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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Great Slave)

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(Tu Nedhe)

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Table of Contents

Prayer	1115
Point of Order	1115
Ministers' Statements	1119
62-16(2): Government of Canada Residential School Apology (Roland)	1119
63-16(2): Recognition of John B. Zoe (Lafferty)	1120
64-16(2): Northern Women in Mining, Oil and Gas (Lee)	1120
Members' Statements	1120
Government of Canada Residential School Apology (Beaulieu)	1120
Mandatory Leave Without Pay Concerns for Affected Employees (Bisaro)	1121
Exploration Permits in the Beaufort Sea (Jacobson)	1121
Location of the Aurora Research Institute (McLeod)	1122
Resource Royalties from Northern Oil Reserves (Bromley)	1122
Government of Canada Residential School Apology (Krutko)	1123
Government of Canada Residential School Apology (Menicoche)	1123
Hydroelectric Development in the Northwest Territories (Ramsay)	1124
Government of Canada Residential School Apology (Groenewegen)	1124
Government of Canada Residential School Apology (Hawkins)	1125
Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery	1125
Oral Questions	1125
309-16(2): Reuniting Aboriginal Foster Children with Families (Krutko)	1125
310-16(2): Mandatory Leave Without Pay for Affected Employees (Bisaro)	1126
311-16(2): Resource Royalties from Northern Oil Reserves (Bromley)	1127
312-16(2): Dental Surgery Service for Fort Resolution Residents (Beaulieu)	1128
313-16(2): Exploration Permits in the Beaufort-Delta (Jacobson)	1129
314-16(2): Development of an NWT Hydro Strategy (Ramsay)	1130
315-16(2): Location of the Aurora Research Institute (McLeod)	1130
316-16(2): Integrating Residential School Information into NWT Curriculum (Menicoche)	1131
317-16(2): Vacation Travel Allowance to Improve Public Service Morale (Hawkins)	1132
318-16(2): Dental Surgery Availability for Children (Groenewegen)	1133
319-16(2): Tsiigehtchic Ferry Service (Krutko)	1134
320-16(2): Taltson Expansion Hydro Project (Ramsay)	1135
Second Reading of Bills	1136
Bill 11 - An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act	1136
Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters	1136
Main Estimates 2008–2009 NWT Housing Corporation	1137
Main Estimates 2008–2009 Department of Environment and Natural Resources	1137
Committee Motion 46-16(2): To Reinstate \$50,000 for Proposed Relocation of Inuvik Area Office (Committee Motion Carried)	1156
Committee Motion 47-16(2): To Reinstate \$108,000 for Renewable Resource Officer Positions and Bear Fencing Program (Committee Motion Carried)	1162
Committee Motion 48-16(2): To Defer Consideration of Operations Expenditures	

Main Estimates 2008–2009 Department of Municipal and Community Affairs	1169
Report of the Committee of the Whole	1176
Orders of the Day	1177

**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Wednesday, June 11, 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 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

Prayer.

Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the day. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Point of Order

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order under Rules 23 (h), (i), (k) and (m). I've waited until today to raise this point of order, because I wanted to review the unedited Hansard.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday during debate on Committee Motion 45-16(2), Mr. Abernethy said, and I quote from page 106 of unedited Hansard for Tuesday, June 10, 2008: "I clearly understand why the Member for Deh Cho is upset. We are knocking off \$300,000 for the 60th parallel visitors' park."

Mr. Abernethy's comments alleged that I was upset. I'm not sure how this was determined, since I did not speak to the motion. His comments also impute that I was defending government projects in my own constituency, which I did not.

Mr. Speaker, I consider Mr. Abernethy's remarks to be disrespectful to me, my constituents and to the concept of consensus government. These comments and remarks do little more than create disorder in the House. It is my exclusive right and privilege to state my opinions and beliefs in this Assembly, and I am very concerned that Mr. Abernethy may have infringed on this right by suggesting that I put my position on the motion under debate.

In this regard I believe Mr. Abernethy's comments offended the practices and precedents of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. McLeod has risen on a point of order. I am going to allow some debate on the point of order. To the point of

order, the honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise on a point of order under Rule 23(h)....

Mr. Speaker: We have a point of order on the floor. I will deal with that point of order. If you want to speak to the point of order, you may. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the point of order, yesterday when the debate was going on we were all talking about the projects that were going on. There was a lot of reference to the different projects that were out there and a lot of reference to the projects that were in question — the ones that were being eliminated as a result of the \$1.5 million cut. Clearly, the Deh Cho project was one of them. I felt, you know, that I'd have been upset if a project was getting eliminated from my riding. It's a fact. We know that exists. We know there would have been \$300,000 spent in the Minister's riding, so I made reference to it. It's a fact; it exists. I didn't think that I was, as the Member said yesterday, impugning his motives. I wasn't suggesting in any way, shape or form that the Minister had any motive in this thing, simply that having a project eliminated from his riding may be upsetting.

That's it for now. I'll save the rest for the next two.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was here in the Chamber when the words were said. I'm going to speak to it in this regard. First, I want to stress — and I think it's important to highlight — that Mr. McLeod's riding and how he makes his opinions are his responsibility and his responsibility alone. Therefore, it should not be assumed as to how Members, whether they be Cabinet or Regular Members, assume that opinion.

Mr. Speaker, it's my opinion that the Member for Great Slave was not shooting with ill intent,

although his words may have suggested there could have been an assumption there. I think the spirit and the intent was strictly based on the fact that something was being deleted, and of course, the Member may feel that is a concern.

My observation of this whole issue at large is that it was an assumption, but I don't think it was meant in any regard of any negative perspective. I don't think there's a point of order here, but I'd certainly like to offer the opportunity for us to retract those words and maybe move forward. I don't think this is a necessary process. Sometimes things get frustrated and words get put into people's mouths, as well as intents.

Closing this point out, Mr. Speaker, the issue I think that really arose here is the fact that there was an assumption made. I don't think the spirit and the intent was mean or with malice or any other type in any way.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was in the Chamber. I heard the comments that were made by Mr. Abernethy. I concur that Mr. McLeod had not spoken to the motion. I perceived Mr. Abernethy's comments to be merely stating the obvious: that there was a motion before us to delete certain capital projects from ridings that were Ministers' ridings. That's what my interpretation was when I heard the words — that Mr. Abernethy was in fact stating the obvious.

As to whether Mr. McLeod was upset by that, I think it would be safe to assume that any Member around this Chamber would not be happy to have a motion come forward to delete something from their riding. I don't think it's an outrageous assumption on Mr. Abernethy's part. Again, I state that to me it sounded like he was stating the obvious about some of the components of that \$1.5 million that were proposed to be deleted.

Mr. Speaker, when you are considering your ruling, which will be yours and yours alone.... I think that we have embarked on a new thing in this Chamber of Members, actually, from the other side defending their ridings, defending capital projects in their ridings, and I think that introduces a new kind of tone to the debate on motions like this. I would appreciate it if that was something you took into consideration as well.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to comment here. I think

it's very important. Although I can understand the point of order that's been raised here, I think it's very important in considering it to take into consideration the context in which the comments were made, and I'd like to just make a comment on that.

My perception of the Member's statement is that it was meant to be vicarious and consoling. If you look at the paragraph preceding the remark, for example, the statement was made that we will be still spending \$2.3 million — in other words, this is not a total cut here — and it was followed by the suggestion that this may be a temporary cut, that we can reinstate these at a later date, which may not be very much later.

I just wanted to make the comment that, taken in context and perhaps considering a lack of experience in what's totally appropriate protocol, the Member's statements were really meant to be more vicarious and consoling than accusatory.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to rise on my own point of order, but I will instead speak to this particular point of order put forward by my colleague.

Personally, I want to state that the Member did not speak to defend; he did not speak to argue the case. He was silent, as was my colleague Mr. Yakeleya. There were three of us named, and things were attributed to us.

Within the context of the debate and the debate that's been going on in this House, in my opinion, there was an imputation, first, that Ministers have been favouring themselves in terms of how projects are being distributed, and then now we're doubly upset because the decision has been made to delete some of them. I don't think that's a fair characterization. I think it's contrary to the rules.

I agree with my colleague. He did not say a word, nor did Mr. Yakeleya, and the Member opposite took it upon himself to define what they were feeling and attribute motive to them that was in no way verbalized in this House. I think it's beyond what is acceptable in terms of the rules of debate before this House.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, was in the House when the exchange occurred. As well, to this point of order, out of interest I read the unedited Hansard. The way it reads to me is that there was no intent here

other than to state the obvious fact, which a Member did.

You have to remember that there was very spirited discussion occurring at that moment as well. We're right in the heat of debating a very, very important motion. It was really important to the Cabinet side, and they were defending it. Many of their Members did speak. The two who were mentioned by Mr. Abernethy didn't speak, but there were others who spoke. There was lots of spirited engagement in the debate. Mr. Abernethy, I believe, just pointed out a few facts from the motion that was being debated in front of us. Mashicho.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise in defence of the point of order from my honourable colleague. We have — I along with Mr. Miltenberger, the MLA for Thebacha — pointed out, in terms of this debate here, in terms of Mr. Abernethy's comments to me, that I never spoke on the motion in the Hansard. I was quite concerned in terms of Mr. Abernethy having the understanding about why I was upset. There are reasons I could be looking upset over here. I'm not too sure how he came to that conclusion. There are many things going on in our lives and many things happening in this Assembly that would cause me to make some judgments. That is quite worrisome to me as to how I choose to be portrayed on this side in terms of our discussions in this House. It really does cause me some concerns in terms of the style of government we have here in terms of the issues Mr. McLeod talked about. To say that I'm upset, too, because we knocked \$100,000 off the CANOL Trail really does concern me a lot in terms of this point of order and in terms of how we are to receive them.

I look forward to your ruling in terms of how we conduct ourselves with the style of government we have in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to just state for the record today that I, too, heard the comments of my colleague Mr. Abernethy yesterday. It was a heated debate. Cabinet Ministers, specifically the Premier, were visibly upset over the motion to delete the \$1.5 million. You could see it on their faces. Actually, some of them were turning quite a shade of red.

I believe that my colleague Mr. Abernethy was pointing out the obvious. Again, Cabinet waded into the debate. They started trying to defend the \$1.5

million expenditure in this area that the motion spoke of. It is unfortunate my colleague named a couple of Ministers who didn't speak to the motion, and I believe they were caught in the crossfire of a heated debate.

You know, you can connect the dots in this motion, that the \$1.5 million.... My colleague was stating the obvious. There wasn't 10 cents of that \$1.5 million expenditure being spent in anyone's riding on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. He was only stating the obvious. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will listen to this and wait for your ruling. But even comments and some of the discussion here continue to talk about obvious facts.

Mr. Speaker, the motion was referring to.... If we look at the document that was being referred to on the capital infrastructure piece, or acquisition plan of the Government of the Northwest Territories for 2008–2009, under IT1, page 9-7, the specific area refers to Parks Renewal — Territorial.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Member raised an issue and spoke on behalf.... There are no obvious facts. When you look at Hansard, there is no record in Hansard of both the Member for Sahtu and the Member for Deh Cho speaking to this.

Now, we've heard some Members say there was obviously a concern or an upset view from some of us over here, and I would have to accept that as Premier and Finance Minister. The budget was being cut. There's obviously going to be some reaction to that from me. But the fact is that in this House we all reserve the right to speak for ourselves and our constituencies. None of the Members on the other side would take very lightly the fact if I were to stand up and start speaking on behalf of the Member for Mackenzie Delta, or Nunakput or Kam Lake, and say, "They are doing this, or they're feeling this," when they've never expressed that in this Assembly.

Now, in heated debate things can happen; agreed. But I think that is why, more importantly, we need clear guidelines as to what is acceptable and not acceptable. If Members enter into the fray, then I guess in this circle we would call it fair game. But for those who have not expressed an opinion on the particular debate, I don't think it would be appropriate for them to put on record — on permanent record — what was being said, because a lot of people in the Northwest Territories only have Hansard to look at.

So, Members, when you raise an obvious fact, we know the fact because we've done our work in this Assembly. But for the people in the Northwest Territories, when they hear the debate — if they catch a bit of it or they just catch Hansard — they're not getting all those pieces. In fact, when they go back and they link up to this document, they would see us talking about territorial assets and facilities.

So I don't think it's appropriate for any Member of this House, whether it be a Minister or a Regular Member, to try to state what another Member is feeling when they haven't been part of the debate on any motion at that point.

I look forward to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, in that area. But we definitely need clear guidelines as to how we proceed from this point, and a better understanding. It is in time of heated debate that things can go sideways on us, as they would say.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. To the point of order, the honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak on the point of order, and in favour of the point of order, on two points. One is the notion that a Member in this House can read an opinion of another by looking at them, which is exactly what happened with respect to Mr. Abernethy's statement yesterday.

I am aware that we need to have a good debate, passionate debate, heated debate, and things are said sometimes that we may not say in a regular situation. That is the reason we have the rules. One of the strongest rules we have is that we're not allowed to impute motive to another Member, even when the words are spoken. You're not allowed to impute motive into something that was verbally stated.

What we are dealing with here, on the face of it, is a Member imputing motives about happiness or unhappiness or whatever on the basis of something that was not spoken. If we are going to be judged and have our motive imputed on the basis of how we look, I think that would pose serious trouble for any future debates in this House. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider that fact closely.

The second thing is that there is a larger issue about an obvious thing that's being referred to, which is that Cabinet as a whole somehow are making decisions that favour a Cabinet Minister's riding and that they are being upset because it's being deleted. That is a serious accusation that we cannot.... If we accept that these are acceptable words to be spoken and, in the heat of debate on a budget, that any Member could impute that a Cabinet Minister specifically — even when he didn't

even say anything — is upset or happy because of something happening to his riding, that is a serious crossing of the line and breach of the line of debate that I don't think we should condone. That really gets in the way of the integrity of consensus government and the level of civility and the respect we need to have in the Legislature to have a healthy debate and for the integrity of the consensus government that we work under.

I am really troubled, Mr. Speaker — and I will be waiting for your ruling — that so many Members are saying, "That is obvious." The point of order we need to respect here is that that is not obvious, that is not correct. If that is being imputed from something that was not even said, that has to be rejected. I look forward to your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the point of order. Mr. Abernethy, do you have your hand up?

Mr. Abernethy: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to make clear — I mean, if you look at the context, the text, and the Hansard within the full context, the first paragraph, second paragraph and third paragraph — that I don't believe I was imputing any motive. I certainly was not suggesting there was a ministerial sort of conspiracy. The fact that the Minister from Range Lake suggests that I was suggesting that is kind of off base.

I don't feel I was suggesting that at all. I was talking about the motion. I talked about how I understood there were obviously going to be some people upset about this. Then I further went on to talk about how this is not necessarily a dead issue. We have an opportunity to work together as a group. For the Minister to suggest I was actually suggesting there might be some inappropriate activity going on, on behalf of Cabinet, is completely off base.

I mean, I'll further state — I'll make it dead clear — I was never questioning the integrity of the Minister, certainly not questioning the credentials or the credibility of the Minister. I was talking about the fact that we were cutting \$1.5 million, and it was certainly going to be affecting some people. I can clearly understand how unfortunate that is and how that's going to adversely affect some people, specifically the Members.

I also never referred to them as Ministers. I referred to them as Members. My intent was not to impute motive in any way, shape or form.

I'm a little offended by Ms. Lee's claim that I'm, in fact, imputing motive. I think that's actually inappropriate.

I respect this House. I'll treat this House with respect. I'll treat all Members with respect. I think I've demonstrated I'm capable of that, and I think I've done that in the nine months I've been here, and I'll continue to do that. I'm going to wait for the Speaker's ruling on this. If the Speaker should rule me out of order, I'll happily withdraw my comments and I'll happily and sincerely apologize to the Member, but until that time I don't believe in any way, shape or form that I was imputing motive. If I did, it was certainly not my intent.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. To the point of order. I'll allow the final remarks to Mr. McLeod.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it's an issue of somebody suggesting what my position was on an issue that I had no opportunity to speak to. Whether or not I had intended to speak to the issue is a separate issue altogether.

We heard again today four Members say it's clear that this is a fact — pointing at me — that I was upset. I don't think anybody across the room knew how I felt.

This is a territorial project. It is in the Deh Cho. That is a fact. Whether or not I was upset, whether I was going to defend the position, is a whole separate issue, and nobody has the right to speak on my behalf. I resent that, and I will not accept that.

This, I think, is somewhat a little bit clearer in the fact that the Member has indicated he wasn't questioning my credibility and my integrity. However, that's not how I felt yesterday. I felt that he was raising issues with my ability to do my job, and I had to raise it today, Mr. Speaker. I'll await your decision.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I have allowed some debate on the point of order. Due to the number of Members who have spoken on this point of order and issues that were raised, feelings that were expressed, I will take this point of order under advisement and come back with my ruling so I can review everything that was said in response to the point of order. Thank you, Members.

Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 62-16(2)
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL APOLOGY

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon Prime Minister Stephen

Harper provided a statement of apology to former students of aboriginal residential schools.

I would like to offer this government's acknowledgement of the Prime Minister's apology to the aboriginal people and their families who have been hurt by their attendance at residential schools.

Most people in this territory have been impacted in some way by the effect of residential schools. Many have families or friends who were affected. Over half the Members of this Legislative Assembly attended residential schools themselves. All of us have witnessed the loss, sorrow and devastation caused by these schools. Many of the challenges Northerners face — from loss of language, culture and family connection, to addictions and further abuses — stem from the difficult personal and family situations created by the residential school system in our communities.

The Prime Minister's apology is a glimmer of hope for northern students who passed through a dark part of Canadian history and finally marks the beginning of a period of healing and recovery. This apology is a necessary step on the healing journey of those who have suffered and suffer still. It does not mean the harm done to them by residential schools will go away, but it allows for a new chapter in this sorrowful book — a turning of the page that signals a new beginning and a time of reconciliation and hope for aboriginal families across our land.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great deal of work ahead of us to help those affected deal with the indignities, degradation and suffering that resulted from residential schools. Much of the planning we do in this Legislature is bound to the events of the residential school system.

For some there has been a positive side to their experience. Students met lifelong friends and received an education that started them on a successful career path, as we witnessed recently at a Yellowknife reunion of one NWT residential school.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has granted casual leave to employees wishing to watch the apology or attend events marking the occasion. Let us also pause for a moment from our discussions and debates today to remember and pray for those students and family members who have suffered as a result of the residential school system. Let us reflect on their suffering and also on their strength. Let us honour the culture, language and community that has been retained even as we mourn for what was tragically lost.

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

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I move that Minister's Statement 62-16(2) be moved into Committee of the Whole for further debate.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder to the motion? The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins. Motion is on the floor. Motion is in order.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Minister's Statement 62-16(2) will be moved into Committee of the Whole.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 63-16(2)
RECOGNITION OF JOHN B. ZOE

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. John B. Zoe is receiving an honorary Doctor of Laws in Edmonton for his work in community service and with government agencies in the Tlicho region. The positive impact Mr. Zoe has had on the North will be felt for many years to come.

As one of the main drivers of the Tlicho negotiations, he worked tirelessly to make sure his people were represented. Mr. Zoe was a chief negotiator for the entire duration of the negotiations. His dedication helped make the landmark agreement a reality.

He also played a big part in the creation of the Tlicho Community Service Agency. That agency is unique in the way it delivers education, health and social services within the context of the traditional cultural values and has received national and international awards for its innovative model. Mr. Zoe has been dedicated to preserving, reviving and celebrating the culture and language of Tlicho people for more than two decades. He has helped revitalize traditional activities such as canoe making with the elders and youth in the region. Getting youth out on the land, being a mentor and reviving cultural traditions has made Mr. Zoe a true custodian of his culture.

It would be impossible to highlight every important thing Mr. Zoe has done for the Tlicho people and for the North. He is a storyteller, a politician, a public servant, an anthropologist, an archaeologist, a musician, a husband and a father. He wears many hats and does so with a tireless work ethic, humility and respect for others. He deserves to be recognized for his passion for, and dedication to, his people and their heritage.

The honour he has received from the University of Alberta is a testament to his positive influence. His contribution to our territory should be celebrated, and I would like you to join me in applauding him. Mahsi cho.

Applause.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Ms. Lee.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 64-16(2)
NORTHERN WOMEN IN MINING, OIL AND GAS

Hon. Sandy Lee: In the spirit of celebrating Mining Week this week, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate 11 women who recently completed the Building Trades Helper Program under the Northern Women in Mining, Oil and Gas Project.

This program provides workplace exposure to women in trade occupations such as carpentry, electrical, welding, plumbing and other trades integral to the mining, oil and gas industries. The governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories, industry and Aurora College all partnered with the Status of Women Council to provide financial support, housing, hands-on site training and upgrading in preparation for them to write the trades entrance examination.

Mr. Speaker, northern women are under-represented in industrial trades, which means northern women are a huge untapped labour resource that the industry is eager to have working on their projects. I'm pleased to see northern women enrol in this program, and I encourage them to explore the lucrative opportunities available to them in industry.

I commend the Status of Women Council and their numerous industry partners for their insight in providing this type of program for the training of women in the industrial trades.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to invite the Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing 11 northern women from all regions of the Northwest Territories who have already taken a giant step forward: Sharon Gauthier, Joyce Greenland, Valerie Kimiksana, Laura Krutko, Shirley Niditchie, Stephanie Smutylo, Emelda King, Doris Rabesca, Sarah Tautuajuk, Kayla Crozier and Jennifer McDonald.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL APOLOGY

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today's a very emotional day for many of my constituents. I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the

official apology made earlier today by the Government of Canada. That's an important step toward healing for many residential school survivors and those family members who have passed on.

It is an historical day for Canada. As the Member for Tu Nedhe representing many residential school survivors and families of former survivors, I would like to thank the Government of Canada for taking the responsibility to officially acknowledge many Canadians, to officially acknowledge what many Canadians have known all along: the residential school experience that was inflicted was a terrible and tragic experience for many aboriginal Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, from this day forward many will be able to complete their personal journey of healing, while for many others this marks the beginning of this personal journey of healing. June 21 is just around the corner, and it is a recognized statutory holiday in the Northwest Territories. I would like to encourage all to support and honour this special day as a special day for aboriginal people as well as all Canadians.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MANDATORY LEAVE WITHOUT PAY
CONCERNS FOR AFFECTED EMPLOYEES

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to discuss today treatment that some of our employees who've been affected by the proposed budget are receiving.

Since March of this year GNWT employees have been dealing with what are effectively layoff notices and all the emotion and the angst that such notices brings. Over the last couple of weeks as we have discussed the budget, Members have been told that the government is trying to make it as easy as possible for the affected employees and to help them transition from one job to the next within the government, from the government to another employer, or to unemployment. That it is easy for these employees, however, is a statement I find quite debatable.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to advise this House of an injustice in our pay system for certain employees, and it's related to Donny Days. Some time ago, to make things fair for all employees, the GNWT and the Union of Northern Workers, through a collective agreement signed by both parties, agreed that 1.92 per cent of each employee's paycheque would be deducted throughout the year so that the staff would receive pay throughout the mandatory leave days, or Donny Days, in December. Both parties have also agreed that these pay deductions are attached to the job position, not the employee, and

that's been verified by an arbitration case. Should an employee leave his or her job mid-year and the position be subsequently filled, the new employee will still have fully paid for the December leave courtesy of the previous person's deductions. It all works out in the end, and it does make sense, actually.

But, Mr. Speaker, what do not make sense are the pay deductions of an employee whose position is being terminated as a result of this budget. No one will fill that position; it's gone. Poof! Yet the Department of Human Resources is advising these employees that no refund of their Donny Days deductions will be forthcoming. To add insult to injury, we are laying people off and we are reducing their salary for five days' leave they will not be able to take. The money will not go to another employee, as the position has been eliminated. No doubt the funds could fall into general revenue, but it's also entirely possible that the money will be used by the department as a slush fund to buy supplies or support programs, and that does not seem fair to me.

This injustice needs to be corrected, Mr. Speaker. Affected employees whose positions are eliminated who do not go on to another GNWT job should receive a refund of the 1.92 per cent of their pay that's been deducted on each paycheque for Donny Days. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance later on.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
EXPLORATION PERMITS
IN THE BEAUFORT SEA

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs announced exploration leases totalling over \$1 billion and covering nearly 850,000 hectares of the Beaufort seabed. British Petroleum paid \$1.18 billion for a 380-hectare parcel, which surpassed last year's record payment of \$585 million on exploration leases. The two other leases, totalling \$4.3 million, went to MGM Energy Corp. and ConocoPhillips Canada Resources Corp.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, we are excited in the Beaufort-Delta, as these leases require work commitments totalling \$300 million. This means economic opportunities for the businesses in the communities of Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik and employment opportunities for residents.

It's good for the people of Tuk to see more opportunities for the community. We were a bit in an exploration slump for a while due to uncertainty over the construction of the Mackenzie Gas Project. The slump is over.

I want to urge all successful bidders to work with the people and the businesses of the Beaufort-Delta and the community of Tuktoyaktuk to ensure maximum benefit to the region.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
LOCATION OF THE
AURORA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Premier some questions on the Arctic Research Institute. I'd like to follow that up today with my Member's statement.

We all know climate change is happening. This is something that's been out there for a while. We see it first-hand in the Beaufort-Delta with the banks starting to cave in with permafrost giving out and that. We see it in the ocean. The signs are all out there, and I think Mr. Bromley points out quite well that there are a lot of concerns. My colleague Mr. Jacobson spoke to the exploration that's going to be going on in the Beaufort-Delta, which is a good thing for business in the Beaufort-Delta, but they still will continue to monitor the environment.

That brings me to the point I want to make. The federal government is looking to put up an Aurora institute as the place to conduct research and have it as the headquarters. I think I've tried to make my case why the facility should be in the Beaufort-Delta and, in particular, in Inuvik. The Arctic is an open textbook as to climate change and how it's affecting the animals. If you want to study the ocean, we have it there. If you want to study the delta, the delta's there. If you want to study whales, they're there. If you want to study buffalo, they'll soon be there because of the way things are changing.

I will have questions today to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, because I think the location of the Aurora Research Institute should be in Inuvik, and I think the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will be a big player in helping decide where it's going to go. I will pose my questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment at the appropriate time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RESOURCE ROYALTIES FROM
NORTHERN OIL RESERVES

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the Proven Area Agreement in 1944 the Government of Canada apparently gained a one-third equity stake in gross production from the

Norman Wells oil field. This oil is a Northwest Territories resource, yet the federal government is raking in hundreds of millions of dollars with no return to the NWT.

Just how much are they making from our resources? At an average price of \$65 per barrel for crude oil, the revenues for the federal government for 2006–2007 from the Norman Wells field were \$123 million. For 2007–2008 there was a higher price for oil, on average, offset by the lower exchange rate and a 5 per cent decline in production; at \$100 per barrel average price for last year, federal receipts will be \$165 million. For 2008–2009, with a slight drop in production but greater average price per barrel, about \$125, an estimated total of \$215 million in revenue will accrue to the federal government.

I roughly define more than reasonable profits for the federal government from this investment at \$100 million per year. This means the Government of Canada has accrued considerable yearly windfall profits above this amount — windfall profits of \$23 million, \$40 million and an estimated \$100 million from 2006–2007 to the current fiscal year.

Same-source revenues for the GNWT and aboriginal governments from the sale of this oil will be nil. The accumulation of gross levels of profit by Canada from NWT resources without any benefits to us is unacceptable and wrong. It is only right that windfall profits from the extraction and sale of our natural resources be returned to this jurisdiction to do good work.

We in the NWT are a small population widely distributed and often living in small, remote communities. Many of our communities rely almost exclusively on fossil fuels for heating, power and transportation needs. The dedication of these windfall profits to replacing fossil fuel systems with renewable energy systems in, say, our five most expensive small Mackenzie Valley communities would be an entirely appropriate use and, indeed, investment of these dollars. This investment would free significant dollars that could then be invested in similarly wise ways to help other communities deal with the rising cost of living and the challenges of preventing and adjusting to climate change.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Bromley: I view this as a moral imperative. These oil resources are Northerners' resources, and clearly considerable revenues are already contributing to national issues. We are also facing serious issues here in the North. I encourage this government to vigorously pursue the appropriate return and reinvestment of windfall profits currently

received by the federal government from our oil reserves.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL APOLOGY

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I had an opportunity to watch the Prime Minister of Canada make an official apology to residential school survivors in Canada and, more importantly, to the children who are no longer here.

It was very hard to hear the Prime Minister of Canada talk about an issue I feel has affected me greatly due to the loss of so many friends to suicide and death because of the residential school experience. Those individuals are not here today to see the apology and also to have an opportunity to deal with the many challenges they had to face and the lives they have lost because of the institutional screw-up that the Government of Canada made.

It's very hard to stand here and talk about an issue that I feel. Nothing can bring back those children, my friends. There's no amount of money in the world that can bring back your culture, your language or your lifestyle, which was so unique prior to the Europeans coming to Canada. These people had their own systems of caring for their children, caring for their elders, caring for their communities, being gathered so that everybody was able to sustain themselves. It was hard to see the elders on the television crying, because I also shed a tear.

We have to do better for the aboriginal people of Canada, the aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories, and the ones who are still hurting. These people had their own governance systems. These people were self-reliant. These people were able to care for their children, their elders and their communities. Yet look at what it has done to the generations of people from this concept being implemented in the mid-1800s to where we are today. It has affected us greatly in our ability to function in society, our ability to govern ourselves and our ability to retain our languages.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

As we know, the first indigenous people have been involved. In some places the archeologists were able to trace their ancestry back for 10,000 years in northern Canada. Where are we today?

I can quote the Prime Minister of Canada when he basically states that never again will we have such a policy in place by way of the residential school policy. We do have a policy. It's called apprehension. We have over 630 children in foster homes and care facilities in the Northwest Territories. In southern institutions there are some 8,300 children who are under foster care on reserves in southern Canada. What are we doing different?

I will be asking the Minister of Health questions with regard to what we are doing with 630 children in care, of whom 570 are aboriginal.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL APOLOGY

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, wish to speak on the Indian residential school apology.

Today our aboriginal people have a reason to be hopeful. First Nations people have waited a long time for this sincere and full apology by the Government of Canada for their role in developing and running the residential school system.

Residential schools caused incredible suffering for thousands of aboriginal people when their children were systemically removed from their family, community and culture. Our aboriginal children suffered physical and emotional abuse leading to loss of language, culture and parenting skills. The impact of those experiences has and will have serious effects on the health and well-being of generations of aboriginal people.

Today Prime Minister Harper made that statement on behalf of the federal government and all Canadians in the House of Commons. Mr. Speaker, this apology is another step toward a brighter future for our First Nations. Canada is moving forward in acknowledging and regretting the harm it inflicted on my people. Compensation payments and the launch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are connected steps supporting the recovery from the trauma suffered.

Today thousands of First Nations people gathered in Ottawa to witness this historic event in person. In my riding and in many other parts of the NWT people were glued to the TV and radio to hear that apology. It is an apology to each one of us as members of First Nations. An apology cannot undo what happened. The government apology is about what they've done to our people. To us, it's about tragedy of loss. I send my wishes of courage,

strength and wisdom to our people to find forgiveness so we can move forward.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

We need to ensure that the stories and experiences of our residential school survivors and the Canadian policies that inflicted them remain in the conscious memory of all Canadians. Instead of blank pages, they must become part of our history books. They must be talked about in our schools and history classes. When we learn from history instead of forgetting about it, we can start building a better future for our children and grandchildren.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HYDROELECTRIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak today about hydroelectric development in the Northwest Territories. I've said previously that the Government of the Northwest Territories needs to develop a long-range hydro strategy that sets out the roles, responsibilities and possibilities that exist to take our government and aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories forward together in developing this vast resource of ours. We cannot do this in isolation. We will need to develop a strategy to engage and consult with aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories.

I understand that we need to move forward, and I have stated before that in principle I do support the expansion of the Taltson hydro system. However, I would feel more comfortable if I knew there would be a social component to the expansion. Communities in the South Slave should see decreases in their power rates. Also, we need to ensure we have customers to sell the power to.

Mr. Speaker, it will probably take three to four years to go through the regulatory approval and construction, and that will take three or four years off the mine life expectancy of our existing mines. I haven't seen any signed contracts to date from these mining companies to buy power from Taltson. We're set to spend another \$3 million toward this project, and we need to have a sound business case for that to happen. If this project is such a good business case, it should be completely cost-neutral to the public purse.

We need to ensure that as a government we get as much as possible out of the Taltson expansion and transmission line. In developing this comprehensive hydro strategy, we also need to make sure we have

the expertise and the experience to develop our potential in a coordinated, timely and businesslike manner.

As a government we may have hired over 70 new positions in the area of the Mackenzie Gas Project over the past five years to deal with that project. Why are we not getting serious about hydro and the potential it has? To my knowledge, we've not hired one person with any degree of experience or expertise in this area, which makes me wonder: who is developing this hydro strategy, Mr. Speaker?

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT OF CANADA RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL APOLOGY

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to the Prime Minister's apology to the students of aboriginal residential schools, which we heard broadcast earlier today.

I believe this apology was a good thing and long overdue. Although it cannot erase the wrongs of the past, it is still a powerful statement on behalf of the Canadian government and also on behalf of Canadian people. The Prime Minister's is the most powerful voice in the land, and I think it must be seen to represent the voice of Canadian people.

We know the lasting impacts of the events that occur during a child's formative years. We can only imagine the feelings of anxiety and trauma when a child is separated from the love, discipline and authority of their parents' care. It was an interruption and an assault on one of nature's most sacred relationships: that between parents and their children.

There are serious, lasting consequences of the loss of that bond. Apologizing could be the beginning of forgiveness, which is also a powerful choice. If the aboriginal people affected by this travesty of public policy and the ensuing offences can receive this apology and, as my colleague said, could find the strength to forgive even though forgiveness may not be deserved, I believe there can be healing.

We as Northerners must look for meaningful ways to express our support and understanding of each other. We in this House have a unique opportunity as elected Northern leaders to demonstrate ways to promote healing and peace, and we should look for every opportunity to do that.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL APOLOGY

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I, too, would like to speak to the issue of Prime Minister Harper's statement regarding the apology for residential schooling that happened to First Nations and Inuit people in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I had one of the unique experiences of growing up in Fort Simpson, and I always treasure that. I've met a lot of people over the years who have gone to residential school. I had to attend Akaitcho Hall because there wasn't a school there, and I built a lot of bonds with many good friends who have gone through the system. For that, I'll always treasure the experiences, knowledge and the relationships we've always had.

I felt that the place I went to was a caring organization, and it was okay for me. But I'll tell you: my experience was that it wasn't for everyone. The administration, the organization and the intent took care of many of us, but the stress of being taken away from families was too much to bear for many people. I remember many people going home — not a lot, but many people — because of the heartstrings it pulled upon and the problems it created there.

I want to commend other Members, such as David Krutko, for speaking about his experience and his relationships and the challenges they faced. As well, I want to recognize Mr. Menicoche for his experiences, which he's spoken about today.

Mr. Speaker, I had a statement I couldn't read today, because I think what happened today was a groundbreaking moment. As highlighted by Mr. Menicoche, this is not just going to be a page in history. This will be a new chapter on how we identify ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, even though maybe someone had thought this was right, fortunately someone is looking back and saying, This was completely wrong. I think that so much of the identity of people was erased over such a horrible period of time that it will take not just years but decades and decades for us to move forward.

My heart goes out to those who still struggle with challenges. I know people for whom this experience has not just changed their lives; it has permanently carved a new path for them. It's not a path they willed upon themselves; it's an experience that was forced upon them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close by saying that I'm grateful for my experience. I'm not saying that every day was good, but I'm saying that this recognition was of the fact that many people struggled, and

they need that recognition and that apology, which came today.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

**Recognition of
Visitors in the Gallery**

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I see the mayor of Fort Simpson, Mr. Duncan Carvin, in the gallery. Welcome.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 309-16(2)
REUNITING ABORIGINAL FOSTER
CHILDREN WITH FAMILIES

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services. It's in regard to the number of children we have in care in the Northwest Territories. We have some 630 children in care at a cost of \$15 million to this government. Out of those 630 children, some 570 are aboriginal children.

Knowing that in southern Canada — I mentioned the off-reserve number, which is 8,300 — there's been a 65 per cent increase, I'd like to ask the Minister: in regard to this program being administered through the implementation of the Child and Family Services Act, what is the increase in numbers of children in care since the act came into place?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have that specific number the Member is asking for. I'd be happy to undertake to get that.

I think it's really important to note — and the Member is right — that we have about 630 children in care of some kind in the Territories. The vast majority of them are aboriginal children, but most of them are in their homes with their extended families in their communities. The number of children who are in southern facilities has decreased dramatically. I think it's a gain we should be proud of.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I don't think we should be proud of having any kid put into care.

There are 331 aboriginal children in foster care. That's over half of the 570 children I mentioned. I'd like to ask the Minister: what are we doing to reunite these children with their parents and to reunite the families?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't suggesting we should be proud of the fact that we have children in care. I agree with the Member that we want to minimize that number as much as possible.

The fact is that we have made some progress. In 1999, out of all the children in care, most of them were not with their families in the communities.

We have very few children — only about 38 out of 630 children — outside of the NWT, in southern care. They are there because they need services and programs we're not able to offer in the Territories.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, this is a travesty similar to the residential school situation, where they had great intentions of helping the aboriginal children and trying to make them something they weren't.

I'd like to ask the Minister. Under the policy it clearly states that every effort has to be made to reunite those children with their families. The policy is clear. Are you following the policy to ensure the 570 children are reunited with their parents?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, yes. Every effort is made within the policy and within the children's care service to do everything we can to keep our children in their homes.

A lot of parents are willing to get into a voluntary service agreement with Social Services where they're given some guidelines and boundaries as to what they need to provide to the children in order to keep their children. A lot of parents are doing that.

I have to correct the facts. Out of 630 children in care, we have 18 in southern jurisdictions. The vast majority of our children in care are in the North and with their parents and extended families as much as possible.

I do agree with the Member that it's an area we need to continue to work on and continue to work on to keep the families together wherever possible.

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

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, we're spending some \$15 million in regard to people in care. She mentioned 18 people

in southern Canada. We're spending over \$4 million in that area, yet the Minister clearly stated that they are ensuring these children are reunited with their families. I hear we have children in Nova Scotia from aboriginal communities in the North.

I'd like to ask the Minister if she can give me a breakdown in detail of exactly how many of these dollars are really expended in the North and exactly what we are doing. Give me the numbers. How many children have been reunited with their parents? You say: yes, they are. Well, let's see the numbers.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I think the numbers he's referring to have to do with children who are in southern facilities for all kinds of reasons, not just for foster care.

I'd be happy to offer the Member and provide to the Member a breakdown on all children we have in southern institutions. They could be there for health care issues or treatment or foster care purposes.

As well, I'd be happy to provide the Member with detailed information on what measures are taken within the policy of the department to enhance the chance to keep the children in the families.

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

QUESTION 310-16(2)
MANDATORY LEAVE WITHOUT PAY
FOR AFFECTED EMPLOYEES

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spoke in my Member's statement about pay deductions to provide for an employee's pay during Donny Days in December and on this government's policy to keep Donny Days deductions when a position is terminated.

It seems patently unfair, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to explain to the House why the government keeps funds which rightly belong to the employee.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This area of mandatory leave without pay was an issue that was originally implemented in 1995–1996, I believe — within that year or the year after that — as a result of changes with the pay system.

The system that's in place today was negotiated and put in place with the UNW. That's why it exists today.

Ms. Bisaro: I thank the Minister for the explanation. I mentioned in my statement that I know this is a negotiated agreement, but it's a negotiated agreement for the job position. If the job position ends and there is no employee who takes the job because there's no job to go to, then the employee whose job has been terminated has been giving up deductions for leave days they won't be able to take.

I'd like the Minister to explain. The job has been terminated; there is no further job; I am terminated in June. From June to the end of the year there is no job. There are no further pay deductions. Why must the government keep my Donny Days deductions?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, we would have to look at sitting down with the UNW. The language in the agreement speaks to no reimbursements in this category, and to date there have been none made. We would have to see if this would be one area for discussion. Of course, we know that when we open that door, there's going to be a list of them coming forward. We also know that we will be sitting down with the union in the near future as well.

Ms. Bisaro: I thank the Minister for his willingness to meet with the union, because I'm sure the union is going to want to meet with the government to discuss this issue. A number of our employees are in this particular situation.

I'd like to know from the Minister what steps he is going to take or when he is going to take steps to meet with the union. I'll leave it at that for now.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, I'll work with the Minister responsible for Human Resources. Our primary contact through our contract process is through that department. I'll sit down with the Minister and look at what options and timelines we can look at.

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

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, and thanks to the Minister. I guess my last question would be on how he intends to communicate this to the union and/or to our employees.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, we need to sit down and look at what options are available, what our request would look like, how a discussion could be undertaken with the UNW, and what that might look toward. If it ends up becoming an actual negotiation, part of the negotiation process, that can take quite some time as well. We'd have to sit down together to go through that. I'll have to have a discussion with our

Minister responsible for Human Resources to go through some of these details and timelines we would be having to look at.

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

QUESTION 311-16(2)
RESOURCE ROYALTIES FROM
NORTHERN OIL RESERVES

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government is obviously accruing gross levels of profits — windfall profits — from the sale of oil from the Norman Wells oilfield.

My question is to the Minister of Finance. What is he doing to get special dispensation under these extraordinary situations — circumstances where windfall profits are getting huge — to recover those dollars under special dispensation and put them toward some of our big issues we've got going here?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The term "special dispensation" is one we don't normally have a discussion on with the federal government.

This issue has been part of our process around devolution of resource revenue sharing. Previous governments have included that discussion. From the Northwest Territories' point of view, it should be included as a royalty, but of course that's in dispute with the federal government.

My latest discussions with the leaders in the territory as well as with the federal government have been to recognize that those resources and the equity payment they're receiving are as a result of the development of the North, and those should flow back to the North through infrastructure or another arrangement. So those areas are being looked at. It has always been on the table to try to get equal dollar value out of that to stay in the North.

Mr. Bromley: Thanks for those comments from the Minister. What caught my ear was that these have always been part of the discussions. Obviously, you know, we could wait till the cows come home until we get some response from the federal government here. It's a very difficult situation, I'm the first to admit.

By "special dispensation" I'm saying these are windfall profits that are accruing right now. One comment, Mr. Speaker: the federal government is pursuing the oil companies, because of their

windfall profits, to try and recover some of those. This is the perfect opportunity.

Will the Minister really go after a special dispensation from the federal government, using their own reasoning, to recover some of these windfall profits, these gross amounts of money from our resources, and put them to special issues such as cost of living and climate change that are also national issues? It would help address national and territorial as well as local issues.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, for us as the Government of the Northwest Territories to in fact gain those resources so we can direct them to initiatives in the Northwest Territories would be indeed, I would consider, a great day for the Northwest Territories. We have to come up with an arrangement on a common approach as we're sitting down and discussing with regional aboriginal leadership. Those dollars that come out of the Norman Wells find have been part of those discussions.

Now, not every group agrees we should be going down and getting those. They see that as their area of negotiation. We do need to come together as the Government of the Northwest Territories and leaders in the Northwest Territories and finally just decide we need to get a move on this. As I said about our financial situation, here's an opportunity to help us reinvest in the North in critical areas. It is something we are pursuing and will continue to pursue: the equal value that is coming out of the Norman Wells area.

Mr. Bromley: I caught the word "short" there. I just want to emphasize that we could very well have some federal partners here. I don't think we should be waiting. I'm not saying we should be giving up on the larger issues that we're pursuing in concert with our partner governments, aboriginal governments and so on. But on this issue I think the Northwest Territories should go after a special dispensation in the short term to take advantage of these windfall profits. Will the Minister commit to do that?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, we're always looking at options and angles to approach the federal government in getting more revenues to the Northwest Territories. This will be one of those. It is a complex matter just with the issues we have to deal with in the North as well. It is something we always consider: options we can go forward on and looking for different avenues for reinvestment in the North. I will commit to that. I'll raise this issue and continue to raise this issue, but it is in a complex environment, I must let Members know.

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

QUESTION 312-16(2)
DENTAL SURGERY SERVICE FOR
FORT RESOLUTION RESIDENTS

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I have questions on dental surgery services for residents of Fort Resolution. I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services about those services. Can the Minister tell me when and why the dental surgery unit in Hay River Hospital has closed?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no such thing as a dental surgery unit in any hospital in the Territories, but it is true that dental surgery services have been discontinued, and they're not being offered in any other health service facilities in the Territories, including Hay River as of March of this year.

Mr. Beaulieu: I'm not sure why that happened, but could the Minister tell me what the options for the people in Fort Resolution are now for that service?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, the reason was that dental surgery is not an insured service under the NWT health care benefits program. It is a non-insured service, and for those who have third-party insurance, part of it is covered under that. The federal government is responsible for those residents of the Territories who are eligible for NIHB.

Mr. Speaker, the option, then, for the residents of Fort Resolution is to work with the health care professional in their community. If they are eligible for NIHB or other insurance programs, they're eligible to have the surgery in a private care facility we have an arrangement with south of 60.

Mr. Beaulieu: I'm assuming that coming to Yellowknife is not an option. There is additional cost to travel down south even if you're going there on medical. Who would cover the cost of people who can't afford — even with their dental surgery covered — to travel down south but aren't able to access service in the NWT?

Hon. Sandy Lee: This is a big issue for us, and it's one I'm working to resolve. Children who need dental surgery under NIHB will have most of the services covered. For those who can't afford it, we have an assistance program available under health insurance. They have to be indigent.

This is a huge challenge for us in that the biggest cost of the dental surgery service is the services of anaesthetists, who cost about \$1,000 per 90 minutes. We feel that dental surgeons who are

offering this service and are getting paid for most of the funding should contribute to some of the cost of doing it. Government is willing to do that, and I'm also wanting the federal government to step up to the plate and get into a partnership with us so we can provide the services in the North for our residents. I'm working on that.

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

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Aside from the fact that this is money that's going south and that the service is not available and expensive and so on, there are also long waiting periods for people to go and get dental surgery. Can the Minister tell me if there is recent work to bring dental surgery services back to the NWT?

Hon. Sandy Lee: There are dental surgeons, I'm sure, who are willing to provide the surgery in our health care clinics and hospitals, but the expectation is that the Government of the Northwest Territories will cover the entire cost of the OR nurses, OR staff and the anaesthesiologist, who is one of the most expensive specialists. We feel there is room for us to negotiate, because the dentists are getting most of the coverage for providing that service or are compensated for that. We also feel that the federal government should step into covering the dental surgery costs, because it is a question of long-term oral health of our residents.

I am investigating this, and I'm looking at the possibility of making this service available in either Hay River Hospital, where there is room for that, but probably not in Stanton, because they are fully occupied. But I am looking into that. We need the surgeons and the federal government and everybody to work together on this.

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

QUESTION 313-16(2)
EXPLORATION PERMITS
IN THE BEAUFORT-DELTA

Mr. Jacobson: Mr. Speaker, going back to my Member's statement today on the Beaufort lease sale, what is the GNWT going to get out of the lease sale in the Beaufort?

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

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Until actual development occurs as a result of those leases, and if they are successful in finding some products they can take out and transport or develop in the North, on the bid side the benefit we'll get is when people are hired and increase the wealth in

the communities and impact us from that side of it. Businesses take part in the activity and have a higher corporate tax. That's the piece we get. We don't have a direct benefit at this stage of the leases going up.

Mr. Jacobson: What is the government doing to maximize our benefits right now?

Hon. Floyd Roland: The area we focus on — and I guess to an earlier question about devolution and resource revenue sharing.... The oil and gas part is still with the federal government. We would hope to see that come north as well so we can see some of those benefits accruing for the Territories.

The issue of what we're doing today to maximize benefits would depend, for example, on which region we are in. With the Beaufort Sea area being within the Inuvialuit region, part of their claim permits them a portion of the work and some control over how businesses would work in that jurisdiction. They would get benefit from that side. As the Government of the Northwest Territories, again, if there's production and other levels of development that happen, we can then look directly at areas such as socio-economic agreements that we put in place, again making sure Northerners get the majority of the contracts and jobs.

Mr. Jacobson: When is the government going to take this issue about benefits back to Ottawa to open up this discussion again?

Hon. Floyd Roland: In the area of devolution and resource revenue sharing, I'm trying to move that file ahead. I've already had two meetings with regional aboriginal leadership to discuss this issue. Of course, different regions are at different stages of their own land claims and self-government discussions. Some aren't prepared to have that discussion. I think that, as the North, we do have to have a discussion about how we get this and when those benefits would begin to accrue to the Northwest Territories.

As Members are seeing throughout this budget process, we have to make difficult choices with the fiscal environment that we have to live in. Resource revenues flowing to the Government of the Northwest Territories and aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories would definitely help us in enhancing the level of service we can provide.

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

Mr. Jacobson: I have none at this time.

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

QUESTION 314-16(2)
DEVELOPMENT OF AN NWT HYDRO
STRATEGY

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I could ask my questions to the Minister Responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation or perhaps the Minister with the money from ITI. I guess for argument's sake today I'll ask the Minister of ITI some questions about hydro development in the Northwest Territories.

I spoke in my Member's statement of the Taltson expansion and the need and requirement for a comprehensive hydro strategy in the Northwest Territories to address our potential in that area. I'd like to ask the Minister of ITI: who is doing this strategy, and will it include consultation with aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories?

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

Hon. Bob McLeod: We will be seeking expressions of interest and consulting with all stakeholders and aboriginal governments this year.

Mr. Ramsay: I'm wondering if the aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories are going to be full partners in this comprehensive hydro strategy the government's developing.

Hon. Bob McLeod: As we outlined in our 2007 NWT Energy Plan, hydro development is clearly the most promising renewable energy opportunity available in the Northwest Territories. In order to involve aboriginal governments and aboriginal partners as we've done in the North Slave and South Slave, we'll need to have a comprehensive hydro strategy that would quantify the resources available, identify the opportunities and the challenges of development, and also create a long-term vision for sustainable hydroelectric development in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Ramsay: Given the great potential that hydro holds here in the Northwest Territories, I'm wondering if the Minister can comment on how many persons we've hired over the past five years who have any level of experience or expertise in the area of hydro development.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We do have an energy-planning division, and we rely on expertise from the NWT Power Corporation. We have worked with some eminent experts, such as Peter Loughheed. We have gone forward with an expression of interest from engineers and hydro specialists so that we can determine what kind of expertise is available out there, because we realize we will need assistance to go further with this.

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

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again getting back to my Member's Statement from earlier, I spoke of the government hiring in excess of 70 positions having to deal solely with the Mackenzie Gas Project. Given the potential that hydro has here in the Northwest Territories, I find there is a great discrepancy between the weight the government has put in the area of hydro and the weight it's put on the Mackenzie Gas Project. I'm wondering — and maybe the Minister could respond to this question: what is the strategy for trying to get some expertise and experience in-house?

Hon. Bob McLeod: We are developing a hydro strategy. Part of what we expect to determine is how much support there is for hydro in the Northwest Territories. We do have demonstrated support in the North Slave and South Slave with the Deze Corporation, and we have the Sahdae Corporation and the Sahtu in Deline. In previous consultations, the public response hasn't been wholeheartedly in support of hydro. Once we develop our hydro strategy and determine the areas that would be available for development, then we can determine the level of resources we need to support ongoing hydro development in the Northwest Territories.

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

QUESTION 315-16(2)
LOCATION OF
THE AURORA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct my question today to Minister Lafferty, the Minister of ECE, and Aurora College. I'd like to ask the Minister if his department or Aurora College was contacted in any way to help to identify a location for the Arctic Institute.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Education, culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, our Department of Education, Culture and Employment works closely with Aurora College on the Aurora Research Institute that's based out of Inuvik. We have continuously utilized that facility for a number of years: their facility and the services they provide on research. I'm not sure what the Member is referring to by asking if we were contacted. Is he referring to the federal government? We have continued working with the Aurora Research Institute on the research of the North. Mahsi.

Mr. McLeod: That was actually my question, because it was Aurora Research Institute. They're looking at proposing a new facility up in Arctic Canada, with Aurora College working closely with Aurora Research Institute. I just assumed the Minister would have some information or have been contacted as to a possible permanent location for the new facility being proposed for Arctic Canada.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: We haven't directly been contacted by the federal government. As you know, the announcement was made just recently. I believe there are some discussions happening. We are looking forward to that particular discussion, because it does highlight Arctic research. We're not sure exactly where the federal government is targeting — whether it will be in the Nunavut area or in the Northwest Territories. But we are certainly interested in pursuing that once the message is relayed down through our Northwest Territories department. Then we can certainly work with that. We'll work with the committee members on proceeding with that.

Mr. McLeod: I'd like to ask the Minister if the Aurora Research Institute works closely with industry. Was Aurora Research receiving any revenue from industry to operate the Arctic Research Institute?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, yes. Aurora Research Institute for a number of years now has worked with different parties — industries — most recently with Mallik gas hydrate. It's joined forces with Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation. They have contributed a substantial amount of funding toward this particular investment in the North since 2006 up to 2009, and they've continued to show interest.

Even before that, near Inuvik they're well known worldwide as a test site for gas hydrate. There have been some previous international projects completed in that area in 1998 and 2002. So it is well known internationally that this is a test site and the research in the North for the Arctic.

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

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I make that point to confirm my case for the Beaufort-Delta region, in particular Inuvik, being the location of the new facility.

I'd like to ask the Minister my final question. We know that the adult learning centre is coming down in Inuvik, and students really have no place to go. The Aurora Research Institute's existing building would make the perfect opportunity.

Would the Minister — I'm trying to find the word — talk to, I guess, communicate? That's the word we

have to use in here. "Talk to" I use outside. Would the Minister communicate with his federal counterparts or whoever are the decision-makers as to their desire to possibly have the facility located in Inuvik, where it will, I think, serve the most good and provide the best opportunity for youth?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, we'll do everything we can with the federal government. It has been announced for the Arctic, and we'll certainly find out what the status is, and we'll certainly push for the Northwest Territories.

We've fully utilized the Aurora Research Institute, the service they've provided and the facility. The Member's comments I will certainly take into consideration through our discussions, and we'll keep the Member informed on this matter. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 316-16(2)
INTEGRATING RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
INFORMATION INTO NWT CURRICULUM

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment some questions on curriculum.

Earlier in my Member's statement I spoke about the residential school experience, that it should be included in our schools. I believe it could be in the history classes or social studies. How do we effect this change? That is the question I would like to ask the Minister.

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

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. On that particular area we can certainly talk with the department. Not only that, but in the northern studies and also social studies we have highlighted the Northern perspective, the ecology of the North. That can be one of the discussions we can certainly have within our department: how we can integrate that into a curriculum.

We have to work with the school boards and the educational authorities and also within our departments with the superintendents. There has to be ongoing communication on how we can proceed with this. That will be one of the topics up for discussion.

Mr. Menicoche: I certainly would support the efforts of the Minister in doing that. Also, if he can convey the same concerns to our federal counterparts and press that issue on the federal

level as well — that it should indeed be part of our education system in Canada.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, we do get the opportunity to meet with federal and also provincial jurisdiction Ministers. Certainly, this message will be relayed by me, but I'm sure there will be other territorial Ministers, specifically, who will probably address this issue with the federal Minister. Those will be the ongoing discussions. It was just announced today, so I'm sure people across the country have heard. I'm sure there will be more discussion in this particular area. We will certainly share that information with the federal Minister when the opportunity arises. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 317-16(2)
VACATION TRAVEL ALLOWANCE TO
IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICE MORALE

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although I rose today to reaffirm my support for the Prime Minister's policy, I didn't have a chance to speak to my Member's statement, which was a really good one. I'm going to have to find a way to work the preamble into what my statement was about.

Mr. Speaker, my statement would have covered a great topic in very good detail: what is the government doing about improving employee morale? Recognizing that the GNWT is no longer the employer of choice — they've even set up an Employer of Choice unit — I'd like to know in this House: what is the GNWT doing to improve employee morale? I'd like to point my question to the Minister of Human Resources.

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

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories has a number of programs to improve employee morale. The most significant one is the Employee Recognition Program.

Mr. Hawkins: That was an excellent start. He actually worked his way into my third question, so we'll start with that one.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked to a number of employees. They appreciate the pat on the head. Unfortunately, the pat on the head or the back doesn't go far enough anymore. I've heard and I truly believe that it's time to stop talking about how great our employees are and start showing how great they are. What type of new benefits are we offering to make sure the territorial government turns its

reputation around to yet again become, or as it should be known as, the employer of choice?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I think what the Member is referring to are benefits that are more utilized in the private sector. As he knows, we have a collective bargaining process, so all of these benefits are negotiated through the UNW or the NWT Teachers' Association or the NWT Power Corporation or the physicians.

Mr. Hawkins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I won't argue with the Minister of Human Resources, because he is correct on that fact, but the attitudes and perspectives should be set in this House. I believe we should mandate these types of discussions to look at things like the return of the vacation allowance. That would go a long way in returning that attitude and appreciation. Employees would feel that the government cares about them. Would the Minister take a look at that initiative and consider that as an option to reinvigorate our public service?

Hon. Bob McLeod: If that was the wish of the Assembly. We've heard contrary opinions, that we should perhaps be looking at moving away from those kinds of things, as well. I think the best way is to continue to recognize the importance of employees, to work with management and senior management of the departments so that they recognize and practise the fact that employees are important assets and resources of our government. We all know we can't accomplish anything without having employees working for the government. Certainly, there are a number of approaches that can be used that are part of normal management practices.

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

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, from the answer of the Minister, you can tell what a difficult challenge this one is.

But on the point I raised about the vacation travel allowances: you know, if we looked a little deeper into this problem, we'd realize that if we started setting aside some of the wages onto a taxable benefit, that would offset and work out in the employee's favour, if we described it that way. It wouldn't have to be a return of a lush agreement. It could just be a modest contribution that works toward the employee's benefits.

Mr. Speaker, on that point, would the Human Resources Minister look into the idea about reallocating some of the wage that's attributed to a vacation allowance so that the taxable benefit works out in favour of the employee and would probably go a long way to improve employee morale?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Part of the reason for moving away from the vacation travel allowance was to move toward a made-in-the-North workforce and also to try to maintain benefits in the Northwest Territories.

We realized that what the vacation travel allowance would do is encourage people to leave the North, to go south and spend their money in the south. What we want to do is have a made-in-the-North workforce, and we'll continue to work in that direction.

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

QUESTION 318-16(2)
DENTAL SURGERY AVAILABILITY
FOR CHILDREN

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask some questions of the Minister of Health and Social Services on the issue of dental surgery. I did hear my colleague, Mr. Beaulieu, speaking to this earlier today as well.

We had occasion to have Ms. Lee in Hay River recently, but even prior to that we had heard from the people who are still offering dental surgery in Hay River about a situation whereby there is a significant waiting list right now of mostly children waiting for dental surgery.

The portion that the non-insured health benefit is prepared to fund is less than the actual cost for these procedures. This is something where the difference could be paid, I suppose, by the GNWT, or they could choose not to step up with the difference.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: given the importance of a child's health and how it can deteriorate if the dental surgeries are not carried out, what steps are being taken to address this backlog of children waiting for dental surgery?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is right. With respect to the cost of doing the children's dental surgery in Hay River, which is an option we could consider, most of the cost is with the anaesthetic service and the anaesthesiologist, who is a specialist who needs to provide that service, as well as with all the related costs of performing that procedure.

Just for anaesthetics, Mr. Speaker, our cost for doing it in Hay River per 90 minutes is \$952. NIHB

is willing to cover \$700, and there is a gap of \$244 per situation.

It is our position that it is not an insured service. We are willing to let the hospital be used for that, and we are saying that the dental surgeons, who are getting compensated for most of it, would cover some of those costs of using the facility and using the anaesthesiologist.

As well, we would like the federal government to step in, because when you are saying \$244 per child — and we have numerous children on the waiting list — it really does add up. It's a cost we're having a difficult time covering.

Mrs. Groenewegen: So we understand what the problem is. The problem is the difference between what the service costs and what NIHB is prepared to cover. It is \$244, as the Minister says, per child. I know of at least 130 children who are on a waiting list today waiting for dental surgery.

In the interest of processing their cases, the Minister is expecting the federal government to perhaps come back and raise their contribution. Maybe the dental surgeons will lower their fees.

In the meantime, these children are sick. Many of them are on pain relief to try and alleviate symptoms of their various conditions, such as abscesses and so on. Mr. Speaker, these folks are in limbo right now. What is the plan?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the plight of the children as well as of other residents in the Territories who are looking to have dental surgery.

We should remember that dental surgery is not an insured service. There are limits to what the government offers in terms of health care benefits. This is another case where NIHB has capped the amount of money they are willing to pay. It is \$200,000 here, \$300,000 there. Over the years it adds up to millions.

I am putting this issue on the list of things I need to discuss with the federal Minister of Health and social services. I also would like to suggest that when it costs \$952 to do a procedure, most of the money goes to the dental surgeon. The services that surgeons and dentists provide are provided in their private clinics, and they cover the operating costs for that. We are willing to let them use our hospitals, but we're asking them to come and work with us and be willing to cover some part of the cost of doing that. At the end of the day, they're the ones who are getting most of the compensation.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I guess I'm not as interested in the politics of this as actually making sure that

the Northern clients who need dental surgery receive it. There are 130 people in a backlog right now, and \$240 needs to come from someplace to close this gap, which is the amount that's in question here.

Mr. Speaker, we have a hospital. We have dental surgeons in Hay River willing to do this. We have clients who need the service. Can the GNWT not bring anything to the table to help these folks get service?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I want to tell you that I feel sympathetic, and I want to do as much as I can for the children, just as the Member on the other side does.

I am responsible for the health care funding. All of our hospitals are going through a deficit, and they've had to make some choices. Where they have fiscal challenges, they have to put their first priority on insured services. Dental surgery is not an insured service. It's not an insured service anywhere in Canada. For the aboriginal children NIHB covers a cost of that. There is a gap in the funding available. I think GNWT is willing to make some compromise on that, but there are the federal government, the dentistry industry and us being involved. I think we, all three parties, should work together to help the children who need that. I agree with the Member that we need to do something about the children who need these dental surgeries.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, \$244 will seem like a very small amount of money when we have to start sending these children on medical travel down to Edmonton or other places. In fact, no other place in the Northwest Territories wants to do dental surgery anymore — only Hay River. It is an affordable place to go. The alternative is much, much more expensive.

Would the Minister commit to continuing to work with NIHB and her department to try to find a way to fund this difference between what NIHB is currently paying and what the actual cost of these services is? I don't think we can ask the dentists to do it, but we do need a solution. Will the Minister commit to work toward that?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, we have asked the dental association to come forward. They're not as interested as we would like, but I think it's something I need to pursue. Hay River is a facility that has the most surgery days open that they could facilitate. But even if we decided that that is the facility to do it, we would have to cover the cost of bringing all the children there. The GNWT, at the end of the day, is willing to step up to the plate and cover that to make it happen. The short answer is

that, yes, I will continue to push the federal government.

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

QUESTION 319-16(2) TSIIGEHTCHIC FERRY SERVICE

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Transportation. I've received several inquiries from the community of Tsiigehtchic in regard to the ferry service on the Mackenzie at the Tsiigehtchic crossing. The constituents want to know exactly why it is that they have to wait an hour, up to two hours, to catch the ferry to cross to the Inuvik side. People are missing their appointments in Inuvik. They're also missing their flights for medical travel.

There used to be a schedule in place, I believe: on the hour from the Inuvik side, on the half-hour from the McPherson side and then, basically, on the three-quarter hour from the Tsiigehtchic to the Inuvik side. My understanding is that they implemented that because the cost savings to the government were somewhere in the range of 40 per cent for, basically, CO₂ emissions from diesel fuel. People knew when the ferry was going to be leaving on that particular occasion; they could plan for it. People who had to set up appointments in Inuvik could make their connection to catch aircraft south because of medical travel; they were able to plan around that schedule. But right now, they're not doing that.

I'd like to ask the Minister: can he ensure that we have a schedule in place, basically, for the ferry service to Inuvik like it was the last number of years? It's a cost saving to this government. It's a way we can save money, and also we can cut back on burning CO₂.

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

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that the Member has raised a good concern in terms of one of our five ferry operations in the North. He wants especially for Tsiigehtchic and McPherson and Inuvik that... We will take this question. I'll relay it to my officials and see what we can do in terms of looking at our level of services for people so they can make their planned schedule. We'll see how we can improve our services for the people in the areas the Member talked about.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, the residents of Tsiigehtchic would like to see this acted on immediately, since it's a practice we've done before; it was in place. So I'd like to ask the

Minister: can he immediately implement the schedule of ferry services on the Mackenzie crossing at Tsiigehtchic?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, the Member again raises a good question. I'll talk to my officials, to check in to this situation and see what plans we can do to look at the hours of operation of our ferry services, and also at the impact issues where we could improve our services for customers. I think that's something I'm willing to work with the Member on.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the Minister has to go back to his department. If something works in the region, it saves government money, it saves us burning fossil fuels to the extent of 40 per cent.... There's no madness to this; do it. I'd like to ask the Minister exactly when we can see this service back to what it was before, where we had scheduled service for the period on the Mackenzie crossing at Tsiigehtchic.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, as soon as I look at all the options, certainly I'll get back as quickly as possible to the Member and institute, possibly, a new operation of services for the people of Tsiigehtchic.

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

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, people are missing their appointments. People are missing meetings. People are missing scheduled appointments in Inuvik because the ferry is holding them up or they're not being able to make those appointments. That is a serious cost. The government is paying the cost of a lot of this medical travel. I'd like to ask the Minister again: for the sake of service to the people of the Mackenzie Delta, can you implement the scheduling process that was there prior to someone making the decision.... Can he do it tomorrow?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, if I could somehow have a meeting with my officials between now and tomorrow, I would certainly make an announcement. However, I need to talk to the contractors, look at the situation. Is this an ongoing issue within the region? It's the first time I've had this discussion with the Member. Certainly I would look at the hours of service to make sure people in Inuvik, Tsiigehtchic or Fort McPherson do arrive at their appointments on time.

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

QUESTION 320-16(2)
TALTSON EXPANSION HYDRO PROJECT

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I guess I'm going to switch gears a little bit but still talk about hydro. I want to ask the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation some questions on the Taltson expansion. I'm wondering whether any progress has been made on the discussions with the diamond mines to secure the power from that Taltson expansion and where that process is at.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister Responsible for the NWT Power Corporation, Mr. Yakeleya.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, the Energy Corporation is in negotiations with the diamond mines. My understanding is that the confidentiality agreements have been signed by the parties with Diavik and De Beers, and they're close to working with Ekati in terms of signing the confidentiality agreement. A letter of intent has been forwarded to Diavik and De Beers for those signatures, and certainly they are being forwarded to Ekati for their consideration. Hopefully sometime within the next short period these will be signed.

Mr. Ramsay: That's pretty big news. I'm kind of taken aback by the news that Deze has negotiated deals and has signed agreements with, I believe the Minister said, De Beers and Diavik. This seems to me to be a pretty sizable announcement. When was the Minister planning on letting Members of this House know that agreements had been signed?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, these agreements I've spoken of are confidential agreements, but they are working with the mines. The mines want to see the use of hydro power into their operations. Once I talk to the Deze corporation, we would then come forward with the announcement in terms of whether we have a deal with the mines or not and if this project is on a go-forward basis. Right now it seems by all indications that it looks very good for both parties.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, considering that we are debating the Draft Main Estimates here over the month of June and there's a lone item in there for \$3 million for ITI to look at the Taltson expansion, I think it would be incumbent upon the Minister and the government to apprise Members that there has been some movement in the area of securing a business deal for the power from the Taltson expansion. I guess the Minister has made an announcement today in the House suggesting that agreements have been reached, so I'd like to ask him: when exactly is he going to make this information public? I guess by us standing here today it already is public. Mahsi.

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to let the public and the Members here know that these are confidential agreements. The negotiation is confidential between the parties that are involved. This is standard practice. But once we know that we have a significant announcement between the Deze corporation and the mines, that they have come to some agreement in terms of benefiting all of the people of the Northwest Territories, I certainly would inform the Cabinet Ministers. We would certainly have the discussion, then, in terms of the amounts and activity.

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

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Minister for that. I wouldn't expect that the Minister or Deze would share those confidential agreements with Members. However, if the agreements have been signed.... I mean, that's a tremendous leap forward.

Again, I want to ask the Minister specifically: are the deals that have been signed between Deze and the two mining companies that he mentions, Diavik and De Beers...? Is that for power from Taltson?

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, we are working with partners on this project. The confidentiality agreement is between the mines and our partner, Deze corporation, which has taken the lead in terms of the specifics. I would look to our lead Minister, Bob McLeod, in terms of having discussions with committee members on the specific project for reasons I'm unable to give today because of the confidentiality. I would look forward to having the Member meet with the committee members to talk about the specifics of Taltson.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Time for question period has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. 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. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 11 AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ACT

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that Bill 11,

An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 11 amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to provide a travel allowance to a Member who attends a sitting or meetings of a committee of the Legislative Assembly after he or she has attended a sitting or meetings for eight consecutive sitting or meeting days.

Mr. Speaker: Bill 11 has had second reading.

Motion carried; Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, read a second time.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive rule 69(2) and have Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, moved into Committee of the Whole.

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Speaker: Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Bill 8, Committee Reports 2-16(2), 3-16(2), 4-16(2), 5-16(2), 6-16(2), 7-16(2); Tabled Document 37-16(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 business before the House, with Mr. Bromley in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): I'd like to call the committee to order. We have before us consideration of Bill 8 and Bill 11, Committee Reports 2-16(2), 3-16(2), 4-16(2), 5-16(2), 6-16(2), 7-16(2), Tabled Document 37-16(2) and Minister's Statement 62-16(2). What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The wish of the committee today is to return to the NWT Housing Corporation Main Estimates and then to continue with Environment and Natural Resources and, time permitting, to start with the Municipal and Community Affairs Department.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Is the committee agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): We'll take a short recess.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Okay. I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order. Before the break the Committee agreed to return to our consideration of the Housing Corporation.

MAIN ESTIMATES 2008–2009
NWT HOUSING CORPORATION

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): We left off on the Corporate Summary, on page 2-149. Minister Miltenberger, I understand you have some comments to make.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am prepared to redirect \$1.292 million from the Infrastructure Acquisition Plan to the Contributing Assistance for Repairs and Enhancement, also known as the CARE program. This would increase funding levels for the CARE program from \$742,000 to \$2.034 million in 2008–2009, which is similar to the 2007–2008 expenditures. The total contribution from the Financial Management Board Secretariat to the Housing Corporation would remain unchanged.

As well, the Housing Corporation will take action to assess and develop a strategy focusing on accessible living opportunities for families who include a disabled person. This work will be undertaken within existing Housing Corporation resources. In regard to the Elders on the Land housing program, the Housing Corporation is of the opinion that where there is an issue of primary housing for elders, be it in the community or on the land, existing programs are adequate to cover that circumstance.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Responses to those comments. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank Minister Miltenberger and the NWT Housing Corporation for their responsiveness to the concerns of Regular Members with respect to the home-repair program referred to as CARE, also the On-the-land program for seniors and the willingness of the department to look, going forward, for opportunities to develop housing options for families who may have family members with disabilities. We will certainly look forward to that discussion with the NWT Housing Corporation going forward.

Mr. Chairman, when you call this page — unless there are other Members who wish to speak to this — I believe we would be willing to consider concluding the consideration of the NWT Housing Corporation Main Estimates today.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Were there any other

responses to the Minister's comments? No comments.

Okay. Here we go then. Thank you for that. We're on page 2-149, NWT Housing Corporation, information item, Corporate Summary, Operations Expenditure Summary, Expenditure Category: \$81.527 million. All agreed?

NWT Housing Corporation, Corporate Summary, Operations Expenditure Summary, Expenditure Category: \$81.527 million, approved.

That, ladies and gentlemen, concludes consideration of the Housing Corporation. Thank you.

I believe it's the wish of the committee to move on to Environment and Natural Resources. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

MAIN ESTIMATES 2008–2009
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources, do you wish to provide some opening remarks?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I do. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is responsible for working with all people and interested organizations to protect our environment. This is done through the responsible and sustainable use of our resources for the social and economic benefit of residents.

Departmental goals include the protection of our air, land, water, wildlife and forests, a recognition that these important elements are linked, and an understanding that all residents have a part to play in keeping the environment healthy.

For the 2008–2009 fiscal year the departmental Main Estimates total \$56.9 million, representing a decrease of approximately 1 per cent from the previous year. While the current fiscal situation of our government presents some challenges, it has also demanded the department focus its efforts on a few key areas and improve overall efficiencies in some programs.

Climate change remains a serious issue for the NWT. New actions proposed will help the GNWT achieve its greenhouse gas emission targets and will allow the GNWT to assist other sectors to develop their own emission-management plans and targets.

During 2008–2009 the department will spend almost \$1 million on energy conservation and

alternative energy initiatives. Another \$1.1 million will be spent on improving our environmental monitoring efforts. Members will note that there have been some reductions. Some of this funding will be re-profiled to meet actions identified under the Strategic Initiative Managing This Land and support the Legislative Assembly's goal of an environment that will sustain present and future generations.

An operational review of the fire management program identified proposed reductions and increased efficiencies. ENR will work within these parameters and focus on a fire-management program that meets the objectives of protecting persons, property and other values at risk.

During 2008–2009 ENR will continue to provide wise stewardship management and protection of our natural resources and environment. Work will continue on major legislative initiatives, including tabling a new Species at Risk Act this spring, drafting a new Wildlife Act, expanding programs under the Waste Reduction and Recovery Act, and updating and modernizing forest management legislation and policy.

As I previously mentioned, the department will be focusing on four strategic investment areas: protect our waters, mitigate and adapt to climate change, improve environmental monitoring, and environmental stewardship. These actions identified under the Managing This Land Strategic Initiative are essential in ensuring our environment sustains present and future generations.

Members of this Legislative Assembly, aboriginal governments, and residents have identified protection of our water resources as a major priority. In response, the department is leading the development of an NWT water strategy to guide our actions in protecting water supply and quality.

ENR will also work closely with other departments to develop a Northwest Territories land-use framework. This framework will guide GNWT participation in land and governance issues and help to increase northern control over land and resources. In order to effectively respond to the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project and other major development projects, the GNWT requires the capacity to participate effectively in the regulatory reviews and manage the impacts of development.

Environmental monitoring is a crucial element in ensuring the sustainable development of our resources. Completion of the Northwest Territories ecosystem classification will provide a vital tool for government and industry in ensuring resource development is sustainable.

Environmental stewardship is a shared responsibility in the NWT and an integral part of our

day-to-day activities. We will continue to work with federal departments and agencies, aboriginal governments and organizations, industry, harvesters and stakeholders to preserve and conserve our wildlife and forest resources and protect our environment. Given the potential impacts of increased resource development on wildlife habitat, extra focus will be placed in some areas, including implementing actions outlined in the Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy to address issues raised by Members of the Legislative Assembly, co-management boards and delegates at the Caribou Summit.

As Members know, environmental issues are high on the agenda of NWT residents and other Canadians. The department will continue to work with federal and territorial departments and agencies, aboriginal governments, communities and other stakeholders on these issues. I am confident the Main Estimates for Environment and Natural Resources will ensure our environment can sustain present and future generations.

I would like to thank the Members of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure for their comments and suggestions during review of the Main Estimates. I look forward to the committee's comments today, and I'm prepared to answer any questions the Members may have.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Minister. I will now call the Chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure to provide opening comments. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The committee met with the Minister and his staff on April 9, 2008, to consider the department's 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates. The committee noted that the total operating budget for 2008–2009 is \$56.942 million. Committee members offer the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the '08–09 Draft Main Estimates.

Reductions to Forest Management

There were significant reductions to the forest management budget. The majority of the reductions were based on a review undertaken by the department that identified a series of measures that could be implemented to reduce expenditures and still provide effective forest management services. These measures included a reduction to the number of pre-suppression contract fire crews from 39 to 29, and a more cost-effective, coordinated approach in the use of rotary-wing aircraft.

Committee members acknowledged that there were efficiencies to be gained within this activity. However, Members voiced concerns about the

impact the reductions to fire crews would have on people who rely on firefighting for seasonal employment. Firefighting represents a significant employment opportunity for many residents, particularly those in small communities. This reduction potentially leaves those who rely on employment through these contracts with very few options other than income support.

Also of concern to Members was the reduction to the FireSmart Program, which supports communities to undertake wildlife risk mitigation planning. The reductions will mean less support and resources for communities to undertake this type of planning. Members note that, overall, the reductions to forest management may have left the department and communities somewhat vulnerable if there's a bad fire season.

The forests in the NWT are an important renewable resource that has significant potential to support sustainable small-scale industries such as biomass for heat production, timber harvesting and sawmill operations. The committee encourages the department to work with communities to explore these opportunities as a way to support local economies and promote the use of renewable energy.

Energy Planning and Climate Change

Committee members were supportive of the government's efforts in moving forward with key renewable-energy initiatives such as wind energy and hydroelectric development. These are important initiatives that will support reductions to greenhouse gas emissions over the long term. Committee members want to see these efforts be balanced with more immediate actions to address the mounting challenge of climate change here in the Northwest Territories.

Members believe that government must develop new initiatives that actually gain net reductions to greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories. Members request the government move beyond voluntary efforts and establish standards and enforceable regulations as part of the effort to mitigate climate change impacts.

That concludes the committee's review of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. I'd just like to thank the committee members involved in the review, as well as the Minister and his staff, and our committee researcher, Ms. Cate Sills, and our Committee Clerk, Ms. Patricia Russell.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay, to you and your committee. I will now ask the Minister if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. Does the committee agree?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, committee. Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Will the Minister please introduce his witnesses.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, I have with me Mr. Gary Bohnet, the acting deputy minister of Environment and Natural Resources, and Ms. Nancy Magrum, the director of finance and administration for Environment and Natural Resources.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Minister. I will now open the floor to general comments from the committee. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the priorities that has been in this House year after year, from one Legislature to another, is the Wildlife Act. The Inuvialuit signed their land claim agreement in 1984, and that agreement has a very large component that deals with the wildlife aspect of those agreements. The Gwich'in signed their agreement in 1992; the Sahtu, in 1994; and now the Tlicho agreement. Yet we spend millions of dollars on consultations, lawyers and meetings.

I think we have to bring closure to this legislation and allow it to see the light of day. We can talk about the environment and protection of the wildlife, but you have to have the legislative tools, the authorities, to be able to allow those land claim agreements, those regulatory bodies that are established under those arrangements, to have a say in wildlife management, land and water management, and protection of the environment.

Those land claim agreements weren't negotiated lightly. It's been in process for 20 years, and I think it's important to realize. I noticed that in your opening comments you talked about how the government wants to take control of lands, resources and wildlife environments. A lot of those lands you're talking about are First Nations lands. A lot of the responsibilities are already in place by way of land claim agreements and wildlife legislative authorities. Basically, provisions of those land claim agreements are paramount over territorial legislation.

It's the same thing in regard to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, which flowed from the Dene/Métis claim process into the Gwich'in claim, the Sahtu, and now the Tlicho.

I think it's important to realize that with this endeavour we're on, we seem to build up a bureaucracy on top of bureaucracy. But when it comes to actually seeing some physical proof that we're really seeing a change, legislative change, it seems to move at a snail's pace into this legislature to be passed and put into force.

For me, a first priority has always been the Wildlife Act. We spend a lot of time and emphasis on species at risk. There is a federal responsibility under that, and yes, we have some responsibility, but I think the Wildlife Act is more important than the Species at Risk legislation.

In regard to the NWT Water Strategy, we already have a legislative framework or tool to work from, which is the Mackenzie Valley basin management agreement, which has been signed and which I was part of back in 1985–86. All the jurisdictions where the Mackenzie basin flows, from Saskatchewan to Alberta to B.C. to the Yukon to the Northwest Territories, are signatories to that water basin agreement. If anything, we should be building on that and signing off on these bilateral agreements between the different provinces and territories so we can have control of that resource.

What's happening in Fort McMurray and the threats you hear from the community of Fort Chipewyan: we're not immune to that. They're looking at uranium development in the region I represent in regard to the headwaters of the Peel River, which flows into the Mackenzie Delta and into the Arctic Ocean.

With these developments, regardless of whether it's the Fort McMurray development of fossil fuels or mining development of uranium, from what happened on Great Bear Lake and Uranium City to uranium developments in a lot of our watersheds.... In regard to different sanctuaries we have, I think it's important that as governments we build on what's already there and not start something that's going to take a lot of resources and money — that we be realistic about what goals and objectives we're trying to meet.

Like I stated when I started talking, the Wildlife Act is something we've been talking about forever. Until we really want to make a difference and put the resources and the manpower behind this legislation and get it passed in this Legislature.... I think this department is too top-heavy and dealing with other issues that, basically, this government has no authority to be involved in the first place. I think we're doing stuff the federal government has the legislative authority to do until those authorities are transferred through devolution in regard to the management of land, water and resource development, through that devolution process.

Also, without having the support of the First Nations governments, which a lot of these authorities flow through, I see it not really allowing those legislative agreements to be developed so that they can implement all those sections of those agreements that have been negotiated.

It's important that as a government we work with those First Nations governments and with those land claim agreements by way of bilateral agreements, to use those as the basis of whatever we're doing here.

In regard to the other issue, on forestry, I think this government spends too much money in regard to forest management and very little by way of producing a product out of our forest sector. We have potential in communities. In communities I represent, they made a decision several years ago to purchase wood mizers to use the forest products, to cut the product in the regions and use it for housing materials to build people's homes on the land or even for different community projects. Again, that's a very unique opportunity for communities. It generates employment. It generates income for a lot of people who are on income support.

More importantly, we are managing the forests by harvesting them and not simply responding to a fire and spending millions of dollars on water bombers and fire support. If anything, we should be doing a better job of developing the forest sector as a unique economic opportunity, as we have with the commercial industries by way of commercial fishing, harvesting and agriculture in the Northwest Territories.

The other issue is around the government's cuts they've made. It seems like it's easy to cut individuals who are on seasonal employment, who might be lucky to make \$20,000 a year as forest fire fighters. Yet those contracts we have in communities with this government, in some cases, are the only means for a lot of people in those communities to bring income to their families to get them through the winter.

Those little things we see happening in our communities are the first things that get cut when government decides to cut budget items. It's the easy stuff. You guys don't see it, but we MLAs do, who basically represent these people and know these individuals personally. These people have spent years training for these positions. In regard to fire safety, they've gone in some cases all the way to the United States to fight fires on behalf of this government, yet we're the first ones to cut them when it comes to making cuts in this government.

I totally disagree with that style of cut. If you're going to cut something, why don't you cut one of your big water bomber contracts, which is worth in

excess of \$18 million, and chip away at that? Save a bunch of positions in our communities and really make a difference by forcing this government to put money into producing from the forestry industry, allowing the communities to economically and socially benefit from the forest sector instead of simply bringing in wood pellets from Alberta, putting them in bags, taking them into our communities and telling people: "Well, sorry. You don't have to cut wood now because we have a new initiative, and we're going to import wood pellets from Alberta."

What's the difference between that and transporting fuel up a rail system, putting it onto a barge and taking it to our communities, the environmental insanity of that? If anything, we should be promoting people's harvesting of our forests and the opportunities around our communities by way of taking stock of the potential of our forest sector and forest industry.

People are basically struggling with high-cost issues. Sometimes when this government comes up with some plans, I wonder if we're going backwards in time simply for the benefit of an entrepreneur or businessperson who got the attention of a Minister for the sake of promoting his business; he has a monopoly on an opportunity in northern Canada because he has an item that has the potential of an economic business dollar-sign stamped on it.

Again, I think this government's process of cutting the jobs and opportunities by way of community fire suppression issues around our communities for safety.... I'm also looking at jobs. So when we get to the appropriate item on the agenda, I'd like to take another crack at it, because I'm not too sure if I'm getting through to this department.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. I failed to mention at our start-up here that, with the support of the committee, I'd like to be consistent and allow general comments to roll up before asking the Minister for a comprehensive response. Is that satisfactory to the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Okay. Thank you. Next I have on the list Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to say that I had an opportunity to travel with the Minister over to Fort Simpson back in April. It was a good opportunity to go there and meet with the people and the leadership.

I just want to reiterate some of the concerns we heard as a result of our discussions there. As well, we made it over to Trout Lake, Mr. Chair.

In Simpson initially they wanted to follow up on a couple of long-outstanding items. Most particular

was the biomass assessment, or the forestry inventory, around Fort Simpson. That was a commitment, a long-outstanding commitment. They brought it up with the Minister, so that's something I'd like to follow up on in our discussions here in Committee of the Whole and to work toward it. It's very important, having this assessment done, in many respects.

As well, on the eve of the big push to find alternate energy sources, Fort Simpson did bring up with the Minister at that time that they would like to look at different ways of generating energy, and one of them was geothermal. They're interested in doing a pilot project, testing for the availability of geothermal in Fort Simpson. They're still developing their proposal. That's something I certainly support there, Mr. Chair, as well as looking at the geothermal heating potential for Fort Liard. It's just a matter of the communities needing assistance in putting together the package and being informed about where to send it.

I don't expect, of course, the GNWT to fund everything. There are lots of federal matching dollars or federal programming out there to assist communities that want to explore alternate energy sources. It's just having the capacity to deal with it. Our communities are small, and the resources to develop proposals are limited. Working with the department, I believe, was their intent; instead of the department just waiting for a proposal, I think they wanted to work together with the department and explore these many different opportunities.

With respect to the reallocation of the money, I know this department is just over the 9 per cent cutback in their budget. They're to be commended for that. However, it came at a big cost in order to achieve those targets, and one of them — Mr. Krutko spoke about it — is a reduction in fire suppression. To us in Fort Simpson it means a reduction of two crews: ten people. That's ten people who aren't going to be employed in my community of Fort Simpson, and the impact is manifold there.

One impact is that they look forward to that summer work. They've got families who depend on them as well. The hours they do work are credited toward some employment insurance that they can utilize in the wintertime should the winter work season be slow, and that was a benefit of that program.

I'm of the view, too, that I don't know why they were cut. I think they're saying that the last couple of years have been good fire seasons. Those are cycles, Mr. Chair, and I don't know how far back the department should look at that full cycle. We've had a couple of good years, but that doesn't mean that we're out of the woods, so to speak. You've just got to look at the Sahtu Region. They had a couple of

really bad fire seasons in a row, but they had many, many good years, too.

Having the resources available to combat those threats to our land and our resources and to be able to suppress the fires in any of the regions is critical and is our responsibility as a government. I believe we might have been too hasty in reducing in this area, because there are other big cost centres we could have looked at instead of reducing the fire crews. So I'm fundamentally opposed to that, Mr. Chair.

Another cost centre that was the subject of reduction, of course, is regional positions, regional front-line worker positions: a forester in my region as well as a renewable resource officer in Fort Liard. I just want to state for the record, of course, that I'm opposed to that as well, only because I look at the budget, Mr. Chair, and you see corresponding growth in the capital, or the headquarters division, of five or six positions.

When we started doing this whole exercise of fiscal restraint and budget reductions, I went on record right away, Mr. Chair, that we cannot be centralizing and privatizing. It's just not good for the communities, and it's not good for the regions.

If anything, it's the front-line workers we have to keep in place. Those are the ones who are in touch with the regions, with the communities. They know the people, they know the land, and they are an immense resource. To try to run it out of headquarters, I believe, is not the direction we should be going. I don't know how many times I have to say it: it's just not the way we should be doing our work.

When it comes to cutbacks, initially it was about fiscal restraint, but we have shown and we have established that this budget is not about fiscal restraint but about reallocation of resources. Sometimes keeping what we have is a priority. Just because we have an opportunity to reallocate, it's sometimes not the best way to do things.

Monitoring and utilizing continuous improvement methodology is another way of watching the costs and using best practices in the industry, because they're always current. There are always new technologies out there that will save us money, and those have to be examined. But cutting out old tried-and-true methods of fire suppression: I really think we should have another good look at that.

Especially in terms of fire suppression – we're in June, and it's kind of like mid-year – I would really, really urge the Minister and the Department of ENR that, for goodness' sake, we're going to have to revisit this for the next fiscal year.

Just switching gears over to energy conservation, I think we're on the right track with that. There's

always more that could be done, but supporting energy conservation through a couple of the programs we have will be beneficial.

I'll end on that note, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Mr. Menicoche. General comments?

Okay. Before proceeding into detail, I'll call on the Minister for a response to those. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll quickly go through the list. With the Wildlife Act the intent is, as we've indicated, to bring that forward in the life of this government. There was an agreement made, about three years ago now, with the aboriginal governments where we had to work through the Species at Risk Act, where they'd been in gridlock for a number of years. We resolved the process issue, the drafting issues. It's our intention to come forward next week, hopefully, to be able to table in this House for the first time a draft Species at Risk Act.

We'll build on that process to do the Wildlife Act. We won't lose the advantage of all the work that's been done, though it will have to be updated, and we intend to continue to work very closely with the aboriginal governments, those in the settled areas as well as those in the unsettled areas.

In regard to the Water Strategy, the Mackenzie River basin transboundary agreement is an agreement that does bring together a number of jurisdictions, but it's 13 years old. There has never yet been a Ministers' meeting. If you read the act, it leaves out key pieces. It doesn't include the inclusion of groundwater in the planning of the hydrological cycle.

The framework we're coming forward with here and that we'll be briefing committee on and want to table in the House in this sitting is going to lay out our thinking and our suggestions to move forward so we can have northern voices when it comes to dealing with Northern water. Clearly, we have taken the position that while the legal authority may lie mainly with the federal government, we have a moral and political responsibility and authority to act on this issue that's been identified as critical by the people. We will continue to work very closely with the aboriginal governments as we do this.

When it comes to the issue of forest products, though we're not in the economic development business, we are clearly interested in the issue of biomass. We think there is huge potential in the communities to provide relief to communities that are now staggering under the burden of the price of diesel and that there is an opportunity to look at a secondary industry as we develop this strategy in terms of replacing diesel-generated electricity with

possible biomass-generated electricity, in addition to people choosing to use wood pellets.

I agree with the Member: there is still a very clear need and benefit to just burning wood and harvesting wood the old, traditional way that has been used for centuries.

To reassure the Member, there is no monopoly. There is no plan for a monopoly to give anybody with an interest in this area any kind of inside track. We're going to work collectively to develop something that's good for all communities.

We use value-at-risk to protect the forests so that we can look at property and personal safety and all these types of things. We want to work with all the concerned parties to make sure we put the forest to the best use we can.

The issue of fire crews was one of the reduction areas. There was a study done, which I believe we shared or agreed to share with committee. We've reduced from 39 crews to 29 crews. It was not something that was done lightly. There was intense discussion. I appreciate the impact in communities that have had to do fire crew reduction, as well in my community. We have, as well, looked at and have brought forward reductions in our contracts in the use of aircraft to be as efficient and as economical as possible.

In regard to some of the concerns raised by the Member for Nahendeh, we will work with the community in Hay River with the inventory. We've talked about that. We've re-profiled to hit our targets. The issue of the forester: I believe the Member has been privy to and party to the discussions where we've come up with a solution where we can still meet our targets but address the forestry issue and the inventory issue.

We've committed, as well, to work with the region and community to see and map out maybe more effectively the geothermal potential in the communities. We understand from what the Members at the meeting told us that Nahendeh, the Liard area especially, is rich with potential, and we're very interested in doing that.

As we move into the next year's business planning cycle and once we conclude the fire season, we of course recognize and will put everything up for review in terms of what decisions we've tried to come forward with to see how effective they've been. It will give us a chance to assess the success of the various directions we're dealing with.

If I could speak to the issue of growth in headquarters, an issue of concern for every one of us, I believe, especially those of us from outside of Yellowknife. We as well intend to come forward through the business planning process. I've had the

same discussion with the deputy about the regions and communities that have been reduced, but we see a handful increase of positions in headquarters. We're going to do an analysis and come forward, hopefully, with recommendations of some services or positions that could be as capably and adequately doing their jobs outside of Yellowknife. So there's a commitment here, on the record, that we'll be bringing that forward in the business planning process.

If I could just speak to the issue of fiscal restraint, if I could just clarify for the record: in my recollection and understanding this is a two-stage process. There was fiscal restraint as well as fiscal reallocation. There was an intent to keep our fiscal house in order, to look at a \$60 million reduction in government. At the same time, we wanted to look at a further \$75 million reinvestment, moving resources within government to what were the priority areas of the 16th Assembly. So there has been a two-pronged issue here in dealing with funds, and that is how we've been operating.

I appreciate the Member's comments on energy conservation. There's a lot of room to improve. We've also agreed to work with committee to set up a climate change committee. There's going to be a Minister and two Members. The terms of reference, I believe, are going to the committee, which will allow us to provide a lot of good, clear advice to the other tables that are impacted: the Energy Coordinating Committee, the managing the land committee. We can look at things like the Energy Plan, the Greenhouse Gas Strategy and those types of things.

We have a very interesting and challenging agenda, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Minister. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: I'd like to ask the Minister, since he seems like he's open to reinstating positions: are you going to reinstate all the positions? I know I have a couple of forestry positions in my riding; I'd like to have them reinstated too. In order to do that, are you open to looking at those positions? These people have been with the forestry division for years. For them this is their career, and you're wiping their livelihood out. I just heard you stating you're willing to consider reinstating other areas.

If you're not flexible here, maybe we'll have to cut something out and look at, maybe, the forest management centre in Fort Smith. The question that has always come up is: why do we have a forest management centre that basically operates year-round? People are working in the middle of winter. Why couldn't you shut that down for a

couple of months in the middle of the winter when there are no real forest issues out there and have them work when they're supposed to be working, which is the summer months?

Maybe that can be considered as a savings for this government. Reinstate those dollars back into these positions with the individuals' livelihood you got rid of. I just noted you've made a reference that you're willing to reinstate in some areas, so I'd like to know. If you're going to reinstate in some areas, you'd better reinstate in all areas.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister, in response.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I believe that if you check Hansard, I did not say "reinstate." There are two things. I indicated to the Member for Nahendeh that we'd reached an arrangement where there was concern over a vacant forester position, and we'd reached a compromise. There were job duties that had been shared, but the one vacancy has disappeared. I also made the commitment in this House that we're prepared through the business planning process that's going to start up here in the fall. Clearly, with the things we're putting in place now, there's going to be a need to account and assess how they've worked. I've indicated, as I think every government department will, that as we come forward we'll have to speak to the success of the decisions that have been made in terms of programs and reductions.

I must say that I'm trying to be very even and moderate here on this, but the direct reference to suggestions that we should just go back, once again, into my constituency is something I don't really appreciate. I can demonstrate very clearly that the community I represent has been doing its share and more in terms of dealing with reductions. I appreciate the intensity and concern of the member, but he should also be, hopefully, somewhat sensitive to that kind of comment.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. I'll remind people that we're in general comments here, and I'm wondering if some of these things can come out in the specific discussions. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Chairman, I'm trying to be as general as you can get, because I know for a fact, along with everybody else here, that there are positions in place, that there are suggestions that are being made. I think our suggestions are just as valid as the Minister's recommendations. I think we do have the right to ask questions under general comments. We don't have to get into detail, and I think the whole idea of general comments is to try to get a general idea of the issue and to hear a

response from the Minister on exactly where they're going with this stuff.

I know for a fact that as long as I've been here, going on 12 years, the issue of the forest fire centre has been raised time and time again in this House. Why do we have an office that operates 12 months of the year? It does its real work during the fire season, which is not in the winter time. That's nothing new to this House; it's been raised before. I think it's important that we do look at every aspect of this thing.

The biggest cost in regard to the area of forest management is the water bomber contract. There again, there was nothing done to look at savings in that area. I think it's important that we look at all aspects, especially where the biggest capital investment is in this government. Yet we're picking on individuals' jobs and livelihoods. I think it's important that we ensure we have an opportunity to put forward our issues in regard to general comments and see exactly where the government is going on a general basis. So I'd like to ask the Minister. These are issues that have been around. It's nothing new to me or the Minister. This issue has been raised in this House many times.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The points you raise will clearly come up under Forest Management. I think maybe we'll get into the details then. Minister Miltenberger, would you like any general response there?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just two things. Recently, in the life of the last Assembly, I believe, we signed a ten-year contract that went through an extensive process for water bomber services that are going to last ten years, probably with the potential for an extension. I recognize the issue the Member has raised. I, of course, recognize as well that every facet of every program we have is up for scrutiny, and I accept and will fully engage in that process.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Jacobson.

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Regarding the sport hunting of polar bears and what the U.S. government has done to the sport hunting issue in my riding, I have probably 30 to almost 40 sport hunting guides. For those guides you have two helpers per hunt. That's a lot of helpers in regard to the hunts and money that it brings into the community on a yearly basis. I see that the U.S. government imposed or force-fed us in regard to saying that the U.S. stop polar bear hunting.

What is this department trying to do to reopen that discussion with the U.S. regarding the polar bear and big-game hunting tags?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Again, fairly specific to wildlife, which we will get into eventually here. A response from the Minister?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is an issue of concern, as the Member has indicated. We are working with other jurisdictions to sort out what the implications are. There were some arrangements that had been made between our federal government and the United States government in terms of committees and processes, which we're sorting out. There are cross-Canada working groups. I know that ITI is going to be working on lobbying efforts to work with the Americans to make our case and see if we can change their point of view.

Our scientists have indicated to us through this COSEWIC process that the species should remain as one of special interest. The Americans decided, through their own process, to move them up, as the Member knows, and it's going to affect business, which is very difficult for us to control. But we are going to be making efforts through ITI, and I know the Members are going to be involved in this in terms of lobbying the federal American government.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Any further general comments? Does the committee agree that we move on to detail?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): We'll look at page 11-7, Department Summary, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$56.942 million. We will defer that until the end of our detailed coverage.

Moving on to page 11-8, Information Item, Active Positions — By Region. Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to sound like a broken record, but I'm going to ask roughly the same questions I asked on this page for the other departments.

I'm just trying to reconcile some of the position changes in my brain. I see that when we look at the bottom line numbers, the department is going down by four positions, yet we do see some increases — six positions up in Yellowknife headquarters — and then pretty much all of the regions are going down. I'm a little confused by some of the numbers. I was under the impression that the department was identifying 22.5 positions for elimination.

Similar to yesterday and all the previous days, can the Minister please give me a bit of an outline or concept of how they went through the department and identified which positions to eliminate and what

the criteria used for those eliminations was? At the same time, how many of these 22.5 or so positions, or whatever the correct number might be, were in fact vacant, how many were filled, and what is the status of those positions now?

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

Ms. Magrum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to specifically direct this response to position changes for the 2008–2009 Mains. There are 14 reductions identified, which is actually 17.5 positions for '08–09. Of those, 14 are vacant, and 3.5 of those positions are filled. Three of those positions are in Yellowknife, and 14.5 are in the regions. Some of those are including ENR's staff crew.

Mr. Abernethy: So that gives me the second half of my question: can the department just give me some understanding of the criteria they used when they were actually going into the department to identify which positions should be eliminated and which ones should be kept?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, when it comes to anything related to fire management or forest management — the fire operations side of things — we had an extensive review. We had several criteria, including basically the issue of where they were located, the number of fires that were fought in particular areas. In many cases, for example, there were positions we had trouble filling. For numerous years there were numerous vacancies in particular positions, as far as those particular positions went.

As we mentioned earlier, most of our positions identified were vacant positions. That was something that's not unique to ENR. Most of the small communities we had were having trouble with housing and other related issues as far as filling particular positions. So generally, most of our positions were based on the efficiencies of the departments, the work that was required. There was another particular position where we felt, upon review with the MLA.... It was the regional forester position. We re-profiled that into a half-time regional forester and a half-time regional environmental assessment officer. Rather than eliminate a position with a body in it, the vacant position went.

Mr. Abernethy: Yesterday when we were talking to ITI, it became obvious that they had notified staff in '09–10 positions that are being eliminated. As I indicated before, we were under the impression that 22.5 positions are being eliminated; now we hear 17.5. Is the difference between the 22.5 and the 17.5 next year, '09–10? And if so, how many are

filled and how many are vacant? How many actual positions are going in '09–10?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I'll just make a couple of comments and then I'll get Ms. Magrum to provide the details. There was a number, but clearly this process.... These are estimates, and we recognize fully and acknowledge here that the '09–10 business plan has to go through a process. We're going to be coming forward with some plans that we have, recognizing they're susceptible to being modified or amended as we negotiate our way through this process. I'll ask Ms. Magrum if she could give the detail on the other positions, in terms of vacancies for '09–10.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Ms. Magrum

Ms. Magrum: The proposed reductions for 2009–2010 include five positions, two of which are vacant. Three positions are in Yellowknife.

Mr. Abernethy: I can't help myself. I've got to ask a question we asked yesterday. Have the staff for the '09–10 reductions been notified yet? Have they been told their positions are being eliminated?

Mr. Bohnet: No, none of those staff were notified of their reductions. One of the individuals asked and had requested to be put on notice as far as being a potentially affected employee. He's on deferred leave and some medical. The way he put it: for succession planning for the department, he was getting near time to retire and he offered his name up because he was going to be leaving anyhow. He was the only individual who received a letter, and it was because he requested it.

Mr. Abernethy: Thanks for answering the questions. You're answering them very clearly, very concisely, which is nice. It's nice to actually get clear and concise answers.

The last question I have for you is the increase of six in Yellowknife. A few of the Members have mentioned that in their opening comments, and I'm curious. I don't know what the six positions are that are being created in Yellowknife, and I'm curious if there's any opportunity for any of those positions to actually go outside of headquarters. Are they super-specific and they must be here? Or is there any opportunity for any of these types of positions to go elsewhere, maybe some of the other regional centres?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I'll just make some general comments, and then I'll ask the deputy to fill in the detail. I just want to restate the commitment that we're going to look and come into the business plan in the fall when we sit down with the committee, and we'll come forward with that assessment. Some of these positions were added

through supps; they're specialty positions with water and those types of things. With your indulgence, Mr. Chair, I'll get the deputy to provide that detail.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Basically, all the positions that were identified for Yellowknife were specialty positions, knowing that some of those particular positions — for example, water and some of those ones — may have the potential to be moved to another location. With the initiative just kicking off with some of the major work, particularly in water and land, some of our other project areas, the initial positions, are here because they are specialty-type positions.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you for that commitment. Thank you for the information. I do have a lot of interest in the fire suppression reductions as well, but I know there are other Members who are a lot keener on those particular questions. Rather than repeating ourselves, I won't ask any more questions. I would like once again to thank you for the clear and concise answers. It's nice to get answers for a change.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Not hearing a question there, I'll move to Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: In regard to the Inuvik positions, there are seven positions being lost there. Like I commented earlier, there's a position in Fort McPherson that's been let go. This individual made a career of this, working for forestry every summer. I'd just like to know: what's the reason behind that position? What's the title of that position? Why does it have to be let go?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Mr. Minister.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: There are fire crew positions that were vacant as well. There are a number of interns as well; the one in Fort McPherson is an '09–10 proposal.

Mr. Krutko: As I stated, this individual worked there every summer, and I think it's important those positions that can be retained. Again, the process that was used is something I have questions about.

I would just like to know exactly, with the number of so-called specialist positions.... What's the cost to implement those specialist positions in Yellowknife compared to doing away with the regional positions, seasonal positions? It sounds like you've got all this so-called high-priced help being implemented at the headquarters level, but you're getting rid of the people who depend on the seasonal employment to get them through the winter.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The nine fire crews were roughly \$1.229 million. The six positions added to Yellowknife.... I don't know if we have the number, but it would be in the order of, I assume, \$600,000.

Mr. Krutko: Then what's the number of fire crew individuals being let go in regard to the \$1.2 million?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: There are five members per crew, I believe, in the standard fire crew, so that would be 45 seasonals. There were another four in Inuvik that were on the GNWT payroll, but they were all vacant.

I'd like to point out — I'll maybe get Mr. Bohnet to give the details — that almost half of the crews were vacant or asked to have their contract taken back because they didn't have staff. But, once again, with your indulgence, I'll get Mr. Bohnet to speak a bit more.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to the reduction of the contract for fire crews and fire crews in general, I'll start with the government crew, which is the Inuvik crew. Three of the five positions had been vacant for the last two years. We had extreme difficulty filling those particular positions.

In regard to the nine contract fire crews, three of the crews had approached ENR to take back the contracts in various regions. I won't get into the particular locations. But for various reasons — either their corporation got themselves into some type of financial difficulties; they couldn't find manpower.... In fact, a big one that's growing more and more is.... The GNWT — when our fire crew is no longer the employer of choice, they're moving on to some of the areas in the resource development sector. So we had three crews that had come back to us.

We also, in our review of the whole forest management process and the fire-management operation, took a look.... We actually had two crews who fought two fires the entire fire season last year. Another crew went on one mop-up last year. So we were experiencing tremendous difficulty with a lot of the crews, for a number of reasons. It was not only us; the contractors themselves were experiencing a lot of these difficulties. Many of the decisions ENR didn't even have to make. The contractors made them, because they approached us. Mr. Chairman, I hope that helps a little bit.

Mr. Krutko: So in order to get rid of 45 individuals, you're saving \$1.2 million. But basically to put six

positions in Yellowknife, it's going to cost us \$600,000. I think that's kind of ironic that you're getting six positions for \$600,000, but you're doing away with 45 individuals' careers by way of these contracts.

Again, I hear the Minister saying, Well, there were only two fire responses last year. Talking to the people in my riding, this is the earliest fire season they've ever had. They're seeing more lightning strikes in the Inuvik region. This is June; we're already seeing major activity by way of lightning strikes. Fire is starting earlier. Fire season usually runs to the end of August. So I think just assuming, Well, we didn't have it in the past.... I think, if anything, with global warming we're going to see more fires than we've ever seen before in history. I think people could not assume, Well, they only responded to two fires, so let's get rid of them. That's a bad way of dealing with the issue in regard to these positions.

The Inuvik region has gone down from 46 positions last year to 39 positions. I'd just like to know: exactly what are those positions in the Inuvik region?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I seek a bit of clarification from the Member. Does he want to know what the 39 positions in the Beaufort-Delta are? Or did he want to know the seven positions that have been eliminated?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. Clarification, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: I'd just like to know the seven positions that have been let go.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: There were four fire crew members. There was an intern wildlife technician, an intern renewable resource officer and an intern wildlife biologist.

Mr. Krutko: The wildlife biologist: is that the one that deals with the polar bear issue, in regard to that research?

Mr. Bohnet: No, it isn't.

Mr. Krutko: I'll pass it on.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Moving next to Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be very brief, just following up on some comments made by my colleague from Mackenzie Delta. The four fire crew and three interns — out of these seven, how many of them are aboriginal?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There were four vacant, but I don't have that information regarding the status of the wildlife technician, the renewable resource officer or the wildlife biologist. We can get that information.

Mr. Chair, I'd just like to point out as well that interns are usually on staff just for the year. The plan would be at the end of the year, or by the end of the year, hopefully, to find them permanent employment. But by definition "intern" is a time-specific position.

Mr. McLeod: The Minister has pointed out a couple of times that the four were vacant. I think those were the firefighting positions, if I'm not mistaken. Are they always filled? Are they filled year-round? Obviously, when the decision was made to do this, they may have been vacant, because there was no fire season yet. I'm just curious to know: are they employed year-round? Or is it just a seasonal position, and when they came up with the numbers these four were vacant because there might have been snow on the ground and they didn't need them?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, they would be basically permanent seasonal. They would have a job that would start up every May and conclude in August or September, depending on demand. They at some point had been interviewed or made indeterminate, I guess — indeterminate seasonal — and those positions were set up as GNWT seasonal staff.

Mr. McLeod: Assuming we were to have a fire right outside of Inuvik, do we have anybody in Inuvik who's capable of fighting the fire, or are we going to have to bring in a crew from Yellowknife?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, we still have a number of fire crews in the Beaufort-Delta, Inuvik, Fort McPherson and those particular areas.

Mr. McLeod: I was just trying to follow up on a few questions on that. But I do want to make just an observation, and I think an observation that's shared by many Members. It's an observation made in some of the other departments we've been going through the last couple of weeks. We passed a motion again — I'll mention it — the other day on decentralization. I look at this Active Positions — By Region, and I think it's been pointed out a couple of times: an increase of six, again in headquarters. They show a decrease of one in North Slave, but I'm assuming that's still in Yellowknife. Then Fort Smith has got a reduction of eight. Deh Cho has a reduction of two. Sahtu has a reduction of two, and the Beaufort-Delta has a reduction of seven.

This doesn't go over well with us, especially a lot of the Members from outside the capital, to continually see positions going up in headquarters, saying we need specialized positions. As Mr. Krutko said, you get a guy there who's been a career firefighter and depends on this kind of seasonal employment. We're doing it backwards, people. We're going after the little guys constantly, because they put up the least resistance. Then we add specialists to headquarters in every department. I think we're doing it backwards. We're going out in the communities, and the guy's making payments. But no, we're going to cut you, but we're going to put six specialists in headquarters. I would encourage this department and the rest of Cabinet to really stand back and have a serious look at that. We're going to have so many people working in headquarters that they'll have nobody in the regions to give orders to; there'll be nobody left. I think it's something we seriously have to have a look at.

ENR, of all departments.... You know, there's always a lot of aboriginal content within ENR, and it's always been a fairly good department. I see the folks who are being let go; that's why I asked if they were aboriginal. I'm curious to know if they were aboriginal. Who at the end of the day made the decision to let these folks go? Would it have been the regional superintendent? Would it have been the deputy minister? That's what I've been curious about. Who made the ultimate decision? Was the recommendation coming in from the regional office? That's what I'm having trouble understanding.

Just a few comments, Mr. Chair, and an observation and some words of advice for ENR and the rest of Cabinet. We're going to have to start getting away from being too top-heavy. It's not a good sign. We can't be telling people on one hand, We're letting you go, and then on the other hand it's coming out that we're increasing in headquarters. I always go back to the first budget I was ever a part of a few years ago. One of the departments — actually it was the Housing Corporation — had a reduction of \$1.2 million in the Beaufort-Delta. Well, I mean, okay; but then, a couple of pages later, the budget in headquarters went up by \$1.2 million.

I don't think I had a question there, but I just wanted to make a few comments. We have to just keep letting them know we're not happy with this. It's not acceptable to keep seeing the regions getting nailed and headquarters growing.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Response to those comments. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the comments and

advice from the Member. There are a couple of quick points.

I've indicated that when we looked at the firefighting issue, both the aircraft and the fire crews, there was a study that was done that laid out issues and concerns and the fact that, in terms of our requirements, we were overcrewed. I will check with the department, but if I haven't provided that report to the EDI Committee I will make sure we get that. It was done. That particular piece was looked at very carefully. In terms of the decisions, the final decision, of course, is mine as Minister. I agreed with the plan that was brought forward. I will stand here before this House, and that is my responsibility and final decision. We went through Cabinet, but as Minister, I am the one who's accountable.

We are going to come back in the fall, because I share the same concerns, coming from a small community, in terms of the growth in headquarters. We're going to come back in the business-plan process with what I hope are going to be some clear options to possibly relocate some resources and services outside of Yellowknife.

We also have a plan we want to bring forward to committee to look at coming up with a clear plan by this fall in the small communities to work with those community members who may be interested in acquiring the skills to get them at least started in the business of being a renewable resource officer at an entry level. We want to give them an opportunity for training and support they might not otherwise get. They might not be able to make the entry requirements to get into the NRTP program, to get their diploma, but they may have tremendous assets otherwise that we'd like to take advantage of. They're from the community and have awareness of the culture and the language and the land. We're going to bring that forward, as well, as a way to get our presence more evident at the community level.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, and I appreciate the Minister saying the ultimate decision was his. Maybe I asked my question the wrong way. Obviously, the Minister would make the decisions based on the information he got. I suppose my question was: who identified the positions to be affected?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: There was a considerable amount of work done with headquarters and all the regions and all the different program areas and regional superintendents and staff as they laid out what the targets were and what they could bring forward and still be able to say we can do the job, the mandate of the Environment and Natural Resources department. So that worked its way up. There was involvement right from every region to do that with headquarters.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. McLeod, anything further? No? Thank you.

We are on page 11-8, Active Positions — By Region, information item. Any more questions? Sorry. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: If I can ask the Minister in regard to the position in Fort McPherson: what's the cost of that position in Fort McPherson? My understanding is that it's somewhere in the range of \$28,000. I'd just like to know: is that the amount of that position in Fort McPherson, which is a seasonal position?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: It's a seasonal position. The figure the Member's quoted is probably in the range of what that position would be worth on a seasonal basis.

Mr. Krutko: Has the government ever looked at the impact to our system? If this individual decided to go on income support, go into public housing — and that person could have earned an income — receive UI to get him through part of the winter, compared to the cost of this person going on income support and becoming... What's the cost of that in the community? I understand, at the end of it all, it's about \$85,000.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, our estimation is that the cost of the GNWT maintaining a crew where there's no operational requirement averages about \$27,500 per crew member for the contract period. The cost of providing income assistance to one period for the same period of time as the operational period of the contract is estimated at about \$1,250 per person or \$2,500 for a family of four.

I guess the other point I want to make is that over time, in some cases, this program has been seen to have a significant social component for the reason the Members have talked about.

Our challenge has been to look at the money we have available, the targets we were given, the number of crews that have grown over the years — in some cases with a very, very modest or minimal workload — and to make the hard decisions in all areas, including this one. We've tried to be as careful as possible on that issue. Our capacity to run our fire crews with that social component being one of the criteria is not something we're able to do with the resources we have available.

Mr. Krutko: Yes; just to remind the Minister, this person was a government employee. He was not on contract to provide fire services. This guy is an employee of this government who basically was a seasonal employee. This person has built his career around that position for \$27,000 a year. This

government is basically, you know.... And yet you could put six positions in Yellowknife for \$600,000, at a cost of \$100,000 per person, and not even blink.

I'd like to ask the Minister: why is it that you had no problem eliminating the position for \$27,000, in which this person's livelihood is on the line? And I have three other people in my community who are government employees who were let go as part this process. I would fight for every one of those people's positions, knowing that there's going to be six so-called specialists hired who probably have never lived in the North in their lives, were hired from the south, brought up here with extra costs for moving costs and isolation, removal costs, and get to well over \$600,000 by the time they get set up and move them into an office.

Yet you have no qualms about getting rid of somebody for \$27,000. I find that pathetic.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to point out again to the Member that that is a proposed reduction for '09–10. All these reductions were made with extreme caring. There were a lot of qualms and a lot of hard discussions. I can assure the Member that none of this was done lightly. The position I believe he's talking about is going to be brought forward in the '09–10 business planning process, and we've all acknowledged there will be a full review and the first opportunity for all the Members to go through the full cycle.

Mr. Krutko: I know my colleague from Inuvik Twin Lakes made reference to the affirmative action candidates in Inuvik. I'd like to know how many affirmative action individuals are being laid off in this department.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: In terms of GNWT staff, there are three P1s in '08–09.

Mr. Krutko: What about the seasonal positions with the forest fire contract? Those are people also. I'd like to know how many people this government has had under payroll are going to be laid off through this process.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, in terms of the contract position, the majority, if not all, of the fire crews would be from the community and would in all probability be considered P1s, if you were staff.

Mr. Krutko: I'd just like to ask the Minister if it will take a motion from this House to reinstate that position in regard to the three PYs you mentioned.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Clarification: are you referring to the '08–09?

Mr. Krutko: I am referring to reinstating any positions in regard to aboriginal employees in this department — that this government generously consider reinstating those positions, knowing the affirmative action numbers are down to 31 per cent yet the aboriginal population makes up over 51 per cent. I'd just like to ask the Minister: what does it take to reinstate positions? Do we have to pass motions in the House or delay the item?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, I believe our deputy is looking at our affirmative action stats for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. They are about 68 per cent. Of course, we will seriously consider any recommendation that's made by committee, recognizing that we have targets we are required to meet, which we have done, and we'd have to look to see what's possible. At this point we believe we've come forward with what is a fair and measured plan to allow us to keep doing business and still meet the targets we were given.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Anything further, Mr. Krutko? Nothing further?

We're on page 11-8, an information item, Active Positions — By Region. All agreed?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department Summary, Active Positions — By Region, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): We'll move on to 11-9, Active Positions — Community Allocation. Agreed?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department Summary, Active Positions — Community Allocation, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on. Revenue Summary, page 11-10, information item. Questions? Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a quick question. I'm wondering if the Minister or the deputy minister could comment on the compliance on the remittance of fishing licences. I know we have a number of vendors around the territory, including some fishing lodges that actually sell the fishing licences on-site, and I'm wondering if they have a problem with collecting the revenues from the sale of those fishing licences.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not that we're aware of, but we can check. I'd also like to point out, just in regard to the fishing licence issue, when we were in Nahendeh, the issue came up — at, I believe it was Trout Lake

— about selling licences in places like Nelson. These folks would fly in, and the only kind of benefit the North would get would be the fishing licences — and they were sold in another jurisdiction. We've committed to looking at that. There was also a strong suggestion that we consider raising the price of the fishing licences because they are very, very modest considering the type of resource they are getting for that price. We will check on that issue, but there are some other issues that are, as well, of interest in terms of fishing licences.

Mr. Ramsay: I'd like to thank the Minister for that and certainly look forward to discussions we could have in that regard in the fall when we go through the business plans. Mahsi.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the Minister for identifying the Trout Lake issue, and I'd just like to.... It's been over a month since we brought that issue to his attention. I just want to ask the Minister: has there been any movement toward utilizing Trout Lake and their store, or any small community, and sell fishing licences from them — encourage it? It would generate more revenue if tourists have to purchase in the community.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. We're in the process of working on it as we speak. We realize the idea of selling licences in other jurisdictions — people flying in — poses a lot of problems. Many times, that's not even going to a community. There's no benefit to the community whatsoever. Another thing is they're going into lakes that for enforcement purposes we can't get to. We are committed to working with ITI on that particular issue to make sure we get a good grasp of who the vendors are, where they are located. We are leaning to the idea of no vendors outside the Northwest Territories.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Bohnet. Mr. Menicoche. That's all? Right. Next on my list I have Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: He answered the question I was going to ask.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Excellent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: He answered the question.... No, he didn't. I'm just kidding.

Laughter.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Under Beverage Container Program showing predicted revenue of \$179,000, where does it show what the costs are for undertaking that program: for the payments to the depots, for the transportation of the beverage containers from the communities to central depots, for the money we pay to contractors, for equipment to put in the beverage container recycling yards? Where are all those expenses indicated?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Ms. Magrum.

Ms. Magrum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Environment Fund records revenues on the beverage container surcharges for each of the containers returned, and then the expenses contain all of the items the Member indicated: the transportation.... Those are all expenses of the fund. And then the \$179,000 is the projected surplus for 2008–2009.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have a document, a page of detail, that I'd be happy to share with the Members, as opposed to.... Or we could read off. If there are specific numbers the Member would like, we could do that as well. We do have a piece of backup information we'd be happy to share.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Anything further, Mrs. Groenewegen?

Mrs. Groenewegen: I would be interested in seeing that document the Minister offers up.

Under Timber Permits and Licences, is that for cutting firewood, or is that for commercial harvesting?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chair, that's a combination, and my own observation in my own community is that probably more and more of it is going to cutting firewood.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister. Moving on, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just had another quick question for the Minister and his staff on the \$179,000 showing up under revenue for that Beverage Container Program. I know it comes up later on under the Environment Fund. But is there a way the department can keep that \$179,000 and put it into research and development or look into new ways of getting waste out of the waste stream? I think that would be a better use of the money than

just throwing it back into consolidated revenue or general revenue.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chair, that money stays in the fund, and as well we intend to come forward once again with a business planning process with what we're going to be suggesting as the next steps for this program in terms of things we'd like to look at, such as plastic bags and cardboard and other areas where there's a need for us to look at recovery and recycling.

Mr. Ramsay: Just for clarification's sake, on the Beverage Container Program, the \$179,000 stays in that Environment Fund. If it does, I'm just wondering why we would show it in our budgeting exercises as revenue. When it stays in the fund, maybe we shouldn't record it like this. I'm not sure.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Call on Ms. Magrum.

Ms. Magrum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is the first year this budget item of \$179,000 has actually been included in the Main Estimates documents. That was a requirement. Even though this money stays in the fund, it is considered revenue of the GNWT and was to be recorded as such.

Mr. Ramsay: As long as it's not going back into general revenue, that's fine.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I have nobody else on the list, so we're on page 11-10, information item, Revenue Summary.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department Summary, Revenue Summary, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on. Page 11-12. Corporate Management, and 11-13, Activity Summary, Corporate Management, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$10.094 million. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to the area and in regard to corporate costs, these payments and these commitments, there's an issue that's come up out of the Inuvik office of relocating the office to Shell Lake. I think that as a government we all know there is no resource office in Inuvik. There used to be. The community sold that property. Again, you know, we have harvesters who still depend on that activity. A lot of these individuals basically come to town, sell their furs and put a little money in their pocket. Also, for people in the communities who go to Inuvik and whatnot, you know they expect to provide that service. For most people who get service in the

Inuvik region, it's usually in the downtown core. Yet the government is now in the process of deciding to relocate out to Shell Lake. I notice under Infrastructure Acquisition Plan you have some \$300,000 for that, and a total estimate of \$310,000.

I'd just like to know exactly: have you taken into consideration the effect of that service not being in the Inuvik downtown core where individuals who can't afford...? You know, to go to the airport in Inuvik you're looking at almost \$30. This Shell Lake is ten kilometres out of Inuvik. For these individuals to have to go running out there to get service from this government — why is it that we're having to relocate that to another area? I'd just like to ask the Minister where is that decision, and also what's the \$300,000 for in regard to the Shell Lake bunk house?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member raises a concern that is a concern with us as well. As part of the relocation of the main operations to Shell Lake, we will be setting up a storefront operation. We're either going to negotiate an arrangement with ITI or one of the aboriginal governments to have an officer available to address the issues raised by the Member for Mackenzie Delta. I'll ask the deputy minister once again, with your indulgence, to speak about the \$300,000.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the \$300,000 has been forecasted for this particular project for a number of years for renovations to the Shell Lake area, where the fire crews and the forest management section worked. It will also now include moving the existing staff from the leased facilities to that new location at Shell Lake. There are minor renovations needed at Shell Lake, and that's where there are a number of functions related to that.

Mr. Krutko: Can the Minister elaborate on exactly how many people you're talking about moving out to Shell Lake and exactly what type of program responsibility those people who are going to be moving out there have?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The intent is to move basically the regional office that the Gwich'in own downtown out to Shell Lake. We will set up, as I indicated, a storefront office to make sure we still have a clear, visible and easily accessible presence in the downtown of Inuvik.

Mr. Krutko: Well, I believe most of the supervisor positions are in the downtown core. If you want to

talk to someone from Housing or Transportation or Public Works or MACA, they're all right downtown. I mean, if I drive to Inuvik and I want to talk to somebody, I just go downtown and walk down the street.

I think it's more than just having a storefront operation. You want to be able to talk to people and ensure that programs and services are being delivered, not simply that you have a storefront. My issue is around the whole move itself, of moving to a federal infrastructure that has been in Inuvik going back 50 years.

The upgrades at \$300,000.... I think at the end of the day they're probably going to cost you a lot more than \$300,000 by way of safety codes, electrical codes and basically looking at the overall costs in regard to dealing with heat exchange systems and ventilation. I think there's a lot more to this building than simply saying it's going to cost \$300,000. Again, I'd like to ask: why is the superintendent of the department moving out to Shell Lake? So he can go fishing?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The move was for operational reasons. The building they were in was very cramped. I was in there a number of times.

I've been out to Shell Lake as well. They made a very good case about using existing government resources, recognizing the fact we still have to have a presence in downtown Inuvik, which we will do. Then it made more effective use and more permanent use of a facility that has lots of infrastructure but was only used for part of the year. They looked at their needs. It was checked to make sure it met all health and safety concerns. So we've proceeded with that. They've budgeted to do that. The work the deputy talked about was already in the books and was just to maintain the buildings that were being used for fire crews to acceptable standards.

Mr. Krutko: I understand that the building you're vacating also has a lab fixture inside of it. I'd like to know what's going to be the status of the lab that's there in regard to that responsibility the department's presently taken on, where they do provide that out of that facility. Where do they go?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The whole existing operation, except for the storefront operation, is being relocated to Shell Lake, including the lab.

Mr. Krutko: Do you have any final count on how many people will be relocated to Shell Lake? It sounds like, now, the whole department's moving out there. Can you give me the numbers and the different program responsibilities of the employees who are moving out there?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, the Deputy is counting in his head here about ten positions. But just to be on the safe side, I will commit to provide the information to committee that lays out the current staff inhabiting the office building in Inuvik and all the positions that are there that will be relocated to Shell Lake.

Chairman (Bromley): Thank you, Minister. I'd just like to break in here. This committee is well known for its hard work. But it's even harder work when it's not based on a full stomach. There is sustenance available, so I'm going to call a short recess while we take care of that need.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): I'll call the Committee of the Whole to order. We are on page 11-13, Corporate Management, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$10.094 million. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to the lease property in Inuvik that the department of environment presently occupies, I'd just like to know exactly when you are intending to move out of that location and exactly where you are in regard to your lease commitments for that office space.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my understanding that the lease is up here in June, and we will be moving in the very, very near future. In a matter of weeks we'll be moving.

I also understand we have the provisions, while we're doing some of the minor work at Shell Lake, to extend it for a month or so to allow us to occupy the present lease while we're preparing our move.

Mr. Krutko: Has the contract been let to do the renovation in regard to the Shell Lake bunkhouse? I see there's \$300,000 in regard to your Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, but I don't believe we've approved it here yet. I'm just wondering: has that contract been let, and has the contract been awarded?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That funding, I believe, was approved in the interim appropriation. I think the planning is underway. I don't think they've let any of the contracts or that they've actually started doing the work, though.

Mr. Krutko: Just in regard to the contract, didn't the deputy just state that the lease is up in June? Realistically, if the contract hasn't been let and

you've got this amount of work to do, plus you have to relocate the office — move all the equipment and everything — I think you're probably talking a couple of months here. Could I have a clear understanding on a date we're hoping to get this work done by, having it relocated, and also exactly what the cost of that move is going to be?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The deputy indicated that we have an arrangement with the landlord that will give us some time. The work being done to the bunkhouses does not interfere with the move of the administration piece and the operation for the regional office. It's going to be done with existing resources. There are monies, we've indicated in the budget, to repair the bunkhouses. We're going to be moving as quickly as we can, and we have the goodwill of the landlord to give us some extra time should we need it.

Mr. Krutko: Again, getting back to the service side of the department responsibility, we do have responsibility in regard to the different types of programs and whatnot. What do the residents of the Mackenzie Delta or Inuvik have to do to get that service? Do they all have to drive out to Shell Lake now to receive that service? I know you've mentioned there's going to be a storefront, but there are still other types of services that have to be offered that are presently by way of programs this department administers. I'd just like to know: are people going to be reimbursed for the extra cost they have to incur by way of driving out there and, vice versa, your employees?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, the storefront in downtown Inuvik will be the point of contact for Inuvik residents so that it's convenient. There will be arrangements made if there's a requirement for a specific service. That will be sorted out with the staff in the storefront, and then arrangements will be made to make sure that service is available so as not to inconvenience Inuvik residents. If they have the capacity and they want to drive to Shell Lake, that would be fine. If there are other limitations, then we will be clearly bringing the service. Whoever they need to see, arrangements will be made so that that service is available.

Mr. Krutko: Again, I think that most of our harvesters don't have that kind of money to throw around by way of having to go all the way out to Shell Lake to try to sell their furs and also being able to deal with wondering where their fur cheques are and whatnot. As a government I think we have a responsibility to realize that there are individuals we have to provide services for who aren't too well off.

I'd just like to know: will the government be providing transportation or subsidies to these

individuals? Since you're the one who's being an inconvenience to the public, basically, for the sake of comfort of your staff, I think something should be done to ensure the public is being somehow compensated for having this move imposed on them. You always had a presence in the downtown core of Inuvik, and now you don't.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, we recognize the issue raised by the Member, and we will be taking all of the appropriate steps with this storefront operation and other supports to ensure the Inuvik residents aren't inconvenienced by the move.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Anything further? Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the reductions of staff in this area, I was wondering if the Minister could demonstrate to me what process they went through to do that specific evaluation and then further reduction on the staff members. How many staff members in this specific unit are we losing by title?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The whole department was looked at with the same process we talked about earlier in terms of being thorough and making sure we can still provide the services and trying to be as balanced as we can, recognizing that there are, clearly, some areas where we still require work.

I'll ask Ms. Magrum to give the Member the details about the positions in this particular program area.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Ms. Magrum.

Ms. Magrum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For 2008–2009 there is a communications and policy intern position that is being removed. As well, there's a manager of information systems, and half of funding for a corporate services clerk in Norman Wells. These two last positions are Shared Services positions. The funding is shared with ITI; however, these positions appear on ITI's organization chart.

Mr. Hawkins: For my record, are these staffed at this time?

Ms. Magrum: No, they're not.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Anything further, Mr. Hawkins?

Mr. Hawkins: No. I'll accept that at this time.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Any further questions on page 11-13? Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: From our briefing information I see that it looks like there was a reduction of travel in this particular area. I'm just trying to see where it's reflected under the extended details under expenses under Corporate Management. Is it there?

Ms. Magrum: There was a \$25,000 reduction in directorate travel. The actual travel line shows an increase of \$12,000. Part of this is an increase due to increase in funding in the management of transboundary waters. The other change is due to internal reallocations that managers made in preparing their budgets.

Mr. Hawkins: For my understanding, would they be able to explain the internal reallocation? Was that other travel money all combined in one pool, or was it just leftover money that didn't sort of have a specific title?

Ms. Magrum: Those internal reallocations would have been reallocations within the corporate management activity but within the budget of other line objects. When managers prepare their budgets, they review their actual expenditures and have an opportunity to reallocate funding in certain areas, depending on their projected need.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Other questions on page 11-13? Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I noticed that under Contract Services there's almost a \$300,000 increase from last year. I'd just like to know what that \$300,000 increase is for and exactly where that is being expended.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was our portion of the supp reserve that was divided up among departments.

Mr. Krutko: Could the Minister elaborate a little more on this supp reserve? I thought we had a major deficit problem — we're laying people off — and now we've got a reserve. That's pretty interesting.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, historically there's a supplementary reserve that the government has that's usually kept in a central location, and it is drawn down. In this case, what was done is that the supplementary reserve — I'm not sure; I can't recollect how big it was — was

divided up on basically a proportional basis among all the departments. The money the Member references is what ENR's share of that supplementary reserve was or is.

Mr. Krutko: Contract services usually means that you have an actual contract with someone to provide a service. I'd just like to know. It just doesn't seem like there's that fit there, you know, because it falls under the category of Contract Services. I was under the impression, by it being under that line item, that you increased contract services with someone who provides a service to this department. I'd just like to know why. What's the reasoning behind putting it under that heading?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, this is a new arrangement. It was put there as a place to hold it as we sort out how it's going to be drawn down in the coming months.

Normally we would be going back to FMB with a supplementary request for funds. Now we've been given our share and told we have to account for it. We don't have a clear spot at this point within our accounting structure, so it was just decided to put it in the contract services.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Anything further, Mr. Krutko? Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just on the note of the supp reserve: is it allocated at this time, or is it just being treated as unallocated money?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, at this point, it's still relatively early in the year. It's mainly sitting there. But I'll ask the deputy to speak to the issue of potential plans for the supp reserve.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the things we're looking is that there's been a problem identified with filling staff positions in some of the smaller communities in the territory.

We're looking at some training initiatives, working with Arctic College and some of the aboriginal governments, and looking at some new approaches to hiring local people who are familiar with the land and the language and such and trying to groom them to work as renewable resource officers. There's that type of initiative.

Another initiative we're looking at is the idea of a field operations unit. This is, again, to try to create a set-up so that we can provide much better and coordinated services to the region and community operations of ENR. That's just a couple.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Bohnet. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While we're looking at some of those potential initiatives, the other thing with the supp reserve to keep in mind for us is that it was divided up among departments with the understanding that we wouldn't be coming back to the FMB for further funding. So we have to, as well, try to keep a reserve to allow for contingencies that may be unforeseen at this point or requirements that may come up that aren't budgeted for. We have to be careful how we use this funding, because under the current rules there is no going back to FMB at this point.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to be clear — and I thank Mr. Bohnet for his answer. Really, it sounds like it had the earmarks, to some degree or not, of a project that didn't, obviously, make it to print here. I just wanted to make sure it's being used for what it was intended for. Ultimately, although I see in here projects potentially on the list such as, you know, Mr. Bohnet had broken out, I just wondered if you'd had it already tagged to other things.

As I understand, some other departments have already in some form or another allocated some of their supp reserve money. I wanted to see if it was just being treated as cash, as a rainy-day fund, which I was certainly hoping it would be, or was it relatively allocated? That's what I wanted to know about it.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. No question there, I guess. Any further questions? Yes, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to move a motion.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Go ahead.

COMMITTEE MOTION 46-16(2)
TO REINSTATE \$50,000
FOR PROPOSED RELOCATION
OF INUVIK AREA OFFICE
(COMMITTEE MOTION CARRIED)

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Chair, I move the committee strongly recommend that the government take immediate action to reinstate funding in the amount of \$50,000 for the proposed relocation of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources area office under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources under Corporate Management Activity.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): The motion is being distributed. The motion has been distributed. The motion is in order. To the motion, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe the department has to be transparent. They have to be visible in our communities, not run out of town ten kilometres and think they cannot provide a service. I think it's crucial that this department.... It's fundamental, especially for our harvesters and people in communities who depend on this department to assist them, and especially our trappers and hunters, in regard to issues such as fur sales. The first I've heard of talk about a storefront and whatnot here....

This motion just basically supports that idea that Inuvik has to have some storefront presence in the community. By simply moving out to Shell Lake and assuming it's comfortable for everybody, I don't feel comfortable doing that. Also, I know constituents I've talked to want to be able to be assured that they can have these services provided, especially as Inuvik is our regional centre. A lot of people from outside Inuvik go into Inuvik and meet with the people within this department and also meet with other departments and have to run all over the place.

The government should consider a service model and ensure that services are being distributed and offered fairly to everyone. We talk about decentralization, we talk about bringing services closer to the people and the communities, yet in this case it seems like the decision's been made with no consideration for the people we serve.

That's why I'm bringing this motion forward. If the Minister's comment is true, the main thing this motion could do is to support the storefront operation in Inuvik, which is a little bit of a remedy to having this move out of the community. At least we'll have some presence in the downtown core in Inuvik and not simply have to drive all the way out to Shell Lake to see the people who should be providing the service in the downtown core. I'd just like to move the motion in regard to that ability, where I for one feel we're losing an opportunity.

Most harvesters right now.... Going back over the years, old Slim used to have his store practically right on the location where they go now to provide their services, and they've been doing that for quite some time. I think the location is not only unique to the department, it also has a lot of history to it. I'd just like the department to seriously consider having a presence continue on in the town of Inuvik and not outside of it.

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

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Member's concern. We've just had earlier an extensive discussion about this particular issue, and it's our opinion as a department that we have and will continue to take the appropriate steps to make sure the people of Inuvik have access to the services. We've come up with what we believe is a better use of existing resources and infrastructure at Shell Lake. The equipment's there for a storefront, and while I appreciate the motion to put back the \$50,000, clearly we're trying to work under targets we've been given and come up with a plan we think allows us to do that and still do our fiscal duty here as one of the departments of the government.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. To the motion, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: I just wanted to lend my support to the motion that's before us this evening, for a couple of reasons.

I'd like to get some more information. This is a tough one. I give a lot of credit to the Minister and his department for going out, and they are actually one of the departments that has done a fair amount in the area of reductions, and they are to be applauded for that.

With this one, however, there's some concern over the amount of money that has been injected. I know we approved \$300,000 in the interim appropriation for the Shell Lake area. I'm not sure how much more we're going to need to spend there to get offices relocated from Inuvik out to Shell Lake. It's something we need to spend a little bit more time on. I'm not sure if the amount that shows up in this motion of \$50,000 is necessarily the amount of money it's going to take to get us through to the fall so that we can, hopefully, get some more answers. I certainly would like to investigate a little more about what it's going to cost in ENR to relocate out to Shell Lake and whether or not there's going to be a presence in downtown Inuvik. Those are things that have been highlighted by my colleague from Mackenzie Delta.

Those are important things, and I think we need to keep those in mind, and we need to just make sure we are doing the right thing. In an effort to save some money we might have to spend a lot more. Again, I'm going to support the motion. I don't think it's going to end up being \$50,000 at the end of the day until we come up with a solution. That's my take on it.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the motion, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: I'll support the motion. I just want that on record.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: I just want to state, hearing a concern from the Members around this area and the operation, that the department, as the Minister stated, has done their work to try to meet their target and has done well in doing that and coming up with the right balance.

Just for the record, the Minister has made a commitment that the storefront operation will still be looked at in the actual downtown area of the community of Inuvik proper. As well, the \$300,000 in the interim appropriation, just for the record, is to deal with the bunkhouse, and that's to deal with fire crews and that operation. I just want to put that on the record. It's not the deal with offices and moving of those offices. It's to ensure that the bunkhouse is done. It's a facility that's been used for that for many years.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Roland. To the motion? Question has been called. I will ask the mover of the motion to conclude the debate on the motion.

Mr. Krutko: What I'm hearing from the Minister in regard to this storefront.... This motion basically supports that initiative. I think we can continue that initiative and make sure we have a presence.

I think this department is crucial to what's going on in the Inuvik region. We have environmental screening committees that work in the community; we have regulatory boards that work in Inuvik. At the end of the day, we have to work with these other agencies, but I think that moving away from the downtown core of Inuvik sends the wrong message. If this government is saying they want to be involved in providing services and programs, to be involved in the oil and gas activities, talk about land management, environment management, it does not send the right message by way of government's relocating outside of the core of the community.

When you are a regional centre, you're there to provide services to Inuvik, Beaufort-Delta region as a whole and not to be having to go in to town, then come back out of town and then back in to town to meet with somebody else. I think the convenience of this is going to be felt by people who are trying to develop a working relationship with this department. But, again, the motion does support the effort that's being recommended by the department, so I don't think it should be an issue. If anything, it's helping it by way of identifying these dollars for reinstatement.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would request a recorded vote.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The question has been called. A recorded vote has been requested. I will now ask all those in favour to please stand.

Principal Clerk of Operations (Ms. Bennett): Mr. Krutko, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

Principal Clerk, Operations (Ms. Bennett): Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): The results of the recorded vote on that motion: nine in favour, zero opposed, seven abstentions.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): We'll return to considering page 11-13, Activity Summary, Corporate Management, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$10,094,000. Was that a question, Ms. Bisaro?

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question. I understand there are 11 positions that have been transferred from Corporate Management to Environment, yet when I look at the compensation and benefits figures for both of these sections, they haven't really changed much. I just wonder if I could get an explanation. I would think one would go down and the other would go up.

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

Ms. Magrum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The previous Actuals and previous Main Estimates were restated to include the movement of the environmental assessment positions.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Follow-up, Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Okay. I accept the explanation. It shows, I guess, in Environment, because the Actuals for 2006 were quite a bit less, but in Corporate Management it's almost the same in value. Maybe I should get an explanation as to why.

Ms. Magrum: Mr. Chair, the 2006 Actuals, the recorded Actuals in the public accounts, would have been larger than this number. When we make an organizational change, we restate it as if the change had taken place in the prior year, so the numbers wouldn't look the same.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Further comments, questions? Page 11-13, for the record, Corporate Management, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$10.094 million.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Corporate Management, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$10.094 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-14, Corporate Management, Grants and Contributions: \$70,000.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Corporate Management, Grants and Contributions: \$70,000, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-16, Corporate Management, information item, Active Positions. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Corporate Management, Active Positions, information item (page 11-16), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-17, information item, Corporate Management.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Corporate Management, Active Positions, information item (page 11-17), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-19, Activity Summary, Environment, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$5.575 million. Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just with respect to this activity description, especially with environmental protection.... I've got a couple of incidents in my riding of late, the most notable, of course, being the Trout Lake fuel spill, and once again, there was another spill, I believe, in Fort Liard. Maybe the Minister can provide a brief discussion about how the department interacts and gets involved with a leak of this nature.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The response is basically one, in the case of Trout Lake, where once we were notified there was an issue, we responded immediately to make sure we went in there and contacted the other related agencies. We wanted to make sure the appropriate steps were taken to contain and limit and then look at remediation. As I indicated to the Member in the House, of course there are a number of other groups involved, including Northland Utilities, which has a primary responsibility.

Part of our job as well is, once we've contained it and remediated it, to make sure to do a debriefing and review of what happened and why and what steps do we take, working once again with other agencies, to make sure we try to avoid situations like that, where there's a valve failure because of ground moving. There are always issues that come up in people's minds, as we've talked about, in terms of climate change, the ground shifting, those types of things. That would be basically what our role is.

Mr. Menicoche: I'm interested also in who approves tank farms, et cetera. One of the big issues that came out of the result of Trout Lake was that somebody obviously signed off on the final installation of the piping and of the tank and of the need not to have a berm. I'd like to find out who. Is it this department that approves that type of installation?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: There would have been an application put in and a plan reviewed by the appropriate agencies. I don't believe ENR has a clear role in terms of the type of design and those types of things. Our concern would be the issue of whether they're double-walled and if there are appropriate berms and such. With the issue of the failure because of the valve breaking off because of shifting ground and those types of things, there would be questions. There would have been a plan in place that would have been filed. I'd have to commit to the Member to get that information for him, but I don't have all that detail with me.

Mr. Menicoche: Yes; I would like at least a further update on some of the questions and a bit of an update on exactly what happened and how it happened and the events that led up to it. I'm curious about, once again, the fact that somebody signed off on installing the piping and tankage.

I don't know if the Minister has the detail in front of him, but it has been my experience that double-walled tanks, if they're going to be permanent, must have a berm. That was one of the key issues that may have helped in this situation. Somebody must have determined that this double-walled tank was a temporary installation, so it didn't need a berm, but if it's a power plant, it's not really going anywhere. I think our rules or guidelines must have been misapplied in this case, and it has a bearing on what happened at Trout Lake.

I made note of it in the Member's statement as well. One of the things I'd like to be looking for is to do the post-mortem on this case and look at our guidelines and strengthen them in order to support our small and remote communities that take a lengthy time to respond to any events like this, especially when there's a lack of oil spill equipment around. The community's got to be commended on

doing their best with what they had, but small and remote communities should have that much additional protection, I believe. I'll continue to work on the Minister's office with this matter.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I'll just reiterate my commitment when the Member raises the issue in the House about the sharing of the information we have. As well, we will commit to getting answers to the specific questions the Member's asked in regard to who signed off, which agency signed off the installation and approved the design, and such of the....

Before I speak any further, Mr. Chairman, I see that Minister McLeod has his hand up. He may help us inform this discussion.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Just to add a little bit to the Member's questions regarding roles and responsibilities when it comes to bulk storage of fuel — there are different classifications. In and on Commissioner's land, there is the National Fire Code, which outlines the general responsibility. It states that the owner's, or owners', authorized agent is responsible for carrying out provisions of the code.

In and on federal lands, the responsibility falls under Indian and Northern Affairs. The spill in Trout Lake was on federal Crown land and therefore falls under the jurisdiction of Indian Affairs.

Mr. Menicoche: I'd like thank Minister McLeod for that clarification.

It still heightens the need that overlapping jurisdictions must look at the primary objective, which is to take care of our land and our environment — and of the water, too; we seriously have to add that bit, because the product release did make it into the lake, and the lake is the key centre of their lives, especially in Trout Lake.

Once again, I'd just like to follow up on the Minister's commitment that we work together on this issue now that the federal people are involved. We've all got a stake in this, especially the people who are losing the most: the residents of Trout Lake. We're here for the betterment of their lives. If we can get continued commitment to work on this file, work on the issues, and strengthen our regulations — and, as well, to suggest strengthening regulations to our federal counterparts — I think that will go a long way in preventing future events from being so serious.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Not a question. I'll move on to Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In this section I noticed some interesting things that have

changed, and I'm just curious. I see that Public and Regulatory Hearings, Participation Support, has dropped by \$50,000, and I'm just trying to get a sense as to.... They don't think they're needing it? Is it one of those things, and they don't believe any major issues are coming up or whatnot? Or is it just an area where they think they can do it smarter and better?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was a sunsetted fund, so it lapsed because it was sunsetted.

Mr. Hawkins: My apologies. I did note that, but the fact is the points still stand, because obviously it was important — you brought it back as a new initiative. Is the department not seeing that this is an issue coming forward?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, we've made do with the resources we have. As well, as has been pointed out, there's been a number of positions added to help us deal with environmental monitoring and assessment and those types of things. So to this point, we have been able to soldier on without those funds.

Mr. Hawkins: Quite admirable, if the Minister is soldiering on.

I see that there's reduced energy efficiency in Alternative Energy, Grants and Contributions, of \$200,000. I just wonder — it just seemed as if these energy grants just got going a couple of years ago, and now it's being reduced. I'm just trying to get a sense of where this government's focus is on this area. Maybe there's an obvious explanation to the Minister, but it would appear to be a less obvious explanation to Members, and I just want some clarity on this area — why that area is being reduced and what the noticeable impact will be.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, that particular program fund, based on our Actuals, was under-subscribed, so it was reduced. But at the same time we've also.... There are funds there for EnerGuide for houses, the Energy Efficiency Incentive Program, the energy efficiency side of ecoTrust, the support for Arctic Energy Alliance. We also have a wood pellet pilot project, once again tied to the ecoTrust, and \$450,000 for an alternate energy program.

Mr. Hawkins: Some may say under-subscribed; some may define it as under-promoted. My cup runneth over — it's more than half-full.

Mr. Chairman, I noticed that under the Grants area on this page — Grants and Contributions — Arctic

Energy Alliance is taking a little bit of a beating. If I may just quote some quick numbers, I see in '06–'07 they received funding of \$800,000. Then you go to '07–'08, where obviously something horrible happened, and unfortunately, I was here to see it: they dropped down to \$260,000. But some revelation came by, and then they got funding up to \$1.6 million. Now they're down to just over \$1 million.

Mr. Chairman, I'm just trying to get some understanding, under this Grants and Contributions line item, as to where this government is in support of the Arctic Energy Alliance. Is there some reason this section should lose almost, we'll call it over, \$500,000? That's one-third of their funding, practically. This is going to have a noticeable decrease, and I'm just kind of concerned about that. Does the Minister have a response to that?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, the relationship of the government with the Arctic Energy Alliance has, up to this point, been based on a department-by-department basis. The intent, I believe, is to move to government funding, having a funding arrangement with Arctic Energy Alliance, as opposed to going department-shopping, looking for support. We recognize the importance of the Arctic Energy Alliance, and we have been trying to sustain them.

In regard to the specifics of the current status in the budget, with your indulgence, I'll ask Ms. Magrum to provide some detail.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Magrum.

Ms. Magrum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The description under Arctic Energy Alliance is actually a little bit misleading. That includes the programs the Minister previously brought forward. It includes the Alternate Energy Program; Energy Efficiency; Energy Guide for Houses. It includes contributions to the Arctic Energy Alliance, and it includes the wood pellet pilot project.

The funding in 2008–2009, the actual contribution to the Arctic Energy Alliance, is \$410,000, which matches the Revised Mains of \$410,000 for 2007–2008, and it's actually an increase of \$150,000 from the 2007–2008 Mains.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you. Okay, well, that's actually good news, in that these mysterious documents don't quite read that clearly. I'll accept that as the obvious answer or, I should say, the more obvious answer to it now.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to leave it at this, for this time on this section, but I just want to stress my full support for the Arctic Energy Alliance and the work they do. I've been known to pop by there for advice and insights on a couple of projects. Our Chair of this moment supports them, as do other Members, and of course, the Minister and the staff.

That being said, Mr. Chairman, when we look at oil prices now, among the many other options, this is going to be an area that.... We don't know what our oil bills are going to look like — or our power bills — this fall. We can only just horribly speculate as to where they're going to go next. My thought is, if they're getting so many customers a day, every day, trying to figure out how we could do business better, I bet it's going to double or triple here, once it starts getting cold and we start getting some of those winter bills in. There's going to be almost a frenzy of saying, How can we do business better?

I want to put on record that I appreciate the increase, as I'm sure they do as well. But that said, we have to keep an eye to this sector, because I think people are going to subscribe to this option and these ideals more and more as we move forward. If that day comes — and I'm sure it will — when oil hits \$200 a barrel, it's going to be a nightmare here, and people are going to be screaming for any possible solution to do things smarter and better. I think this is the avenue people are going to attempt to tap into for options in order to be able to just keep their homes.

My biggest fear is that our costs of keeping our homes with the lights on — and, of course, heated — are going to certainly outpace the cost of our mortgages, because these energy costs are certainly picking up momentum.

Anyway, I've rambled on enough. The real issue is that I wanted to make sure it was on record that I appreciate the work they do there. They're very insightful. I've even asked them just average questions, and they work very hard to make sure they get back to me. I know it's not just me as an MLA, but they do that for the average person out there. The shop is very sensitive to the average customer's need.

Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to make sure that stuff was on record.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I'd say you've done that. I think I can move on to Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try not to ramble.

Laughter.

Ms. Bisaro: There's a decrease of \$540,000 from last year's Revised Mains to this year's amount of money. There's also an increase of \$150,000 base funding for Arctic Energy Alliance. I guess that means the funding for the various programs that Arctic Energy Alliance runs has gone down, and I'd like to get an explanation of that.

Actually, before I go there, I'm really pleased to see that the base funding for the Arctic Energy Alliance has increased. I think they do a great job. I've mentioned several times in the House that I wish the GNWT would use them to develop an energy plan for us. Maybe with this extra money, we'll be able to get them to do something for us and develop a plan.

However, that said, could I get an explanation, or could I get the numbers that make up the \$1.070 million, which is the Arctic Energy Alliance contribution?

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

Ms. Magrum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll actually do a little bit of an explanation of the decrease from what was in the Revised Mains to the 2008–2009 Mains. It was referenced, that decrease of \$540,000.

In supp 1, we received some funding under the Alternative Energy Program. That was for \$450,000, and \$300,000 of that was loaded into the contribution budget from the supp.

In the 2008–2009 Mains, we still have \$450,000 for the Alternative Energy Program; however, \$150,000 of that is in Contributions. Some is in Grants and Contributions, and some is in O&M. So the overall funding for that program didn't change.

Part of the reason for the load with the supp is, quite often, when we get supplementary approval for funding, we don't have it exact. When the budget gets loaded, it quite often gets loaded in one location and may be transferred or utilized in other ways.

The Energy Efficiency Incentive Program: in the 2007–2008 supp we received \$800,000, and in 2008–2009 it has decreased to \$300,000. With that original \$800,000, \$400,000 of it was GNWT-funded; the other \$400,000 came from the ecoTrust.

Then in 2008–2009 the GNWT portion remained the same. The ecoTrust portion was decreased to \$100,000. As well, we did the other decrease of \$200,000, and that, as explained by the Minister, was a result of the under-subscription to that program.

For all the other programs — Energy Guide; the funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance — funding has remained the same. We received an additional \$110,000 for the wood pellet pilot project.

I hope I haven't confused you too much.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: She can repeat that.

Laughter.

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

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I got lost after the first deduction and addition, but I accept the explanation. It sounds as though we're getting the same money but it's in different places, so that's great.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Any further questions?

Page 11-21. Environment, Grants and Contributions: \$1.270 million.

Sorry. Let me retract that and move back to the page we should be on. Page 11-19 has not been approved yet. So that's Environment, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$5.575 million. Thank you.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Environment, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$5.575 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-20, Environment. Sorry. We don't need to do that. Moving on to 11-21, Environment, Grants and Contributions: \$1.270 million.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Environment, Grants and Contributions: \$1.270 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you for your patience, committee. Page 11-22, information item, Environment, Active Positions. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Environment, Active Positions, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-23, Active Positions.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Environment, Active Positions, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on to Forest Management, page 11-25, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$26.536 million.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Forest Management, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$26.536 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on to page 11-27, Forest Management, Grants and Contributions: \$100,000.

I understand there was a printing error. There was a page — page 11-33 — that was in there by mistake, so just remove that page.

I just want to make sure we're all on the same page. So how about if I restate: we're at Forest Management, page 11-27. Thank you.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Forest Management, Grants and Contributions: \$100,000, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on. Information item, Forest Management, Active Positions, page 11-28. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Forest Management, Active Positions, information item (page 11-28), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-29, Forest Management, Active Positions.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Forest Management, Active Positions, information item (page 11-29), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on to Wildlife, page 11-31. Mr. Jacobson.

COMMITTEE MOTION 47-16(2)
TO REINSTATE \$108,000 FOR RENEWABLE
RESOURCE OFFICER POSITIONS AND
BEAR FENCING PROGRAM
(COMMITTEE MOTION CARRIED)

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you. Mr. Chair, I move that the committee strongly recommend that the government take immediate action to reinstate funding in the amount of \$108,000 for the proposed elimination of renewable resources officers' positions in Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour, and the elimination of the Bear Fencing Program under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, under Wildlife Activity.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The motion is on the floor and being distributed right now. The motion is in order. To the motion, Mr. Jacobson.

Mr. Jacobson: Mr. Chair, I'd like a recorded vote.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. And to the motion, Mr. Jacobson.

Mr. Jacobson: Yes, Mr. Chair. These two positions in the communities are well needed, in regard to the smaller communities and the jobs these provide for a few community members in the natural resources program in the department.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. To the motion, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I talked to the Member about his concern. There is a position in Tuk that's going to be filled. There has been some difficulty in filling the positions that are there, which is one of the reasons the deputy was talking about — and we've been talking about as a department — coming up with a way to have a training program to work with the small communities to give those people who may have a lot of on-the-land skills and other skills — but maybe not the academic credentials — an ability to get trained up to the point where they could provide some of these functions for us. At this point, my understanding is the positions are vacant and have been, but we do have a plan coming forward here. We'd like to possibly use some of that supplementary appropriation to try to work with the small communities.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. To the motion, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm in support of the motion that's before us. I think the Minister made some good points about the possibility of a training program to try to fill these two positions. I understand they're half-time positions, one in Paulatuk and one in Sachs Harbour. That would be, to me, an indication that we perhaps should keep the money where it is. I know the positions are vacant right now, but these are fairly new positions, if I can remember — last year, in fact, they were created. I do support the motion. I think the money should stay there. These are positions, I think, that even on a half-time basis will be beneficial. Both communities, I think, could use a renewable resource officer and the training that would go along with that position, as well. I'm in support of the reinstatement of that money. Mahsi.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the motion, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be voting in favour of this motion. I think if the Minister talks about a plan.... Well, this is our way of helping you with the plan, by making sure the money's there for those positions. I'd like to think we're doing our part by helping the Minister and the department. If they're unable to fill them, I mean, heck, the money

will just lapse and nothing will change. The issue of what we're doing is making sure that's available.

My suggestion, of course, is to back up.... I should say I support local training of potentially either one person, or two people, obviously, in this situation. The problem I see is that it's difficult to, all of a sudden, tell someone, whether they're from southern Canada or somewhere in the NWT, to just show up in these communities and, all of a sudden, "You're now a community member."

It's a challenge to move into these areas. I would hope that a lot of weight is put to possibly finding a couple of responsible people in that area and seeing if they'd be interested in training, and maybe we could mentor them into these types of positions. It's always been my experience that if you can find someone from an area, if they have some type of roots and reason to be there, they'll probably stay there for life if we've given them that opportunity.

People are always appreciative of having a job and feeling as if they've made a contribution. I think these jobs are the types of things that would allow that. These communities are hard enough to staff, as emphasized already, and I think every government opportunity in there helps. Government-paying jobs help these small communities get through. The challenge there is, of course, keeping employment in the community, but getting employment is just as hard as keeping it there. I'll be supporting this, recognizing the struggle some of these small communities go through.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will also support the motion. I believe in the program or idea of bringing a renewable resource officer 1 to the community level, especially in the smaller communities, where the workload isn't there for a full-time renewable resource officer position but there is need for a renewable resource officer in the community. Renewable resource officers are not able to travel into these communities frequently enough. With the \$500,000 or so that has been reduced in the overall travel for the department, I'm assuming the trips into Sachs Harbour and Paulatuk will decrease even further.

Also, I think the concept of a renewable resource officer 1 is almost like a patrolman, as they used to refer to them in the olden days. Yeah, the olden days. They become very valuable to the actual renewable resource officer who is travelling in from Inuvik who may or may not know the area around Sachs and Paulatuk where the patrols may be necessary. So I will support the motion.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. To the motion, Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it was the Minister's comments to the motion that actually helped me make up my mind on this one.

I think the positions are important. It's unfortunate they're vacant. But given that the department's already looking at creating a training plan, it would seem kind of pointless to get rid of the positions you're going to train somebody into. I would suggest that getting rid of the positions might not be timely. If you are going to do the training, you might as well use the money from the positions to hire the trainees and, therefore, utilize the money in that capacity.

And just as a note, years ago we had this lovely program called the Public Service Career Training Program, which was a competency-based, on-the-job training program. I remember vividly that there are renewable resource officer training competency profiles and training plans in there which, with minor work, could probably be brought forward, tweaked and ready to go in really short order, which means you might as well start hiring now.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. Mr. Krutko. To the motion.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be supporting the motion. I believe that, you know, we do have capable people in these communities. We have people involved in the renewable resource boards in our communities. Also, there is a program, through the Natural Resources program through Arctic College, where people have graduated through that program and can slide into these types of positions.

I think it's important that we do everything we can to enhance the presence of renewable resource staff on the ground. We're talking about, you know, challenges we're facing in regard to the numbers dropping by way of migratory species, in regard to caribou. We're talking about different problems we're seeing with global warming and the question about polar bears and things like that.

I think this is just as important as someone sitting in the office in Yellowknife. If anything, it's probably more important for those people who go out on the land and depend on these people as guide support services, and also to assist in the harvesting that takes place in our communities.

I think this position is vital to the community, considering it's only \$180,000 for two positions. I'm not too sure if, looking at so-called specialist positions we talked about earlier for somewhere around \$600,000.... I think that shows our priorities

aren't in the right place. So with that, I will be supporting the motion.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. I have nobody further. Mr. Jacobson.

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My colleagues covered off the motion quite thoroughly. I'm going to ask for a recorded vote at this time.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Question has been called, and the Members have requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

Principal Clerk of Operations (Ms. Bennett): Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

Principal Clerk, Operations (Ms. Bennett): Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): The results of the recorded vote on the motion: nine in favour, zero opposed, and seven abstained. The motion is carried.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): We return to 11-31, Wildlife Operations. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: I just have a question. I noticed that where you talk about the description, it talks about the Wildlife activity that also works in cooperation with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, who provide expert advice, contacts and experts to support traditional economies. I know that was one of the issues we brought up in the report: that the committee seriously take a look at those traditional economies, especially in regard to renewable investments.

We seem to focus a lot on the non-renewable aspects of mining, oil and gas and whatnot. I think we do really poorly when it comes to the renewable aspects, in regard to harvesting, commercial fishing, agriculture, forestry. I'd just like to ask the Minister on that statement: what are you doing along with Industry, Tourism and Investment to enhance the renewable industry in the Northwest Territories, especially in the area of harvesting, big game, and also looking at the commercial aspect of the renewable potential we have in the Northwest Territories?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We work jointly with ITI in a number of programs related to the traditional economy. Also, in particular, ENR, likewise with other partners, not only with ITI but MACA and other programs, looks at developing youth trapper opportunities, trappers-on-the-land programs. We have incentive programs.

One of our successes in the GNWT is the work done by this government on the traditional economy and the promoting of the traditional economy. Our officers work closely with the harvesters in all communities and in all regions and will continue to do so. We think this is one area where we're extremely successful in working in partnership with ITI and MACA and other departments, like ECE.

Mr. Krutko: I believe we've got to do more than just promote. I think we have to invest.

I know that in the past they used to have programs called special Arctic grants, grants for that which were part of the economic development agreement we had with the federal government. There were a couple of hundred thousand dollars in that program, which was very successful in regard to people being able to harvest and apply for different programs under the special Arctic programs. I'm just wondering: is that something that's being looked at between this department and ITI and also in regard to federal programs to see if we can track some of those dollars?

We hear about programs in Atlantic Canada. There's an Atlantic economic diversification program, where there's money to help out with the fishery industry. We hear about programs in regard to the provinces, in regard to the farm industry, cattle industry, but there's very little by way of us pushing our own program in the North to promote renewable resource industry in the Northwest Territories and also dealing with the agriculture industry. I'd just like to know: are we doing anything to develop a program that will have program dollars involved so people can apply for programs to assist in the renewable resource sector?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My understanding is that ARDA predated what we now have, which is called the Western Harvester Assistance Program. It has been there, I think, for a number of years and been drawn down by many eligible aboriginal governments. As well, maybe Minister McLeod would like to speak to the discussions that have been ongoing with the federal government about

other support the federal government may be able to provide us in this particular area. But at this point it's the western harvesters fund that is the mainstay.

Mr. Krutko: I understand the program has been there since 1999, after division. It was \$15 million. Again, it is matching funds: people have to come up with the money to match the GNWT money. In most cases those harvester dollars are an application-based program. Again, it does not deal with the aspect of commercialized harvesting: commercialized harvesting of fish, commercialized harvesting of wildlife, commercial harvesting by way of agricultural products in the Northwest Territories.

The harvesters program is not designed for what I'm asking for. I'm asking for nothing less than what's been offered in Atlantic Canada: a western diversification program in regard to western Canada. I believe 1994 was the last time this government had an economic development agreement with Ottawa to look at economic dollars. Yet every other jurisdiction in Canada has it, and we don't. It's time we went to Ottawa and made Ottawa aware they are offering something to the rest of Canada that we're being excluded from. Again, we're putting a lot of emphasis and money in regard to the oil and gas and mining industries, in regard to training and investment, and also looking at the secondary aspects of the non-renewable industry, but very little by way of the renewable industry. We have to call a spade a spade. We don't have an economic development agreement with Ottawa.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Currently we have the SINED program, with special initiatives for northern economic development. That's a program with the federal government that involves the three northern territories and provides \$6 million a year for each territory for five years. That program is slated to go until it ends, after 2009. We have approached the federal government to indicate the need for a replacement program.

The SINED program is different from previous economic development agreements. The Member is correct: we went through a period of nine years where the Northwest Territories, or the northern territories, were the only regions in Canada that didn't have a regional economic development program. We agree it's very important to have a regional economic development program. We've looked at joining the Western Diversification Fund. We will expect to be having discussions with the federal government.

With regard to the fur industry, I think the Northwest Territories probably has the best program in all of

Canada. We're the only territory of any province or territory that provides funding to assist harvesters and also to introduce youth to trapping. We also have introduced a market gardening process whereby we help the smaller communities develop vegetable gardens. We make farm machinery available for interested locals to develop gardens, and we will be working with the agriculture community.

Mr. Krutko: I'd like to thank the Minister for that, but, again, we can't lose sight of this opportunity. We do have to do whatever we can to get the federal government to realize the importance of the renewable aspect of our economy. We do have an opportunity to really see it thrive and whatnot. I'd just like to get some assurances from the Minister in regard to the Minister of ITI's response that there is something in the works. I think keeping us informed and trying to get a deal sooner than later will help us to be able to achieve that. With that, that's it for my question.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: We — the government, the appropriate departments, ITI and, where appropriate, ENR — will commit to keep the Member and the committee informed and apprised of developments in that area.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you. Any further questions? We're on page 11-31, Wildlife, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$14.737 million.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Wildlife, Operations Expenditure Summary: \$14.737 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-33, Wildlife, Grants and Contributions: \$231,000.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Wildlife, Grants and Contributions: \$231,000, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-34, Wildlife, Active Positions. Any questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Wildlife, Active Positions, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-35, Wildlife, Active Positions. Any questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Activity Summary, Active Positions, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-36, information item, Lease Commitments — Infrastructure. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Lease Commitments — Infrastructure, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-37, Environment Fund. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Environment Fund, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-38, Work Performed on Behalf of Others, information item. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Work Performed on Behalf of Others, information item, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-39, information item, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued, information item (page 11-39), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-40, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued, information item (page 11-40), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-41, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued, information item (page 11-41), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-42, information item, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued. Questions?

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued, information item (page 11-42), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Page 11-43, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued. Questions? Mr. Krutko?

Mr. Krutko: Yes; I see the Caribou Summit. We had a major conference a number of years ago. I'd just like to ask the Minister: is there any upcoming conference of that sort happening again? It is becoming a more and more apparent issue. You're talking about a caribou strategy and whatnot, and I think you do have to run it past the people in the communities and aboriginal leaders and wildlife boards. Before you move on any type of caribou strategic plan of any sort, we should run it first past those groups. I'm just wondering: why are there no

dollars allotted for a conference to deal with that strategy?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, the plan is to carry on the work in terms of surveys and trying to get as accurate numbers on herd sizes as possible, working with collaring and doing counts this spring. There are going to be more over the summer and fall. As well, we've engaged with a peer review with the Alberta Research Council, which is in the works, and we're waiting for those results.

Once we have the most up-to-date numbers all the way across, including their planning on doing the work on the Porcupine, Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, Bluenose-East, Bathhurst, Ahiak and Beverly Kaminuriak... As well, we've engaged in initial discussions with the government in Nunavut to talk about the issue that came out of the Caribou Summit in Inuvik — the calving grounds. We have a number of initiatives underway and work underway in a whole host of areas. Once those show a bit more progress, we'll probably be in a better position to look at bringing folks back together for the Caribou Summit, part 2.

Mr. Krutko: From that I assume the Minister's saying there is going to be nothing happening until next year?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: There's going to be considerable activity in the area of caribou. We're just not going to be in a position, in the near future, where it would make sense to have another conference before we have enough information in progress to make it worthwhile to bring all the parties back together.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Anything further, Mr. Krutko? We're on page 11-43, information item, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Work Performed on Behalf of Others — Continued, information item (page 11-43), approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, committee. We'll return to 11-7. Operations Expenditure Summary. Ms. Bisaro.

COMMITTEE MOTION 48-16(2)
TO DEFER CONSIDERATION OF
OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES
(COMMITTEE MOTION CARRIED)

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the department summary for the Department of

Environment and Natural Resources, Operations Expenditure at this time.

Chairman (Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The motion's on the floor and is being distributed now. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question is being called.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Bromley): We'll defer further consideration of the O&M and move on to capital for ENR. Committee agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): We'll start on page 10-6, Forest Management: \$1.28 million.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Forest Management: \$1.28 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): For the record, committee, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$1.28 million.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$1.28 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Total Activity, \$1.28 million. We have a question on the floor. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a question on the Shell Lake bunkhouse, \$300,000. I'm not familiar with the infrastructure that's on the ground there at Shell Lake. Are there further capital needs required at the Shell Lake Compound to move the offices out there?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These funds are identified to upgrade the bunkhouses and the fire operations that operate there on a seasonal basis. The other work to occupy and move the original office out to Shell Lake has been taken care of, and there's no funding requirements coming forward that should come before this House.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. I see no other questions here. That's Total Activity: \$1.28 million. Sorry; there's a question. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Just a question on the last response. On asking the Minister a while back on this particular matter, for the office space, I was told there's a contract let and he won't be able to move there until the end of June, if not later. What contract's been let, how much is the contract for, and what work is going to be done so you can move the office there? I thought that was the

original question I asked earlier. That was what I was told, so I'm just wondering what's going on there.

What contract is let? How much money is being expended on the contract? As I mentioned earlier, they expect to have the work completed by the end of this month or later so that they can move out there.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Yes, Mr. Chairman, thank you. We'll have to get back to the Member on the specific details if any contracts have been let and the status of those particular contracts. We do have an agreement to extend our present lease until any necessary renovations are made to have our people move into Shell Lake. We're doing that from within our existing resources; we're not looking for any other capital dollars.

Mr. Krutko: Well, I'd just like to know where that surplus money comes from. Is it all these vacant positions in our communities? Where is it coming from?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, we'll get back to the Member with the exact detail, but this has been planned for some time by the office, and they've been getting their house in order to be able to do this with the resources they have. I'll commit to provide that information to committee.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Okay, anything further on this page? We're on page 10-6. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under the area of Forest Management, I wanted to ask the Minister and the department about what I noticed previously: that under these commitments the government's spending in excess of \$500,000 a year to lease office and warehouse space in Fort Smith. If we're spending that kind of money, I'm wondering: have we got it in the capital plan anywhere? That's half a million dollars a year. Maybe we should build our own building in Fort Smith instead of spending that type of money on a lease. Have we done any of that work, and where is that at in the capital plan?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, the Member is correct, and I comment on his astute observation. We're currently renting space from the federal government. They've just increased the rent by 50 per cent or so, and they're going to be increasing it every year from here on in, they tell us. So in fact, that project is before the Capital Planning Committee to look at getting a northern-owned building, since we're already spending the money on lease and rent. That is in the works and

will be making its way through the appropriate channels.

Mr. Ramsay: That's good, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to the Minister for that, and I look forward to seeing that at a future date.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thanks, Mr. Ramsay. Any further questions? Page 10-6, Forest Management, Total Activity: \$1.28 million.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Forest Management, Total Activity: \$1.28 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Moving on to page 10-8, Wildlife Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$485,000. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: I'd just like to ask the Minister what's the urgency of jet boats? We have people shelved, on the line, and we're purchasing toys for people to play with. I'm just wondering what the priority of these jet boats is, yet people's jobs have been lost in this department.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My recollection was that these were also approved in the interim appropriation, but the need is, of course, to allow the staff — the many good staff we do have on the job, on the land — to have decent, safe operating equipment in the summer. There's extensive work done on the various lakes and waters and rivers that cover the land. Some of the boats they do have are very old, not worth repairing and don't have the necessary capacity.

Mr. Krutko: For \$55,000 — most jet boats I know of go for maybe \$28,000. Is this the Cadillac version, or will \$28,000 suffice for a jet boat?

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Mr. Bohnet.

Mr. Bohnet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the reasons you've seen this purchase of jet boats is that the previous equipment, including all our jet boats, is basically falling apart because of its extensive use by officers in the field. You're seeing more and more jet boats in the Northwest Territories in remote areas. It's important that our staff, our officers, have the opportunity to go out there to do their job. Naturally, the issue is safety.

In regard to the price of jet boats, Mr. Chairman, this is well within reason for a jet boat of this size. It's not a Cadillac model; it's a workhorse model of jet boats.

Mr. Krutko: I'm just wondering when they're going to purchase a jet boat for Shell Lake.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Comments?
Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll accept the comment in the good humour it was delivered in.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Delightful. Thank you. Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Wildlife; we're on page 10-8. Total Tangible Capital Assets — sorry. Apologies. Mr. Jacobson.

Mr. Jacobson: Accepted, Mr. Chair. For my new warehouse in Paulatuk: would materials be ordered already to start the project for this summer?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Chairman, it says here that the materials will be purchased, but I can't tell the Member if they're on the way or not. This was also approved in the interim appropriation.

Mr. Jacobson: Our last event is in August, so we have time.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Have I missed anybody else? Possibly moving forward here. So under Wildlife, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$485,000.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Wildlife, Total Tangible Capital Assets: \$485,000, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Total Activity: \$485,000.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Wildlife, Total Activity: \$485,000, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Total department: \$1.765 million.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, Total department: \$1.765 million, approved.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Does the committee agree that that concludes the capital assets?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you to your officials. You may release your officials. Would the Sergeant-at-Arms escort them out of the Chamber.

Next we have, in order, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. Is committee agreed that we move on to that department?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

MAIN ESTIMATES 2008–2009
DEPARTMENT OF
MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): I'll call on Mr. Michael McLeod to give his opening remarks.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' Main Estimates for the fiscal year 2008–2009.

MACA has a very broad mandate, which focuses on community governments but also includes providing a range of programs and services to individuals and other sectors of society. MACA is responsible for administering 23 different pieces of legislation, many of which require departmental staff to carry out regulatory or statutory functions and to deliver specific functions and programs.

The department is requesting \$114.782 million in operating expenses for the 2008–2009 fiscal year. This represents a slight increase of \$126,000, or 0.11 per cent, from the department's 2007–2008 operating expenses budget. This increase primarily reflects the net impact of increased funding of \$4 million for forced growth and \$830,000 associated with strategic initiatives offset by decreases associated with the scheduled sunset, as well as decreases related to program and position reductions.

Historically, MACA's budget includes approximately 80 per cent in funding that is in the form of grants and contributions. The bulk of this funding flows directly to our key stakeholders — the community governments. Funding to communities is used to provide special services to every resident of the Northwest Territories.

Analysis done over the past few years has demonstrated that even with current funding levels, communities are challenged to meet all their obligations, especially in light of increased pressures posed by regulatory requirements, liability issues, competition for staff and inflation. Thus when considering how to meet budget targets for this fiscal year, MACA's first consideration was to protect core funding to community governments.

As a result, I'm pleased that MACA has been able to maintain stable funding for community government operations and maintenance, water and sewer services funding, and capital formula funding. A total of \$75 million is included in the budget to provide for these core funding programs.

The budget includes a small increase to the water and sewer services funding and includes \$33.6 million in capital funding, an increase of \$1.4 million from 2007–2008.

Twenty-eight million dollars will be provided to community government through the capital funding formula. This represents an increase of more than \$5 million from 2007–2008, which will go directly to communities to provide for their own infrastructure priorities. The balance reflects projects cost shared through the Municipal and Rural Infrastructure Program, which remain on the department's capital plan until they are completed.

Another priority in developing the budget was to maintain programs and services that support implementation of the New Deal for NWT community governments. While 2007–2008 was the first year of formal implementation of the New Deal, MACA and communities have been working in partnership for two years prior to that on the development of the initiative. Some communities are experiencing transition issues while others are adapting more quickly to their new responsibilities and accountabilities. We must ensure that the core funding and programs and services that support communities through this transition are maintained.

To meet assigned budget targets, the department has had to make difficult choices about where levels of services can be reduced and where we can look to alternate service-delivery approaches to address our mandate. Reductions have been posed to programs that support community governments in delivering their responsibilities in a range of areas including community development, planning, emergency management and financial management.

Positions are being eliminated where it has been determined that a function can be eliminated or changed, or that fewer resources can be dedicated to a program area. This budget contains a net reduction of 20 positions, when the full impact of strategic initiatives, forced-growth sunsets and reductions are taken into consideration.

MACA's 2008–2009 budget includes funding to provide for one-time salary and severance costs of those employees whose positions have been proposed for elimination. As a result, while the department and stakeholders may feel the program impact of reduced staff in 2008–2009, the full financial impact will not fully be reflected in the department's budget until 2009–2010 fiscal year.

As part of the budget-development process, funding has been made available from reductions and is being re-profiled to support strategic initiatives. The department's 2008–2009 budget includes a total of \$830,000 in funding for new investments as part of our Building our Future initiative.

MACA's budget includes funding to support those community governments that are currently providing ground ambulance and highway rescue

services. Funding to continue the department's activities related to implementation of the Drinking Water Quality Framework supports the Managing This Land Strategic Initiative.

Funding for two new School of Community Government positions will be located in regional offices to help support a new decentralized approach to capacity building and development activities of community governments.

In addition to the strategic initiative funding, MACA's 2008–2009 budget also includes \$4 million in forced-growth funding. This includes salary and northern allowance benefit increases related to the collective agreement and funding to allow the department to continue the Youth Centres Initiative, which was implemented in 2007.

Funding is also included to provide the general assessment and general taxation area that is required as per provision of the Property Assessment and Taxation Act.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity both to discuss the context the department used to develop its 2008–2009 budget and also to highlight the major increases and decreases included. I would be very pleased to discuss the budget in further detail and to answer any questions you may have. Mahsi.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Minister Michael McLeod. I'd like to call next on the Chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The committee met with the Minister and his officials on April 4, 2008, to consider the department's Draft Main Estimates.

The committee noted that the total operating budget for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs for 2008–2009 is \$114.782 million. The budget also includes \$33.6 million for capital expenditures, of which \$28 million will be provided to community governments to use to support their own infrastructure priorities.

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

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I'm going to pass the report off to my colleague from Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Chair, committee members recognized that MACA's primary mandate is to

support community governments in the delivery of central services to every resident of the NWT.

The committee was pleased that the department's 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates did not include any reductions in community government operations and maintenance funding, water and sewer service funding, or capital formula funding. However, the committee is concerned with the level of reductions in contribution programs in support of community development, capacity building, community emergency response and the impact those cuts may have on communities successfully taking on the new responsibility under the New Deal.

Proposed reductions in this area are significant, and the overall effect is diminished support to community governments.

In Sport, Recreation and Youth and Volunteers, the committee is pleased to see that the regional recreation coordinator position will be maintained. Sport and recreation programs provide an effective vehicle through which personal and social development of young people can be positively affected. The regional recreation coordinators are an integral part of how government encourages youth and youth services and effective means to the support as part of the broad youth strategy.

Committee members were very disappointed by the lack of support to the volunteer sector. Members noted that the government reduced spending, particularly in the areas of health, justice, social services, youth services and community development. Communities rely more on volunteer efforts to weather the storm. Unfortunately, they have less capacity than ever to respond to the needs of our communities. There is a real need for more direct support in this sector. The committee recommends that the department, as part of the business planning process, identify actions including the necessary investments to provide meaningful support to the volunteer sector.

Mr. Chair, at this time, I pass it back to the Chair of the committee, Mr. Ramsay.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Krutko. That concludes the committee's review of the Municipal and Community Affairs Draft Main Estimates, 2008–2009.

I'd like to thank Minister Michael McLeod and his staff for being with us to review the Draft Mains, as well as our committee researcher, Ms. Cate Sills, and our Committee Clerk, Ms. Patricia Russell. Mahsi.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay and your committee is...? What is the wish of the committee here? I'll ask the Minister: does the Minister wish to bring in his witnesses?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to bring in the witnesses.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister. I'd ask you to bring your witnesses in and ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to seat them and ask the Minister.... Sorry.

Does the committee agree?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): I'll ask the Minister to bring in the witnesses and the Sergeant-at-Arms to seat them. Mr. McLeod, I'll ask you to introduce the witnesses.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me today I have, on my right, Debbie DeLancey, the deputy minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and Laura Gareau is on my left, who is the director of Corporate Affairs.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I will now open it up to general comments. Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just with respect to MACA, I'm glad to see they're before us here in Committee of the Whole. Some general comments are that over the last couple of weeks I must have given the House about 30 petitions, and I think about 29 of them were MACA-related. Many of the petitions there were related to the sports, youth and recreation and the community development positions that MACA had slated to delete.

I'm very pleased to see that MACA and the ministry were very responsive. I'd also commend all the people from my riding, my community, who took the effort to take pen to hand and write their signatures on the petitions. In some small way they had an effect on how the department was going to decide these positions. They did take the time to say, "Okay, well maybe" and revisit the fact that the regional recreation coordinator positions are very important and play a significant role in our communities and our regions. They've decided to keep them.

With the delivery of sport, recreation and youth programs in our region, I do have to say that there's one component of that department that was not addressed when people filed their petitions with me. In my riding we have a youth worker. The intent was to save the sports and rec department. When I

travel to the communities, these front-line positions are in the communities delivering the sports, rec and youth programming, which is very important to the people — well, it is very important to government too.

How we're going to deliver those programs... I do not believe we're going to deliver them from headquarters, which seemed was going to happen at first. I'd just like to say, the youth position is still very important in my riding and I think in all the regions too.

I believe the youth component of our sports and recreation cannot be set aside and revisited at a later date. I think we've got a continuous momentum. We're attributing dollars to youth programming. I know that MACA and the government stated it time and time again in our vision and mission statements that youth is very, very important. To not have anybody deliver those programs, what kind of message are we sending?

As we deliberate youth programs in our communities in Committee of the Whole, I'll be working toward getting a motion from this side of the House to help the Minister of MACA work toward getting the youth position reinstated and, even in the upcoming budgeting plans, providing youth workers in our other regions. There's lots of value in that. With that, I'll leave that subject alone for now.

One of the new issues for me is — and I just brought it up recent the other day; I think it was in question period — the quality and type of water in our water reservoirs in small communities. Our residents from two of my six communities so far are very concerned about the quality of water. I know we're making strides in addressing that. But for me, it's a standard. Some of the water's really discoloured. They're saying it's safe, but if you're getting discoloured water put in front of you there, you question the quality of it.

I'd like to just bring it to the Minister's attention and say: Look, we've got to work toward — well, I've got a glass of water here before me — having it nice and clear. Even though it's potable, it's got to be visibly appealing as well. We've got the technology. It's just how do we make it better for the communities to have that type of quality of water in front of our people? Needless to say, the quality of water is very important, not only in our jurisdiction but in all the jurisdictions across Canada. How it's delivered to our smaller communities is equally important. We've got to work and strive toward that, Mr. Chair. I'll leave it at that for my opening comments right now.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I've got a few comments I want to make to the Minister and his staff.

First of all, there were a lot of tough decisions that had to be made in the area of reductions within the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. I commend the Minister and his staff for coming up with them — I don't agree with all of them — but I think it was a very good effort on behalf of the Minister and his staff to reach the target that was given to them. Again, I appreciate their efforts.

The big thing for me is that there's no impact community government funding, and I think this is a key thing. Communities need that stable and secure funding in order to operate.

The one concern I do have is with the cuts to the School of Community Government. We've always got to keep an eye on capacity building at the community level. We need to ensure that programs and opportunities for training are available to communities that need them. I'm going to be closely following how this plays itself out. I know Aurora College is going to get involved in the delivery of some programs and some training for communities; I'm interested to see how that will work out. I think it will be successful. I do believe Aurora College should play a role in the delivery of programs and training opportunities to communities. I look forward to seeing more there.

I wanted to also thank the department for the reinstatement of the rec coordinators. It didn't come as a recommendation, but you heard from a number of Members that that was a concern in many of our communities and the ridings we represent. I was glad to see the department took a second look at that and decided to reinstate those rec coordinators.

Many of my colleagues have talked about the necessity for this government to focus some attention on youth and the issues surrounding youth in the Northwest Territories. I know Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Menicoche and a number of my other colleagues have spoken about the need to be spending more in the area of youth. It's something that I think needs to be addressed. Perhaps it could come through strategic initiative funding. We need to earmark some money to get it in on the ground level so we are having a positive impact on the youth in our communities.

There are some communities out there, Mr. Chairman, that are absolutely struggling with youth gangs, drugs, alcohol, and youths roaming the streets late at night and causing fires and vandalism. We really need to reach out to those kids and give them something positive in their lives. It's going to take spending some money to do that. I

think we have to come up with a game plan to address that, and I think it should happen through the strategic initiative funding. As money becomes available, we should try to coordinate that. I look forward to the Minister and his staff working with our committee and other Regular Members to ensure we do serve the youth of the Northwest Territories to the best of our ability.

The other thing I wanted to mention while I've got the floor, Mr. Chairman, is the community emergency management coordinator. I'm having some difficulty with that reduction. We all know full well that disasters take place. There was a flood in Hay River, a flood in Aklavik a couple of years ago. We need to make sure that when disaster strikes, communities have somebody to fall back on. They need to have that peace of mind. To me, that's what it is. It's peace of mind for communities to know there's somebody who's going to pay attention. We should all be paying attention, but there's somebody there who's going to walk them through things, who's going to be there to take them hand in hand and walk them through the process and get them the help they need. Again, I'm not quite sure about the reduction in the community emergency management coordinator position. That's something we'll be discussing a little bit later, Mr. Chairman.

I just wanted to leave off by thanking the Minister and his officials — I think MACA — and also the Minister of Public Works. He's done a good job at managing both of those departments.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Mr. Ramsay. I call next on Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It would be really easy just to repeat what these two said, so I'm not going to waste time saying the same things, with the exception of the recreation positions.

I was sad when the original notifications went out to the employees. We heard that a bunch of the recreation positions were going to get cut, given that it was in our strategic plan. I'm very happy the department reconsidered, and I'm very happy the department put those positions back in. I think they're incredibly important to the youth of the Northwest Territories.

I share the same areas of concern as Mr. Ramsay. In addition, although I don't believe that MACA's necessarily the right department to be the central department or the central spokesperson for the voluntary sector of the Government of the Northwest Territories — although I believe the voluntary sector should be speaking to a central body, probably somebody in the Executive as far as a point of contact for the entire sector — currently it is under MACA.

I have to say I was a little disappointed that the voluntary sector was pretty much completely ignored, specifically the VSI — the Voluntary Sector Initiative. I think that project, that group, had significant value and provided great opportunities for this government to step up and work with a central coordinating body for the voluntary sector in the Northwest Territories, to move forward and find those relationships that will be important for the GNWT and the voluntary sector. I'm quite disappointed the support to the Volunteer NWT is non-existent. I'm disappointed the Volunteer NWT is shutting their doors. I think it's a loss to the Northwest Territories. I think it's a loss to the government. I think it's a loss to everybody. I think we had an opportunity to develop a really solid relationship. Sure, we would have had to kick in some money, and I think it's a little short-sighted that we didn't.

I'll probably be asking some questions about that, and as usual, I'll be asking my questions about position reductions as well. That's it.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Mr. Abernethy. I'll call next on Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased at a lot of things here, in the department, also. I'm happy the New Deal's in place. I'm happy the department increased capital for communities by over \$5 million.

I guess the issue of having some of the groups... Some of the communities that are taking the New Deal can't own assets or property. I'm not 100 per cent sure which it is. I believe it's buildings, but I think roads and other systems can be worked on. I hope the department would come to, maybe, if need be, create some sort of legislation that will allow the Dene bands to own GNWT assets like other larger municipalities, cities and towns and so on. It would be a good hurdle to get over to give equal access to the New Deal by all communities.

In Tu Nedhe, neither of my communities can own assets because they're under the wrong act. One is actually under a federal act because one continues to be a band. Capital, I think, would be easier to deal with. Dealing with a band and the settlement council, I would find that.... I guess the only issue that potentially could be there with this type of funding is a cash-flow issue. If the department's arbitrarily cutting the budget into equal chunks and handing it out throughout the year, it may not allow the band or settlement council to flow their projects out the way they want to. Maybe that's something we could be cognizant of.

I want to repeat what both Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Abernethy touched on. Youth, to me, is a very, very important area to spend money on. Of all

strategic initiatives, I believe that the ultimate strategic initiative is to spend money on youth. I don't think we're doing that. I didn't see the department.... Although I'm not sure that youth is actually.... I mean, the youth budget that the Minister of MACA had is, I believe, in excess of \$1 million. I'm not sure if that's actually a MACA program, but that is one area where I thought the government could look at expanding, even to the extent of putting some human resources in that area and getting some youth workers into the regions.

I thought that was something this government could do. I thought that was something that was strategic, and it would be something that was so important to the youth of all the communities across the North — to try to give the youth equal access to everything that is available in the Northwest Territories in this area. I thought that at least for this year, the department could look at putting more money into the youth budget.

I'm not talking about a huge contribution in youth corps or anything like that. I'm just talking about the money the Minister has to set the youth budget. I do believe it's around \$1 million. I would have liked to see that budget proposed in order for us to do an effective job. I'm trying to, I guess, put these key individuals into place at the start so that these guys can then start that whole process of working on capital issues, working with schools, working.... I mean, there are all kinds of possibilities.

Some of these youth workers are gym teachers. I mean, we're suffering for gym teachers in small communities. One thing I'm asking Education to do is to try to move their PTR or do something with their PTR to put some sort of base expenditure into a community meeting with all of this essential stuff — I include physical education — in the curriculum. Maybe that's something this department could work with the schools on.

I think there's an opportunity here to be pretty strategic with the youth. I think our returns are real quick; kids grow up real fast. When you're looking at putting a 17-year-old guy on the right road, five years later he's a productive adult. I think that's what we have to try to do. We have to try to achieve a lot of productive adults out of the youth we have today; maybe we won't be facing some of the social problems we're currently facing in small communities.

I guess, in general, social problems are spread across the whole North. I guess it's not quite as apparent when there's a large number of people living in one location. With that, I look forward to going through the Mains. That's all I have.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Mr. Beaulieu. I'll call next on Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Although it's highlighted by other Members, as you go along you end up repeating some of the other stuff, but it's certainly worthwhile repeating.

Mr. Chairman, I'll first start with the Minister and staff. I find this is a model department when it comes to responding to MLA concerns. I put that out as a compliment and a point of notice to the other departments to make sure they follow this department's example of timely responses. Even when they can't get back to you, they let you know. Mr. Chairman, this is a model department.

Mr. Chairman, the other thing is the emphasis on the ability to work with the Minister. Although I don't sit on the EDI committee, the Minister and his staff are certainly willing to listen to Members such as myself, and I find it very positive. We don't get a chance to send him little cards of thank you and all those things, but exactly once a year it's our chance to say they're listening, and we appreciate it.

One shouldn't expect emotions, though, Mr. Chairman. I've talked to the Minister in the past about this. You know, we don't see eye-to-eye on this issue, but there's certainly respect over the problem. Although I respect the work that's designed and done through the School of Community Government — it's an extremely valuable service — I would prefer to eventually see it migrate into Aurora College. I stand firm on that issue, because I believe all our college training.... Sorry. Aurora College should provide all our training programs throughout government. You know, it seems odd that we'll create internal programs that develop training models and whatnot. To me, that defeats the whole purpose of having a college that, I stress.... I think it is our method to move forward on education in the territory, and I truly support what the college represents. Someday I think that will be a reality, but I suspect today won't be that day.

Mr. Chairman, there's just one other area I do want to highlight. There will be detailed questions coming forward later on the community emergency management coordinator position. As mentioned by Mr. Ramsay earlier, you have to look no further than the Hay River little disaster, there, with the flooding and whatnot, to see how important his role is in our work and for the protection and readiness of our people. Without this type of expertise at the helm, it makes it very difficult to all-of-a-sudden flip a switch. An average person may be able to grab a textbook, but it's this type of expertise that knows how to implement these things without unnecessary delay.

The justification I'll be looking for is how they would have come down to decide that someone in this area isn't required. I'm sure it's a matter of just getting some details. I'm sure it won't be long before the Minister realizes the error of his ways.

But that's it, Mr. Chairman; I'd hate to see us lose that skill and ability. Ultimately, it puts not just one community but all our communities at risk, which puts our territory at risk. You take that skill and coordination away and, like I say, the service just turns into a textbook. We could make the same argument for most other services we provide. But, you know, we really need the skilled eye, the human touch in these things. When that phone call comes in, we need someone ready to go who is familiar and experienced in this area.

Mr. Chairman, there is one last note I almost forgot to mention. I do want to highlight and discuss the good work done regarding municipal funding. Our mayor here in Yellowknife has spoken in his role as the municipality's president. They speak in favour of this budget because of what support it offers municipalities. The New Deal is coming forward in a positive way, as I understand it.

Mr. Chairman, this is good work for our communities in that even when times are tough, in times of cuts, the communities are protected, because they have a smaller avenue to raise revenues and to adjust to changes as quickly as we could possibly deal with them.

With that said, Mr. Chairman, I thank committee for the time for my opening comments. I will have very interesting and detailed questions regarding that community emergency management coordinator. Like I say, although I don't think we're getting into that detail tonight, let's give the Minister one more night to sleep on it and maybe change his mind.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you very much, Mr. Hawkins. I'll call next on Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This has become a recurring theme. Many of the points I'm going to make have already been mentioned, but as I stated to one of the other Ministers earlier this week, they're important to me, so I'm going to mention them. I did want to start off as well by thanking the Minister and his officials for the approach they took and the clear and concise way in which they communicated to the committee the rationale they'd used for making these reductions. I found the briefing to be one of the best I've observed, and it was refreshing.

In no particular order, I am also concerned about the amount of money we're spending on our youth. It's a major priority in our goals and objectives. I don't know that it's necessarily MACA's fault, but in

terms of the government as a whole, I don't think we have in this budget put enough emphasis on contributions toward youth programming, coordinators, facilities and so on. I think it's something we need to consider, particularly in the next budget. I'm okay with the way things are here, but we certainly can't reduce funding or facilities or staffing in terms of youth and youth programming any more than we already have.

I also am against the elimination of the emergency planning coordinator positions. I mentioned it in the House in a statement at least once. I feel that position provides a lot of support to communities whenever a disaster occurs. With communities taking on a lot of new responsibilities under the New Deal, which I do support, I think it is incumbent on the government and on MACA to make sure communities are not being stretched beyond their human capacity. We can't rip out the supports the communities have been using over the last two or three years all at once. I think MACA understands this, but the removal of this particular emergency planning coordinator, to me, is a bad move.

I think that support can't be provided elsewhere, and it's my understanding that there's nobody else in the department who's going to take over these activities. So I have a concern there. I must say I have been advised that the territorial planning coordinator will do it, but I'm not so sure that position will have the hands-on back and forth with communities that the planning coordinator does.

The School of Community Government has been reduced to a certain extent. I appreciate the explanation that the department is going to focus the school on high-priority programming and eliminate some of the programs that can be accessed elsewhere. I commend them for that approach, but I think we have to be extremely careful about reducing the programming of the School of Community Government too far. The northern communities rely on the School of Community Government to train their officials. We have to remember that. We have to make sure the programs the School of Community Government is offering are programs our local governments need and want. I would caution the department not to reduce the School of Community Government. If you're going to do it, do it very carefully.

I also have to speak very strongly against the loss of funding for the voluntary sector initiative. It was a paltry \$10,000 as a strategic initiative, and that \$10,000 is now no longer there. It's only a piece of the unfortunate demise of Volunteer NWT. I think that organization is one that lost support from not only MACA but the whole government. There were other avenues where the several departments could have gotten together and made volunteers an important element. I'm done.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Next on my list I have Mr. Robert McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not quite ready to join this group hug yet, but I will give credit where credit is due. I've been going on with all the other departments about the size of headquarters. One of the first things I noticed with MACA was the reduction of a number of people at headquarters — or positions; I don't know if they're vacant. It's still a good thing to see. I notice the balance between Yellowknife headquarters and the regional area offices is starting to balance out. I think it's a good thing. MACA should be one of the few departments where it is balanced out.

Where I really have a concern, again, is the number of positions cut in the Beaufort-Delta and, in particular, in Inuvik. They've been hit hard. I know there are a few vacant positions; I'm not sure if these were it. I could fight to have every one reinstated. I've always said, understanding that reductions are necessary, that we'll take our fair share. That's the word there: we'll take our fair share. We've been hit awfully hard; MACA in Inuvik is one of the departments that has been hit fairly hard. My understanding was that it provided services to the communities. I'm not sure what the thinking is on that. If they plan on providing these services to the communities out of headquarters, I can always get to those details later.

As far as some of the training for the communities goes, I notice a lot of folks who come down to Yellowknife for training, and I think that's something that can be administered or done out of the regional offices. It would save a lot of travel time and travel money bringing them down here. I've noticed quite a few, actually. I see the School of Community Government's gone down a bit. I'm not sure if that's where MACA was going with this — to have more of the training done at the regional level. If that's their thinking, then I think that's a good thing.

Other than that, it's been said a couple of times before.... And at first to even consider taking out the rec coordinators, after we've run a program in the Beaufort-Delta Aurora College for how many years to train recreational leaders, and some good graduates came through there. The person who was doing it out of Inuvik was just a top-notch individual who enjoyed what he did. He did it because he enjoyed it, not because it was a job and he was paid to. To consider taking the positions out in the first place, I think, was very poorly thought out. It goes against what we've been saying are our priorities of the 16th Assembly, in particular our youth. I'm glad to see it go back in again, and I think with the resistance you got not only from the Members.... I think the public had a lot to do with this, because it was something that was very near and dear to them. I'm glad it got straightened out, because we had the message out there that youth

are our priority. I think by keeping these folks, we're actually saying the youth are a priority and we're going to prove it.

Other than my concern with the positions in the Beaufort-Delta — in particular Inuvik; I know they've been hit awfully hard.... I think we lost a Lands person and some community planner, somebody who works with the communities. We've lost too many people. We've got an oil and gas person, I think, who's on the hook, and yet they continue to add more oil and gas people in Yellowknife. I can't figure that one out for the life of me. Anyway, I think you're moving in the right direction, especially with balancing out between headquarters and regional office. I will commend and compliment you on that.

Those are my opening remarks. I probably will have a few questions when we get into the detail.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Robert McLeod. I understand I have a couple more. Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): A motion is on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and is not debatable.

Motion carried.

Chairman (Mr. Bromley): I will now rise and report progress. Thank you, Minister McLeod, and thank you to your witnesses. Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber.

Report of the Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Item 21. Can I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 37-16(2), Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2, and Committee Report 7-16(2). I 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. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Item 22, third reading of bills. Item 23, Madam Clerk, Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Principal Clerk, Operations (Ms. Bennett):

Orders of the Day for Thursday, June 12, 2008, 1:30 p.m.

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements
- 3) Members' Statements
- 4) Reports of Standing and Special Committees
- 5) Returns to Oral Questions
- 6) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
- 7) Acknowledgements
- 8) Oral Questions
- 9) Written Questions
- 10) Returns to Written Questions
- 11) Replies to Opening Address
- 12) Petitions
- 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 12: An Act to Amend the Human Rights Act
- 19) Second Reading of Bills
- 20) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 8: Appropriation Act, 2008–2009

Bill 11: An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act

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 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

MS 62-16(2): Government of Canada Residential Schools Apology

- 21) Report of Committee of the Whole
- 22) Third Reading of Bills
- 23) Orders of the Day

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, June 12, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

