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**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Hay River North)

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*Intergovernmental Relations*  
*Minister responsible for the NWT Power*  
*Corporation*

**Mr. Norman Yakeleya**  
(Sahtu)

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
Tuesday, October 21, 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, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland, Mr. Yakeleya.

The House met at 1:33 p.m.

**Prayer**

Prayer.

**Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey):** Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the Day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Miltenberger.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 114-16(2)  
REFOCUSING GOVERNMENT  
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to provide the Assembly with an update on the work of the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative Committee. This committee has been tasked by Cabinet with advancing a number of this Assembly's priorities related to the operations of government, including improving service delivery to small communities, managing the cost of government and examining how we can change the structure of government to deliver better results.

One of the Assembly's priorities is to complete a thorough analysis of the efficiency, effectiveness and value of current government operations. To accomplish this, we have established a program review office in the Department of Executive. This office will lead a number of activities designed to manage expenditure growth, make our programs and services more effective and improve the government's success in reporting on results.

The office is up and running and has begun to identify priority areas for targeted program review. This work will proceed in partnership with departments to ensure that we get solid, credible program information combined with objective analysis and program evaluation expertise.

The program review office will also ensure that the government has policies in place to ensure that the departments conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of all programs and services and that we

use the results of these evaluations to support tough decisions about allocation of government resources.

To begin this work, we are taking a close look at some of the program areas that represent the greatest proportion of our expenditures — health programs, schools, and adult education and training — to see if there is potential for improved efficiency or savings. We're also looking at program areas that have been identified as priorities by the Assembly, including youth and economic development programs, to ensure we are getting value for our investments.

Mr. Speaker, another key component of the work to increase efficiency of government operations is to reduce the number of boards and agencies that have been set up to deliver government programs and services. This is not a new challenge for this Assembly. There have been a number of reviews on this topic, including extensive work done during the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly, and all have recommended that the number of boards and agencies needs to be reduced.

Altogether well over 100 boards and agencies are involved in the delivery of government services. As a first step we are looking at streamlining and structuring operations of boards in three key program areas: health and social services, education and housing. Today there are 70 boards at the regional and community level involved in governance in these areas. These boards were created with the best of intentions to ensure that there is local and regional input into decision-making.

This proliferation of boards has actually created barriers to service delivery. Roles and responsibilities are confused, meaning there is often no clear accountability. There's duplication and overlap in administration, resulting in fewer resources available for programs. Clients must deal with two or three agencies to obtain services when they would benefit from an integrated approach. The level and quality of services delivered differs from region to region, and it is a continual challenge to find enough people to fill all the board positions.

We are proposing to reduce the number of government boards for these programs from 70 to seven by establishing six regional service boards to oversee and coordinate all program delivery for health and social services, education and housing, and one coordinating committee including board Chairs and the appropriate Ministers. Based on the very successful model of the Tlicho Community Services Agency, these regional boards will be built on greater efficiency and a more client focused, service oriented approach. They will be structured to be congruent with emerging aboriginal self-government boundaries and will support the eventual transfer of program responsibilities to these governments.

There will still be an opportunity for communities to have input into programs and services at the local level through community education committees or interagency committees. How communities choose to do this will be different from region to region.

We recognize that there are challenges. In Yellowknife, for example, there are three existing education boards with very broad mandates, and the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority serves a larger population than any other regional authority. We will have to take the time to assess how to implement reform in this complex situation. In other regions we should be able to move more quickly to implementation.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that there is a strong desire on the part of existing boards to provide input as we move forward. We will still be seeking the views and ideas of current board members and administrators and other key stakeholders on how to proceed. But be very clear: we are not consulting on whether board reform is needed. We are determined to move forward with this long overdue initiative with a view to implementation in the 2010–2011 fiscal year.

There's a lot of work to do to meet this target. Work is underway to define the functions and responsibilities of the new regional service boards. Further work will need to be done to streamline and integrate financial and administrative systems. There will be a need for legislative amendments and significant human resource challenges, as well as further analysis of the potential costs and savings associated with implementation.

We have been working in cooperation with all the departments to roll out this proposal. We have begun consultations with the chief executive officers of health and social services authorities and the district education authorities. We intend to meet with all authorities in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having the Chairs of the Social Programs Committee and the Economic Development Infrastructure Committee join us at

the Refocusing Government committee table. Their perspective will add great value to this important work.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 115-16(2)  
NATIONAL STUDENTS AGAINST IMPAIRED  
AND DISTRACTED DRIVING DAY

**Hon. Michael McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, today, October 21, is National Students Against Impaired and Distracted Driving Day, NSAIDD. It is also the tenth anniversary of this national day that focuses attention, especially among teens and young drivers, on the serious consequences of driving while impaired or distracted. More than 500,000 students across Canada, including the Northwest Territories, are actively engaged in reducing impaired and distracted driving on this day of awareness. It's encouraging to see that many young people are advocating safe and healthy lifestyle choices and responsible decision-making.

Regrettably, impaired driving continues to be a serious problem in the Northwest Territories and in other parts of Canada. Despite years of intensive public education, more severe penalties and increased law enforcement, impaired driving continues to take the lives of Northerners. In the Northwest Territories seven people lost their lives due to collisions involving alcohol over the past five years. Another 86 people were injured. These collisions could have been prevented.

With the increasing use of technology such as cellular phones and text messaging, driver distraction is now an integral component of public information and messaging campaigns of this national driving awareness day. It is also a focus of our own Drive Alive! program, and for good reason. With the difficulties related to regulating and enforcing distracted driving, public information and awareness will be a key to reducing distracted driving. Some studies have shown that use of cellphones while driving slows reaction times to an extent similar to being intoxicated. I am very encouraged that messages regarding the effects of distracted driving have been included in this national day of awareness, especially in light of the positive role that public awareness has played in reducing impaired driving.

Yes, great progress has been made to reduce the incidence of impaired driving in Canada. In the past 20 years, as a result of the work of groups such as NSAIDD, MADD and SADD, there has been a steady decline in the number of collisions and injuries involving alcohol. I want to acknowledge the great work these groups have been doing in fighting impaired driving in the Northwest Territories.

I know Members of this House will join me in applauding the attitude and actions of these young adults who are promoting safer driving choices and participating in the National Students Against Impaired and Distracted Driving Day across Canada. They have made a real difference and will continue to do so. I encourage all Members to join the voices of our young people and spread the importance of making responsible choices when it comes to driving.

First, speak up. Say no to getting into a vehicle with a driver who is impaired. Speak up when others in your vehicle are distracting the driver or when the driver is fatigued or driving recklessly. Then speak out. Take a stand against the great harm that impaired and distracted driving does in our territory and in your community.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 116-16(2)  
WASTE REDUCTION AND RECOVERY  
PROGRAM EXPANSION

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, reducing consumption and recycling waste products is a way for all of us to help reduce the impact we have on the environment. It means we use fewer natural resources, use less energy to make new products, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save money.

Individually, the people of the Northwest Territories can make positive choices to help reduce their impact on the environment, but they look to government to take initiative in developing programs to recover and recycle products and materials rather than put them into landfills. When given the opportunity, people willingly participate in recycling programs. The Beverage Container Program, with a recovery rate of 81 per cent last year, is a good example of how successful recycling programs can be. At the appropriate time today I will be tabling the Beverage Container Program Annual Report 2007–2008.

During January of 2008 the Department of Environment and Natural Resources developed and distributed a discussion paper on expanding the Waste Reduction and Recovery program. Based on what we heard, ENR is preparing a five year action plan outlining both short and long term goals for the program. Details will be outlined in the departmental business plan, but it is our intention to add electronics, milk containers, paper and cardboard to the list of products we recover and recycle. Longer term plans envision tires, lead acid batteries and fuel drums being added to this list.

Recently we have seen various communities across Canada take steps towards limiting the use of single use retail bags. The GNWT has the same goal. The department will initiate a program aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating the use of these bags within two years. As mentioned earlier, details will be outlined in the departmental business plan and will include education, alternatives and environmental levies in this area.

It is clear that waste reduction and recycling is important to the people of the Northwest Territories. Expanding this program will not only help greatly extend the lives of local landfills but will also maintain and improve the quality of our environment.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COST OF LIVING REDUCTION STRATEGIES

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to use my Member's statement today to comment on some of the remarks I've heard the Premier make over the last little while.

In his sessional statement at the beginning of this month the Premier mentioned that we must manage government expenditures. Thank goodness that's still a focus. We absolutely must pursue the goal of matching expenditures to our revenue.

The Premier went on to mention some actions the government might take to manage our expenditures — identifying areas for financial improvement and reinvesting our dollars wisely, for example. I agree that both are completely necessary. In our current economic climate it's mandatory that the target of all of our investments is that of reducing the cost of living.

As to managing expenditures, I unfortunately have little faith that the cuts we anticipate in the upcoming operations budget for '09–10 will in fact be thought out and researched. Once bitten, twice shy, unfortunately. And in my view NWT residents were badly bitten by the cuts made in the budget we passed last June.

There's also a need for the government to review existing policies. They must be viewed through a different lens and amended to enable residents, not create roadblocks to their efforts to gain independence. As the strategic initiative committee goes about its business of refocusing government, I hope that the revamping of policy will be front and centre of its agenda.

A couple of times I've heard the Premier speak of regionalization in the NWT but with no accompanying explanation. I wonder just what this means and how it will be beneficial to the NWT and our constituents.

To my last point, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has stated that subsidies lower the cost of living for us. I cannot agree. Subsidies make life affordable but don't actually lower the price of commodities like gas or milk. Nor do they change the actual expense of an accommodation unit. Subsidies stifle our people and keep them reliant on someone else instead of themselves. We need to work towards elimination of all the subsidies the government provides. We need to find a way to make people independent, providing for themselves and leading productive, satisfying lives.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HEAVY EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE BUDGETS

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

Today I'd like to talk about replacing heavy equipment in Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e. It has been brought to my attention that heavy equipment in Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e are being replaced much earlier than they should be due to improper maintenance. This causes communities to use their budgets to replace expensive pieces of equipment well before the equipment should be replaced.

Under the ideal situation — I'm no expert — I believe that heavy equipment should last roughly 20 years. However, due to a lack of maintenance some of these assets are being replaced well before their time. Ideally, equipment should be retrofitted once at midlife and replaced when they should be.

Mr. Speaker, this is an expensive burden on communities and the government when some equipment costs in the range of \$250,000. Part of the problem is unlimited O&M budgets to maintain heavy equipment. For example, to hire qualified mechanics and have them perform regular, scheduled maintenance is a challenge for smaller communities like Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e. Many times the community must hire mechanics from outside the community. In the case of Lutselk'e they also have to cover the cost of travel, accommodation and freight. This quickly depletes the maintenance budget, so the communities find themselves in a catch-22.

With inadequate maintenance budgets heavy equipment is not properly maintained, resulting in replacement much sooner than necessary, and this contributes to budgetary issues. With adequate

maintenance budgets, Mr. Speaker, communities can maintain their heavy equipment assets properly, resulting in a longer operating life and safer pieces of equipment. In the long run we'll effectively save substantial dollars for both the communities and the GNWT.

Mr. Speaker, the department needs to do more to assist these communities so they're able to properly maintain heavy equipment, and the communities can use their valuable budgets on other, more important items as opposed to replacing equipment well before its time.

Later on today I'll have questions for the appropriate Minister.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SAHTU REGIONAL WELLNESS HEALTH CENTRE

**Mr. Yakeleya:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I was privy to the exchange between Hon. Minister Lee and my colleague Mr. Hawkins on a health care issue in downtown Yellowknife.

It says in Hansard that Ms. Lee, the honourable Minister, has stated that we're pouring millions and millions into downtown services, that one of the richest parts of the health care service is going to downtown Yellowknife.

I was shocked to hear this, because my region has been looking for a long time at areas that we could fill to bring up standards by other communities in terms of health care services. The Sahtu has been asking for a regional wellness health centre like any other health centre in Inuvik, Fort Simpson, Hay River, Fort Smith or Yellowknife. We've been asking for this.

Actually, I've been doing some research. In 2005 I talked about health care in the Sahtu. In 2007 I had a statement that talked about a regional wellness centre in the Sahtu. Again in 2008 I'm bringing this issue up in terms of having a regional wellness health centre in the Sahtu. My people have faced many challenges, and we'd like to see if we can enjoy the benefits that other regions have in terms of care for our people.

You know, the weather plays a very important role in terms of medevacking, transferring people to Inuvik or Yellowknife. In terms of the travel, they have to get them on a flight, and sometimes they are unable to make it, like in other small communities. Mr. Speaker, the people in the Sahtu have been asking for a regional wellness health centre, and I haven't seen it yet in the capital books.



I understand that some of the regions have waited years and years to get additional services in their region. We are waiting for a regional wellness centre. If you go into Tulita, for example, our health centre is busting at the seams. It's embarrassing when you have an eye clinic in Tulita that has boxes and chairs sitting in front of you — a proper eye clinic. Or the dental services in our region as well as Tulita.... The hallways are crowded. We have a short time. You go into Colville Lake. People have to wonder if they're playing.... And if it is, the doctor looks at his clock and says: oh, I've got to be there by 5 o'clock. That's deplorable in our region.

I'll be asking the Minister at the appropriate time what she can do to indicate that she can start pouring millions into our health care system in the Sahtu. We have a health board. We are ready to go, and we are ready to work with her. We need a regional health centre.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
90<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY GREETINGS  
TO PERSIS GRUBEN

**Mr. Jacobson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were so busy yesterday we didn't do Members' statements, so today I'd like to bring up birthday greetings for Ms. Persis Gruben in Tuktoyaktuk. It was her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday yesterday.

I'd like to apologize that I couldn't deliver my special birthday greeting in person. They had a big feast in the home last night, and I was only given the highlights of it last night. On this special day reaching this age in your life is a great milestone, and we're so grateful that you're still active and healthy.

We are very fortunate to have an elder like you in our community of Tuk. I can only imagine the changes you have seen in the North and the Government of the Northwest Territories throughout your lifetime. Through your wisdom and knowledge I'll continue to represent the Nunakput riding with the grace and wisdom shown by your encouraging influence.

On behalf of the government of the Northwest Territories and my family I wish you health and happiness on your 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Ms. Persis Gruben.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
ABSENCE OF PREMIER ROLAND AT  
COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION MEETING

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to speak today about the Premiers' conference that was held recently in Montreal. There is one Premier out of the 13 provincial and territorial leaders who was absent from that meeting. That was our Premier, Mr. Roland.

The Premiers were meeting to discuss the global economic crisis and how the provinces and territories will be impacted by these volatile economic times. More important is the fact that the federal government will be a key player in fiscal issues pertaining to the provinces and territories. The backdrop to this meeting is the global financial crisis that the International Monetary Fund estimates will result in global financial losses of more than \$1 trillion. The potential credit crunch threatens a global recession that will result in the slowest economic growth in 17 years, according to the Bank of Canada.

There is a growing concern that the federal government will have to run deficits in the coming years. Just last year a more generous equalization formula was brought in by the Conservative government. There is a fear among the Premiers that like the Chrétien government in the 1990s, the current government may entertain cuts to transfers to the provinces and territories as a way to balance budgets.

With these very compelling reasons our Premier should have been at the table with the other Premiers. The Northwest Territories fought long and hard to get a seat at the national table. When a meeting like this is called, we need to be there. In his sessional statement the Premier states, "There is a lot of confusion and uncertainty out there, and NWT residents and businesses will be affected." Why, then, would our Premier, who is elected to represent all the residents of the Northwest Territories, choose to be absent?

With his comments to the CBC yesterday it would appear that the Premier was more interested in capital projects in his riding than the interests of the territory as a whole. I would like to remind the Premier that he has given the role of Finance Minister to Mr. Miltenberger, who also happens to be the very capable Deputy Premier, and he has a very solid Minister of Public Works and Services. The capital appropriation would have been dealt with accordingly. It's hard to be taken seriously at the national level when you don't show up to the meetings.

I'll have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
GNWT ENERGY PRIORITIES FRAMEWORK

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am encouraged to see this government bring some focused attention to our energy issues in its recent Energy Priorities Framework. In particular, I see us beginning to act in ways that recognize the need to reduce energy costs through common sense activities like conservation, efficiency and switching to local and renewable sources.

The framework is full of excellent recommendations. I suggest that our people take a look at this. I see it is open for comments, and the government is obviously wanting feedback on it. I encourage people to do so.

However, significant gaps remain in this framework. Possibly the largest is transportation. Transportation is probably one of the largest sources of our rising cost of living. It's fossil fuel intensive, and its greenhouse gas emissions are very high; there is no attention paid to it at all. Mr. Speaker, I think we need some real progressive work in this area. How are we going to move to a low greenhouse gas intensive way of getting around and transporting our goods and services?

Another one is the expertise. We don't talk about expertise needed to implement a lot of these things, especially in our communities. We need some Aurora College programs that really get access, some technical and trades level expertise. We need an awards and recognition level to build this expertise in our communities.

People and business will willingly adopt many of these things if we have the feasibility studies, the payback times and the monitoring and demonstration to show them the things that actually work. Natural gas is recommended here, and I want to put up a big yellow flag on natural gas. Although it is a cleaner burning fuel, you have to burn a lot more of it. It is a fossil fuel that is rising steadily in cost just as the other fossil fuels are. So we need to be very cautious there. If we can, let's leap right to a renewable energy source that will be provided locally and provide our local economies with some stimulus.

The industry is not really talked about, Mr. Speaker. We need some carbon neutral development here. We have the political and moral authority. Let's get the critical approach going that we really require here.

Perhaps I could ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

Unanimous consent granted.

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. I think possibly the biggest thing we can do here is a thorough and complete review and possibly restructuring of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation. I think this is something we all know at heart. All our residents and constituents have been talking to us about this. We have some real opportunities here. People can start generating and delivering their own energy needs and contributing it to the grid through net metering and so on. We need some real progressive grassroots work there, so let's get that done.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Nahende, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
ROCKY ISLAND BARGE FUEL SPILL

**Mr. Menicoche:** Mr. Speaker, an NTCL barge, which was being moved by a tug, hit a shoal at Wrigley Rock in the Mackenzie River early in the morning of Tuesday, August 25, 2008. The barge was loaded with diesel fuel and building supplies. The tugboat is operated by Horizon North Logistics Inc.

The Horizon North representative reported that the crew discovered a hairline fracture at the waterline when they were checking the barge after the incident. The crew deployed containment booms and contacted the necessary authorities. The crew transferred the fuel from the leaking compartment into another compartment on the barge. The Horizon North representatives suggested fog and wind as the likely cause of the incident. Transport Canada is investigating the accident. The Coast Guard led the response to the oil spill and has worked with Horizon North to limit the amount of diesel fuel released.

The barge contained 577,000 litres in total, with 85,000 litres in the affected compartment. The Coast Guard representative reported that diesel fuel evaporates and dissipates quickly when released into the environment. Approximately 60 per cent of the spill would have evaporated within 24 hours, and the water quality was and has been monitored at that point.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, any amount of fuel spilled into our rivers is too much. Local constituents have suggested to me that the federal agencies were slow in responding and have minimized the importance of the incident. Northerners expect that federal regulators can learn from these events and improve their response time and action so that they can be ready for large scale development and pipeline activity.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be asking the Minister responsible questions on this incident. Mahsi cho.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
INUVIK SCHOOLS REPLACEMENT PROJECT

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to summarize for the record what we have learned about the process for the acquisition of a few replacement schools in Inuvik.

No one will dispute that the Inuvik schools were old and in need of being replaced. The process that ensued, however, raises questions for me about the role of Ministers and Premiers in performing their duties as Cabinet Ministers in relation to their work as representatives of their constituencies.

We don't expect Minister's constituencies to be passed over for enhanced program services or infrastructure, but neither would I expect that they would get any preferential treatment by the Cabinet. Every Cabinet Minister of this government owes a duty of fairness to all communities, regions and constituencies in the NWT.

The government was approached with the idea of a negotiated contract for what has become known as the super school in Inuvik. The negotiated contract was supported by community leaders, including the local MLAs, as evidenced by letters of support. From there we are told, and I accept, that the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake removed himself from Cabinet deliberations. Former Premier Joe Handley signed off the Cabinet record of decision. In conjunction with that, however, at least two more records of decisions from the Financial Management Board were signed off by the Chair, also the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

The thing that still remains unclear for me is how it would be Cabinet policy for the Member signing a letter of support to be removed from discussing a project but could subsequently chair deliberations and ultimately sign off on the ensuing decision.

I'm not pleased with the length that I had to go doing questioning to get this amount of information. This is a public government, and it is spending public funds and making decisions that need to be transparent and accountable and publicly defensible. I'm limited in the answers I can get in this House.

Mr. Speaker, now that this process has revealed this seeming lack of clarity in the policy of Cabinet and the process, I am going to be referring my questions regarding this process to someone who

can get the answers to ensure that Cabinet policies remove any appearance or perception of conflict when Members of Cabinet are performing their duties in relation to their own constituency. I think this will be beneficial for everyone and will not allow Members to hide behind superficial answers like the ones I received initially, professing non-participation, only to find out that both financial appropriations were signed off....

**Mr. Speaker:** Mrs. Groenewegen, time for your Member's statement has expired.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

Unanimous consent granted.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks, colleagues. I am sorry; I am not feeling well today and not doing as good a job of communicating as I should be. As I said, I believe that we can get answers to these questions and we can bring clarity to these policies. I think it will be to the benefit of everyone, and that is what I intend to do.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
BOARD REFORM EXERCISE

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to thank the Minister responsible for the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative Committee for his comments today on reducing the number of boards and agencies in the NWT.

I believe that over 70 boards and agencies providing services for around 42,000 people might be a little on the excessive side. I agree that something needs to be done. I believe that reducing the number of agencies could result in administrative efficiencies as well as an improved holistic focus of services to people of the NWT.

Having said this, I do have some concerns. Today I am not convinced that rolling all the health authorities into regional authorities is the right answer, especially when it comes to the mobility of health professionals like nurses. Also, how do we roll a territorial authority like Stanton Territory Health Authority into a regional model?

I'm happy to see that the Minister recognizes some of these challenges. I look forward to participating as an elected Member of this Legislative Assembly in finding solutions and setting directions. I'd also like to thank the Minister and the Premier for including the Chairs of EDI and Social Programs on the Refocusing Government committee. This is an

important and difficult initiative with long term effects. Let's work together and get it right in the best interest of all Northerners.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
FUEL PRICE REGULATION AND  
CONSUMER PROTECTION MEASURES

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been seeing the decrease in the markets in fuel prices; it's now below \$80 a barrel. Yet in our communities we continue to pay exorbitant amounts for fuel. In Aklavik they're paying, right now, \$1.76 a litre, and it supposedly went up by 3 cents. If anything, you'd think it would have come down.

As the government we also have a responsibility to protect our consumers to ensure there's not price gouging and to realize that there has been emerging a decline in the price of fuel and the effects it does have in regard to our economy: power rates, operating and maintaining a home, being able to run your vehicles and operating your equipment.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that this government does consider looking at the possibility of bringing in legislation that will be able to control, monitor and also, in some cases, restrict these types of increases from taking place. On one hand, they tell you the market is based on the world economy, yet when a barrel of fuel drops to less than \$80 a barrel, we continue to see fuel prices going up. I believe there is something wrong with that picture.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we as a government protect the residents of the Northwest Territories from outside sources by way of our dependency on fuel from other parts of the Northwest Territories. It will be a tough year for people in the Northwest Territories. I believe we bought our fuel at the high end in regard to this summer's resupply for fuel for power plants for communities to maintain our homes and our communities.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be asking the Minister of Finance what this government is doing to ensure that we have the policies and legislation there to protect our consumers in regard to the high price of fuel in the Northwest Territories, when the rest of the world is seeing a decrease in the price of fuel commodities.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
DIESEL FUEL SHORTAGE  
IN WESTERN CANADA

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. There is a serious shortage of diesel fuel across western Canada. Many drivers are nervous about the supply and whether it will dry up altogether. Most certainly the question out there today is how effective is the resupply going to be in the North, both the supply as well as the price. Those are important questions. In a recent news broadcast a spokesman from Petro-Canada said the shortage is due to an unexpected high demand this month from wholesalers. In addition, problems at several Alberta refineries have combined with diesel fuel in short supply. Two refineries have temporarily shut down diesel production. A third refinery is not producing at full capacity. What we have here is a perfect storm of problems, because this uncertainty is real.

Mr. Speaker, last weekend I went to Edmonton, and in a polite fashion, while I was filling up my vehicle, I asked the store clerk: how are things going? He said miserable, because they had no diesel fuel to offer anyone, and he said the supply chain is broken and is getting worse. It wasn't at one gas station alone I heard this problem. I heard it at others.

I fear the situation could have negative effects on all Northerners. A slowdown in trucking deliveries could lead to shortages of products on our store shelves. That could be food. That could be gas to fill our tanks. Mr. Speaker, that could be home heating fuel to warm ourselves in this coming cold winter. Let us not forget that Christmas is coming, and I certainly hope merchandise won't be shorted on our shelves.

This problem has existed for a couple of months now, and all indications are that it is not fully resolved and should not be resolved until approximately November. Some fill-up stations in the South are rationing the amount of fuel that they can sell to certain customers. Mr. Speaker, I fear that this may come here, and I certainly hope it does not. Some diesel fuel supplies from Eastern Canada are being delivered west so that this situation can be eased due to the shortage.

I will have questions for the Minister of Public Works later today to ask him what he is doing about the situation and how well aware he is of the situation. I want to make sure his department is on top of the situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**Mr. Speaker:** Colleagues, I would like draw your attention to the presence in the visitors' gallery of Mr. Dan Kardash, formerly a resident of Hay River. Dan lived in Hay River for many years. He was a schoolteacher and a successful businessman. Beside him is his son Mr. Brian Kardash, who happens to be husband to our very own Patricia Russell. Welcome to the House, gentlemen.

The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize Brian Kardash, a schoolteacher from Fort Resolution from last year and Patricia's husband, as you indicated. I never met his father, but I understand that's Dan Kardash.

**Mr. Bromley:** Third time lucky. I would also like to recognize Mr. Brian Kardash, a resident of Weledeh, and of course his father. I would also like to recognize Sue Bevington and her companion, also residents of Weledeh.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, it's not very often I get a chance to recognize a constituent down from Inuvik: Conrad Baetz, who works out of the North Mackenzie District for Indian and Northern Affairs and, I believe, his mother, Greta, beside him.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. I welcome everyone to the gallery today. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 500-16(2) ROCKY ISLAND BARGE FUEL SPILL

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on my questions to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources with regard to, I think they call it, the Rocky Island barge spill. It was just south of Fort Wrigley. It happened in August. One of the barges ran aground.

The biggest concern, Mr. Speaker, is that there was slow response by authorities to access this spill. The other concern is that because of the slow response, the amount of spillage was not adequately reported. I'd just like to ask the Minister: what is his latest assessment of this grounding of a barge on the island just below Wrigley?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Transport Canada continues to investigate the situation. We, as well, have received the same initial information in terms of the amount of the spill, which was, according to the captain, estimated to be very small, between ten and 15 litres.

I know there have been concerns that there was an oil sheen or a sheen on the water that was quite expansive and extensive. Our people won't even know. This is a Transport Canada issue. We were one of the first folks there. The issue was dealt with as quickly as possible. The formal numbers for the spill are relatively small.

**Mr. Menicoche:** I would like to commend our Department of Environment and Natural Resources for being there as quickly as they were. The federal department and the Coast Guard were very slow in getting there.

How do we do a balance of the fuel that was in the barge and the actual fuel that they did take out of that compartment? Once again, the constituents who were there on the site, as well, said that with the amount of sheen, the amount of spill seemed that it far, far exceeded the 20 litres that was reported. How can we get a good assessment of this, Mr. Speaker? Also, I don't think it's doing anybody any favours to be hiding any excess amounts.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, the barge contained 577,000 litres of fuel. The compartment that was punctured had about 85,000 litres of fuel. My understanding of the process is that the barge was hauled in to where it could be dealt with and repaired. The punctured compartment was pumped out, and the amount of litres that were taken out was of course measured against what was supposed to be in there. What those numbers are we don't know yet. That information hasn't been shared with us that I'm aware of. It's still under investigation.

I don't think that at this point it's an issue of any kind of cover-up or folks hiding things. It's fairly straightforward. The assumption is that when we see the report, they'll be able to show the numbers: what was initially in the punctured compartment and what was pumped out.

**Mr. Menicoche:** I'm looking forward to any preliminary report that does come from the federal agencies or even ours. I'm just wondering if the Minister has any current report with regard to that spill.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, the investigation is still underway. I understand Transport Canada officials, the inspector, was in Hay River early in September to interview crew members as part of the investigation. I have yet to see any reports, preliminary or otherwise.

I will commit to the Member for the Sahtu and all the affected.... In fact, I'll update all the Members once we get the report. Given the concern and the fact that this is a major river flowing down through the Mackenzie Valley, we'll share that information with all the MLAs.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess what we need, as well, from our Government of the Northwest Territories perspective is a good post-mortem to see why some agencies didn't respond in time. I'd like to ask the Minister at this time: will he be conducting an assessment from the GNWT perspective as to how effective the response was to this incident?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** There is a plan to sit down and do the debriefing. We'll see what Transport Canada comes up with in terms of the official report. We had officials on the ground in relatively short order, and they have perspective and some information and advice, I think, to bring to bear to ensure, as the Member indicates, that we do a proper post-mortem and debriefing to find out what happened and why and what can be learned from the incident to ensure that there's no repetition in the future.

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

#### QUESTION 501-16(2)

#### HEAVY EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE BUDGETS

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I talked about the maintenance of heavy equipment assets in Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e and the need for the department to provide assistance to the communities. I'd like to follow up on my statement with questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Will the department work with the communities in developing much needed maintenance programs for the heavy equipment assets in both Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Robert McLeod.

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the New Deal the authority for capital infrastructure was transferred over to the

communities. Along with that transfer came the responsibility for maintaining a lot of the equipment they have. Having said that, MACA does work with the community governments to establish preventative maintenance plans to ensure that equipment lasts for a while. There are also the community works advisers in each regional office to assist the communities in coming up with these plans.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** I don't believe the money allocated to the communities for this activity takes into consideration hiring qualified mechanics from outside the community or extra travel and accommodation costs for mechanics and, if parts are needed, expensive freight costs. Will the department look at increasing community budgets to allow them to properly maintain their equipment?

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** MACA provides O&M formula funding to all community governments to support them in operating and maintenance in their communities. They do a review every couple of years to see if there's an increase that might be needed because of the high cost of living and supplying these services. MACA is always willing to support community governments to try to find the most cost-effective ways to take care of the equipment they have in the community.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Will the Minister and the department agree to do a mechanical assessment of all heavy equipment in Tu Nedhe to determine what needs to be done to assist the communities to reduce capital expenditures in this area?

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** As I said earlier, MACA is doing all it can and will continue and commit to working with the communities to identify their equipment and come up with any type of plan that they can. This is the early stage of the New Deal, and MACA is always willing help the communities come up with a plan until they're to a point where the capacity is there to take care of all this type of information themselves.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At one time the Department of Public Works maintained an office and staff in Lutselk'e and also had mechanics in Fort Resolution who looked after the maintenance of all heavy equipment in the community. This was discontinued eight years ago. Would the Minister look at working with the Department of Public Works to assist the communities in maintaining their equipment, in addition to what MACA is doing?

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** As the Minister of MACA I can't make a commitment of funds on behalf of other Ministers. However, I will commit again that MACA's staff will work with community

governments in Tu Nedhe to see what options they have and support them in ensuring their equipment and planning and preventative maintenance needs are looked after.

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

QUESTION 502-16(2)  
COST OF LIVING REDUCTION STRATEGIES

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Premier. As I mentioned in my Member's statement, the Premier believes that subsidies lower the cost of living. As I mentioned in my statement, I don't agree with him.

All the Members in this House I think have expressed concern recently about the expected increase that we're going to experience in home heating fuel. Some have suggested that the government must implement a subsidy to assist residents. I'd like to ask the Premier how a fuel subsidy will reduce the NWT cost of living.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process we're undergoing is budget preparations, as well as trying to look at cost effectiveness of programs. A number of initiatives we've started. The issue of subsidies is one we've looked at for quite a number of years. The total package ranges over \$100 million, when you look at all the areas of housing, fuel subsidy and income support.

In the short term I'd say we have to look at the fact that we do limit the impact or stabilize the cost of living in many of our small and remote communities. Without that subsidy, the cost would go extremely higher. Our Territorial Power Support Program is an example of that. But I do believe in the long term that the market adjusts for those things. We do have to look at the way we spend our money in the area of subsidies and, as we go through our business plan preparations, be willing to hear from Members as to suggestions of how we look at things and ways we try to tackle this issue.

**Ms. Bisaro:** I thank the Premier for his comments. I didn't really hear an answer — I guess I'm looking for a philosophical discussion here, but I didn't really hear an answer — as to how the fuel subsidy will reduce the cost of living overall.

The cost of a litre of fuel is the cost of a litre of fuel, whether it's subsidized or otherwise. A subsidy will simply reduce the bill to the building owner for heating that particular building. In my mind the only way to reduce the actual cost of living for the homeowner is to use an alternative or cheaper source of heat. I'd like to know if the Premier agrees with me.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I would agree with what the Member stated. The way we look at how we generate our electricity costs or just the generation of electricity and how it's distributed across the North and then how we as a government deal with that side of it... Again, our Territorial Power Support Program does limit and help with the cost of living in our more remote communities. If that full cost was passed on, then more dollars out of our constituents' pockets would be spent on just utilities.

But we do need to look at other things. That is why, for example, the discussion paper has been launched by Minister Bob McLeod in the areas looking at alternative energies. As our budget preparation moves forward in the next cycle, we're looking at trying to make critical investments in the area of other energy technologies so that we can look long term at reducing the cost of living. One of those big goals would be the hydro strategy.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Again, thanks to the Premier for his comments. He's mentioned some of the things that we need to do, that we are doing, to try to mitigate the costs to all of our residents of actually living in this particular part of the country. I would like to ask the Minister specifically what actions are being undertaken to try and lower the cost of living for our residents in the short term. By short term I mean within the next six to eight months, over this winter.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that are being reviewed in highlights of the upcoming budget preparations. More recently, for example, we've increased the Seniors Fuel Subsidy to limit the impact of the cost of living on our seniors who are on fixed incomes. That's one of the areas, and again, that is short term. Other things we have to look at are mini hydro in some of our communities and wind technology to be put in place.

I think one of the other things we do need to look at, again, goes back to our main power source in the Northwest Territories and how we look at that. I stated earlier in this House that I met with the board and had a discussion with them about the fact that we could not leave any stone unturned in trying to limit the impact of the cost of living and the cost of electricity generation to Northerners.

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

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Mr. Premier. I appreciate that some things are long term. I am particularly concerned, as I said, about the six to eight month period that's upcoming. I hear that there are a couple of things there.

The Premier mentioned the increase in the subsidy for seniors for their home heating fuel. I have to state that I disagree that a subsidy is going to have

an impact on the cost of living. The fuel is still going to cost the same amount of money whether there's a subsidy for me as a senior or not. I'd like to say to the Premier that I think we have a disagreement in semantics. My understanding of the phrase "cost of living" I don't think is the same as the Premier's. I'd like to ask him if he agrees.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I agree to disagree, is maybe the term we can use. I look at the cost of living and I think a lot of us look at the cost of living as what we have pay out of our pockets to survive here in the Northwest Territories. Some of our steps are taken to mitigate that cost of living.

I agree that the cost for the real product is still there, and we have to work with that. For example, one of the other things we are working on through the Minister of ENR and his department, along with the Arctic Energy Alliance, I believe, is rebates on stoves and other equipment for homes. That, in the short term, can help individuals change over to a more efficient system that could help in their monthly costs as well.

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

QUESTION 503-16(2)  
FUEL PRICE REGULATION AND  
CONSUMER PROTECTION MEASURES

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Finance in regard to the issue I raised about how fuel prices have declined greatly but our communities still pay a very high price. I used the situation in Aklavik, where the fuel increased by 3 cents to \$1.76 a litre. To the Minister of Finance: do we have any consumer protection legislation in place that we can bring into force so that we can protect the consumers from these wide fluctuations in fuel prices?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the small communities POL brings in the fuel. The resupply has been completed. Those costs and prices are set according to what they pay at the time of the resupply. In other communities on the road system that can be resupplied through the free market, there's no regulatory regime in place to control prices, nor is there any on the books we have that I'm aware of.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the prices, especially with fuel commodities and gas, have no problem going up whenever there's a fuel increase or there's a hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico, but it seems like they have a real problem bringing down the prices when the price decreases.

Again, I'd like to ask the Minister, since we don't have that legislation, if that is something the government would consider looking at, knowing that this problem does have implications right across Canada. I think as a territory we're not exempt from that, especially when we do depend on provinces such as Alberta and elsewhere for our fuel commodities.

I'd like to ask the Minister: is that something this government's considering in regard to reducing the cost of living and also having a system in place to protect the residents of the Northwest Territories?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** The information I've seen from other jurisdictions where they've attempted to regulate gas prices just shows in the long term that there are no real long term benefits to the residents of that jurisdiction. In many cases it has a counterproductive influence, where if the prices aren't right or if they're too low, the folks who supply the fuel will just go to other jurisdictions where they can get a far better price. I don't think, on the face of it, that we want to be running down the path setting up those kinds of forces in the market system we currently have.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, maybe the Minister can tell us exactly what type of authority this government does have, because it doesn't seem like we are doing anything in this area. Does this government have responsibility in regard to consumer protection by way of a legislative authority?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** We have some consumer protection authority in terms of the issue of regulating fuel prices. It's not an area we are involved in. We do have the ability to set taxes on motive and non-motive fuel, but in terms of issuing instructions to the marketplace and putting in those types of price controls, it's not an area we are involved in.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, again I'd like to ask the Minister if he can seriously take a look into this. I think we as government have the responsibility to protect our consumers from these types of unjust acts by big industry. I think it is an issue right across Canada, an issue in regard to oil companies making \$30 billion profit. It seems like the consumer at the end of the day is the one getting the end of the pipe here. I'd just like to ask the Minister: will he seriously take a look at this and bring something back to the Legislative Assembly?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Again, I'd like to tell the Member that in fact the evidence that is there would indicate that this is not a way to productively try to impact the cost of fuel in terms of affordability. The Conference Board of Canada has come to that



conclusion, as have many esteemed economists, that in the long run there are major economic and social/political costs to that type of regime. At this point it's not an area we have an intention of getting actively involved in.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 504-16(2)  
ABSENCE OF PREMIER ROLAND AT  
COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION MEETING

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Premier. They get back to my Member's statement from earlier, where I spoke of the Premiers' meeting in Montreal that took place yesterday.

As I mentioned, the Northwest Territories has fought long and hard to actually get a seat at the national table with the other Premiers from around the country. I believe it was in 1992 when former Premier Nellie Cournoyea became the first Premier of the Northwest Territories to actually sit with the other Premiers.

I was listening, like many Northerners, to *Northbeat* last night. The Premier was interviewed on why he chose to stay here in Yellowknife and not attend the meeting that took place in Montreal. The first question I have for the Premier today is: why was he not at this important meeting in Montreal?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for that question. In fact, it gives me an opportunity to speak about the call I made to Premier Charest when the idea of the meeting first came together. I followed up with him yesterday after the meeting again to discuss some of the events that occurred and a direction being set and the call, in agreement with the Prime Minister, to hold a First Ministers' meeting before Christmas. We're hoping to get the dates on that soon.

The reason I didn't make the trip initially.... As I've said, I confirmed with Premier Charest that I was hoping to make attendance at that conference depending on, of course, what happens in the House. As we know, in a consensus style of government, the Cabinet's in a minority situation, and we must always weigh carefully the actions that are happening within the House. At that point, I decided my time would be best served here in our Legislature.

**Mr. Ramsay:** I thank the Premier for that. I'm glad he did get in touch with Premier Charest on the results of that meeting.

Like I said earlier, I think there is a good possibility that if the federal government starts running deficits, they'll start choosing between deep program cuts and.... I'd hazard a guess that they would also take a look at axing programs. Possibly equalization might be included in that. Again, I want to make sure that the Premier understands the gravity of not being at this meeting.

I want to ask him again: what exactly warranted his presence in the House yesterday so that he couldn't be in Montreal to discuss these key issues?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, I think the Member can answer that question by looking at the Hansard that was taking place, printed in this House, and what was happening. The fact is, in operating as we do, in a consensus style government we have to weigh the options of where we go and the influence we may have at a certain meeting. I kept in touch with the Chair of the Council of the Federation, Premier Charest, and followed up with him and will look to have another meeting with him directly in the weeks coming.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, I just want, maybe, to get the Premier to state on record: what exactly is his first priority? Is it the people of the Northwest Territories and the future of the Northwest Territories, or is it his constituents back in Inuvik?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, we know that once a Regular Member is elected to Cabinet, their constituents lose a certain amount of representation because of the new role that Ministers, including myself, play in representing the territory. The budget is a territorial document, and this House decides on that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question. Given the gravity of the situation, the financial meltdown globally and the possibility that the federal government may look at cuts to equalization going forward, I'm wondering: why wouldn't the Premier come to Members of the House and tell us, "I have to go to this meeting; I have to be at this meeting"? Why wasn't that quoted to us? Why does the Premier make that decision on his own to stay in the House and not attend this meeting?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, in making a decision as to whether to go to any meeting, whether it's provincial/territorial or FPT, in this situation one weighs all the options and tries to get as much information as possible. I was aware that there is going to be a First Ministers' meeting with the same subject matter: the economy and the impact it will have on Canada. At that next meeting we will have the Prime Minister there, and that

would lead to a more fulsome discussion about the initiatives that may be taken or may not be taken. That's what I weighed.

In fact, as well, we had communications go down the hall to let Members know that I was intending to go to that conference. But again, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, in weighing the actions that were happening within this Assembly, I had to make a decision as to whether to go or stay, and my decision was to stay.

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

QUESTION 505-16(2)  
DIESEL FUEL SHORTAGE  
IN WESTERN CANADA

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I talked in my Member's statement today about a concern about diesel fuel for transportation and the concern that shortage has caused. My question could apply to multiple Ministers, but I think maybe in this particular case I may ask the Premier for his perspective on the situation.

In this situation here we have a possibility of a shortage.... Well, actually, I shouldn't say possibility. We know there's a shortage in Western Canada. The question really is: when is this shortage going to creep up into the Northwest Territories?

I'd like to ask the Premier: from his perspective what can the Northwest Territories government, first, be informed about, what do they plan to do about it, and what role can we play in this situation?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We became aware even previously. Last year, for example, there was talk of a shortage across Western Canada. The announcement that the Member is speaking about was refinery issues in Southern Canada.

For our supply here in the North — for example, to our remote communities — that's resupplied by our Petroleum Products Division. Their fuel is up to max on the diesel side. For example as well, within the Power Corporation, at the Yellowknife facility, we have surplus supply there. We've taken the necessary steps and actions to protect ourselves here in the Northwest Territories.

We know, as well, from some of the discussion that last year Inuvik had some problems with resupply and worked that out with the bulk agent there, or Imperial Oil, in fact. I'm informed now that they have a good resupply as well.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that the supply won't affect the resupply process that happened already this summer. I mean, from a community perspective, knowing that you only get filled up once, maybe even twice a year if you're lucky, you're right: it has a significant impact. I'm glad that there's stability there.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are things like food that have to be delivered to the Northwest Territories through the trucking system. There is home heating fuel that has to be delivered as well — things along those lines. That's some of the issue that's being raised here, the concern on the street.

I'm just curious. From the government's perspective what can the government do to make sure that the food supply keeps moving if there starts to be a shortage that has an impact on that type of delivery?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things we've done in looking at the potential shortage is to make sure we've got our bases covered for our facilities and assets in communities. We would be prepared to work with the private sector if a scenario were to arise that there needed to be some movement there. Of course, we'd be working with that.

Mr. Speaker, the Member is talking about an "if" scenario, and it's pretty hard to look at that option. We haven't been contacted by any of the fuelling operations here — for example, in the capital — about any concerns.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I guess it's not so much of an "if" scenario as.... I mean, we plan EMOs for exactly these types of operations when something happens. I guess I'm really searching for the answer to how prepared the government is if this problem creeps into the Northwest Territories. Because, I mean, we get our food from places like Edmonton, Calgary and beyond, and that's a reality if that's a problem. If they can't fill up their trucks there to drive north, it affects the reality we live in here.

Mr. Speaker, that's the type of information I'm trying to get here. I'm not trying to embarrass anybody by any means. I'm just asking: are we prepared for that type of reality if this problem creeps up north, and is there any idea on how we deal with it?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** If something were to happen, it may be a reality. The fact is we have looked at our areas where we have direct responsibility. In fact, when there was an issue about some shortages in the higher parts of the territory last year, the Department of Public Works and Services looked at routes Over the Top to look at resupply from other areas to ensure there was no shortage in the Northwest Territories.

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

QUESTION 506-16(2)  
MINISTERIAL BENEFITS POLICY

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I believe it was, in the House — or this week, at least — a couple of documents were tabled with respect to the Ministerial Benefits Policy and also a report respecting benefits to Ministers under that policy for the fiscal year ended March 31. Every term I believe that there is an independent commission struck to look at Members' remuneration and benefits. I think that this commission allows for a cross-section of input and public participation for those who may wish to comment on Members' benefits and pay.

The Members of the Executive Council actually are entitled to somewhat different benefits, and I was wondering if the Premier could tell us, please: how are those benefits and policies set? Who gets to vote on that?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Executive Council, as well as the Legislative Assembly Act, covers a number of areas. The Executive piece is following work that was done by previous governments and put into place, in fact, to kick in with this the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

The work was done prior to this Assembly. It came into effect, and in fact, this tabling of this information is the first time we are putting it forward for information for the public.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** I thought that the Cabinet actually made decisions on policies reflecting Ministers' benefits. Anyway, moving on from there, I got the answer I thought was going to hear. I still don't really know what the answer is. I don't want to waste all four questions on the same topic, so moving on.

The capital living allowance for members of the Executive Council, I have no problem with that. Members are expected to live here on a full time basis, and that certainly requires a certain level of comfort and an amount of space. No problem. Home travel is absolutely reasonable. Members have got to go back to their constituencies when they serve on the Executive Council. But there are a few other benefits in here which I think are a little bit unusual. Cabinet Ministers are allowed to accrue sick leave and vacation leaves. I'd like to ask the Premier: what is the policy of this Executive Council with respect to actually paying people out for those benefits?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, we follow the same pattern as employees would have for annual leave, for example. Sick leave, though, is different. You can accrue that, but there is no payout at any time for that piece. Annual leave, there is payout for that, as there has been in previous Assemblies.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Certainly it did exist in previous Assemblies. Just to note the difference, though, Regular Members do not accrue vacation leave, and we certainly don't get paid out for it at the end of our term, but Cabinet Ministers do.

Mr. Speaker, also under the Ministerial Benefits Policy there is something called an entertainment allowance. It is a non-accountable \$1,500 annual allowance for duty related entertainment expenses. I would like to ask the Premier: is that over and above the already existing approximately \$1,000 a month that Members receive? So they would get the Members' \$1,000 non-accountable plus the Cabinet Ministers' \$1,500 non-accountable expense for entertainment?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, maybe I should take a better look at my Members' portion of benefits. The ministerial piece is \$1,500 for the year, and it covers other expenses that Members who are Ministers would incur in their duties, whether it is in the capital or when they are travelling, to cover off some of the additional costs that one would run across.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** I was wanting to know if it is over and above what Regular Members receive. I have to assume that it is, that the \$1,500 is separate and for ministerial entertainment, as opposed to MLA expenses in that area.

Mr. Speaker, these questions went all too quickly, but do Ministers also have access to the departmental budget, credit cards, allowances for such things as entertainment?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, if a Minister — I'll use ENR as an example — deals with a department issue and has a group of individuals or a conference, the department would pick up those costs on that side of it. The ministerial piece would be if the Minister himself were to meet with Members, for example, or Ministers from other jurisdictions on other related matters. But if a Minister is specifically meeting and that has been set up to deal with the department or deal with counterparts across the country on files within the department, the department would cover those costs.

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

QUESTION 507-16(2)  
GNWT ENERGY PRIORITIES FRAMEWORK

**Mr. Bromley:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on my Member's statement on the Energy Priorities Framework by asking the Minister who is the lead for energy about why transportation was completely missed out here. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars every decade subsidizing highways, highway transport, and costs are continuing to soar. Greenhouse gas emissions are continuing to increase. What are we doing outside the box? Why aren't we thinking outside the box, trying to lower our costs, coming up with low intensity greenhouse gas emission ways of transport and some long term solutions? Thank you very much.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. I guess I'll go to Mr. Robert McLeod.

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a number of initiatives underway that deal with the issue of energy initiatives and also mitigating climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The greenhouse gas strategy that is being developed by the government would be looking at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We all know that transportation is probably, as the Member indicated, the largest sector in terms of producing greenhouse gas emissions, so that is the area we would be looking at.

**Mr. Bromley:** I'm afraid I cannot thank the Minister for that; I didn't hear an answer there. Clearly, this is a source of greenhouse gas emissions. We are talking energy issues here. This is probably the biggest single source of increasing the cost of living; let's put it that way. What are we doing to come up with new ways of transportation that do not require hundreds of millions of dollars of investment every decade in highways and so on and that can actually reduce our costs? What are we doing outside the box that is creative and is actually going to decrease our costs and emissions from transportation?

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, we do have the ecoTrust. That was the program whereby we provided incentives to NWT residents to reduce their costs. In this case we were providing incentives to people who were purchasing vehicles that were fuel efficient, and certainly that is one area where we are helping people. The Energy Priorities document, we sent it out for discussion. We are seeking input from the general public, and certainly if it is seen as a gap, we would look at it. I should point out to the Member that with the ecoTrust program and energy conservation, our focus has shifted more to energy conservation within the home. That is where we are looking at providing most of our incentives.

**Mr. Bromley:** Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Minister for those comments. I don't want to detract from the Energy Priorities Framework, because I think there is some very good stuff here. I think the Minister has pointed at the home environment and buildings. There are some very good things happening there. But as he has pointed out, transportation is the biggest source of many of our problems with our cost of living. So I'm hoping that some real outside the box thinking can be done there, some fundamental solutions.

One of the things I found missing was the development of local expertise on implementing some of these energy solutions that are a bit new. Perhaps the Minister could comment on what sorts of programs we will get going to make sure that communities have access to expertise for putting up solar hot water heaters or what have you. So I will just leave it at that and let the Minister use his imagination to come up with his ideas.

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, that is an area.... We're at a disadvantage. There are shortages, but we have been working with the Arctic Energy Alliance, which has been providing a significant number of programs to fill that gap. As part of our energy priorities this is an area we want to look at. As well, we will be working with the municipalities and the NWT Association of Communities so we can find ways to provide that expertise. Certainly through some of the federal programs there are a number of initiatives that could assist.

**Mr. Bromley:** Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Minister for those comments. In the area of natural gas to communities for energy supplies, I'm wondering if the Minister would commit to giving serious effort to working with communities to come up with some sort of ultimate solutions rather than these interim fossil fuel solutions that could prove to be very expensive — leapfrogging, as many communities are choosing to do, to a renewable energy source — or at least giving that some thought and investigation.

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** Making natural gas available for communities is an area that we've been pursuing for some time now. Right when we first heard about oil and gas coming back to the Northwest Territories and people talking about pipelines, we commissioned studies to look at the potential for conversion to natural gas. Through the environmental assessment process we've indicated the need for the pipeline to provide for outtake so that we can convert communities along the pipeline right-of-way to natural gas. This is something we're interested in. Plus we've updated our studies that were done approximately six years ago, so we have more current information.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. A final short supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the comments on that. I realize that they are narrowly economic, but I think we have many more win-win situations we could find here.

My final question is on the Power Corporation. Would the Minister commit to leading this government and doing a comprehensive and thorough review of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, their work on the energy front, the possibility of restructuring and so on, to address many of the fundamental issues that we hear so much about from our constituents?

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** The Ministerial Energy Coordinating Committee is already working in that area.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

QUESTION 508-16(2)  
SAHTU REGIONAL WELLNESS  
HEALTH CENTRE

**Mr. Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services. I would like to know when the Minister is going to work with our stakeholders in the Sahtu to see the Sahtu regional health centre put on the capital acquisition plan.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** Mr. Speaker, I first of all would like to assure the Member that Health and Social Services and the government are pointing millions of dollars into the Sahtu region. I do appreciate that there are no substantial capital projects on the books for the Sahtu region. I'd be happy to see a needs study or an assessment of the region to see what their capital needs are and work through the new capital planning process with the Member.

**Mr. Yakeleya:** My people certainly would like to know where these millions of dollars are that have been pointed to the Sahtu. I have on the books for 2005–2006 \$8.1 million coming into Sahtu Health. In Hansard it has on Friday that they poured millions downtown into Yellowknife in terms of projects: a \$15 million dementia centre. We're asking if this government can put capital into our region to bring the standards of health care similar to downtown Yellowknife — for the Sahtu region to have a regional health and wellness centre that our region can enjoy, just like any other region in the Northwest Territories. We're tired of flying in and flying out and using Yellowknife and these types of conditions. We would like a regional health centre.

When will the Minister commit to seeing something on the books?

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** Mr. Speaker, I have not had a chance to actually go and see the facility and meet the Sahtu authority staff and leaders. I want to do that. I have not had a chance to do that as the Minister. Also, right now I don't have the information on what their needs are. In order for us to work toward capital planning and capital projects for Sahtu, we need to initiate that process. I'm making a commitment to the Member that I will look into that and work with the Member on that.

**Mr. Yakeleya:** I thank the Minister for making the effort to come to the Sahtu and talk to the stakeholders. The Minister has dealt with the Sahtu regional health board. You have talked to them. You have talked to them also as a Regular Member. I remember you coming to the Sahtu region. There's no difference. There are no changes in terms of our health centres, Minister Lee. In Tulita we're busting at the seams in terms of our health centre. We're getting two nurse practitioners in our region. Where are we going to put them? How are we going to have this facility? Where are they going to work in the facilities in our region? I think that if we can approve a \$12 million project in Inuvik for an office and storage centre, certainly we can do something for the Sahtu region.

Again, I would ask strongly of the Minister to meet with the stakeholders and put this on the plan. We can start that process here and give hope to the people. When can we put this on the plan so the region can have a regional health centre?

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the Sahtu regional health authority is new, young and vibrant. It's working hard to bring up the programs and services in the region. I'm willing to work with the authority as well as the Member to look at what we have in the Sahtu and what we need to work on, not only in the programming but also with respect to capital planning. I do make a commitment to the Member that I will ask the department to work with the Sahtu to see what their capital needs are. There are processes, step by step, that we need to follow, and I'm willing to begin that process.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. A final short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Mr. Yakeleya:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My former colleague Mr. Braden fought hard for the dementia centre. He fought hard for the dementia centre in Yellowknife. All of a sudden it's in the books, it's on the table, and \$15 million is spent. We have over the years been fighting for a centre in the Sahtu region. Now we have to go through the process to get a regional centre for the whole Sahtu region. We would like a piece of the pie in terms of the dollars coming in.

Again, I have seen elders get on the plane in terrible weather. Myself, I've experienced where we see people fly out to Edmonton or Norman Wells with sore teeth. I would say to the Minister: would she fight hard for the Sahtu people to see that we have a regional health centre in the Sahtu so that she can proudly stand up and say that we have one here, as she says for funding for the dementia centre in the Northwest Territories?

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** As the Member is aware, the dementia centre was debated and fought on in this House for about eight years. I am willing to make the commitment to the Member that I will look at what's in the books or not for the Sahtu region and that we will work to make sure that our O&M and capital budget is spent equitably. I have also made a commitment in this House that I will review programs and services for small communities with the objective to enhance what we can do and to work on empowering and building capacity in small communities and how we deliver our health and social services programs in our communities. There's a lot of work underway, and I'm looking forward to working with the Member on that.

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

QUESTION 509-16(2)  
CENTRALIZATION OF  
EQUIPMENT IN REGIONAL OFFICES

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. It's in regard to the human resource officers in the Mackenzie Delta region — more importantly, the ones in my riding. I know I've raised in Committee of the Whole that these people are basically not given opportunities by way of training. The equipment they're working with is hand-me-down. In some cases it's practically junk. I have received pictures in this particular matter of the equipment these people are having to operate. I'm told that most of the radios and whatnot that are in those offices in our communities are now being moved to the Inuvik office. For me, the whole idea of building capacity in communities is to make sure we have the infrastructure and the people and provide them with equipment to do their jobs. So I would like to ask the Minister: why is it that there is now a trend in place where we're moving equipment out of communities to the regional office in Inuvik?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The trend and ongoing commitment of the government for Environment and Natural Resources is to make sure that our offices are adequately provided for, that staff have equipment,

that staff are given training, that we hire local whenever possible. The Member has raised some concerns. It occurred in his constituency in Fort McPherson in regard to the equipment and some of the staffing issues. We've already had meetings, as I've indicated to the Member, and we're going to make sure that those issues that have been identified will be remedied.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, it's not only unique to Fort McPherson. This situation also occurs in Aklavik, and I know for a fact in regard to the people in Tsiigehtchic, for the majority of their supplies that they need, they have to run into Inuvik, pick it up and come back into the field. I think we are putting officers in a dangerous situation where they are all around the road with no radio communication in their vehicles, vehicles that are over 15 years old and snowmobiles that basically should be put into a museum.

I would like to ask the Minister again: why is this trend continuing to take place? Basically this government has accrued that capital in this House for those particular communities. That capital could be allocated to those communities, and now the newer equipment's been taken out of communities, and they've been given the older equipment which was at the regional office. So I would like to ask the Minister: how are you investigating this, and exactly what are you going to do about it?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, we are checking into these concerns. In fact, we've been aware of the concerns for some time. What we are going to do about it is we are going to take steps to remedy the issue as it pertains to the staff and to the equipment and vehicles.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, I believe also that to be fair to our aboriginal employees, especially in the Inuvik region.... They are unfairly treated when it comes to training dollars. Other individuals or non-aboriginals are able to go southern places to take training, but our employees in the Inuvik region are told to go see if they can take a course at Arctic College in Inuvik. Yet other employees are basically allowed to go to southern courses. I would like to ask the Minister: why is this government allowing mishandling by way of how we treat our employees, aboriginal versus non-aboriginal, in the Inuvik regional office?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** We place as a department and as a government a very high priority on staff training and educational opportunities for all of our staff. We are working very closely with the colleges. There are also a lot of other courses, both within the government and outside of government, that our staff can benefit from. The Member has made an assertion here that there is an unfair distribution. I will ask the department to provide me with training that was not

accessed by the staff in the Inuvik region over the last year or so to see what, in fact, the information tells us and if there are any inequities. Then we will move to address those inequities, whatever they may be.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final short supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to ask the Minister: are there any cultural enhancement programs put in place for new employees, non-aboriginal employees, in the Inuvik region so that they can understand the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit culture and the people that they have to serve and not to basically assume things without understanding the culture of the people in that region? I would like to ask the Minister: do they provide cultural enhancement programs to new employees in regard to the culture of the people that they're serving?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** There are orientation packages provided to employees, part of which, I believe, is a cross-culture awareness component.

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

QUESTION 510-16(2)  
IMPACT OF LOWER FUEL PRICES  
ON GENERAL RATE APPLICATION

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation. Obviously, the world price of oil is down — actually 40 per cent in the last six months — and the GRA that's underway, the General Rate Application, is premised on the fact that oil prices were inflated and the cost of doing business for the Power Corporation was such that they had to go out and get some more money from the consumers. That rate increase was pegged at 19 per cent. Given the fact that oil prices have recently dropped — today they are at about \$74 a barrel — what will this do to the GRA, and will the Power Corporation please cease and desist on the GRA?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Power Corporation General Rate Application or the rate rider application that is being looked at right now, that the Member's pointed out, is to deal with the past expenses of the Power Corporation on fuel prices. In fact, it goes back quite a number of months, so it's a makeup for loss of money that was looked at when they went through the general rate rider application over a year ago. So that makes up some of the issues not for going ahead.... It is more

dealing with the costs that the Power Corporation had to deal with.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, I can understand and appreciate some of the previous costs. A lot of previous costs, as well, were because of bonuses paid to the senior management at the Power Corporation. I agree with my colleagues over here that are calling for a full scale review of the Power Corporation. I believe that they should find the way and the means within to pay for the fuel that they have had to pay for in the past and the costs that they have to pay for the past and not go and try to get it out of the pockets of residents in the Northwest Territories.

Again, I want to ask the Minister: given the fact that oil is \$74 a barrel, will the government instruct the Power Corporation to drop the current GRA and the rate riders?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, I fully understand the need to take action when it comes to power generation in the Northwest Territories. Hopefully, as we look at the initiative as the Assembly, we'll be able to look at options. I know that through the Ministerial Energy Coordinating Committee we're looking at bringing a paper forward that looks at all options that we should look at here in the Northwest Territories.

As for the General Rate Application that is before the PUB right now, one of the other circumstances that we have to realize is the PUB has placed, for example, a 15 per cent cap on increases or decreases — more on the increases side for the costs. For example, if in one of our communities the actual cost of power generation is in the 30 per cent range from the previous rate application, then they're capped at that 15 per cent, and that further impacts the delivery throughout the rest of the territory. So there are a number of implicating factors here, and as I stated, much of this cost on the fuel situation is going out to recapture costs that have already been spent by the Power Corporation. I will get the full details for the Member on this.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Time for question period has expired; however, I will allow the Member a short supplementary. Mr. Ramsay.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Premier for that response. You know, as an MLA you get questions all the time from constituents, and one of the questions that I've been getting numerous times lately.... I would like somebody to explain this to me. That's why I'm going to ask the Minister today to explain this to me and explain to the residents in the Northwest Territories. How is it that every time we turn around, conservation is pushed on residents? Conservation of power, conservation of energy.

The residents in our territory are doing what they can to cut back on power. They're replacing their appliances; they're driving smaller cars; they're doing what they can. But that's on one hand, and then on the other hand, the Power Corporation is going to go out and increase power rates 19 per cent. The two don't correlate. I would like the Minister to try to explain to the residents of the Northwest Territories how this is. If we're using less power, how come they are going to charge us more for it?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** The process that is laid before the Power Corporation and how it has to operate.... It goes through a very thorough review, and in fact it costs a substantial amount of money when it comes to putting the application before the PUB and justifying the costs that it operates under and establishing its rates and then going forward to see if it can get the approval.

As you look at the annual costs that we have to face here in the Northwest Territories, the Power Corporation is going through the same. For example, whenever a new package is negotiated with the employees, that has an impact. When refuelling happens in our remote communities, that has an impact. As well, replacing existing infrastructure has an impact.

One of the things we have to consider in all of this is that although we look at alternatives, we're still working within a framework that's quite structured, that leaves little room for thinking outside the existing process. I think that's where we come in as Members of the Assembly: to look outside the box, as I heard a Member state earlier, and look at options that truly can benefit our community members.

When we talk about conservation, the less power used is definitely a good thing and helps us. Because if there's more population in the community or more houses, then at times we have to add an additional generation plant to be able to provide that power source, which means that community is impacted. If we can reduce that just by planning, we can limit the impact.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final short supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to ask just one final question, I guess, about fuelling. Now that prices are low, I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation: why can't we go out there? I'll bet that the cost of fuel does go up in the near future. Why can't we go out today and buy the fuel that we need for this winter and for next summer's resupply? We can buy fuel that far in advance. I think that even if we have to borrow the money, if we can ensure that power rates in the communities are going to stay at a lower rate, we

should be going out there and buying that fuel today to ensure lower rates for our constituents.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, the process the Power Corp has looked at.... It has in fact joined the Department of Public Works and Services' Petroleum Products Division so that they can bring the volumes to a larger amount, thereby seeing some additional savings. We are topped up in most communities because of a resupply scenario by barge, which has to be done in our spring and summer operation. Unfortunately, this year it was one of the highest prices we faced, and that's an issue that we're all going to have to face as the colder temperatures hit us. We're looking at options where we can try to lessen the impact on people in the Northwest Territories, and we'll continue to do so.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

### Written Questions

#### QUESTION 40-16(2) TRAINING COSTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a written question regarding training costs in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

- 1) How many ENR employees, identified by position title and community of residence, have taken training courses in the last three years?
- 2) What courses have been taken, and what was the course location and cost?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

#### QUESTION 41-16(2) FUEL SPILLS RESPONSE PLAN

**Mr. Yakeleya:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My written question is directed to Hon. Minister Miltenberger, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

- 1) Will the Minister develop a plan of action that includes community renewable resource councils as part of types of fuel spill response plans?
- 2) Can the Minister provide an explanation as to why it took four and a half hours to have his officials at the scene of the Rocky Island barge fuel spill and an explanation on why they did not stay at the scene until the barge was safely secure from further spills?



- 3) Has the department conducted, in conjunction with local renewable resource councils, an environmental impact study in Wrigley and Tulita on the impacts because of the "unknown amount of spills?"

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, Mr. Robert McLeod.

### Tabling of Documents

**Hon. Robert McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Workers' Compensation Board Northwest Territories and Nunavut Annual Report 2007.

Document 110-16(2), Workers' Compensation Board NWT and Nunavut Annual Report 2007, tabled.

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** I wish to table the following document entitled Annual Report on Official Languages 2007-2008. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

Document 111-16(2), Annual Report of Official Languages 2007-2008, tabled.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Beverage Container Program Annual Report 2007-2008. Thank you.

Document 112-16(2), Beverage Container Program Annual Report 2007-2008, tabled.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

### Motions

#### MOTION 24-16(2) TIERED VEHICLE REGISTRATION SYSTEM (MOTION CARRIED)

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS climate change, as a result of greenhouse gas emissions, is one of the most serious environmental, economic and political challenges of our time;

AND WHEREAS global climate change is predicted to result in significant impacts in the North, some of which are already being felt;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories, through the NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy, has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 10 per cent below 2001 levels by 2011;

AND WHEREAS the Northwest Territories per capita greenhouse gas emissions are over 50 per cent higher than the national average and amongst the world's highest;

AND WHEREAS the transportation sector emits 46 per cent of greenhouse gases in the Northwest Territories, which represents the largest single source of emissions;

AND WHEREAS the use of fuel efficient vehicles can contribute to a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories has the authority to establish vehicle registration fees;

NOW THEREFORE I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that this Legislative Assembly recommends implementing a tiered vehicle registration system where fees are based on the fuel economy rating of vehicles, thereby encouraging ownership of more fuel-efficient vehicles and supporting the overall reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories.

**Mr. Speaker:** The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion, the honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Transportation is in the early stages of designing and implementing a new digital vehicle registration system to be used throughout the Northwest Territories. Given that we're still in the development phase, now's the best time to consider a change in how we register vehicles in the NWT so that can be incorporated into the system.

I believe that vehicle registration fees in the Northwest Territories should be changed from a flat rate to a graduated emission based system. This strategy will help the Northwest Territories and Canada meet its targets for greenhouse gas reduction and achieve the goal set by the NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy in 2007. The proposal is an opportunity for the Northwest Territories to be a leader in regulating vehicles to support the immediate need for climate change mitigation.

Mr. Speaker, changing our registration fee policy to a graduated emission based system meets the goals set out in the NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy by increasing the awareness of climate change and the need to control emissions, engaging all

Northerners who register a vehicle and promoting the use of more efficient equipment and technology. This is a practical action that can be taken immediately with long term results of sustained reduction in emissions. These alone are strong reasons for the GNWT to consider changing our vehicle registration policy to reflect our priority of climate change mitigation.

The GNWT's strategic plan identifies the need to coordinate efforts to ensure sustainable development. If development increases at its current rate, the Northwest Territories will triple its emissions within the next three to five years. We can counter this by promoting the use of environmentally responsible vehicles.

A new emission based registration system would also advance current initiatives already in place by both the territorial and federal governments. It gives us an opportunity to work proactively with residents, communities and industries on the mitigation of climate change. In addition, now that the ecoAUTO rebate program offered by the federal government has been cancelled effective December 31, this could take its place as an incentive for Northerners to buy environmentally responsible vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has announced that it will introduce new regulations for fuel consumption for cars and light trucks starting in 2011. The new standard will meet or exceed the one proposed by the United States of 6.7 litres per hundred kilometres. Some provinces, such as British Columbia, will also introduce new vehicle emission strategies in their spring session — report standards that approach the state of California's proposed 5.3 litres per hundred kilometres.

The transportation sector accounts for roughly 25 per cent of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions and 18 per cent of the emissions in the Northwest Territories. The NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy identifies that if 10 per cent of the NWT vehicles were replaced by mid-sized hybrids, emissions would be reduced significantly.

While greenhouse gas emissions for vehicles is a complex problem, changing our registration fees to directly address emissions would be a step in the direction of territorial and federal climate change mitigation goals. It would also make it easier for Northerners to adapt to future federal regulations.

The Northwest Territories does not perform emission testing on vehicles, nor does it currently have a graduated registration policy in place like most other jurisdictions. The majority of Canadian provinces have tiered registration systems, which classify vehicles in a variety of ways. Some do it by weight. Some jurisdictions, such as B.C., tend to follow the state of California's tailpipe emissions approach, dividing their fleet of vehicles into two

groups: passenger cars and light duty trucks, and larger trucks and SUVs.

The United Kingdom classifies its vehicles by brands with carbon dioxide per kilometre and charges fees at a rate that averages one imperial pound per gram of carbon dioxide per kilometre for most vehicles. Every litre of fuel burned emits approximately 2,300 grams of carbon dioxide. Owners of alternative fuel vehicles or fuel efficient vehicles such as the Toyota Prius, which consumes on average about 4 litres per hundred kilometres, are charged an almost negligible fee of up to 35 British pounds, or \$72 Canadian, per year. Vehicles cost up to 400 British pounds, or \$822 Canadian, a year if they register vehicles that emit 226 grams of carbon dioxide or more per kilometre.

I'm not suggesting we go to the same extreme as the United Kingdom; I believe that we should rate vehicles in the Northwest Territories by how many litres it takes to go 100 kilometres. This is easy to calculate, as that information is included in manufacturers' specifications.

In discussing this motion with other Members, some have indicated they're concerned that the graduated system would affect small, isolated communities negatively — communities where the majority of vehicles are often four wheel drive pickup trucks. In small, isolated communities these vehicles are appropriate given the road conditions, where small vehicles low to the ground would only last a couple of weeks.

A graduated registration system does not have to be a significant disadvantage to small communities. One way to address this concern is to have a two-tiered instead of a multi-tiered system. For example, this government could implement a system where vehicles ranging from better than nine litres per hundred kilometres in the city — vehicles like the Toyota Prius, the Ford Focus and any other small cars and hybrids — could be charged less than the existing rate of \$89 per year, somewhere around maybe \$55 to \$65. Vehicles ranging from 9.1 litres per hundred kilometres or worse in the city — vehicles such as the Ford F150, Chevy Silverado and most SUVs — would be charged the existing rate of \$89 per year, which results in no change in the majority of the smaller communities.

As a note, I've recently travelled to Fort Resolution, Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Simpson, Fort McPherson, Délínê, Inuvik, Norman Wells and Behchoko, and at each of these communities, with the exception of Délínê and Fort McPherson, I saw a large number of vehicles that would definitely fall into the lower registration category. With respect to Délínê and Fort McPherson, I wasn't there long enough, and I didn't have an opportunity to look around town, but I wouldn't be surprised if there

were vehicles in those communities that fall into the lower rate criteria.

This is a sort of registration system that allows Northerners to choose which vehicles they'd wish to buy but also gives them incentive to make environmentally responsible choices. If this sort of action is taken by other jurisdictions, it will put significant pressure on the auto industry to develop products that meet the need for cost effective, environmentally responsible vehicles.

Basing territorial registration fees on emissions is consistent with the GNWT's strategic plan for an environment that will sustain present and future generations, the GNWT's target for reduced emissions by 10 per cent by 2011, and the federal government's new standards for vehicles. It allows for flexibility and choice while still promoting environmental responsibility. It is an opportunity for the Northwest Territories to lead the way on climate change mitigation and will result in sustained long term reduction of emissions. I'm putting this motion forward and supporting it because I think it's the right thing to do.

I'm not saying what the tiered rates should be. I believe that if this motion is passed, the Department of Transportation should conduct research into other jurisdictions, develop a reasonable rate structure that factors in the reality of small communities, and bring that proposed rate structure back to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure for consideration and debate. I encourage Cabinet, as well as Members on this side of the House, to support this motion and demonstrate that we care about our environment and are committed to meeting our targets for greenhouse gas reductions and achieving the goals set by the NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy in 2007.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. I'll go the seconder of the motion, the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seconded the motion proudly because I believe in this initiative. My wife and I bought a hybrid vehicle two years ago. I can tell you that when we were there, the salesperson said: where do you live? I said: we live in Yellowknife. He felt at that time, due to the analysis, that a hybrid vehicle might not necessarily give us the best payback. But that's not how we run our family. We said that this is a smart, economical choice, and we're making choices because we're thinking of tomorrow as opposed to just today.

I would encourage any incentives that could be brought forward by this government that would encourage people to choose eco-friendly decisions. They make sense. Every step in the right direction — with a carrot approach, as opposed to a stick

approach — is the right way to do to this. This approach, by asking for a tiered system, says clearly that our government believes that if you're making smart choices, better choices for the environment.... Let's help reward people with that type of choice.

In closing, I want to emphasize that a northern made system does not necessarily mean we have to penalize the existing vehicles that are out there. It's finding a way to encourage people to use and manage their choices just a little better. That's why I'm in full support of redeveloping a new vehicle registration system that is sound and makes sense in the North.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion, the honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to address you. I want to start by thanking the Member for Great Slave for bringing this forward.

The context within which he brings this forward is important. Climate change is happening throughout the world. It's a global issue. We know what some of the costs are. We're starting to have an idea of what some of the costs will be. We're talking about loss of some of our wildlife species and fish, some of our reliable water sources and perhaps, most importantly, our climate. Our climate is becoming very unreliable and relatively extreme compared to what it has been.

There are also global impacts associated with climate change. The contribution of vehicles is probably the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions. I think this is a good motion in that it starts us towards thinking about that and making wise choices when we purchase our vehicles.

I think we have a responsibility as a government to provide leadership on this and, certainly, to provide a stable and safe environment in the future. That's uncertain at this point given climate change, although we have a small window of opportunity to address that.

I again regard this as a modest but very symbolic step in our work to address climate change. I want to recognize that this is put together by this Member as a step that would benefit all the people of the Northwest Territories. It would signal a new awareness and progressive approach to becoming responsible global citizens within the context of our own communities.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the motion, the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not be supporting the motion. I believe this motion is going a little too far, especially with the impact it's going to have on our small communities where we depend on the good old pickup trucks to get around. Those are our work trucks; they're not just a luxury item. In most cases we do have potholes. We don't have just a few speed bumps on the way. Most of our highways are gravel and rough. I think someone with a hybrid trying to operate under that condition, or even a Lexus for that matter, will have a real problem in navigating themselves on the roads we have to travel on.

It's important to realize that this is just one tax of many taxes that we see on the horizon. Until we know what the picture is in regard to the global issues by way of enforcing this type of legislation, but not imposing it strictly on the type of livelihood that you have or where you live, and not having the luxury of driving on paved roads....

I think you also have to realize that there are 12,000 truckloads that drive up our highway systems to the diamond mines, yet nothing in this legislation is going to affect that industry. They're shipping 12,000 truckloads of diesel fuel to these diamond mines, and nothing's been done in that case. I think it's important to realize we have some bigger polluters out there than little Joe and Mary trying to run up the hills to get a load of wood.

I think it's important that this government takes a comprehensive approach in regard to these different initiatives of tax increases, raising fuel taxes, or considering alternative tax implications. At the end of the day the bottom line for people living in small communities is what effect this has on the high cost of living that's already in place. We pay the highest price in regard to fuel; we pay a fuel tax on top of that. We also pay in regard to heating fuel. We're nailed with another tax on our heating fuel. I think it's important to realize that in what little way this was intended.... You have to calculate the cumulative effect of all taxes, not just this one that's being presented.

At this time I will be voting against the motion.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. To the motion, the honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My colleague brought forward a worthy motion with many positive points. Regretfully, the point that affects me and my constituents is that it increases the cost by further registration. I cannot support this motion.

The Members have spoken about the benefit to all NWT residents. Once again, I have to disagree with my colleagues; it is not benefiting all the NWT residents. I've got a constituency with many small

communities and road systems, and they have to depend on the bigger vehicles to move around, to move their goods. In fact, many of my communities don't even have a consistent store, so they do have to travel quite a bit.

Having the benefits of a smaller vehicle is just not advantageous to them. It's not a choice for them. They do have to have these larger vehicles in order to get around. In the urban centres — where you have nice roads and you're using it daily and you have a choice — it's probably a necessity that you move to smaller vehicles to do your running around from one end of Yellowknife to the other, to do your grocery shopping and move your kids around. But in the smaller communities there's just not that kind of environment that's conducive to this type of change in our legislation.

Some of the points — that the Department of Transportation should be researching this type of thing — I agree with, but by bringing it forward in the motion, I just cannot support it in this form.

Another thing is that Members made an issue of climate change and the ability of our constituents to think green. All those are good points. Again, for my constituency it's not a choice. It becomes an issue of cost and how it impacts their pocketbooks. With those points I just cannot support this motion. I will be voting against it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion, the honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Great Slave for bringing forward the motion that's before us today. I agree with the principle of the motion. Being the chair of EDI, any proposed changes to registration from the Department of Transportation would be vetted through the committee. I think a lot of the concerns — and concerns I share with Members.... I am not going to support any increase, especially in the smaller communities, for operating a vehicle. That's just something I wouldn't condone.

If we do move to something like this, I could see folks who want to buy a hybrid or want to buy a more fuel efficient smaller vehicle being given a break on the registration fees. I can't see myself supporting any increase to registration fees for vehicles in the Northwest Territories. I could see us lowering them for the more fuel efficient vehicles.

In the smaller communities, like some of my colleagues were saying, there isn't much of a choice. The roads are such that you need a truck. A truck is a way of life in small communities for people who are out harvesting caribou or on the land. They need a big vehicle. And for transporting their families in the small communities, a small vehicle is just not going to do it. There are potholes.

I've been to a number of small communities myself, and the roads are oftentimes a sad state.

Again, I want to say that I do support the motion in principle. To the Members who are opposing the motion before us today, I want them to take some satisfaction in that all of this, if it happens, is going to be vetted through committee. There will be ample opportunity to discuss this again.

Again, to the principle of the motion I do agree, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be supporting the motion.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the motion, the honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to indicate at the outset that I am in support of this motion, and then to the principle of the motion that has been mentioned by my colleague before me.... I think I'd like to make some comments, though, in relation to some of the arguments that have been presented already and try to counter them.

I also feel that there should not be an increase to registration fees in small communities, and I don't believe that's what this particular motion presents. It presents, simply, the possibility of implementing a tiered registration system. It does not say that registrations will increase. We're not discussing the implementation here; we're merely discussing the principle of this particular motion.

I think that a tiered system will allow us to accommodate regional differences. I fully understand that we have regional differences and that in Tulita it's far easier to drive with a truck than to drive with a small car on the roads that exist there. I agree with that. But I think a tiered system will allow us to maintain current registration fees at the level they are at now and give some sort of a break for people who wish to.... It will give them an incentive to take care of the environment and look at purchasing a more fuel efficient vehicle.

I have to say that, in my mind, there are large vehicles, which would be a truck that's, say, an F-150, and there are gigantic vehicles. I think the intent of this motion is to increase fees for gigantic vehicles. I think there's a full understanding on the part of Members that an F-150 is a fairly common vehicle in the communities, and it probably will survive the roads that exist in the communities and will take them from one to the other. There's no need in most communities for the gigantic vehicle — even for those with large families.

I think that this particular motion will supplement the ecoAUTO rebate program that we have in place and that it will encourage people to limit their greenhouse gas emissions. I think that's a good thing. I think that's something we should keep front

and centre of our minds all the time, and I don't know that we do that.

I do think it's time we take responsibility for our own energy use. It's a mentality we have to keep hammering away at. I think most people, to a certain extent, have a little bit of it, but it's in the back of our brain as opposed to the front of our brain. This is just one more tool we can use to get people to be conscious of what they're doing.

I think I'll quit before I lose my voice.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. To the motion, the honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

**Hon. Michael McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the comments of the Members on this issue. It is a very important issue, and it's been an issue that the Department of Transportation has been looking at for some time in looking at the options that are possible within the area.

Given the location of where we live in the world — in the Northwest Territories — it's important that we recognize we're going to be the most impacted by climate change. It's important that we do our share and lead by example.

Our government in the last while has been working hard to provide programs to provide incentives to reduce the cost of energy and promote energy efficiency for our homes and for our businesses. We've heard a lot about different ways to do that, and vehicles should be no different. We've really been working towards seeing what other jurisdictions are doing. We've done a scan on all the other jurisdictions across the country and how they work with the vehicle registration fee structures. A tiered approach, of course, is usually based on vehicle fuel consumption. But that's just one of many options. Other jurisdictions are looking at a number of other things.

Of the 13 jurisdictions that we looked at, seven do not offer any type of incentives for fuel efficiency. Others do, however, based on different ways to calculate that. Some are based on vehicle weight, others are based on cylinder displacement, and some other jurisdictions offer a rebate on registration and insurance for vehicles that qualify for federal government programs.

Right now I wanted to inform the House that we are looking at a number of options that include a tiered registration system. We'd be glad to share our findings with all the Members of this House. As this motion is to provide direction to our government, Cabinet will not be voting on it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. To the motion, the honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Mr. Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, the challenges before us in terms of climate change and the greenhouse emissions have certainly been brought to the forefront of people in the last couple of years, especially with the winter roads and the ice crossings. Even being in Fort Providence last weekend.... I talked about being on the river with my father-in-law. He set a net, and he was saying, "You know, at this time of the year we should have ice coming down the river here. How come there's no ice on the river? The weather has really been changed quite a lot for us."

We know our challenges as leaders in the community. The elders having a difficult time in the evening: what kind of weather is it going to be the next day in terms of reading the weather? Climate change is right in our face.

I want to say thank you to the Member for continuing to raise the issue here in terms of the challenges, which for us are very true in many different aspects.

Mr. Speaker, our biggest polluters — as Mr. Krutko, the Member for Mackenzie Delta, talked about — are the diamond mines and the amount of traffic that comes through Yellowknife to bring the fuel up to the diamond mines so they can produce diamonds in the Northwest Territories. Two big factors, in terms of the greenhouse emissions here, are the diamond mines and the trucks that come up to deliver supplies to them. I think this motion should be looked at again in terms of how we tackle these two big issues.

The NWT Hydro Strategy talks about the diamond mines. They talk about putting a road into the diamond mines to reduce the amount of traffic in the North. Things like that should be really looked at.

DOT is one of our biggest contributors in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. I know they have done some work in terms of how they have reduced emissions by their use of the facilities in the North and by the number of vehicles they have on the road here. That's something that should strongly come back to this government, talking about how we reduce the transportation initiative in terms of eliminating some of the greenhouse gas here.

I have an issue with this, because in some of our smaller communities there is no proper garage in terms of looking at how we use our vehicles. If we want a vehicle, sometimes our roads are not equipped for those vehicles. In my communities they talk about the use of vehicles, and what's needed in there, as you said, is the F-150. Sometimes we have large families, and the high

cost of living makes it so that we all need to travel to some of the communities to do some shopping.

Mr. Speaker, in my community we don't have very many roads. On some of the small roads in our communities we travel around and around and around. In other regions they can go to different areas, but they are only lucky when the window opens up in January until the end of March, just to get out here.

A two tier system should look at all transportation. Look at the barges that come down the Mackenzie River and how much diesel they use in NTCL super barges arriving in the North. They use a lot of that. Look at the airplanes. We need to look at a lot.

I understand where the Member is going, but first I think we should look at it closely in terms of how we go about it. What we need to look at is how this is impacting some of our small communities and have some time to think about this.

Mr. Speaker, with the price of gas \$1.69 a litre in Tulita, when that price went up again, a lot of people were talking about how we get fuel efficiency vehicles in lieu of the gas guzzlers to be had. We talked to the companies who sell these vehicles down at Hay River and Inuvik. There is a very fine balance in terms of personal choice and consciousness of climate change.

Again, we have large families. They all want to travel together. I don't think we can afford another vehicle to travel with them. We thought the things that need to be considered.... I think breaks should be given to the people who are on the winter road system. They should get a break and a discount on registration for travelling on that road system. Something like that should be looked at.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm not going to support the motion. I think it's a worthy cause, but we should have some more discussions. I think our people are going to be impacted in our communities if we start implementing this. I know if we start implementing this discussion here, a lot of investment can go into discussion and research. I think it needs to be brought to the community or to the House for some more discussion before we look into something like that. It could be beneficial to the people in the North. Right now I think the diamond mines and the trucking companies that are using more should be the ones who should be paying the types of prices, if we're looking at something like this.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion? I'll allow the mover of the motion some closing comments. Mr. Abernethy.

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, maybe my initial opening comments were a little on the long side and people stopped listening to me

halfway through. In no way, shape or form does this motion suggest that vehicles in small communities should have a higher registration rate. It doesn't say that. It doesn't suggest that. If that's what you think, I'm sorry, but that's definitely not what it's saying.

It does actually provide some incentive and encourage people to buy more fuel efficient vehicles. There may be a lower rate to those individuals, but certainly not a higher rate for those individuals in the small community driving, as Ms. Bisaro pointed out, the F-150.

I think it's very important for us to be leaders and not followers, and this is an opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories. I know that there's a lot that needs to be done, and this is just one small step. I'm glad to hear the Minister responsible indicate that there is research underway. I think that's a good step, but I also think passing this motion is important. It's so important, in fact, that I think I'm going to request a recorded vote on this one. I'm also going to request and strongly encourage the Premier to allow Cabinet members a free vote on this motion so that we can all demonstrate our individual commitment to the environment and move forward in the best interests of the people of the Northwest Territories.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The Member is requesting a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those abstaining from the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Robert McLeod, Mr. Bob McLeod.

**Mr. Speaker:** Results are of the votes: six for, four against, seven abstentions.

Motion carried.

**Mr. Speaker:** Colleagues, I have two further motions on the order paper for today. The chair is going to call a short break before we proceed to the next motion.

The House took a short recess.

The House resumed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Back to Orders of the Day. Item 16, motions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MOTION 25-16(2)  
FOOD MAIL AUDIT PROGRAM  
(MOTION CARRIED)

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

WHEREAS, the Government of Canada has operated the Food Mail Program for many years;

AND WHEREAS the program now costs approximately \$50 million annually to administer, with those costs increasing on a yearly basis;

AND WHEREAS the intent of the Food Mail Program is to subsidize the high costs of groceries in small northern Canadian communities by reducing the cost to ship healthy food items north;

AND WHEREAS there have been many instances over the years of abuse and poor management of that program;

AND WHEREAS many people suggest that the Government of Canada is unintentionally covering the costs of shipping poor food choices such as soda pop and potato chips to northern communities;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada is presently evaluating and reviewing that program;

AND WHEREAS it is important to the health and well-being of all northerners that the \$50 million being spent on the delivery of the Food Mail Program be used for the purposes for which it is intended and that the program benefits as many northerners as possible;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that this Assembly communicate its desire for the Government of Canada to undertake a full and detailed audit of the Food Mail Program in order to determine exactly what food items and which clients are currently being subsidized in order to improve program practices and accomplish the stated government objective of contributing towards healthy diets in the north.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion, the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the motion speaks for itself as to the merits of why this should be taken on. I want to thank the seconder, Mr. Jackie Jacobson of Nunakput, for seconding this.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is very important. I've been made aware through a number of sources that the Food Mail Program is probably not used regularly in the context of being used properly and as efficiently as possible. When push comes to shove, at times the good, healthy food tends to get pushed aside for the less healthy food. That's a shame.

Although the federal government at this time is doing a review of the program, to my knowledge and research so far they're not auditing the actual food that is being shipped up. Mr. Speaker, in times like this when we're always worried about what type of food people are eating and whether they are eating properly and whatnot, we want to make sure that we're getting the best value we can for this program.

Mr. Speaker, I won't speak at length to this, because as I said, the motion itself clearly states that it needs to be evaluated to make sure it's running properly. That's really the intent: to make sure that things like milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables are getting to the people of the North at the best price possible. That's the intent of the Food Mail Program: to make sure that the transportation cost is reduced as low as possible so food gets on the shelves of good working Northerners and they can afford to buy these types of things in that environment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues and thank the Assembly for this motion going in.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion, the seconder of the motion, Mr. Jacobson.

**Mr. Jacobson:** Mr. Speaker, today I'm happy to be supporting, as seconder, the motion on the Food Mail Program. Not all constituents can use this program. The high cost of food in our communities, our elders having to pay the high cost of food that's available, which is half-rotten half the time, for produce and stuff like that.... I think it's a shame that larger families have to pay such a high cost of living due to caribou shortages and restrictions to hunting. We're having to rely on Alberta beef.

I think this a really good thing we're doing. I'm in full support of it. The local stores are being held accountable for the pricing, not only the stores but the airlines as well. It's making sure we get somebody on this as a watchdog, making sure that the people, our constituents, who this is mostly affecting, get what's coming to them in the pricing.

I thank my colleagues, and I hope everybody supports this.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. To the motion, the honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

**Hon. Michael McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a comment that we have had a number of discussions with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada regarding this program, which is an important program for communities across the North. We have 17 communities in the Northwest Territories that qualify.

As the Member has indicated, this is a \$40 million to \$50 million program. However, the bulk of the investment for this program goes into Nunavut and Nunavik. We get a small percentage. I think last year we got about \$1.4 million of that revenue coming into our communities.

We've made a number of recommendations over the years to change how some of the program is run and operated, including the point of origin for shipments to allow them to be consolidated at any southern point. We've also asked that the airlines themselves be allowed to administer this program.

The review has started. It had started in the life of the previous government prior to the federal election. That has really brought the whole review to a standstill. We're expecting that the new Minister appointed will pick it up again. We do have a northern representative — his name is Graeme Dargo — who is leading the NWT consultations.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly respect the request for an audit. We all agree that there should be best value in this program. Again, since this is a recommendation to the government, our Cabinet will be abstaining from this motion.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Minister McLeod. I will allow the mover of the motion some closing comments. Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for recognizing how important this program is to the people of the North. I respectfully disagree with him on the size of the figure he's pointed out. I think it's a lot higher in the Northwest Territories. The specific benefits in theory are supposed to go to the program.

But what I will say is that the important thing is: are we getting value for money? Is the money going to the right ideals that we believe we subscribe to, which is making sure we can keep the cost of food as low as possible for all Northerners to be able to benefit, no matter what community you are in? This is a fantastic program that emphasizes northern and remote communities and can do a lot. The question is: is it doing a lot? From all evidence I've seen and heard, I don't believe it's working as hard as it can. That's why it's so important that this audit bring those issues to light, and hopefully we'll deal with it.

In closing, I think this is a good value step for the people of the Northwest Territories. I will be asking



for a recorded vote at this time, and I appreciate support from my colleagues who can stand behind this one.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Member is requesting a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion, please stand. All those abstaining from the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Robert McLeod, Mr. Bob McLeod.

**Mr. Speaker:** Results of the recorded vote: 11 for, none against, seven abstaining.

Motion carried.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MOTION 26-16(2)  
NWT MILK SUBSIDY PROGRAM  
(MOTION CARRIED)

**Mr. Bromley:** WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories has set the goal of having a healthy and educated population and has agreed to work with families, communities and schools to improve the physical and mental well-being of our youth;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories provides subsidies for goods and services that cost too much for ordinary northerners to realistically bear;

AND WHEREAS the increasing costs of living in the NWT make it more and more difficult for many northerners to provide the basic necessities for their families;

AND WHEREAS milk is an essential nutrient for the healthy development of children;

AND WHEREAS the price of milk in many northern communities can cost twice as much as Edmonton prices;

AND WHEREAS cheaper substitutes such as soda pop and other less expensive sugar-loaded drinks are often substituted for milk, leading to serious longer-term health issues;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the

Government of the Northwest Territories establish a Milk Subsidy Program for all children aged one to twelve in any NWT community where milk costs are ten per cent or higher than those in Yellowknife;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories include the costs of the Milk Subsidy Program in the 2009–2010 budget and implement the program in early 2009.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion, the honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

**Mr. Bromley:** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to a preventative approach to addressing the root causes of issues that we face. Milk is the single most important nutrient to the healthy development and benefit of our youth. The issue has been brought to us by community representatives, by health workers and by educational workers and teachers. Many thanks to them for bringing this forward.

Many people have seen, or heard recently from my colleague, the frightening photographs of many of our youth who are in desperate need of dental surgery and the backload we have there to deal with. Sugary drinks, as I mentioned in the motion, are much cheaper than milk in some of our communities, and it's most unfortunate. But when people can't afford the appropriate thing, they'll turn to substitutes, and in this case it's damaging our youth.

This program is meant to be implemented in concert with important ongoing community and school nutritional programs, and I'm sure the government will make sure that that's done. Many residents fail to benefit from Food Mail Program, as has been mentioned, particularly those in our small communities who don't necessarily have the literacy and education required to take advantage of this — or even the tradition, like the tradition that's developed among our professionals who are visiting our communities for short periods of time. It should be our intent to promote the full use of the Food Mail Program, and this will minimize the cost of this program and the subsidy to milk specifically to ensure efficient use of our subsidy dollars.

Finally, I'd like to just mention the long term benefits that this can bring. Healthy kids mean healthy bodies and strong minds, with resilience to the challenges we face. This investment will return benefits and savings in terms of the physical, mental and psychological well-being of our youth and our families, and we'll notice that in our costs down the road. I urge all Members to support this motion. There's been very good support in getting it to this stage and presenting the issue, and I thank everybody for that support.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the motion. I'll go to the seconder of the motion, the Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will add just a couple of brief comments.

I'd like to commend my colleague Mr. Bromley for bringing forward this idea and this motion and for thinking creatively. It's something I think we all should be well aware of and should attempt to imitate. We spend millions of dollars in subsidies on our residents. Albeit this is an additional subsidy, I think it's a subsidy that probably is more important than almost any of the other ones we currently have, and I think it's one that is very much needed. I also think of this as one option to try to go a little bit towards evening out the costs that residents have to bear in smaller communities versus Yellowknife, the capital and the largest community.

Just as an aside, I think there is some opportunity, if we add this subsidy in, for reducing the price of milk. We can probably do something to offset it by looking at increasing taxes on pop and junk food and/or removing subsidies for freight, which we already have on pop and junk food. We may end up being revenue neutral as we also get creative in how we implement this particular subsidy.

I urge all Members to support this. I think it's a wonderful initiative and one we all should gladly support.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. To the motion, the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Mr. Bromley's motion as very important, and I appreciate the spirit and intent of it.

Mr. Speaker, as the father of two young children I certainly understand and in no way dispute the nutritional value of milk. I understand that clearly, and it makes perfect sense to me. I also understand the impacts of what happens when you don't have milk.

It's difficult to say this, but I cannot support this motion at this time the way it's designed. This program, in my view, is what the Food Mail Program, in principle, should be doing but isn't doing. I believe that the problem really is focused on how the Food Mail Program is delivered. I think in a little bit of time the Food Mail Program, if delivered properly, would solve this exact problem.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day the feds are paying \$50 million into the Food Mail Program, and I'm not sure we're getting the value we need out of it. We now have to find a way to subsidize milk to lower that cost when we already have a program

that does it. I don't feel the territorial government is in a position to subsidize the federal government.

I completely understand why the motion has come forward. I like the intent; I like the spirit — if it could just be that simple. I really wish it could, but it isn't. Where is the money going to come from? We already know that the territorial government has difficulty with its finances now, and we're making tough choices every day. But are we going to a \$500,000 program run by a \$1 million administration? I'm not necessarily sure.

Is it a question of people making good choices for their families? Well, I've always believed that families will make good choices by themselves on what they feel is appropriate for the family. If you are in a small community, I understand that it's easier to reach for a \$2 can of pop versus a \$10 jug of milk. But you know what? When you do the math, the milk still is cheaper. I think it comes down to nutritional choices that people are making.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to have impact on the youth, my feeling is: why aren't we subsidizing things like baby food? Why are we leaving seniors off the table? Seniors would benefit from milk too. I've heard constantly that osteoporosis is a problem in the seniors' community; we should be including them in this program. There are a lot of concerns right now.

There's another way. If we want to benefit parents to make responsible choices, why don't we give them all another \$100 per child in child care? That would free up money in their pockets to make good choices.

Mr. Speaker, the intent is really good. There are lots of ways to achieve the same thing, but I'm not necessarily sure how this would be. If it's to go to low income folks or income support folks, I am concerned and curious if this money would be clawed back. In other words, we've just found a new way to give more money to the Northern Stores or the co-ops without necessarily doing much. I think the end user would be set back.

If the goal is to help people, I think we need to find ways to help people directly. Let's put it onto income support payments and increase the base for people who have children. If you have children, you get an extra \$100 per child per month. That way they can help make good choices directly. We could do that in one broad brush stroke without creating a new program. That could be done today if we really wanted to. It's this House that sets those dollar values, so we could do that.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I want to thank Mr. Bromley. He also came to me to talk to me about my reservations. I want to thank him for his efforts to go through his perspective on this motion. I agree with the intent, but I have to stand by my

concerns and convictions on this one, which are that the fundamental problem is the Food Mail Program. That is the delivery mechanism that we could get the best value for all Northerners on, and that's exactly where the problem is. Once an audit goes through, I think that will solve a lot of our problems and go in the right direction.

If we want to change the subsidy in another vehicle to help support people with their milk, that's okay. I'm willing to listen, and I'm certainly willing to stand up and support an income support adjustment to help the people in the lowest income bracket any day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I'll be voting against the motion. I don't do so in a happy way. I just think this isn't exactly how it should be addressed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion, the honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to support the motion that's before us on the milk subsidy program. I want to commend my colleague Mr. Bromley for having the sense and the courage to bring something like this forward. I think it shows a great deal of creativity. As a government I think we need to start somewhere, and this is a good place to start.

I think milk is absolutely a requirement in a child's nutrition, and we need to make sure that children can get milk in the smaller communities where it's costly. You know, I've been to Inuvik, and it's interesting how the government can subsidize the sale of liquor in our communities. The price at the liquor store here in Yellowknife isn't much different than it is in Inuvik. But if you look at the price of milk in Yellowknife compared to Inuvik, it's a great deal different. There's something wrong with that picture, Mr. Speaker, if the government is subsidizing the sale of liquor when we should be giving our parents, especially in the smaller communities, the opportunity to choose between pop and milk. If there's a subsidy in place that would allow them to purchase more milk for their families, I think that's a step in the right direction.

Part of the vision of the Government of Northwest Territories is Healthy Choices, healthy individuals making healthy choices. Again, I think this speaks to that. It's a principle motion. This is going to be developed. It's going to be taken through the committee system. It's going to be, you know, poked and prodded by Members until we get a final version of it. So this isn't the last that we're going to hear of it. This is the principle and something that I fully support. Again, I want to thank Mr. Bromley for his creativity. We need to start somewhere as a government, and this is a great place to start.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the motion, the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting the motion, and I would like to thank Mr. Bromley for bringing it forward. I think this is a no-brainer. When you go into a community and you see \$16 for two litres of milk and you expect people on low income or income support clients to make a choice between spending \$16 for two litres of milk, or in some cases \$3.50 for a can of pop.... We have to realize that with the high cost of living in our communities, it is a very expensive commodity in a lot of our communities. In the larger centres it may not be that way. In order to stretch our dollars as far as we can, by implementing this motion, it will improve the quality of life for children in our communities.

Yes, we do have a problem when we start seeing our children walking around the communities who are just starting to walk, and they've got a can of pop in one hand and candy or chips in the other. It makes you wonder what the condition of that child is going to be in the next ten or 15 years and the high rates of sugar diabetes that we are seeing in regard to our population. A lot of that stems from exactly the food that's being provided and choices people are making. If this can help by offsetting the high costs in our communities, I am fully in support of it.

Mr. Speaker, as a government we also have to look at other jurisdictions throughout the North, such as Iceland and Greenland. They have implemented a sugar tax on products that come into their jurisdiction which have high traces of sugar. We tax fuel products; we tax tobacco. I think there's no reason why we shouldn't consider that as an option — taxing items that carry high traces of sugar. Everybody knows there are nine teaspoons of sugar in one can of pop, and again, that's something we should be made aware. So I will be fully supporting this motion, and I think it is a good motion going forward.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. To the motion, the honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting the motion as well. Certainly, it's not entirely clearly defined how this is going to work. If people think that having a milk subsidy is too administrative a burden, then maybe we should just give it away. Maybe in a small community where milk's expensive, we should just have a cooler full of milk that anybody can take and not just people ages one to 12.

People have mentioned some of the pressures on seniors. Everybody could stand to use a little more

milk. I don't know about everybody else's kids, but I'll tell you, when my kids were growing up, if there was cereal in the cupboard, that milk jug got hauled out of that fridge a lot of times. There are a lot of good things you can do with milk. You can make soup — you've got milk based soups — you can make pudding; you can put it on cereal. You can make a lot of different things. You can put it in bannock. It's a good staple food.

So I support the subsidy program. Like I said, if it becomes administratively burdensome — how you're going to deliver it — I would just suggest giving it away, and I do not know how we as a government could go wrong. I don't think anybody's going to abuse milk.

As to Mr. Hawkins's point of giving families a \$100 subsidy, you have no guarantee where the \$100 is going to end up. It may not end up buying milk. It may end up buying something else that we don't support as a government. No slight against the folks who.... But, you know, there are a lot of pressures for family money. This will be one way of ensuring that everybody has access to something very nutritious, and it can become a staple in lots of different foods. So I would support that.

The only other thing I would suggest is that in the implementation of this milk subsidy, I would like to ensure that we check with communities that already have people who are working on breakfast programs and nutrition programs in the schools and so on, that we build on what people are already doing rather than coming in there and them vacating what it is they are doing in the community on a voluntary basis. I would like to work with them and add this to it. I think it's a very good idea and a step in the right direction. I support the motion.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion, the honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Mr. Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, some years ago I remember going to one of the small communities. I was hosted by a family, and when we got up in the morning, we had some breakfast. I couldn't believe that a family that was feeding the child breakfast cereal.... They had water there, and they had Coffee-Mate. They were making milk for the child. That's their milk, because the milk is so expensive in our small isolated communities that have no roads, have no opportunity to purchase milk at a lower price. I sat there with the family, a well respected elder and mother, and they were making milk with Coffee-Mate, and they were pouring that for the children to eat before they went to school.

I asked some people in my region and my community: in the past what did you do? Our lifestyle has changed quite considerably from the nomadic life to where we are now in the

communities, where we have great dependency on the store, and Health Canada has been pushing to have milk as one of the primary products to have within our lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, the price of milk is something that has been a big concern for my region. I'm just looking at some prices here. These are probably old prices. In Tuktoyaktuk it's \$8.99 for two litres. It's probably gone more now, on special. And I hope it's fresh. In Good Hope it's \$6.50. But another number, I think, is more reflective of the prices that we pay in our small communities now.

Mr. Speaker, I will certainly, definitely support this motion. I think there is something that we can do immediately. I think that the Food Mail Program will take.... You know, the government will drag its feet on that. It will have a lot of complications and challenges to implement a true Food Mail Program in the Northwest Territories. But this is something that we can definitely show our people in our regions that we are supporting the different guidelines that we are being handed by Health Canada, by the Government of Canada and this government, in terms of how we sustain a healthy life within our families, within our communities.

I hope this milk subsidy program sees the light of day by the time we get through the business plans in terms of how we implement something like that. It is so beneficial and certainly will help our communities in terms of them coming to the stores — not to benefit the Northern Stores — to benefit our people. Some of that milk sits on the shelves, and it's past due date. They still sell it at full price. It's a crying shame.

Today is when we have to check. In our community sometimes the expiry date has already gone past; we still have to pay the full price, though. I hope that now, when the students come and the families come into the Northern Stores, they have fresh milk there at a good price, and that's something that they can afford, and they can now tell people in the communities, "We've got milk."

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion, the honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

**Mr. Jacobson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm in full support of this motion. I thank Mr. Bromley for bringing this forward and know how many people it's going to affect in the smaller communities. I really think, you know, the well-being of our youth.... They are our future, so we should try to help them in any way we possibly can, especially the families. I mean, I have five children at home. We go through a lot of milk in my house. In regard to any motion like this that will help the people, it should be done. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. To the motion, the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting the motion. I would like to thank Mr. Bromley. I think it's important to put good healthy food on the table, and I consider milk to be very healthy. As people in the House know, I support the youth strongly, and I'm happy to see that they will be getting a good start with milk and so on. So I, too, will support the motion. Perhaps at some point this milk subsidy can be expanded to formula and start with infants right up to 12 years old.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. To the motion, the honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to just speak briefly to this motion, as lead Minister of the Reducing the Cost of Living Strategic Initiative. I appreciate the intention behind the motion and agree with the Members that we need to make sure that our children get every opportunity to grow up healthy and strong. As a government we believe that all of our residents should be able to meet their basic needs and already have many programs that help ensure this.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we know that economic pressures on our residents are increasing, and we welcome the opportunity to work with Members on actions that will help people over the long term. The government is committed to working on reducing the cost of living, and we made this a focus of our strategic initiatives. We do recognize our high cost of living makes it difficult for some of our people to meet their needs. We also recognize that there are differences in cost between our communities, and that threatens the sustainability of some of our more remote and small communities. We do want to take steps that will help reduce these differences and ensure that NWT residents have fair and equitable access to the most basic necessities where they live.

Mr. Speaker, I think it should be noted that the GNWT also supports programs that ensure our children have access to nutritious and healthy food regardless of need. One example is the Department of ECE's Healthy Children Initiative, which provides funding to community based child development programs. In 2007 and 2008 this initiative provided just over \$1.6 million to support child development centres, preschools, daycares and other early childhood programs that often serve nutritious snacks to children in communities across the NWT. ECE also provides funding to help licensed daycares and day homes purchase food for healthy snacks and meals. In 2007 and 2008 there were 117 licensed programs caring for 1,768 children up to the age of 11. In total, Income Security spends

\$17 million a year on food, shelter, utilities and clothing, and we saw an increase of that just last year.

Mr. Speaker, we do support the intent of the motion, but we do want to look at whether milk should be the one that should be subsidized, whether it should be a subsidy. We are willing to review that. Not everyone drinks milk. There might be other things, and it's not part of a traditional diet in every community either. So if there are other alternatives that we could look at, we want to look at that.

Also, we want to look at the fact that the cost of living is determined by many independent and other factors, such as transportation of goods. Subsidy at the end of the supply chain is not always the best way to deal with the cost of living. So as the lead Minister of the strategic initiative committee, I'd like to tell the Members that we will review this and we will continue to work at other ways of reducing the cost of living in the long run. Also, as this is a recommendation to the government, Cabinet will be abstaining from the motion.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the motion? I'll allow the mover of the motion closing comments. Mr. Bromley.

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by reiterating that this idea came from the people, and I'm just one of the vehicles here bringing this forward. It has been stressed that this is a preventative and creative approach. It has got an element of fairness to it — small communities and so on, the potential to be revenue neutral. There is absolutely no duplication with the Food Mail Program.

I have to comment briefly on some of the spurious arguments I have heard on that. There are about half of our communities that actually have the food mail service. But this program could apply to milk that was brought in with the Food Mail Program, as I've tried to highlight to all Members. It is a starting point.

Seniors. I would love to see us help out seniors as they need it. We've heard about Nunakput seniors and some of the empty fridges there. We've also heard from the Minister of Health. I appreciate that support, that there are many programs out there. I am sure that this idea will be modified and that many brains will be brought to bear on this, hopefully milk fed brains so that they will be sharp and fully developed.

The preventative approach was also stressed. Diabetes is one of the big diseases that we are facing.

I would like thank everybody for their comments and hope they are recorded here. I would also like

to request a recorded vote, and unlike the Minister of Health, I'd like to strongly encourage Premier Roland to allow Cabinet to have a free vote on this motion. Mahsi.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The Member is requesting a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those abstaining from the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Robert McLeod, Mr. Bob McLeod.

**Mr. Speaker:** Results of the recorded vote: ten for, one against, seven abstaining.

Motion carried.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 17, first reading of bills. The honourable Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board Secretariat, Mr. Miltenberger.

### First Reading of Bills

BILL 21  
APPROPRIATION ACT  
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES)  
2009–2010

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 21, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) 2009–2010, be read for the first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 21 has had first reading.

Motion carried; Bill 21, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) 2009–2010, read a first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 18, second reading of bills. The honourable Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board Secretariat, Mr. Miltenberger.

### Second Reading of Bills

BILL 21  
APPROPRIATION ACT  
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES)  
2009–2010

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 21, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) 2009–2010, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill authorizes the Government of the Northwest Territories to make infrastructure expenditures for the 2009–2010 fiscal year.

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 21 has had second reading.

Motion carried; Bill 21, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) 2009–2010 read a second time and referred to a standing committee.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 19, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Minister's Statement 80-16(2), Bills 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, with Mr. Abernethy in the chair.

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

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Good afternoon, colleagues. Before we commence with our Committee of the Whole business for today, I wish to provide my ruling on the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake on Friday, October 17, 2008.

### Chairman's Ruling

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Mr. Roland rose on a point of order with regard to comments made in Committee of the Whole by Mr. Bromley in the context of debate on capital estimates. Mr. Roland asserted that Mr. Bromley was in contravention of Rule 23(i), which states, "A Member will be called to order...if the Member imputes false or hidden motives to another Member."

I reviewed the unedited transcripts from last Friday, and I rule that you do not have a point of order, Mr. Roland. The Chair cannot agree with your assertion that the Member for Weledeh had initiated debate that questioned the credibility of a Member of Cabinet or imputed false or hidden motives. However, we can all agree that Mr. Bromley was asking a number of questions about process. In fact, the Chair notes that Mr. Bromley prefaced many of his comments and questions by using words or phrases such as "hypothetical," "potentially" or "may end up." It was also of great

assistance to the Chair to note that Mr. Bromley was very explicit in his intentions when he stated: "I'm not levying accusations here or anything. I'm trying to highlight what's potentially a new and increasing situation we have here."

I think it would be helpful to once again remind Members to choose your words carefully and to conduct yourselves in a fashion that maintains the dignity and decorum of this House. I think we owe it to our constituents.

I will pass the chair back to Mr. Krutko. On second thought, I'll continue to sit in the chair.

Item 19, Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. We're looking at Member's Statement 80-16(2), sessional statement; Bills 14, 15, 16, 17 and 19. What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The wish of the committee is to proceed with Bill 19, then 14, 16, 17 and the sessional statement, in that order.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Does committee agree?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

#### BILL 19 DONATION OF FOOD ACT

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** We're on Bill 19, Donation of Food Act. At this time I'd like to ask the sponsor of the bill if she would like to make any opening comments. Ms. Bisaro.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I do have some opening comments.

I'm very pleased to provide comments on Bill 19, Donation of Food Act. Bill 19 is a new act that will ensure protection for donors of food and distributors of donated food from liability for their actions.

In all of our communities perfectly good food often goes to waste due to policies and standards established by food businesses and restaurants. Food is often wasted because we have too much food and too few attendees at social functions. Some concerned and committed individuals have started to rescue this food and pass it on to needy organizations and families. However, currently food donors are not protected from liability should the recipients of the food suffer any harm or injury. Bill 19 will provide such protection and allow NWT communities to establish legitimate food rescue programs safe from fear of prosecution.

It is my hope that eventually all NWT communities will establish food rescue programs for the benefit of those less fortunate in our society. I would like to

thank Mrs. Ruby Trudel, who brought forward the need for this bill, and commend her and her team for their work to date. I will be pleased to answer any questions that Members might have.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. At this time I'd like to ask the committee responsible for overseeing the bill if they have any general comments. Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Social Programs reviewed Bill 19, the Donation of Food Act, at a public meeting held Thursday, October 16, 2008. At the public meeting we heard from the sponsor of the bill, Ms. Bisaro, on the need to protect businesses that donate food for charity from liability concerns. We heard that many more restaurants and grocery outlets would donate food if the liability issues were dealt with.

The committee heard from Hon. Sandy Lee, Minister of Health and Social Services, on the government's support for this legislation and the actions that her department takes to ensure food safety for all Northerners, including those who would benefit from donated food.

We also heard from Ruby Trudel, who advocated for such an act and is actively involved in the collection and distribution of donated food here in the city of Yellowknife. The committee applauds Mrs. Trudel's efforts on behalf of less fortunate Northerners and the restaurants and grocery outlets that have made donations — or will do so in the future — to support her efforts.

It is important to note that this legislation is for the entire NWT and not just one organization in Yellowknife. As long as the donor is not selling the donated food, the food is fit for consumption and the donor does not intend to injure, they will be protected from liability. It is hoped that the passage of this important legislation will encourage others to work with their local restaurants and grocery stores to save edible food from going into the landfills.

In closing, we would like to thank our colleague the honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Wendy Bisaro, for sponsoring this important legislation and bringing it forward for this Legislature's consideration.

This concludes the committee's comments. Individual committee members may have questions or comments as we proceed.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. At this time I'd like to ask Ms. Bisaro if she'll be bringing any witnesses. Ms. Bisaro?

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I will.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Is the committee agreed that Ms. Bisaro brings in her witness?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witness in. Thank you.

For the record, Ms. Bisaro, could you introduce your witness.

**Ms. Bisaro:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair; perhaps you could repeat that. It's very hard to hear back here.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Ms. Bisaro, for the record, could you introduce your witness, please.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Yes, certainly. Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me is Ms. Kelly McLaughlin. She's legislative counsel, legislative division with the Department of Justice, GNWT.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Welcome, witness. General comments with regard to the Bill? Ms. Lee.

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the government and as the Minister of Health and Social Services I would like to speak briefly in favour of this private Member's public bill, Bill 19, Donation of Food Act. The proposed bill would exempt the donor, including individuals and businesses, from liability when donating food provided that the donor does not intend to injure and is not reckless. The bill does not apply to a person who distributes donated food for profit.

Mr. Chairman, the current Public Health Act regulates the safety and sanitary handling and preparation of food, but it is not designed to provide food donor protection from liability. This stand-alone piece of legislation will be able to fill that gap. The Public Health Act and its applicable regulations will continue to ensure that donated food is handled in a safe manner and applies to any establishment where food is served to the public.

Mr. Chairman, the bill before us today is consistent with other food donor protection legislation enacted in nine other jurisdictions in Canada. The legislation, when enacted, will be a useful tool in reducing wasted food, especially perishable products like vegetables and dairy products that are most frequently disposed of by retailers and food distributors. Rather than ending up in landfills, nourishing food will be distributed to those who are most in need. Given that all jurisdictions have substantially similar legislation, we feel confident that it can be safely implemented in the North.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Wendy Bisaro, Member for Frame Lake, for bringing this bill forward and all the other Members who have supported it. I would also like to personally recognize the valuable contribution of Mrs. Ruby Trudel, a well known Yellowknife resident who has taken on not only this latest

worthwhile initiative but many other public health and wellness issues over the years for the benefit of our residents, not only in Yellowknife but all over the North.

This legislation will go a long way in providing legislative assistance to our partners like the Mrs. Trudels in our communities large and small who volunteer their time and resources to provide food to those in need.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** General comments on the bill? Mr. Bromley.

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just very briefly I wanted to add my voice of accolade here to Ms. Bisaro and Mrs. Trudel and to those who helped put this together.

We heard earlier today about some of the waste recovery proposals the Minister of ENR is proposing. This is a full cost accounting approach. We know that our food now comes from thousands of kilometres away. To have that energy expended and the cost... A lot of that food going to waste is crazy in today's world. So very briefly, all kudos, and I'm very happy to see this bill go forward.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** General comments? Clause by clause? Okay; we can draw our attention to Bill 19. We're on page 1, clause 1.

Clauses 1 through 3 inclusive approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** To the bill as a whole.

Bill 19 as a whole approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Does committee agree that Bill 19 is now ready for third reading?

Bill 19, Donation of Food Act, approved for third reading.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Bill 19 is now ready for third reading.

I'd like to thank Ms. Bisaro and her witness. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witness out.

#### BILL 14

#### AN ACT TO AMEND THE INCOME TAX ACT

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** As we agreed, the next bill we'll be dealing with is Bill 14.

At this time I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he has any opening comments. Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to present Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act.

This amends the provisions of the Northwest Territories Income Tax Act to make them consistent



with parallel provisions of the Income Tax Act, Canada, that relate to the charitable donations tax credit, the medical expense tax credit, assessment of returns and tax avoidance.

These amendments are routine housekeeping measures that will have no significant impact on our revenues and which will not change income tax rates. These changes are necessary to keep the Northwest Territories Income Tax Act harmonized with the federal act.

Ensuring our act is consistent with the federal act helps reduce the complexity of administration for both the taxpayer and the Canada Revenue Agency. Under our tax collection agreement with Canada, if we do not harmonize our act, we could be required to pay additional administration costs.

The proposed legislation amends the act to make the treatment of the NWT charitable donations credit consistent with the federal treatment. A taxpayer claiming this tax credit will be required to use the same donation amount for the purpose of calculating both the federal and territorial credits. This will prevent people who move from or to the NWT from either losing part of the credit or being able to claim part of it twice.

Harmonizing the provisions of the medical expense tax credit will increase the benefit for the small number of NWT taxpayers who claim medical expenses for dependants. In 2007 an estimated 20 NWT taxpayers had about \$32,000 in medical expenses for dependants that would be eligible for a credit.

The proposed legislation also adopts several relevant sections of the federal act dealing with administrative procedures on filing income tax returns, assessments, withholding of tax and payment of tax owing. This amendment further simplifies the administration of both acts by the Canadian Revenue Agency.

Finally, the general anti-avoidance rule in the federal Income Tax Act was introduced in 1988 as part of the tax reform. It has been used by the Canada Revenue Agency as the last resort to disallow tax benefits from abusive or unacceptable tax planning transactions that are inconsistent with the overall object or spirit of the law. Unlike tax evasion, tax avoidance does not face prosecution in a criminal court.

The Canada Revenue Agency has requested that the NWT establish a similar provision. The proposed legislation will amend the act by introducing a new section on a general anti-avoidance rule that parallels the federal general anti-avoidance rule provision.

Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to answer questions Members may have.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** At this time I'd like to ask the standing committee that reviewed the bill if they have any opening comments. Mr. Abernethy.

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Government Operations held a public hearing on Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, on October 6, 2008.

The proposed amendments make the Income Tax Act consistent with similar provisions in the federal Income Tax Act. These amendments were recommended by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and are part of a nationwide updating exercise.

The Northwest Territories, Nunavut and New Brunswick are the three remaining jurisdictions needing to update their legislation. The affected provisions are related to charitable donations, medical expense tax credits, returns and assessments, withholding and payment, and to tax avoidance.

The amendment to the medical expense tax credit provisions will allow caregivers to claim more of the medical and disability related expenses incurred on behalf of their dependent relatives.

The proposed new section on general anti-avoidance rules will provide for the identification of tax avoidance transactions and permit the reversal of the tax benefits from these transactions.

The proposed changes to the NWT charitable donations credit will require a tax creditor who claims a federal donation to credit the same value for the purpose of the NWT donations credit.

This concludes the committee's comments on Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. Individual members of the committee may have comments or questions as we proceed.

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

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

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

For the record, Mr. Minister, could you introduce your witnesses.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Ms. Margaret Melhorn, Mr. John Monroe and Ms. Lana Birch from Finance, FMB.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Do you want to clarify that for the record?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Birch is from Justice.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. At this time general comments with regard to Bill 14. General comments?

**Some Honourable Members:** Detail.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Okay; we'll switch to Bill 14. Page 1, clause 1.

Clauses 1 through 6 inclusive approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. The bill as a whole.

Bill 14 as a whole approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Does committee agree that Bill 14 is ready for third reading?

Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, approved for third reading.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Bill 14 is now ready for third reading.

With that, I'd like to thank the Minister and thank his witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out.

BILL 16  
WRITE-OFF OF DEBTS ACT, 2008–2009

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Committee of the Whole, Bill 16, Write-off of Debts Act. At this time I'd like to ask the Minister sponsoring the bill if he has any opening comments. Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm here to introduce Bill 16, Write-off of Debts Act, 2008–2009.

This bill authorizes the write-off of debts listed in the schedule of the act. Pursuant to section 24 of the Financial Administration Act, Legislative Assembly approval is required for the write-off of government assets or debts exceeding \$20,000. Pursuant to section 82 of the Financial Administration Act, the write-off of debts owed to a public agency exceeding \$20,000 and the write-off of debts owed to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission exceeding \$50,000 must receive Legislative Assembly approval.

The write-offs being proposed in this act will not require a new appropriation. They will be charged against allowances for bad debts that were established in department budgets at the time it

was determined that collection of the debt would be unlikely.

I wish to emphasize that the write-off of a debt does not relieve a debtor of the liability for repayment. The government will continue to attempt to collect the outstanding amount. Through continued reviews by staff, future recovery of the debt may still be achieved. In addition, in the case of debts owed by companies, staff will track the principals of each firm for future credit reference.

That concludes my opening remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions Members may have.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time I'd like to ask the standing committee who reviewed the bill if they have any comments on the bill. Mr. Abernethy.

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Government Operations reviewed Bill 16, the Write-off of Debts Act, 2008–2009, at a meeting on October 3, 2008.

Following the clause by clause review a motion was carried to report to the Assembly that Bill 16 is ready for consideration by Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 16. Individual Members may have comments or questions as we proceed.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. At this time I'd like to ask the Minister if he'll be bringing in any witnesses.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Is committee agreed the Minister bring in his witnesses?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

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

For the record, Mr. Minister, could you introduce your witnesses.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Margaret Melhorn, deputy minister of Finance, FMB, and Ms. Louise Lavoie, assistant comptroller general, Finance, FMB.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. At this time I'd like general comments in regard to Bill 16.

Interjection.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Does committee agree to go clause by clause?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** We'll move to deal with Bill 16, Write-off of Debts Act, 2008–2009. We'll move to page 3, Schedule, Debts Written-off, Total: \$424,708.95.

Bill 16, Schedule, Total Debts Written-off: \$424,708.95, approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** To the bill as a whole.

Bill 16 as a whole approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Does committee agree that Bill 16 is ready for third reading?

Bill 16, Write-off of Debts Act, 2008–2009, approved for third reading.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Bill 16 is now ready for third reading.

Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out.

BILL 17  
FORGIVENESS OF DEBTS ACT,  
2008–2009

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Next on our list we're dealing with Bill 17, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009. Mr. Yakeleya.

**Mr. Yakeleya:** Mr. Chair, at this time I would like to declare a conflict of interest on this bill.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** For the record Mr. Yakeleya has declared a conflict of interest on this bill.

At this time I'd like to ask the Minister if he'd like to introduce the bill's opening comments. Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Chairman, I'm here to introduce Bill 17, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009.

This bill requests authority for the forgiveness of certain debts listed in the schedule of the act.

Pursuant to section 25 of the Financial Administration Act, the forgiveness of a debt obligation to the government exceeding \$1,000 must receive Legislative Assembly approval. When a debt is forgiven, no further collection action shall be pursued.

The forgiveness of certain debts being proposed in this act will not require a new appropriation. Allowances for doubtful accounts were charged to an appropriation at the time it was determined that collection of the debt was considered unlikely.

The accounts being recommended for forgiveness are the results of bankruptcy, compromise settlements or are in the public interest. In cases where a compromise settlement is reached, the following factors have been considered:

- the possibility of future recoveries;
- the cost to continue legal actions; and
- the value of security associated with the debt.

That concludes my opening remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions the Members may have.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** At this time I'd like to ask the committee responsible for the bill if they have any comments. Mr. Abernethy.

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Government Operations reviewed Bill 17, the Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009, at a meeting on October 3. Following the clause by clause review a motion was carried to report to the Assembly that Bill 17 is now ready for consideration by Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 17. Individual Members may have comments or questions as we proceed.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** At this time I would like to ask the Minister if he will bring in any witnesses.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

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

For the record, Mr. Miltenberger, could you introduce your witnesses.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** This is Ms. Margaret Melhorn, deputy minister of the Financial Management Board, and Ms. Louise Lavoie, assistant comptroller general of the Financial Management Board.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Welcome, witnesses. General comments in regard to Bill 17? Clause by clause. I'll get you to move to page 3 of Bill 17 with regard to Schedule, Debts Forgiven. Moving on to page 5, Total: \$855,168.32.

Bill 17, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009, Debts Forgiven, Total: \$855,168.32, approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Moving back to page 1 with regard to the preamble.

Preamble approved.

Clauses 1 and 2 approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** To the bill as a whole.

Bill 17 as a whole approved.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Does the committee agree that Bill 17 is ready for third reading?

Bill 17, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009, approved for third reading.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Bill 17 is now ready for third reading.

Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Thank you, witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out.

As we agreed, per the schedule, we have Minister's Statement 80-16(2), sessional statement. Mr. Abernethy.

**Mr. Abernethy:** I move to report progress.

Motion carried.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Could I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 19, Donation of Food Act; Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act; Bill 16, Write-off of Debts Act, 2008–2009; Bill 17, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009. I would like to report that Bills 19, 14, 16 and 17 are ready for third reading.

I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. A motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Motion carried.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 21, third reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

### Third Reading of Bills

#### BILL 14 AN ACT TO AMEND THE INCOME TAX ACT

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, be read for the third time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 14 has had third reading.

Motion carried; Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, read a third time.

#### BILL 16 WRITE-OFF OF DEBTS ACT, 2008–2009

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to proceed with the third reading of Bill 16, Write-off of Debts Act, 2008–2009.

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 16 has had third reading.

Motion carried; Bill 16, Write-off of Debts Act, 2008–2009, read a third time.

#### BILL 17 FORGIVENESS OF DEBTS ACT, 2008–2009

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that Bill 17, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009, be read for the third time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 17 has had third reading.

Motion carried; Bill 17, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009, read a third time.

#### BILL 19 DONATION OF FOOD ACT

**Ms. Bisaro:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Bill 19, Donation of Food Act, be read for the third time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 19 has had third reading.

Motion carried; Bill 19, Donation of Food Act, read a third time.

#### BILL 21 APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), 2009–2010

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 21, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2009–2010, be read for the third time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 21 has had third reading.

Motion carried; Bill 21, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2009–2010, read a third time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 22, prorogation. Mr. Clerk, would you ascertain whether the Commissioner, the Hon. W.J. Whitford, is prepared to enter the Chamber to assent to bills and prorogue the Second Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

**Assent to Bills**

**Commissioner of the Northwest Territories (Hon. Tony Whitford):** Honourable Members, good afternoon. It is such a pleasure to be back in your company, albeit a very short event today.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories I am pleased to assent to the following bills:

Bill 10 - An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act

Bill 13 - An Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act

Bill 14 - An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act

Bill 16 - Write-off of Debts Act, 2008–2009

Bill 17 - Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2008–2009

Bill 19 - Donation of Food Act

Bill 21 - Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2009–2010.

Prior to proroguing this Second Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, I wish to announce that the Third Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly will convene on Wednesday, October 22, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

And now, as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories I hereby prorogue the Second Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. Thank you. Merci. Quyanainni.

The House prorogued at 5:48 p.m.

