next question. I'm done.

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

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would this be the area...? I believe this is the area in which I can seek out information as to funding levels for some of the advocacy groups. We have the women's centre, the YWCA. Has there been any change in their funding through this program?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is where the NGOs are funded, and their levels are similar to last year plus 3 per cent forced-growth room we give to authorities. It's up to the authorities to work that out.

Under this section, also, we are funding the strategic initiative, where the government is investing \$400,000 for stabilizing existing shelters and another \$400,000 for enhancing community services.

The final details are not worked out, but what we hope to do is stabilize the shelters we have now. I'm talking only of that component of the NGOs, understanding that there are other NGO groups under this budget page.

We want to be able to access children who witness violence and also provide services to women who are subject to family violence but who may not necessarily want to go to shelters. That's sort of the general framework we have, and we need to work out the details.

Mr. Hawkins: It's interesting how the Minister described it as similar funding, but they have 3 per cent forced growth. I'm just trying to interpret what that actually means. Has the funding of these organizations stayed the same? It's probably a yes-or-no question.

That said, what does the 3 per cent forced growth apply to? Does it apply to their operations money, to the money they use to staff, et cetera, et cetera? Can the Minister explain what that 3 per cent is specifically applied to?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hawkins: It's going to be a long night. Yes what? How does it apply?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I was just honouring his request that the answer be yes or no, and my answer is yes. The 3 per cent extra we are providing to the authorities — who are the governing bodies or the funding agencies for most of the NGOs.... They have this extra money, 3 per cent, to consider those forced-growth applications that will come forward from those NGOs — increased cost in fuel, or whatever that may be. That's a long way to say yes.

Mr. Hawkins: So we have a renewal of the same amount of funding level, but an increase of 3 per cent — not specific or attached to anything such as utility bills or staffing. Okay.

Mr. Chairman, can I get some breakdown as to what some of the contract services are? We have an item listed for \$10.261 million.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: The contract services under the Community Health Programs Activity are a broad range under children and family services, legal services, child protection, the Tele-Care service in the department, all our southern alcohol and drug treatment services, all the southern adult placement contracts and placements for children with specialized needs. It's a whole range of various contracts.

Mr. Hawkins: Would committee be able to receive a copy of that list that also has the amounts attached to it?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Any other questions on 6-33? All right, 6-33, Activity Summary, Community Health Programs, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$75.334 million.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Community Health Programs, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$75.334 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Moving forward, page 6-35, Activity Summary, Community Health Programs, Grants and Contributions, Contributions. Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you. I have a couple of questions around 6-36, but it's a continuation of 6-35. Are we okay with that?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you. I'm a little concerned about the last item on page 6-36, which references homelessness. I see that the amount is \$510,000. It sounds like a lot of money, but considering that the problem of homelessness is increasing in all of our communities, certainly the demand for services for homeless people is going up as opposed to going down.

I wondered if the department had considered increasing this amount, due to the increased demand for services for homelessness.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The homelessness program is a relatively new program to the Northwest Territories, and there are non-government organizations that have done very good work in this over the years.

It's a matter of developing capacity. Our experience over the last year has been that the program is undersubscribed. We have done our best to reach out to communities to seek proposals for what will work in communities outside of Yellowknife, and established a process for people within Yellowknife to make applications for certain aspects of that program. So it's a matter of capacity building, in order to be sure those funds are going to be fully utilized.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Just to add to that, Mr. Chairman: it's important to know that this is a separate program that was established within the department. It doesn't take into consideration lots of other money we give to Sally Ann and other homelessness projects.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you. To the comment that there hasn't been a full intake or uptake on the funds from last year and/or the year before: we did receive some information from the department in response to a committee question that itemizes how the money is earmarked. Some specifically goes to operating shelters or centres. I'm wondering if the Minister or the deputy minister could advise whether the funds that are general in nature are the ones that are not fully subscribed to, and if there's any indication from last year as to how much money is paid.

Mr. Cummings: Some of the funding is earmarked for the operation of Bailey House, which is not yet operational. Some of the funding is relocation assistance for people who can be repatriated from a homelessness situation to a community where they can be housed.

The remaining pot of funding is for small community initiatives to address homelessness.

The relocation assistance is undersubscribed, and the Bailey House is not yet operational.

Ms. Bisaro: I think it's \$50,000 for Bailey House. The \$50,000 from 2007–2008: does that carry forward into 2008–2009, since it wasn't operational last year?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'm sorry; I didn't catch the question.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you. At great risk to my health I'll repeat the question. I'm just kidding. The \$50,000 that was earmarked for Bailey House in 2007–2008: can that be carried forward into 2008–2009, since Bailey House wasn't operational before March 31 of this year?

Hon. Sandy Lee: No, not technically, I understand, but it's been earmarked for this year in anticipation of being operational. If the Member's wondering —

because they didn't spend \$50,000 last year — whether they could add \$50,000 this year, that's not the way it goes.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just following up on that theme, if you will. Obviously, if the Salvation Army is having second thoughts about operating this facility, it's almost certainly over a budget crunch. I'm wondering — without an increase here — if the situation is reflecting the lack of dollars, sufficient dollars, to support that facility. Is the Minister aware of that situation, and does she have a plan?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I am not aware of their funding situation.

There have been lots of investments into that Bailey House. Bailey House project received \$1.4 million from the National Homelessness Initiative; \$10,000 from CMHC; \$1.5 million from City of Yellowknife; \$1.748 million from the NWT Housing Corporation; and \$50,000 from Diavik. I think the GNWT actually put in some more money, if I'm not mistaken.

It's a very complex project with a long history — not a long history, but lots of partners, and lots of chronological data — so I'd be happy to provide the Member with that information if the Member wants to discuss further what some of their cash positions or operational difficulties are. I'd be happy to look into that as well.

I've not been contacted by the organization for any extra funding.

Mr. Bromley: I appreciate that offer, and yes, I'll certainly take the Minister up on that. I am aware there are quite a number of non-government organizations and volunteer efforts that are going into that as well.

Just looking a little further up the same page, looking into emergency shelters and counselling services for victims of spousal assault and other forms of family violence, and given that we're implementing, I think, phase 2 of the framework on family violence, I'm seeing a decrease — certainly no increase — in this expenditure. I'm wondering if there's an explanation for that.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: There's a decrease of approximately \$73,000, I believe. It is related to a position at the authority level for a family violence shelter consultant, which was funded through THAF on a one-time basis, so it had no impact on the actual programs. It was for a one-time consultant, funded through the THAF program.

Mr. Bromley: Thanks for that information. Were those shelters given a little additional support this year for cost of fuel, maintenance, that sort of thing, then?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The YWCA had pressing issues with respect to not being able to keep their employees under the current labour market. The increased wages they provided have helped. The executive director has communicated that to me: their labour force has stabilized.

With respect to extra money the NGOs need, they will.... Every NGO operates their budget the same way as.... I mean, not every NGO, but NGOs as established as YWCA or YACCS would be preparing their budgets for the responsible authority, and they will be taking into consideration their forced-growth issues, whether it's fuel costs or any other matters. The authority would look at that to see if they could fund it. If they need extra resources they go to the Minister, and we're not there yet.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to child services, in regard to Grants and Contributions, there's \$15 million that's been expended for child services. What's the breakdown by way of costs, for the Grants and Contributions in that area, for children that are in care and in different types of care? I know there's care by way of foster care, there's custody issues, there's treatment issues. I'd like to know exactly: do you have an actual cost breakdown of the \$15 million that's being expended for child services?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Is the Member referring to the section on page 6-35, under Children Services, Foster Care, Residential Care and Protective Services? That amount is not quite \$15 million.

Mr. Krutko: I'm looking on the page prior to that, where it says community programs. It has a breakdown in regard to Main Estimates 2008-2009, Child Services, \$15.562 million.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, the breakdown we have is \$3.444 million for foster care, and the \$810,000 is for protective services, fuel price increases and NGOs.

Mr. Krutko: Is there a cost breakdown in regard to southern placement for children who basically are in the foster care system or care system of this government? What's the cost of southern placement?

Hon. Sandy Lee: The total cost for children in care down south is about \$5 million. I think I provided that in one of the session days.

Mr. Krutko: Can the Minister give us an idea where these children are in the southern institutions? Where are they located and exactly what's the number of children that are in southern placements?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I could provide that info. I believe the number of children in southern care is very few, compared to children in care. About 24 out of 630, if my memory serves me correctly.

Mr. Krutko: For 24 children in care in the south I believe we're spending in excess of \$4 million. That's a high amount. What type of care are we paying for in regard to children who are in southern placements?

Hon. Sandy Lee: It is true. Some of our children have very severe issues of FAS/FAE or some real trauma, including sexual abuse, and some of those children are in intensive care settings where it could cost up to \$500,000 or \$600,000 a year.

Mr. Krutko: Yes, that's a very alarming number, especially the cost associated with that.

I'd just like to ask the Minister if it's possible to get a breakdown in regard to the number of children in care in the Beaufort region, especially in my constituency, by way of the different types of care they're in: foster care, people who are in permanent custody, people who are referred to southern institutions or outside the region, from the communities I represent.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, before we go there, I have the information on southern placement costs per use. The projected cost for '08-09 is \$6.185 million. The total number of children that we expect will be in these placements is about 42: three in Bosco, one in Lamont — I don't know where that is — Elk Island Child and Youth Ranch, eight in Vancouver, 11 in Red Deer, 12 in Regina, five in Calgary, two in Edmonton. I would like to ask the deputy minister how many children from Beaufort-Delta are included in here.

Mr. Chairman, our stats are broken down by riding, not Beaufort-Delta altogether. The total children in care are 36: 10 from Aklavik, 22 from McPherson and four from Tsiigehtchic. We have three in southern treatment, and all three are from Fort McPherson.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Chair, if it's possible, can we get the information the Minister's referring to? Can she distribute it to the other Members here? I think those numbers are pretty alarming. I think it's good we have access to that so we can debate it further. Again, I know the Minister mentioned there were

620 kids in care when I asked her the question earlier, and I'm just wondering: is it possible we can get a breakdown of that also? And of the 620 kids, exactly what different types of care they're in also — if I can get that information, Mr. Chair. That's it for me.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, Mr. Chairman; we'll do that.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Health Awareness Activities, I believe we fund our NGOs — a number of NGOs, maybe not every single one. I'm trying to understand why the YWCA gets a grant-in-kind for the lease of the Rockhill apartment building, whereas the Centre for Northern Families doesn't receive a similar type of support. I would say they provide a service equal, in the context of necessity, to what the YWCA does. The Centre for Northern Families, as many of you know, struggles year to year for funding. They grasp at every opportunity for funding they can. Yet they don't seem to be paired on a similar status as the YWCA, and that causes them concern, as well as me. Could the Minister explain to me why we fund the lease or the mortgage on one and not the other?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: The grant-in-kind for the YWCA is for the Rockhill building, which is transitional housing — and perhaps Mr. Hawkins could speak to how a grant-in-kind works — but the arrangement the Centre for Northern Families has is that they pay rent on the building they occupy — or a mortgage, sorry — and that funding is raised through the contributions they receive to deliver services.

Mr. Hawkins: Could one not argue that it's similar, in the same vein, because both are striving for ownership of those facilities?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I'm not sure if they're striving for ownership of those facilities. I don't know — I have to be honest with you — exactly why the YWCA has the Rockhill apartment on a grant-in-kind lease basis. I believe the Centre for Northern Families has received assistance in the past, and the building was given to the Centre for Northern Families from NWT Housing Corporation. There's a nominal amount of mortgage the Centre for Northern Families is required to pay. That is my understanding of those situations.

Mr. Hawkins: If my memory serves me well, the Centre for Northern Families building was the old Addictions treatment centre, and it appears we've given two addiction treatment centres away in the

last quite a few years, of course. I'm trying to get an understanding of why we would support a grant-in-kind that, in other words, pays the housing costs under the YWCA? Would the Minister take on that task to make sure we're comparing apples to apples, to the Centre for Northern Families? As I've seen and experienced, the Centre for Northern Families struggles with their funding, and I think they provide an admirable service for the money they receive in funding. I want to make sure they're being treated equally and on the same page as the YWCA. I think they deserve that respect.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I will undertake to get that information for the Member.

Mr. Hawkins: Under the homelessness issue raised earlier by, I believe, Ms. Bisaro, I'd like some breakout as to what activities fall under that. I don't remember hearing, or I missed, what the actual \$510,000 breaks out to be earmarked for.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Those are not earmarked; it's a pot of money set aside. It's application-based and it's demand-based.

Mr. Hawkins: What are the application-based requirements of an organization that wishes to tap into that pot of money? I'm trying to get some details. Is it just open for anybody who says they provide space for homeless people? Is that the principle of what it's there for?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, this is a program where we invite communities to make applications for funding, up to \$10,000 under Homelessness Support Projects, or \$40,000 under Emergency Shelter Options — under Emergency Shelter Options, small projects under \$40,000 to provide emergency shelter for adults; under Homelessness Support Projects, under \$10,000 to address community homelessness issues. What we look for in projects is a demonstration of creative use of existing community resources, buildings and skills, and integrated partnerships to extend the impact and use of the limited funding. Some of the organizations that received the funding in the past, in '07 and '08, are Deh Gah Gotie Dene Council in Fort Providence in both categories — one for \$40,000 and one for \$10,000; Acho Dene Koe First Nation in Fort Liard; an Aklavik Indian band; Zhahti Koe Friendship Centre in Fort Providence; Katlodeeche First Nation in Hay River Reserve; and Pehdzeh Ki First Nation in Wrigley. In my visits there, they told me these were very helpful to them.

Mr. Hawkins: It sounds as if the money was earmarked strictly for small communities. Is that the case or not?

Hon. Sandy Lee: It's not necessarily for small communities, but the communities that have applied for them so far are small communities.

Mr. Hawkins: That will be enough on that topic.

Mr. Chairman, under Community Services, there's a line that says, "Services designated to assist living in the home." Could the Minister provide a definition of what that title actually means and some examples as to how it's applied?

Hon. Sandy Lee: That's money for home care.

Mr. Hawkins: I think that will be fine for now.

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

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good that I got back, since you cut me off the first time. However, I unfortunately have to go back to the homelessness contribution. Numbers we received through the Standing Committee on Social Programs indicate there's \$200,000 for a Small Community Homelessness Fund. I think the Minister's officials explained that there's also a fund to repatriate people who are homeless to their original home community. My question is whether or not that \$200,000 is only for small communities, similar to Mr. Hawkins' question — is there a large community fund as well as a small community fund?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: The Member is right. This \$200,000 does not include the repatriation fund, and this \$200,000 fund does apply only to communities outside of Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Inuvik and Hay River. Sorry, I didn't get that right the last time. We don't have specific funding for larger communities, because larger communities like, mostly, Yellowknife have NGOs that are established and they get their funding per bed. The Centre for Northern Families, YWCA and Sally Ann get different funding per bed, depending on how those beds are used, either from ECE or Health and Social Services or the homelessness file or Housing too. They get money from the Housing Corporation.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you for that explanation. That helps me out there. I just have one other question, on page 6-36, where it references Community Services and Mental Health Services. Information from last year to this year indicates that funding for the Canadian Mental Health Association has decreased radically, by about \$100,000. I wondered if there was something special that went on last year that the Mental Health Association was funded for. If not, can you advise why there's such a drastic reduction in their funding?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I can tell you we have not decreased any of the NGOs we normally fund, at least, from the department's point of view; I remember seeing a whole list of NGOs we fund.

We didn't decrease any of them, but there is a possibility that an organization like Canadian Mental Health may be getting funding from some other government departments too. I'm not saying they're getting cut, because I can't speak for other departments and I don't wish to. I'm just saying for Department of Health, I'm not aware there were any cuts to Canadian Mental Health.

Ms. Bisaro: Okay. I wonder if I could ask the Minister then, what amount was the Canadian Mental Health Association funded in '07-08, please?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't have that information on me. I'll get that for the Member.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you. That's good.

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

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A question for the Minister. Perhaps I'll start by noting that one of the goals of the 16th Assembly is a healthy, educated people. A priority under that goal is to strengthen regional and local treatment and after-care programs to address addictions and mental health. I'd like to ask the Minister once again: did she instruct her department to strengthen regional and local treatment and after-care programs to address addictions and mental health, and would it be reflected in these pages, 35 and 36? I can take a stab at it myself and see if the Minister might agree, but I'd like to get her take on it.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I give my take on that to the Member, may I just take one moment to answer a question from Ms. Bisaro? We did find the information on the Canadian Mental Health Association. We fund \$127,000 to that organization, and it hasn't changed. It's the same this year as it was last year or the year before.

With respect to aftercare, I just want to say — and I know this from having sat through the Social Programs Committee, and I think that information is correct too — aftercare is a part of the whole spectrum of treatment. You cannot separate aftercare to somebody who's going to Homewood in southern Alberta or to Grande Prairie or to Nats'ejee K'eh. When somebody is suffering from addiction and they make a difficult or good choice of doing something about it, they will go tap into some kind of health care or social program personnel we have. They'll go to health care or they might talk to their doctor or nurse or counsellor or social worker, and then there's a whole process they are helped through. There are number of professionals who will decide, working with the

client, what sort of service that person needs, and what service they need or they want. It could be going to AA, or if they're in a severe situation, then they have to be detoxed at the hospital or they may have to be given medication or they may be eligible to go for two to four weeks to a treatment centre somewhere else.

When they come back, our community wellness workers are in touch with them. That's part of their job. They keep in touch with them; they give counselling to them. In many of the occasions, like Nats'ejee K'eh or any other treatment program — more institutionalized programming — they will be in touch with the clients as well. From a program perspective as well as a funding perspective, there is no demarcation where this is pre-treatment, this is treatment, this is after-treatment and this is aftercare.

I guess the Member is saying, We have said in our strategic plans that aftercare is important. That is part of our treatment spectrum; that is definitely a part of our mandate and the work the community wellness workers are doing.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you for those definitions of the stages of treatment and so on. I think the Minister was starting to get there when she did highlight that in our discussions we really focused in on the apparent insufficient supply of aftercare, and highlighted again the need to address that with strengthened aftercare services. I'm wondering if we've strengthened those services or whether any focus has been brought to bear on that priority.

Hon. Sandy Lee: If the Member wants to know if we have a separate new initiative program set aside for aftercare, that's not here. I think the Member could take comfort in what I've been saying, which is that I am following the mandate given to us by the Caucus on the need for the aftercare programming in the spectrum of treatment programming. We are revising.... I've said many times that we're looking at the job descriptions, duties and activities of mental health addictions specialists as well as community wellness workers. We're going to look at all 67 positions, look at the community profile. We are committed to working on how we could revise their job descriptions and their interactions with each other to make sure we optimize the work they do to take care of the people who are in need of service — aftercare most obviously being the important part of that.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you to the Minister once again for those remarks. I appreciate that, and I appreciate that there is not a specific program on aftercare.

I notice there are actually a few potential places in the Grants and Contributions that I think is under discussion here that have received some increased

funding. About \$332,000 under the first one on page 6-35, and on the next page, an additional \$650,000 for mental health and addictions initiatives under community services, and a couple of others that might involve some aftercare services. I'm hoping that perhaps it was covered off under those increases. May I please — perhaps as a last gasp here — ask the Minister if she did ask her department and employees to focus in a bit more, say, on aftercare services?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I have to say I didn't specifically ask that way, but I can tell you I have been speaking non-stop about the need to revise and review the mental health and addictions and wellness workers' job descriptions and how we could best serve them. I look forward to coming back with the details of that to the Standing Committee on Social Programs, which the Member is part of.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. We are on page 6-35, Activity Summary, Community Health Programs, Grants and Contributions, Contributions.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary Community Health Programs, Grants and Contributions, Contributions, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We are on page 6-36, Activity Summary, Community Health Programs, Grants and Contributions — Continued: \$58.606 million.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary Community Health Programs, Grants and Contributions — Continued: \$58.606 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We are on page 6-38, information item, Community Health Programs, Active Positions.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Community Health Programs, Active Positions, information item (page 6-38), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We are on page 6-39, information item, Community Health Programs, Active Positions.

Department of Health and Social Services, Activity Summary, Community Health Programs, Active Positions, information item (page 6-39), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We're on page 6-40, information item, Work Performed on Behalf of Others. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I'd like some details and an explanation as to what exactly the Territorial

Health Access Fund Arctic Health Research Network is.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Funding from the Territorial Health Access Fund for the Arctic Health Research Network is to assist the Arctic Health Research Network with its start-up infrastructure to establish a research network in the North. The fund is actually from the pan-territorial fund, and the Northwest Territories is taking the lead and works with the contingent of the Arctic Health Research Network in Nunavut and Yukon to establish a research network.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, either I missed it or it wasn't mentioned. What exactly are they researching?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, this funding is provided from the Government of Yukon — \$100,000 is for costs related to the operational secretariat. It's a pan-territorial project to develop a concept for a sustainable northern health research network. If I'm not mistaken, I think it's part of the Polar Year research. Maybe Mr. Cummings could clarify.

Mr. Cummings: The objective of the Arctic Health Research Network is to develop a pan-territorial research network in the North that is supported by connections with universities and research networks in the south. It is intended to be a collaborative process with northern people so that it goes into communities and holds community events and consults with communities about the ethics of conducting research and how traditional knowledge transfer can occur and how research can be respectful of aboriginal culture, tradition and those kind of things. It actually generates ideas for research that will be helpful to northern people and that will originate in the North, as opposed to the historical way of doing research, where southern research networks come into the North and study northern people and take that research home with them.

Mr. Hawkins: On a separate subject, the NWT national diabetes surveillance system, under this sort of work performed on behalf of others — what does standardization diabetes surveillance actually mean? Like, that's a lot of platitude words. I'm trying to get the sense of what they're after.

Mr. Cummings: Any disease surveillance mechanism usually involves software or the establishment of a data base to collect standard data for all clients who present and are at risk of developing diabetes or have developed diabetes.

So it would collect standardized data that can compare our jurisdiction to other jurisdictions nationally.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Cummings. We're on page 6-40, information item, Work Performed on Behalf of Others.

Department of Health and Social Services, Work Performed on Behalf of Others, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We're on page 6-41, information item, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued.

Department of Health and Social Services, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued, information item (page 6-41), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We're on page 6-42, information item, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued.

Department of Health and Social Services, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued, information item (page 6-42), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We're done with page 6-42, so we'll go back to page 6-7, Department of Health and Social Services, Department Summary, Operations Expenditures: \$309.822 million. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a motion.

COMMITTEE MOTION 30-16(2)
TO DEFER FURTHER CONSIDERATION
OF THE OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES,
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES
(COMMITTEE MOTION CARRIED)

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the department summary for the Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, at this time.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): A motion is on the floor and is being distributed now. The motion has now been distributed. The motion is in order.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Okay. We'll be moving along now to Volume 2, the Infrastructure Acquisition Plan for the Department of Health and Social Services. We are on page 5-7, Health and Social Services, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Health Services Programs, Tangible Capital Assets, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$12.808 million; Total activity: \$12.808 million. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Consolidated Primary Care Clinic in Yellowknife: has there been any work done on selecting a location for that as of yet and if so, where?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, the RFP will go out when the budget is passed, so there will be no locations or anything known until the RFP is accepted.

Mr. Hawkins: Just for clarity, of course — as they say, for the official record: is this project tied to this budget, and is it tied in such a way that this budget needs to pass in order for this project to continue?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Absolutely, 1,000 per cent.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Any other questions?

Department of Health and Social Services, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Health Service Programs, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$12.808 million; Total Activity: \$12.808 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Okay we'll move along to page 5-9, Health and Social Services. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I have a similar question to the last one, regarding the long-term care territorial dementia facility. Recently the Minister committed \$15 million to this project as an overall project. I want to know and make sure: was that commitment outside of passing this budget or not?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I believe I was in the opening ceremony to do a cutting ceremony, but I don't think that's the same thing. The answer to that is that this Legislature approves the appropriation for capital projects, and it's in the books for this year, and it has to be approved for the project to proceed.

Mr. Hawkins: Has any work been done to date outside of the previous commitment for planning, such as maybe an RFP?

Hon. Sandy Lee: There has been work done from previous years approved. In order for that project to go forward, we need to have this money approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Ms. Bisaro.

Interjection.

Ms. Bisaro: I don't know which is worse.

Mr. Chair, I just want to ask... My understanding was that in February we approved the number of capital projects, and the dementia facility was one

of them. Could I get clarification that the dementia facility and any other projects that were passed in February are a done deal but the consolidated clinic is not because it is new to this infrastructure acquisition plan?

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, I would like to defer that question to the Minister of Finance.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Minister Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Chairman, Ms. Bisaro is correct. The interim appropriation did have some capital attached to it, and funding was sought for approval to deal with a number of those projects. But the remainder of the projects in '08-09 would need the authority of this House to continue with approvals. We'd have to get further detail on that if the Member sought more information.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Ms. Bisaro? Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just wondering if maybe the Minister could comment. I know it's not in the '08-09 year, but I'm wondering what type of master development plan we can get for \$17.5 million. That seems, to me, to be a lot of money for planning.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Just as a note, we've actually gone past and agreed to 5-7, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I seek unanimous consent to go back to 5-7.

Unanimous consented granted.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We can go back to 5-7. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Stanton Territorial Hospital master development plan: this is an area the Minister has had some question on in this past. It's something we've talked about in the House, at least since the time I've been here. I'm wondering: for \$17.5 million, who is doing this plan? Maybe the Minister could comment on that.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Elkin.

Mr. Elkin: Thank you. The RFP for the master development plan was awarded in the spring of 2008, and the MDP is planning to submit it by the end of August. At that point we'll have a better idea of what costs to incorporate into the capital plan, moving forward for the '09-10 capital planning

process. The consultant is currently working at Stanton to look at it.

Mr. Ramsay: I thank Mr. Elkin for the timing, but to the price: are these numbers accurate? Seventeen and a half million dollars by the time it's all said and done?

Hon. Sandy Lee: What's happening at Stanton is that the consultant has been hired to do that plan.... No, \$17 million is not for the consultant; \$17 million is allocated for the renovation work that we know we'll follow. I'm working through the deputy minister — or the deputy minister is working with the Stanton Authority — to make sure the concentration of that master development project is on the seven key areas where it's seeing most pressure: the emergency unit, diagnostic and imaging, medical daycare, ICU and some other places I can't remember right now.

Understanding, also, that the building of the consolidated primary clinic will reduce the pressure in the emergency unit, which will impact the way the master development plan is done.

Also, the building of the territorial dementia centre will allow 18 residents who are in the extended care unit right now to be moved out.

These three projects are related. The amount allocated here is obviously plan B, or class B, estimation.

Mr. Ramsay: I just want to get a better understanding. Between the hospital technical upgrades at almost \$27 million and \$17.5 million on the master development plan, that's \$46 million. I'm just wondering: we're spending this year \$3.2 million on the technical upgrades; we're spending another \$10.8 million in '09–10, and that's without a master plan. Are we not putting the cart before the horse? Shouldn't you have a master plan developed for that hospital before you go out and start doing all these technical upgrades? It would only make sense, to me, to do that first.

Hon. Sandy Lee: The two capital projects are not related. They are related in that they're in the same building, but technical upgrades are a maintenance.... Well, maintenance and technical upgrades, as he says. The building is almost 20 years old. It does need a lot of work in the technical areas like replacement of the medical gas and vacuum systems for a million; additional upgrades to the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems at an estimated cost of \$1.9 million; overhaul of the elevators; and overall replacement of interior work at the hospital.

It has not had any kind of retrofit in 20 years. This is a sort of a midlife upgrade to upkeep a facility that was built 20 years ago.

Mr. Ramsay: I don't want to prolong this too much longer, but it would only make sense to me, if you are going to look at technical upgrades to that hospital without having done a master plan, that master plan would tell you where patient areas are, where there might be a lounge.... You might want to move the cafeteria, you might want to move offices out of there, you may want to tinker with the layout of that hospital. And if you're going to do that down the road, why would you put oxygen or gas or air, or anything else you need in a hospital, into an area where, three years later, you do a master plan for \$17.5 million and it tells you that's not the best utilization of that space? It doesn't make a lot of sense, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I do understand the Member's point. I think the best way to understand these technical upgrades is that we are having to upgrade parts of the hospital that you don't see. Actually, I went for a tour there. There are a whole two storeys underneath the floor that you don't even see, that has to do with big machines and fans and upgrades. The renovations you do to move the walls around would not have anything to do with the internal guts of the building, the heats and fuels.... I mean, it might have some relationship. But we don't know how long it will take to do the master development plan. It's really important that we do the upgrades to upkeep the building and make sure it doesn't cost us more in the long run.

Mr. Ramsay: There's already been, in the area of technical upgrades in prior years, \$8 million spent, and I believe they're still going through a renovation in the emergency area of the hospital. I can appreciate your argument — the underbelly of the hospital and the air-handling systems and all that. But if you don't know what the utilization and the space requirements are going to be in that hospital unless you do a master plan, why are we spending all this money? I'm not arguing against spending capital dollars at that hospital, because they're needed, but the master plan should come first. That's fundamental to my argument. Why do anything unless you have a master plan?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I understand what the Member's saying. I think I asked the same questions before, when I was sitting there. I have learned, since then, that the master development plans for hospitals are much more complicated than I had thought.

Also, we have had experiences at Stanton where a previous master development plan that was done was way in excess of what we could reasonably afford. I'm working closely with the DM and the authority to make sure the new master development plan that's being proposed is reasonable and is within the demands of those critical areas.

I'm not sure when that will be — when that master development plan will be approved. I do know this technical upgrade has been started already. It's already two years into that plan. We need to continue to move through with that upgrade.

Mr. Ramsay: I know the Minister and her staff had mentioned that the RFP has gone out and work has started on this master development plan, but I don't see any money in the '08–09 budget for that master development plan. I'm wondering where the department's actually finding that money.

Again, I want to get back to that \$17.5 million figure. What portion of that is for the contractor — for the consultant who's going to be doing the work? And what portion of that \$17.5 million is for actual implementation of recommendations of that master plan?

Mr. Elkin: The RFP for the MDP was initiated in '07–08. A portion of those funds are being proposed to be carried over to complete the contract in '08–09. So they don't appear on this budget, but will be in the carryover request.

Mr. Ramsay: So to the \$17.5 million: how much is the consultant going to cost to put together the master plan? And what part of the \$17.5 million is for implementation of recommendations flowing out of that master development plan?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Chairman, the consultant fee, I understand, is \$250,000. I can't tell you what part of the recommendations will be part of this cost. I could tell you that we have to work really hard to make sure the master development plan recommendations fit into the dollar amount allocated here.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to put this on the record, here. This is nice to talk about all these capital projects, but I have to, for the record, ask how Stanton and Fort Smith managed to get ahead of Hay River on the capital bandwagon here when Hay River's been in the works for a longer period of time. I have to ask the Minister that.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can say that the Hay River master development planning process is underway. Once the contractor has completed the master development plan there, we would move onto a proposal for design and construction of the facility there.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I've had a fair amount to say in the past about the condition at Stanton, but it

wasn't really structural stuff. It was kind of more cosmetic and more peripheral stuff.

It's very interesting. You go to Stanton, you walk in there, you take the elevator up — hey, the elevator works! — and you go to the rooms and they seem to work. It's really amazing that a facility that looks kind of functional and normal and clean — no, I take that back — needs a \$27 million upgrade. It isn't readily obvious. It looks like it could use a paint job. It looks like it could use a good cleaning. But it's amazing to me....

What sort of precipitates this? Are we living in luxury land, here? Is there a way to make this facility work? Or are these really pressing things? I heard a whole list of things that just shocked me — change the elevators? Elevators are hugely expensive things. What's wrong with the elevators we've got? We've got other communities — small communities that are out there just desperate for capital infrastructure — and we're taking a building that looks fairly functional, it seems like it meets the needs of delivering the health programs it's intended to deliver, and yet we seem like we're maybe pre-empting something by spending this money in advance. It just seems extravagant.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I think there's always a danger for health-care facilities to cross a threshold into being extravagant. People want to plan for the future, and they build a state-of-the-art facility that costs a lot of money. I have heard figures as much as \$200 million to renovate Stanton Territorial Health Authority.

I have to tell you that would not happen under my watch. We are working really closely with the public administrator to make sure this master development plan is focused on the seven areas we have been talking about.

It's about function. It's about the programs they will provide. I would like to commit to the Members that as soon as I get the master development plan project submitted to me, I'll come and make that presentation. There will be no extravagance or extra, but we do need to address the emergency unit, medical daycare, ICU. I can't remember all the other seven areas, but I've been saying them a number of times. There are seven critical areas we need to address.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I think that by most standards almost anywhere in the world, if you went to a remote location like the Northwest Territories and found 42,000 inhabitants, then you looked around at our capital infrastructure.... If you looked at buildings like this and buildings like the museum across the way — even getting into the small communities.... If you look at schools, and you look

at all the infrastructure out there, I would say that it would be fairly amazing.

Now, if we really didn't have any money — obviously, we have lots of money... If we were really strapped for money, would we be figuring out more innovative ways to make an infrastructure like Stanton work for us without spending millions and millions of dollars?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, we are. We have to watch our money, and we are doing that. We are looking at all the suggestions that Members in this House have made: the possibility of moving some of the office space out; how to make the hospital safe; use for hospital space as much as possible.

I've gone to inquire about whether we could, somehow, use the.... There's a whole section there where they store things right behind the emergency unit. I'm asking whether that could be turned into emergency unit space. I mean, I'm just talking like MLAs here are to make sure we stay realistic about this master development plan. It's not a huge, long, extravagant plan, but it's functional. And it's one that needs to address some of the issues, because I've been getting queries from not just the Yellowknife Members but from lots of other Members about the space issues at the hospital. We need to address those.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just wondering, as I look at this \$46 million at Stanton, if there's an energy expert who will be reviewing this just to ensure the efficiencies and benefits of energy efficiency and energy conservation.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I don't know that. Right now I've got Mr. Deputy Minister to ask — when he next meets with them, after the development people — that he inquire about that.

Mr. Bromley: That's fine. Thank you.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister doesn't have to supply this information now, but I'd be interested to see what information the department has on what that \$17.5 million breaks down into — what we're going to get for that at the end of the day. Even though it's years away, I think the department probably has a good idea of where that money is going to be spent.

I'd like to, as well, get some information on the technical upgrades — what's happened there to date, and what the money in future years is going to

be used for specifically. I don't need that information right now. I could get that later.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Minister Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: We'll get all the specifics.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Lee. We're on page 5-7, Health and Social Services, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Health Services Programs, Tangible Capital Assets, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$12.808 million. Total Activity: \$12.808 million.

Department of Health and Social Services, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Health Services Programs, Tangible Capital Assets, Total Activity: \$12.808 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Moving on to page 5-9, Health and Social Services, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Community Health Programs, Tangible Capital Assets, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$19.606 million. Total Activity: \$19.606 million, Total Department: \$32.414 million. Mr. Jacobson.

COMMITTEE MOTION 31-16(2)
TO DEFER FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF
INFRASTRUCTURE ACQUISITION PLAN,
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES
(COMMITTEE MOTION CARRIED)

Mr. Jacobson: Mr. Chair, I move that the committee defer further consideration of Department of Health and Social Services infrastructure acquisition plan at this time.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We'll move on. Thank you, Ms. Minister. Thank you to your witnesses. What is the wish of committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress.

Motion defeated.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): What is the wish of committee? Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): We can't move the same motion without an intervening piece of business, so we're going to have to call the department. What is the wish of committee? Opening comments. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I suggest that we go back and adopt the Department of Human Resources.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Agreed? All those in agreement to going back to the Department of Human Resources.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

MAIN ESTIMATES 2008–2009
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): Order! We'll be returning to the Department of Human Resources, which is somewhere in this book. We're on page 2-51, Human Resources, Program Summary, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$32.253 million.

Department of Human Resources, Program Summary, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$32.253 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): That concludes the Department of Human Resources. What is the wish of committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Abernethy): I will now rise and report progress. Thank you, Minister Bob McLeod and Minister Lee, and thank your witnesses.

Report of Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

Deputy Speaker (Mr. Krutko): Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole. Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, 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 with three motions being adopted.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Do I have a seconder for that? Mr. Menicoche.

Motion carried.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Item 22, third reading of bills. Item 23, Madam Clerk, Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Principal Clerk of Operations (Ms. Bennett): Orders of the Day for Friday, June 6, 2008, 10 a.m.

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements

- 3) Members' Statements
- 4) Returns to Oral Questions
- 5) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
- 6) Acknowledgements
- 7) Oral Questions
- 8) Written Questions
- 9) Returns to Written Questions
- 10) Replies to Opening Address
- 11) Petitions
- 12) Reports of Standing and Special Committees
- 13) Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
- 14) Tabling of Documents
- 15) Notices of Motion
- 16) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 17) Motions
- 18) First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2007–2008
 - Bill 11: An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
- 19) Second Reading of Bills
- 20) 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

CR 7-16(2): Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

TD 37-16(2): Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2

21) Report of Committee of the Whole

22) Third Reading of Bills

23) Orders of the Day

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, June 6, 2008, at 10 a.m.

The House adjourned at 8:59 p.m.