



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

3rd Session

Day 1

16th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

Pages 1865 to 1894

The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Wednesday, October 22, 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 1:30 p.m.

Singing of *O Canada*.

Prayer

Pastor Bradley Dahr: O God, may Your spirit and guidance be in us as we work for the benefit of all our people for peace and justice in our land and for the constant recognition of the dignity and aspirations of those whom we serve. Thank you for hearing our prayer. Amen.

Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey): Please be seated.

I would like to say a very special thank you to Pastor Brad Dahr from the Seventh Day Adventist Church for coming in and saying our prayer for us and to Shad Turner for singing our national anthem.

Mr. Clerk, would you please ascertain whether the Commissioner, the Hon. Anthony W.J. Whitford, is prepared to enter the Chamber to open the Third Session of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

Opening Address

Commissioner of the Northwest Territories (Hon. Tony Whitford): Asseyez-vous, s'il vous plait. [Translation.] Please be seated. [Translation ends.]

Good afternoon. It seems just like yesterday we were doing this. It was yesterday, wasn't it?

Monsieur le président, mesdames et messieurs les députés, mesdames et messieurs, et amis.

It is once again a great pleasure and an honour for me to be here in your presence. I am pleased to welcome you to the Third Session of the 16th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. I want to welcome the guests there in the public gallery and those who are watching these proceedings on television.

Since we opened the last session, the North has seen the loss of a number of respected and very prominent citizens. I think it's important that we remember them and acknowledge their

contributions to the development of the North over their long lifetimes.

- The honourable Daniel Norris from the Beaufort-Delta. Mr. Norris had served this government for many years in the civil service before becoming our 11th Commissioner.
- Mr. Michael Ballantyne was a former mayor of the City of Yellowknife, a Minister in our government, a former Speaker and a retired Member of the Legislative Assembly.
- Mr. Allan Anderson from Fort Simpson was a World War II veteran and a respected businessman in the Deh Cho.
- Recently, Mr. Calvin Mains from Hay River. He was also well known across the North as a former RCMP officer before working for our government for many years and then serving a term as the Deputy Commissioner.
- George Blondin, our most respected author, Dene elder and leader among his people.
- Patricia McMahon, a former mayor of the City of Yellowknife and president of a number of associations of municipalities.

The whole territory grieves the loss of those fine people and many others who have served and have gone before, all of whom were very influential in our lives and in our communities.

Now I would like to offer my congratulations to Mr. Robert C. McLeod on his new position as a Member of the Executive Council.

Applause.

Commissioner of the Northwest Territories (Hon. Tony Whitford): I would like to extend very best wishes, and I am very confident that the people of the Northwest Territories will be well served by you, sir, in your new roles.

I would like to offer my congratulations to the high school, college and university students from across the Northwest Territories who have graduated from their programs this past spring and summer. I had the opportunity to attend and to speak at several

convocation ceremonies in many communities across the North and elsewhere.

Recently I was invited to be the guest of honour at Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt on Vancouver Island, where 14 young people from across Canada, including two from Fort Providence, were successful in completing the three week Aboriginal Entry Program Pre-Recruit Training Course.

Some of these young people will now have the opportunity to join the Canadian Armed Forces, where they will train and prepare for their choice of careers while serving with the Armed Forces in Canada as well as overseas.

It is such a pleasure to witness the graduation ceremonies of our young people as they complete various steps in their education, from high school through to postsecondary programs of study. We in the North look forward to the contribution that all of our graduates will make to our communities and to the Northwest Territories as a whole in the years to come.

To see our young people find success in school and for them to have a choice in the many careers as they decide to work or to continue on with more education is a very special honour for me to witness. It is among the nicest things of the work that I do as Commissioner and one that I enjoy very much.

As well, 2008 seemed to have been the year of 50th anniversaries for many events, including the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Sir John Franklin School, and then the Inuvik half century celebrations this summer, both of which I attended.

Now, as the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories I am very pleased to declare open the Third Session of the 16th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

As you depart for your homes, I want to wish you safe travels and that you have an opportunity to acquaint yourselves with your communities and your families and enjoy the seasons to come.

With that, thank you, merci beaucoup, qnanami, mahsi cho.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the Day. Item 3, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 1-16(3) ENERGUIDE 80

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update Members on an important initiative being

undertaken by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

As Members are well aware, the challenges of rising fuel costs and climate change have forced all of us to place a renewed focus on energy efficiency. One of the most important places where energy improvements can be made is in the home. As winter approaches, we encourage homeowners and tenants alike to explore the many options available to them to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and mitigate the high cost of fuel.

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is also making significant efforts to improve the energy efficiency of its housing stock. One of the most important efforts we are making is an assessment of existing housing designs to identify areas of enhancement that can achieve energy savings. While the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has been delivering high quality housing for decades, as the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation I have directed my officials to move to the next level in terms of energy efficiency and conservation.

Over the coming year the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will develop design plans to ensure that building envelopes and heating and ventilating systems in future construction projects achieve, at a minimum, an EnerGuide 80 rating. As an example, an EnerGuide 80 rating would typically require an R28 insulated wall, an R50 ceiling and an R40 floor, among other improvements. The EnerGuide rating system is used by Natural Resources Canada to evaluate the energy efficiency of a building. The EnerGuide 80 standard is the benchmark for high energy efficiency.

It is important that this effort be undertaken in a manner that balances increased capital costs with the need for energy conservation. Improvement to the current designs to an EnerGuide 80 rating or better will increase initial costs by 5 to 10 per cent. Over the long term, however, this will yield a greater cost savings, and we will realize a return on investment within a relatively short period given the rising cost to operate a home.

The EnerGuide 80 score standard has been adopted by other provincial and municipal jurisdictions as the minimum score for a highly efficient home. The design enhancements for the NWT Housing Corporation will be finalized by mid 2009 in time for implementation for the 2010 construction season.

Mr. Speaker, while the enhancements to our new design represent a significant component of our efforts to conserve energy, there are also important savings that can be achieved through retrofits of our existing public housing stock. While on average a 20 year old home in Canada will typically score

66 on the EnerGuide scale, I am pleased to report that the NWT Housing Corporation's houses typically score higher than the national average. But there is room for improvement. According to the Arctic Energy Alliance, retrofitting houses from an EnerGuide 70 score to an EnerGuide 80 may reduce greenhouse gas emissions and annual energy costs by 25 to 30 per cent.

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is coordinating with Arctic Energy Alliance to conduct ecoENERGY evaluations on existing public housing units to establish EnerGuide ratings over the next six months. Evaluations on 70 to 100 public housing units are scheduled to be completed by April 2009. This will help determine the greatest emission/cost reduction for future energy retrofit upgrades.

As Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation I also feel strongly that improvements to our home designs are the right thing to do. It will save our clients money and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is one of the many energy efficient initiatives being undertaken by this government through the GNWT's Energy Plan and Greenhouse Gas Strategy and serves as an example of how small improvements can go a long way in helping to protect our environment.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 2-16(3)
CORPORATE HUMAN RESOURCES
STRATEGIC PLAN

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the effectiveness of the government's programs and services is determined by the quality of the people who deliver them. In today's highly competitive labour market we need to do more to recognize that our staff are the government's most valuable resource.

To attract qualified staff and create an environment that encourages them to remain with the Government of the Northwest Territories, it takes more than an investment of money. It also takes planning, vision and commitment. We believe that the government is a challenging and exciting organization that can provide staff with a range of opportunities. We need to invest enough effort and resources into making our government an employer of choice.

This means doing more than providing a competitive salary and benefits package. It also requires that staff have access to mentorship and training and that they have opportunities to advance within the organization. It means ensuring we have a government that actively strives to attract a

workforce that is representative of the population it serves.

We need to find more effective ways to attract aboriginal people into the government and support them to succeed. We need to model other employers who have made it a priority to accommodate persons with disabilities in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, in order to accomplish this, I am pleased to announce that the Department of Human Resources is proceeding with the development of a comprehensive corporate human resource strategic plan for the Northwest Territories' public service.

The strategic plan will describe the goals of the public service, document our internal and external challenges and outline the key initiatives that will be undertaken to achieve success. The plan will be based on consultation with stakeholders, including Members of this Assembly, as well as best practices from other public services. It will be grounded in the realities of working within the political, cultural, social and environmental landscape of the Canadian north. We will also provide a framework for the development of individual departmental human resource plans.

Finally, the plan will include a companion three year action plan that details specific short term objectives, actions, time frames and performance results to be achieved over the life of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the strategic plan will reflect the aspirations of multiple stakeholder groups. It will reflect the 16th Legislative Assembly's priority to "improve human resource management within the GNWT through training, career planning and encouraging innovation by employees." It will be a foundation document guiding the work of thousands of public servants who will continue to provide the highest calibre of programs and services to the people of the Northwest Territories. And, finally, it will reflect the needs and aspirations of residents.

I look forward to keeping the Members of this Assembly informed as we move forward with this important initiative.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 4, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HEALTH CARE CORE SERVICE REDUCTIONS

Mr. Krutko: Today I would like to speak in regard to health and social services in the Mackenzie

Delta. I know I've raised questions in this House time and time again, yet with no results in regard to improvements in services and, more important, promoting a healthy environment and protection of our residents and protection of our youth and our seniors in our communities.

When we have a shortage of nurses or in some cases where we have health centres that we build in communities and they're not functional because we don't have nurses to operate them, there's a breakdown in regard to services being provided for aboriginal communities. I think it's that type of reality that we live in, in most communities. Yet, Mr. Speaker, we continue to see deficits run up in our large regional centres. In the case of Inuvik the government has bailed them out to the tune of \$9 million over the last five years, but no services have been in place in one of our communities. Tsigehtchic hasn't had a nurse in that community for over five years.

In the community that I represent the core programs that really assist people in the area of mental health — frontline workers such as social workers, in regard to nurses, teachers.... Those are the individuals that really improve the quality of life in our communities. People feel that basically by having these services at their fingertips, it does improve the quality of life in our communities. But when we have a system where those aspects aren't there, it deteriorates to a point where people are living in fear, wondering: "What's going to happen when I get sick? Do I have to find a ride to the Inuvik hospital?" What's going to happen in regard to an elderly person who basically has come down with cancer and has to go back to their home community, not realizing that they don't have a health care service provider in that community?

I think that this government has to take this issue seriously. It has a direct implication to the government by way of costs. If anything, the costs escalate when you don't have frontline workers, and more importantly, the individual medical costs and transportation, locums.... People basically have to carry those extra costs. It has a direct effect.

Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister of Health questions on this matter later.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LOTTERY FUNDING FOR THE ARTS

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, the amount of money generated from lottery proceeds in the NWT was \$3 million last year, a significant amount of money. Currently in the NWT proceeds of the Western Canada Lottery program are exclusively allocated

to sports organizations. The NWT is the only jurisdiction in Canada that exclusively allocates lottery proceeds to sports. Alberta and British Columbia divide their lottery proceeds between many different organizations and causes, and the Yukon divides its proceeds between arts and cultural programs and sports programs.

The arts play a significant role in a community's economy and well-being. National statistics show that, on average, investments in the arts result in an 8 to 1 payback to the community for every dollar invested in the form of increased tourism, increased businesses for restaurants and jobs created, to name a few of the spin-off benefits. The arts contribute to a lively, healthy community and give our youth a vehicle to express themselves creatively in positive ways, typically using local materials and resources. They are also an integral part of a diversified economy. As we already rely so strongly upon our non-renewable resources, our territory is going to continue to be vulnerable to the vagaries of the global economy. A healthy arts and culture industry can help us withstand these difficult swings.

Mr. Speaker, our neighbours in the Yukon have recognized this and are benefiting from a burgeoning tourism industry, due in part to their superior level of funding arts and culture in comparison to our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that I'm not suggesting that we reduce funding for sports in the NWT. I recognize that sports play an indispensable role in the lives of our youth and contribute to maintaining healthy communities. I also want to acknowledge that this Assembly has begun to recognize the importance of the arts through increased funding, and I applaud this effort. However, there is still room for additional support, and I think that some access to lottery funds is a valid place to start. There is certainly a possibility of increasing lottery revenue in the NWT. If arts organizations were involved in advertising, I have little doubt that we would start to see an increase in lottery revenues that could be split and used for the increased benefit of both sports and arts and culture — two vitally important aspects of our society.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON YELLOWKNIFE COMMUNITY WELLNESS COALITION

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yellowknife's natural surroundings and safe, small town atmosphere are things that make our capital city unique. Sadly, in recent years this sense of

security is no longer the case. We're experiencing an increase in break and enters as well as drug trafficking. The popular Frame Lake walking trail has become a scene of violent crimes.

Some proactive citizens have created the Yellowknife Community Wellness Coalition, a community policing organization made up of trained volunteers. Their Citizens on Patrol is a neighbourhood watch service that acts as eyes and ears only — observers who report suspicious and dangerous behaviour to the RCMP. These are things we can all do to be community minded. Thanks to contributions from municipal, territorial and federal governments the Community Wellness Coalition service patrol has leased a van to drive through Yellowknife picking people up and bringing them to safe places to stay, be it their homes or one of the shelters. This service is crucial in the winter for people's personal safety and in the summer for collective safety downtown.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm seeing here is a vicious cycle. Needy people are taken to shelters that are already crowded and financially stretched. When these places reach capacity or can only provide a limited range of services, the same people who were brought there are forced onto the streets again. Many of them gather in places such as the bush along Frame Lake Trail, on the rocks behind Sir John Franklin High School and on Tin Can Hill. It is hard to go for a walk in Yellowknife's green spaces without coming across someone's campsite. These people often struggle with addictions, and their desperate condition makes them more susceptible to injury and disease and increased addiction that in turn leads to more crime.

Services like our shelters in the Yellowknife Community Wellness Coalition rely on the dedicated efforts of volunteers. To avoid burnout, they need to increase their number of personnel and provide more training, but they are unable to due to limited funding to the voluntary sector. The Department of Justice has shown a lot of support for the Wellness Coalition, but more help is needed to continue their services. They need a small amount of office space, a part time coordinator and fuel for their van.

We need to examine where we are putting our dollars. We need to break this vicious cycle. We need to fund programs that are already working and help the people that are already helping others. We need to feel secure enough to be able to give tips to the RCMP without fearing for our personal safety. Mr. Speaker, we all want a capital city that is clean and safe. We should be able to enjoy its unique character and step outdoors to see the northern lights or sunset after midnight without being afraid.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be asking the Justice Minister some questions about community wellness and policing.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RENOVATIONS TO THE FORT SIMPSON HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Menicoche: Mahsi cho. [English translation not provided.]

The Fort Simpson Health Centre provides a range of health services to residents of the Deh Cho region. Unfortunately, the existing facility requires renovation to adequately provide these services.

Mr. Speaker, renovations were slated to take place in this facility, but it appears that this project has been taken off the books and funding has been deferred. The facility is scheduled for a half life renovation in 2019. That's ten years into the future. The health centre staff and the residents of the Deh Cho can't wait that long. Adequate work space is already at a premium, and service delivery is being impacted by this situation on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, quality health care services are being compromised by the lack of appropriate space to deliver these services. I urge the Minister to ensure that the renovation of the Fort Simpson Health Centre is funded in this upcoming fiscal year.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS FOR CONSTITUENTS WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to speak about the difficulties a constituent is encountering in dealing with Health and Social Services. My constituent has multiple sclerosis, or MS, as it is commonly referred to.

MS attacks the covering of the brain, causing inflammation and scarring. When this happens, the usual flow of nerve impulses along nerve fibres is interrupted or distorted. MS can be a very debilitating and progressive disease. Symptoms can include extreme fatigue, loss of balance, problems with coordination, stiffness of muscles, speech problems, bladder and bowel problems, short term memory loss and partial or complete paralysis.

Mr. Speaker, anyone living with MS can experience some or all of these symptoms. I was very concerned when my constituent contacted me at the beginning of this month to tell me that she had

been turned down by Extended Health Benefits for a WalkAide, which was duly prescribed by a neurologist. The WalkAide is a functional electrical stimulation device that allows a person who has MS to walk without dragging their feet. When my constituent contacted health benefits, she was told that the WalkAide was a luxury that was not covered by Extended Health Benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if the Minister of Health and Social Services also thinks that walking should be considered a luxury in our territory. I had contacted the Minister's office with my concerns, and it took them close to three weeks to write me back, saying my constituent should phone the deputy minister. I am completely at a loss as to why it took three weeks to say we will get her a cane or a wheelchair, and she can phone the deputy minister so he can assign staff to review her file so she could be provided with financial support equivalent to what she would have been eligible for, which would be a cane or a wheelchair. This is completely unacceptable.

In Alberta these devices are helping those suffering with MS, and they are being distributed for free to help people. Why is this product not on the list in the Northwest Territories? I thought we were in the business of helping our residents, Mr. Speaker. My constituent wants to walk with dignity, not with a cane and certainly not be in a wheelchair, though she had to purchase this device herself. Why would the government not cover such a device? At \$4,500 it would be a small price to pay for a person's quality of life.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People pay taxes their entire life, and when they encounter a serious health issue like MS, the government should be there for them. In this case they weren't, and that's a shame.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FAIRNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE BUDGET PLANNING PROCESS

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year a large amount of money gets thrown on the proverbial table of the Legislative Assembly. For our approximately 42,000 residents, \$1.2 billion in round numbers goes on the table. Departments and deputies and their Ministers elected to oversee them put together business plans which form the basis of our annual budget. Our territory is diverse in so many ways, and although our resources are

great, so are the many needs of our regions, communities and residents.

It's our job as the stewards of the public purse to spend our resources in the public interest in the fairest, most effective and most prudent way possible. That is what is expected of us, and nothing less. We have the power and, more importantly, the responsibility to put in place checks and balances that ensure transparency and accountability in the way that we disburse and distribute our financial resources.

There is no mechanism outside of this Assembly that will hold to account that process, other than the court of public opinion and the confidence that puts us here in the first place. The budget is the people's; they merely entrust us with its management to match it to the needs of those same people to the best of our collective ability. Let's remind ourselves often that with the power that comes with being at the table at which \$1.2 billion is laid down every year comes an ominous obligation to fairness and accountability. That requires balancing the interests of many, as I said. We know this is a political environment where people are passionate about their constituencies and those needs, myself amongst them.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, and to the issue of fairness, I would like to thank my colleagues on this side of the House who on Monday voted unanimously in support of moving forward the funding required for the renovation of Diamond Jenness Secondary School in my riding. I do appreciate their support and their recognition of this being the fair and right thing to do. I want to assure Members on this side of the House and the other side that I will continue to support them in any way I can to realize the aspirations of their constituencies as I listen to their issues.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FUNDING SUPPORT FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

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

Today I rise once again to talk about our youth. On numerous occasions I have taken this opportunity to bring attention to our youth concerns. I have talked about the need to assist communities so they can deliver community based programming. I've talked about youth projects. I've talked about the need to put youth related facilities in smaller communities. This is very important.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about the importance of hiring qualified youth workers. Hiring is the first step, and being able to keep these individuals is a critical factor for successful youth programming. The

communities need this help. I talked about how communities are best suited to know what works for their youth. Communities need to be engaged right from the start. They are the experts. They know the families. They know the issues. I talked about the benefits of successful youth programs, including health benefits for youth, social and justice benefits for the communities, educational and economical benefits for the NWT. A successful youth program results in healthier individuals, healthier communities and in the long run a healthier NWT.

Mr. Speaker, some communities are delivering successful youth programs; however, more often than not these can be found in the larger centres. It is rare to find this level of success in small communities, but when you do, it is usually because the community is lucky enough to have one local individual who is dedicated to the community and the youth.

Having attended the successful Aboriginal Sport Circle award dinner last week, I was once again reminded of the importance of youth. At this time I would like to congratulate the Aboriginal Sport Circle on the tremendous work they are doing with the NWT youth.

Mr. Speaker, in light of some of the success stories here, I feel that our government is still not taking the youth issue seriously. Our youth budgets remain low. Communities still need to hire and retain qualified youth workers. Small communities need to build facilities for their youth. Smaller, isolated communities need help to send their youth to sporting events. An example: a team from Lutselk'e to play Super Soccer here in Yellowknife will cost \$4,000.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REGULAR PERFORMANCE AUDITS OF CROWN CORPORATIONS

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February 2006 and again in March 2007 I made a Member's statement on the need to perform regular performance or value for money audits on Crown corporations owned by the GNWT. In response to my repeated questions, the Finance Minister indicated this was something he was willing to examine. Well, another year has gone by, and I have yet to hear from the Minister, or even the new Minister, to see or hear about any concept being implemented.

We all know that Crown corporations are subjected to annual financial audits by the Auditor General's office, which examines the books and ensures the financial reporting practices are in accordance with

recognized accounting principles. While this is a valuable exercise, Mr. Speaker, it does not provide the directors of the Crown corporations or the shareholders — which are the residents of the NWT as represented by this government and our MLAs — with the indication that the Crown corporations' resources are being managed efficiently and that the operations are being carried out as effectively as possible.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important roles of Regular Members is to hold the government to account for the use of taxpayers' money. Regular performance audits of Crown corporations are especially important, because Regular Members do not review the yearly budget and business plans of Crown corporations like we do for regular departments. This is a lack of direct oversight on the part of the elected MLAs for our Northerners at large. We have seen the benefits of performance audits. Most recently the NWT Housing Corporation was under an audit by the office of the Auditor General. As a result, significant issues were identified, and a work plan to address these operational issues is now being implemented. There are a number of other government owned entities, like the NWT Power Corp, that would benefit from a regular performance audit to help address many of the questions and concerns Northerners have about that operation.

Mr. Speaker, we need to move ahead on this. Other jurisdictions, like the Government of Canada, have legislation that requires special examination of Crown corporations. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the NWT continues not to.

We have an opportunity through the revision of the Financial Administration Act to address this gap. The Auditor General's Office has agreed to work with this government on this problem. We need to recognize and partner with them to make sure this happens.

Mr. Speaker, I will be raising this issue during question period later today. Hopefully the government will finally move forward on this initiative.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REJUVENATING THE NUNAKPUT ECONOMY

Mr. Jacobson: Mr. Speaker, many people ask me: what's the best way to rejuvenate our economy in Nunakput? The answers are plenty, but few of them are being considered by this government. It definitely excludes raising northern taxes for Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, the economic forecast for Canada and our international partners is looking bleak. Even

though the International Monetary Fund says Canada could be one of the only countries to avoid recession, this government must do what it can do to maintain the growth.

Realistically, the Northwest Territories has been experiencing very good times. Year after year the North has either surpassed the country in economic growth or definitely been in the top percentage, but these good times have been only in specific areas, such as Yellowknife. Creating jobs is the best way of having a vibrant community, but in Nunakput job creation is unique and difficult and has its challenges.

This government must do more to assist small businesses in the communities and regions to develop capacity infrastructure and attract industry investments and jobs. This is why I cannot understand why this government wants to hinder the economy and creation of jobs for Northerners by increasing taxes and the overall cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, under the current process the criteria for assistance for regions such as ours are unrealistic. The grants are uniform and designed for businesses in larger centers. This government needs to develop a coalition of partners and stakeholders for the Nunakput region due to their unique set of challenges and promote and coordinate a truly northern, regional and intergovernmental approach at rejuvenating the economy.

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

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE BUDGET PROCESS

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that we have closed the book on the 2009–2010 capital budget, I would like to provide my thoughts on the process.

First, the change in timing for the consideration and approval of the Capital Acquisition Plan is a positive step. There's a better probability that projects will get activated and started early enough to take advantage of the summer construction season, but at the moment it only works in theory. It hasn't yet been tested. There must be an evaluation of this new process after this year — say early 2010 — to see if the change in timing really does produce a better result.

A second seemingly new tactic for this year's Capital Estimates is the dropping of projects from the previous year's Capital Acquisition Plan if

planning is lacking. I support this change. It makes the plan more realistic, in my view.

Third, the Finance Minister and his staff provided Members with lots of information about the Capital Acquisition Plan projects and provided it in a timely manner. I personally appreciated receiving the substantiation and background information. As I have mentioned before, I would like to see a priority attached to each project. I feel it would assist Members in evaluating these projects.

Fourth, the department should provide the government's long range Capital Plan to Members well in advance of any draft Capital Estimates that go to Members. As you have heard more than once, there is a genuine concern on this side of the House about the equitable sharing of projects and capital dollars among all of our 33 communities. This has always been a problem and will likely continue on after we're all no longer here. A solution may be to calculate the cost per capita for each of our communities and each riding to determine if the distribution is fair. If this is shared with Members, I know you'll get feedback. Members are always looking for an opportunity to provide input.

Fifth, this year's infrastructure plan has a big focus on deferred maintenance. I fully support this approach. We need to ensure that this focus is maintained on an ongoing basis. Another new initiative this year was action to reduce our carry-over amounts from one year to the next. I feel this will make the Capital Plan more realistic as we go forward. Eventually we may actually have a plan where all projects start and end when they should. That would be a good thing.

With any plan, as circumstances change, so should the plan. It should reflect the present, not the past.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. Our capital infrastructure plan should not be set in stone from one year to the next. If necessary, projects should be dropped or added. For the deletion of projects that are in the 2008–09 capital budget but not in the '09–10 budget, I saw and heard little evidence of valid reasons for the deletion. Members should be given information on deletions as part of the substantiation package accompanying any Capital Estimates document.

I appreciate this opportunity to provide my comments to the Finance Minister. I hope he takes these comments as constructive criticism and an attempt to improve on the final product.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CULTURAL COMPONENT IN THE
SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Mr. Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of days I had the opportunity to look back into our education system and how culture has played a very important role in our lives and how we've tried to move culture into the education system to teach our children about our culture.

I had a very eye opening discussion this morning with my wife. My little boy is six years old. We wanted to have him wear a fur hat, but his grandmother said not until he's past six years old can he wear a fur hat. That's our way of life as aboriginal people. That's what we teach our children.

I told my wife, "I wonder how much people know about this in our community — how much they know about our culture, about little boys." He got a name from his grandmother. That name is something he grows up with and that's who he becomes. How many people in our own culture know that or continue practising that?

We looked again at certain things. I said, "It's fall time. Fall time is the time to pick berries. How do we involve our elders in our communities to pick berries?" It's a very sacred meaning time, to pick berries and make jam instead of going to the Northern and buying jam. We actually have spiritual and cultural values to pick berries, make jam and give it to the elders. There's medicine in there. But we don't.

How much value do we put into our education in terms of culture? How many millions do we put into our culture? We've really got to ask these questions of our own people in our own communities: how valued is our culture, our way of life? Right now we're thinking that we depend on government to do this and that for us.

We're Dene people, aboriginal people, Inuit people. We've got to stand up; I think we've got to make a stand for education. That's the hardest thing to do in our life: make something good for ourselves. We did it in our past, so there's no difference for us to do it today.

At the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Minister of Education and Culture.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Jacobson.

**Recognition of
Visitors in the Gallery**

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we need to welcome Joseph Palukset and his wife, Elsie Cretenbert, to the House all the way from Ulukhaktok. Welcome to the House.

Also, I would like to recognize Mr. Greg Huff from the Aboriginal Sport Circle and tell him to keep up the good work in what he's been doing.

Mrs. Groenewegen: It is my pleasure today to recognize in the visitor's gallery the mayor for Hay River, his Worship Marc Miltenberger.

Mr. Beaulieu: I would like to recognize my C.A., Joe Bailey, and his brother Greg Hopf.

Mr. Bromley: I would like to recognize Shad Turner. He gave us a beautiful rendition of our national anthem. Also, Mr. Paul Andrews, another Weledeh resident. Welcome to the House.

Hon. Bob McLeod: I, too, would like to recognize Shad Turner, who sang *O Canada* for us. Shad has been an employee with the Department of Human Resources for approximately two years. He is the client service manager responsible for Public Works and Services; Education, Culture and Employment; and Human Resources.

Shad is also an active contributor to the Yellowknife music scene. He is the director of the Yellowknife Choral Society. As well, he sings regularly with Classics on Stage Yellowknife.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I as well would like to recognize J.M. Miltenberger, the younger — my brother Jean-Marc Miltenberger, a successful businessman and mayor of Hay River.

Mr. Yakeleya: I would like to recognize a member of the Tulita people, Mr. Paul Andrew, the main man to hang focus on.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Welcome to everybody in the gallery today. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1-16(3)
CULTURAL COMPONENT IN THE
SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Mr. Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I talked about culture and education. I would like to ask the Minister of Education how many dollars are going into my region, the Sahtu region, into the educational system in terms of

teaching and providing cultural opportunities for our children.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We do provide various program dollars to the community to promote and enhance our language and our culture, our special way of life, in all regions and in all the schools that we provide funding to. We do get certain funding from the federal government as well. And there is a \$1.9 million pot of funding we provide towards that program.

I could provide that detailed information to the Member as to the Sahtu region — specific details of what kind of program dollars they are getting in the riding. Mahsi.

Mr. Yakeleya: I look forward to the information the Minister is going to provide to me and possibly the other Members of the House in terms of the funding that is being provided to the communities and our region.

I'll ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment: in terms of the authority over cultural programs being implemented into our communities, would the Minister commit to sitting down and talking to the education board to look at how to increase cultural programs into the Sahtu community in order to have a balance of academic and cultural teaching?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Certainly there are always ways of improving certain programs or enhancing certain programs. I'm looking forward to the discussion that will take place within the region of Sahtu and to working with the local DEA and also the regional educational council representatives. They are the ones we contribute the program dollars to, to deliver the school programs.

I will be more than happy to meet with the Member and also his representatives to deal with this particular item. If there needs to be improvement, it will be Northwest Territories-wide, so we can certainly talk further on that. Mahsi.

Mr. Yakeleya: Again, I certainly appreciate the Minister making efforts to come into Sahtu and meet with the people there, with the appropriate boards and authorities.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister if he would consider something like they do in Russia with their education programs. In the mornings they have a culture program, just for the morning. They have dancing; they have languages. In the afternoon they provide the academic structure. I would ask the Minister if that type of consideration could be given to the majority of the people in my region,

who are average people who should be looking at how we involve the teachers, parents and the elders in teaching that type of culture.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: That can be one of our topics of discussion when we are meeting with the various parties within the Sahtu region. We do have an integrated cultural and language curriculum in the schools as well. We can talk further on that.

I will bring my department in to discuss what we currently deliver in the schools in the 33 communities we serve. The programs are outlined in all the communities, so we will discuss further where we need to improve in certain areas. Mahsi.

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

Mr. Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our educational boards are doing very well with the limited dollars we have. We are following a national accreditation in terms of what we need to do to pass our students to the next grade.

I feel that within our own schools we are excluding certain professors in our schools, such as the elders. The elders have a wealth of knowledge, yet when we try to get them in there, they're challenged because of the income. They get dinged by social security, by the federal government. They want to come in, but if they do come in, their pension cheque is going to go down, so it hinders them.

I want to ask the Minister: would he be able to take his leadership within his department, work with the other Cabinet Ministers? We've got to have these professors, these elders, in our schools. We have got to teach our younger children, because they are missing that part of their education. We don't have them. We have people coming from outside who don't have that knowledge of our community and our language and our culture. We've got to have the elders in our schools. If we don't, Mr. Speaker, that's a crying shame today.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: I certainly agree with the Member as to the value and the wisdom that elders bring to the school system and also to the community. We must cherish that and also work with that. We as a department have been dealing with this particular issue, because it's not only in the Sahtu region but Northwest Territories-wide that schools would like to fully utilize elders' services.

They are penalized from their pension as well when they get honorarium cheques or casual paycheques. We are dealing with that issue right now. We are talking about options in different scenarios as to how we can deliver an effective program where they don't get penalized. We will continue to work with that, Mr. Speaker. I will continue to work with the Member and also the

members of the standing committee to improve in this area.

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

QUESTION 2-16(3)
CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE
BUDGET PROCESS

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Finance, and I would like to thank him again for the opportunity to tell him what he should be doing.

I'd like to ask a question of the Minister relative to the changes to this year's plan and the opportunity or the possibility of an evaluation. I'd like to know if the Minister can advise the House, and me in particular, of any plans he has to evaluate this new budget process.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, as well, always appreciate an opportunity when the Member has to tell me what to do. I appreciate her advice.

In this case we are very much on the same page. We've already had discussions with staff that we want to do a debrief about how the process works. We'd like to come and sit down with committee, as well, to get feedback so that we can, as we look to the cycle next year, address a lot of the issues that may come up. A lot of them may be issues related to process or content.

We are very much interested in trying to learn from this first run through, now that it's been field tested. I believe there are opportunities for improvement.

Ms. Bisaro: I thank the Minister for his comments. It's always wonderful when both sides of the House are on the same page.

I mentioned in my statement that Members on this side of the House have indicated a concern with equal sharing of dollars and so on. There has also been expressed over the last several months a need for Members to have input into the Capital Plan, a need for Members to get a project on the list. I'd like to ask the Minister what he intends to do to enable Members to get a project on the list. We need a new process, because the current one isn't working.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, firstly, I would differ somewhat from the Member's characterization that the system is not working. It's working, and I think that for the most part it works well. In some cases it may not be working as well

as we would like, but I think overall.... We've been evolving this process for many, many decades now.

We have come up with what we think are the latest improvements, where we will commit to providing a ten year retrospective for Members. We'll look at the 20-year plan going forward. We're going to get feedback, we hope, from committee in terms of the process and steps that are currently there. We already have a significant number of steps and processes that have been put in place to ensure, to the best of our ability, fairness and equity. It's still an issue that has not been satisfactorily addressed. Collectively, I believe that we can go forward to make improvements to this system that is working but that we want to make work better.

Ms. Bisaro: The Minister mentioned a number of actions that are currently in place to try and determine an equitable distribution of dollars and projects. Again, I say there is certainly a perception that that is not operating as efficiently as it should, or certainly it's not to the satisfaction of Members on this side of the House.

I guess I would like to know from the Minister what actions or what things are currently in place. What do they currently do when they are looking at projects? What do they do to try and ensure that it's a fair distribution?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: We work with a committee of deputies. We work with the Cabinet. We work with committees to review the plans. We're committed to reviewing and updating the 20 year plan. We started a new process this year. We have an infrastructure committee that's at work on improvements to the capital planning process.

This new staging of the process in the fall, for example, is one of those significant improvements that we brought forward collectively. We're going to look to what other advice the infrastructure committee brings forward and, as well, whatever input the committee and Regular Members would provide from Priorities and Planning.

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

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks again to the Minister. I guess I would like to suggest that perhaps his perception of how fair things are is not the same as what's over here and not the same as my own. If there is a per capita cost to the projects within individual communities, it certainly isn't even. I would like to suggest that there needs to be a better opportunity for Members to feel that the distribution is even.

I'd like to ask the Minister, as a last question.... I understand that individual years certainly can vary from one year to the next or that amounts can vary per community from one year to the next, but does

the department ever consider a five year average, for instance, on a per capita basis for projects?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: We provided the Members information over a four year period both by constituency and by community to give Members a sense of the money that was spent. We managed to get the housing dollars as well as the money contributed by MACA, which makes for a significant amount of money that we are spreading across the North.

We want to be very careful as we look at per capita. It's one of the issues we always take exception to when we deal with the federal government when they want to allocate the money that they have on a per capita basis, because invariably, because of the small size of our population, we get a very small amount of money. We have been arguing for years for a base plus approach to funding arrangements. It's the same approach that MACA used or is using when they allocate money to the communities. They've agreed to a formula where there is a base, I believe, of about \$600,000, then plus, based on the size of your population, which recognizes that there are larger communities.

So there are ways for us to look at how capital is allocated. But I can tell you from my own experience, per capita, for us, is going to be a process that's not going to be fair. We know right off the top that Yellowknife and all the large communities would get by far the vast amount of capital.

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

QUESTION 3-16(3)

REJUVENATING THE NUNAKPUT ECONOMY

Mr. Jacobson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of ITI. Considering the bleak forecast of the economy here at home and all over the world, considering that even during the good times many of the communities did not benefit economically, what's government going to do in the short term — within the next three months is Christmas season — to keep the economy healthy?

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

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Northwest Territories has been in the enviable position where it's been sheltered more than other jurisdictions from the volatility of the national and world economies, especially since our gross domestic product has been consistently strong over the past ten years.

But as a government we've introduced some new initiatives. Most recently we're just in the process of

rolling out the SEED Policy, the Strategic Entrepreneurial and Economic Development Program which is geared to levels 2 and 3 communities. We are investing \$2.5 million that's now available under this new policy. The approach we're taking as a government is to focus on developing an economy in every community. We're working very hard on that, and we think we've been successful in the Nunakput region.

Mr. Jacobson: It's Nun-ak-put, for the Minister, with a "T."

Will the government find innovative and cooperative solutions to allow small businesses in our small communities to truly benefit from government contracts and spending?

Hon. Bob McLeod: In keeping with our approach of developing the economy in every community, we're looking at trying to do that in all of the 33 communities of the Northwest Territories. In the Nunakput riding there are four communities, so we think we're well underway, as Tuk has oil and gas. In Sachs Harbour we're working on developing the muskox harvesting program. For Ulukhaktok we have a subsidiary developed, a Holman Island subsidiary, to start up the art and print making, and Paulatuk has the Darnley Bay resources. So we're working very hard in that area, and we're working with the members of the community.

Mr. Jacobson: Will the government work with the regional centres, such as Nunakput businesses, and federal and local governments, to review and implement measures to the truly strategic coordination of streamlining with our great territory's economic development?

Hon. Bob McLeod: We're prepared to work with all of the agencies and governments involved in economic development in the region. We're currently negotiating an MOU on contracting with the Inuvialuit regional council. We are always working for better coordination and streamlining.

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

Mr. Jacobson: None at this time. I heard all that good news.

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

QUESTION 4-16(3)

REGULAR PERFORMANCE AUDITS OF CROWN CORPORATIONS

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my Member's statement today I talked about the issue of performance audits. What I really wanted to try to characterize is the fact that performance audits are

actually like a barometer test. They tell you how healthy an organization is by looking at how the organization deals with its policies and are we getting value for money.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question goes to the newly minted Finance Minister. I'm curious if he understands the importance of the issue I'm raising, and would he be willing to implement a Crown corporation accountability act along with the updating of the GNWT's FAA, the Financial Administration Act.

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

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't feel that I'm newly minted. I've been the Minister now for four months, and I've had four months of hard riding on me. I feel I'm, I think, ready to roll — seasoned, as the Member says.

The issue of performance reviews. There are annual financial audits done. We have the ability through motions and requests to get the Auditor General in to look at Crown corporations. We've just structured a program review committee in government that's going to start looking at the operations of government. As well, we have the opportunity, as has been mentioned in this House and spoken to by the Premier, the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, to take a look at the very fundamental operations of the Power Corporation and how we generate and distribute electricity and how we're structured across the board for that particular service, including the regulatory regime. I think we have many opportunities.

Usually performance audits are specifically set up with a specific terms of reference. If the Member is talking about an annual process or a semi-annual process, we'd have to talk about that.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I promised to be nice to the Minister because his little brother was in the gallery. I may not have used "seasoned." I normally would have used "galvanized" or "crusty" Minister. But for the sake of being nice, of course, I won't say those words today.

I'm asking for a reasonable time, value for money audit. The Auditor General does a value for money audit on the federal departments in between five and ten year blocks. That's the kind of thing I'm suggesting. I wouldn't suggest we do one every week, every year, every two years. Then they build up a program, and if the Crown corporation is working healthy, they push it back on the list. That's what I'm asking for.

Would the Minister hear my call on this initiative for value for money audits and take a look at this and see if we could possibly implement something?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I arise galvanized by my colleague's questions to respond with alacrity and great definity.

Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity, through the strategic plans.... For example, the Housing Corporation has just incorporated an accompanying action plan to look at having that built in. The government is moving, too, across the board for all the departments to have strategic plans. I'm sure they're the same discussions we had in regard to the Power Corporation, and that is what is deemed beneficial or essential. So I think the opportunity's there to look at those processes, especially if it's tied into a regular strategic planning process and renewal process of that strategic plan.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear an outright no, but it sure sounded like one slipped in there somehow.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister citing a strategic plan, but the problem is it's not a strategic plan issue; it's an accountability factor that could be built into legislation, and the legislation could be amended to reflect this issue specifically and on the appropriateness.

Would the Minister of Finance be willing to look at this issue and work with the Auditor General's office? The Edmonton office has offered their resources to help with this type of program. Would he be willing to look at that and bring something back to this House to address this need of value for money audits?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, my assumption was that I was stating quite unequivocally that there's an opportunity here through the strategic planning process that departments are moving to and that corporations like the Housing Corporation have moved to, to build that process in. If that is something that is deemed appropriate, through the discussions in the House and as we go through the business planning process in the coming week, and that is an issue that has value enough built into the way we do business, then the opportunity is there through that process. As I understood the Member to say, in his mind he thought it would be every four to five years.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can I get a commitment and recognition from the Minister that the NWTAC has requested the Auditor General's office, through a letter to all Members of the Assembly, that the NWT Power Corp go through a value for money audit? Would the Minister be willing to commit to follow up on this issue? Recognizing that even though the Power Corp doesn't necessarily fall under his portfolio, I think sound fiscal management falls on his shoulders.

Therefore, I hope he would lead the charge in recognition of this difficult problem. Would he be willing to follow up on it?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: The Premier is the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation and has already indicated through questions in the House — and it's been well discussed with Members in other settings — that there's an opportunity here, as we look at the electrical rate review, the energy strategy and all the energy priorities that we're developing, to take a very fundamental look at the Power Corporation — the regulatory regime, how we generate and distribute electricity. I think that opportunity is there. Through that process, if a regular, built in review is deemed appropriate, that would be the venue to in fact have that built in.

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

QUESTION 5-16(3)

FUNDING SUPPORT FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I talked about the need for this government to look at helping smaller communities with their youth programs. I have questions for the Minister of MACA.

Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister about increasing youth budgets for communities. His response was: if there's an opportunity to increase funding for youth, that's something he would look at. My question today is: will the Minister commit to taking action to ensure youth budgets are increased for 2009–2010?

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

Hon. Robert McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I admire the Member's perseverance and commitment to an important issue, and it's an issue that we all share in this House. Having said that, we are identifying more youth funding, and as part of identifying the youth funding, we're hoping to come forward in the business plan. That should increase some of the funding to a lot of youth organizations.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, I also asked about a review of the youth budgets and how they're allocated to my communities in Tu Nedhe. I got a commitment from the Minister that he will do this.

I would like to follow up today by asking the Minister if he would give me a time frame as to when this review can be completed, keeping in mind that I'm talking about Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e.

Hon. Robert McLeod: Those commitments are coming back to bite me. I did say that we would do

a review, and I commit again to the Member that we will do a review. Once we're done sitting in the House, we'll have an opportunity to sit down with the department and give them a schedule of when I'd like to see a review done. I will certainly pass that information on to the Member.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, I felt one option for getting this government and the communities off on the right foot to start looking at youth issues in the communities is to look at a community based youth strategy specific to this particular community or that particular community of Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution.

I would like to follow up on this by asking the Minister if he will give me a time frame on when he can get started with the community based youth strategy.

Hon. Robert McLeod: Mr. Speaker, for a lot of the community youth strategy MACA will have to have a lot of direct input from the community to work together to come up with a plan for a strategy for the community. I did commit that we would start looking into this. As I said in my previous answer, once we're done in the House, I'll have an opportunity to sit down with the department and come up with a schedule of all the commitments I have made and try and see how soon we can come forward with strategies and other information for the Members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. A final supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister for those responses. I also spoke about the Aboriginal Sport Circle and how they deliver programs in many small communities, including Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution. I'd like to ask the Minister if he could commit to increasing the Aboriginal Sport Circle budget to be in line with other territorial sporting organizations.

Hon. Robert McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the budget for the Aboriginal Sport Circle.... I mean, if we're looking at increasing budgets, particularly for youth groups, I'm sure that would be taken into consideration. That would come up during our review. Any increase would come up during the review of the business plans, which we'll be undertaking in a couple of weeks.

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

QUESTION 6-16(3)

MINISTERIAL BENEFITS POLICY

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to the questions I asked yesterday in the House, the public is always very interested in what MLA pay

and benefits are. To that end, the independent commission on Members' pay and benefits is struck at least a once every term, and the recommendations go into effect for the following government. Members have an opportunity for input into that as well.

What I was trying to question the Premier about yesterday was the enhanced or additional benefits that are only available to Cabinet Ministers. I was trying to get the Premier yesterday to confirm — and I'll try again today — that, in fact, the policy for the ministerial benefit is actually decided on and voted on by the Cabinet.

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

Hon. Floyd Roland: Yes.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I thank the Premier for that. I did mention yesterday that, understandably, capital accommodation, home travel, spousal travel, perhaps even the entertainment allowance — some of these things will definitely be there. There is one area of the ministerial benefit which I find a little bit curious and that I referred to yesterday as well, and that is the accruing of holidays that get paid out to Ministers at the end of the year or at the end of their term. This is something quite unique and different, obviously, than what Regular Members have access to. So I am going to ask the Premier: why would the Cabinet policy find it necessary to approve holiday benefits, vacation benefits, and pay them out to Ministers at the end of either the year or their term?

Hon. Floyd Roland: That section of the benefits policy has in fact been around for many governments. We follow the same process that has been recommended to us through the last change, and we follow what we would do with government employees. Being a Cabinet Minister is considered full time work throughout the year. If a Minister has to take time off, they have to actually put in their application forms and follow through with that. It would be paid out at the end of the term if it's not used up.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I fully realize that it has been the practice of past governments. I just find it an anomaly, and it is bit unusual. I don't really know if I totally subscribe to the idea that it should be that way because Cabinet Ministers are full time employees of the government; that is debatable.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that is interesting and different is the enhanced benefits for Cabinet Ministers when it comes to life insurance, dental and health benefits. Now if, heaven forbid, something should happen to any of us in the performance of our duties, we do have a government life insurance policy which would then go to our beneficiary, to our family. Why would that

need to be enhanced for Cabinet Ministers? What would make that need different?

Hon. Floyd Roland: I would have to get further information on the areas the Member spoke to on dental and health benefits. I would have to get a little further detail on that and get back to the Member.

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

Mrs. Groenewegen: Of course, heaven forbid that anything untoward should ever happen to any Member of this House — or anybody, for that matter — but here is an example of where this difference in the enhanced benefit would come into play. If Mr. Roland and I were flying on the same airplane and if the airplane crashed and we both lost our lives, Mr. Roland's family would receive a benefit of \$750,000; my family would receive a benefit of \$250,000. It is a discrepancy. I just don't understand why it's necessary. It doesn't make sense to me. And, honestly, it costs the taxpayers, the public purse, money for that. Mr. Speaker, why the difference?

Hon. Floyd Roland: The benefits policy established that it is the Cabinet of the day that can review many of those policies that are in place to see if they continue to make sense. I don't have the information as to why it was at that level or how long it has been at that level. In fact, Mrs. Groenewegen just provided me with information that my family would be well taken care of, I guess. Hopefully they never have to use that section of our policy. But I will look at this information. As I say, now that this review is within the control of the Cabinet, we can make some changes, whether it is administrative processes or implementation, and see if it uses the same basis of recommendations being made for Cabinet that is made for Members.

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

QUESTION 7-16(3)
EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS
FOR CONSTITUENTS
WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. They go back to my Member's statement from earlier today, where I spoke of a constituent who suffers from MS and her inability to get a WalkAide, which would enable her to walk, through Extended Health Benefits with the Department of Health. In her conversations with departmental officials they told her that this WalkAide was a luxury. I take great exception to anybody at Health and Social Services telling my constituent that a WalkAide, which would enable them to walk, is a luxury and suggesting to

them that they get a cane or a wheelchair. I'd like to ask the Minister why the WalkAide is not part of our Extended Health Benefits here in the Northwest Territories.

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

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, the NWT EHB Program is one of the best in the country. I understand that Mr. Ramsay's constituent's equipment, called a functional electrical stimulation system, was denied for benefit because it was not on the formulary guidelines. She was advised on three occasions that that was not on the list. She did not have a doctor's referral from the NWT. She went to Alberta and purchased this equipment for \$4,500, which is under a pilot program. The Alberta government has not even decided that they're going to use this.

If I would have given the Member that straight answer, it would have taken me a week. I said that was not enough, because I do appreciate that this lady spent \$4,500 of her own money to buy equipment that she felt she needed. What I had asked and what I am trying to do — and I have communicated with the Member throughout the process — is that I'd like to know if she could be eligible for the amount that she would have received had she purchased something that was on the list and that was similar. We have very good programs, but we ask our people to follow the rules and to follow the guidelines. I do believe that the Member respects the rules as well.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I do respect the rules, but I think it is a sad day when one of our residents has to travel to Alberta to see a neurologist to get a prescription for a WalkAide, when here in the Northwest Territories it is not on the list. It adds to the quality of life for this individual. That is evident. That's why they had to go to Alberta. They had to get a prescription from this Alberta doctor, a neurologist in Edmonton, to get a WalkAide.

Again, the Minister speaks of these other aids that are possibly available under the list. Could the Minister tell me today what those other options are, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I understand there is a long list of available, approved and cost effective walk aids on the formulary. We also have doctors available in the NWT who would have been happy to see her. We forwarded her to the neurologist. I don't have the background on why she had to go to Alberta. I would like to look at that.

I think the important point here, Mr. Speaker, is that we are wanting to help her. We are wanting to see how much of the cost we could cover for her, even though she did not see a doctor here — I know no

reason why — even though she purchased something that was not on the list, even though she was told in three separate meetings that that was not on the list, that this was not an approved item.

Mr. Speaker, I'm offering the Member again: if he can ask the constituent to call.... I have asked my department to review her file and see if we can help her out at all. I didn't close the door on that. That's why it took that little while to get back to the Member.

Mr. Ramsay: The Minister didn't answer my question. What other walk aids are on the list that would be available to my constituent to help her in the condition she's in? What are those other options?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I do not have all of the list available. I could get the Member that information. I am aware that there are a number of our NWT residents with MS who get assistance for devices that they need. I understand that this device she purchased is in a pilot program in Alberta. Until the pilot program is finished, we have not decided to put that on the list. It may be that it could get on the list. It appears that this is an experimental device.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that if the constituent would go in and talk to the officials, we could give her a whole.... I believe she was given the list of things that are available.

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

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate the Minister doesn't have the list of available options for my constituent today.

Again, why would my constituent have to go to Alberta, where these devices, as the Minister stated, are being distributed for free? Residents in Alberta don't have to pay \$4,500 for this. There are sufferers of MS in Alberta that are using these devices for their quality of life. Why is it that in the Northwest Territories our residents are forced to pay \$4,500 to enhance their quality of life so they can walk with this WalkAide? Why is that? What is the process to get the WalkAide on this list the Minister talks of?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that the NWT has one of the best coverages for extended health benefits. We have a long list of things, pharmaceuticals and equipment, that the government does provide. Once in a while there comes a product on the market that has to be tested and examined before it gets on the list. Certain governments try it on an experimental basis. I understand that Alberta is trying that.

We do protect our constituents and provide them with services. All we ask, then, is to work with us to

see what we can do to help her. We are working to help her. There are always any number of items on the market, whether it be drugs or devices, that are not covered, because they don't catch up with the list on any given day.

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

QUESTION 8-16(3)
RENOVATIONS TO THE FORT SIMPSON
HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Menicoche: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services as well. In my Member's statement I spoke about the renovations that were slated for the Fort Simpson Health Centre. They have been delayed. I'm just wondering if the Minister can tell me: when will the plans be restarted, and when can Fort Simpson look at getting the renovations done?

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

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The capital project for Deh Cho has not been made available to me. We have just finished our '09-10 Capital Plan, and we're getting into the new stage. I'd be willing to look at what the Dehcho Authority is proposing.

In my tour to Deh Cho the administration had suggested that they would like some work done at the hospital as well as, perhaps, Fort Providence. I think there was some suggestion that they might want to use the surplus money to do that. I understand that's not the right way to spend the surplus money, but Deh Cho has the right to make their submission and to work through the capital planning process. I'm willing to work with the Member to see how we can put that into the process for next capital year.

Mr. Menicoche: Probably I need some clarification. I thought the Dehcho Health and Social Services board was working in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services in terms of establishing the renovation project. It is my understanding that it was on the books for this fiscal year, and it is nowhere to be seen. That creates the illusion that it's not going to be done. I just want to get assurances that these renovations will continue.

Hon. Sandy Lee: I know some of the renovation has been done in the centre. As the Member knows, we're engaged in a different capital planning process now. All of the proposals will be submitted to the capital infrastructure committee to look at putting them into the plan. There are a lot of projects that were slated for years 3 or 4. Unless they had a very specific plan, I believe they are being redirected. I would like to commit to the

Member again that I will look at that proposal from Deh Cho and see how we could put it into the process.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you, Minister, for that clarification. Once again, I just want to get an assurance that just because it's not on the books or in some plan somewhere, it doesn't mean that it's not going to happen; there is still a process. To whom would Dehcho Health and Social Services bring forward that plan, once again?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, yes, this new process has required that unless there is a very specific plan in an advanced stage, some of the capital projects that were on the books got taken off — the Stanton master plan is one of them — and they are being redirected to work through this new capital plan process. I commit to the Member that I will revisit this capital project to see where it is and put it into the process.

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

QUESTION 9-16(3)
YELLOWKNIFE
COMMUNITY WELLNESS COALITION

Mr. Abernethy: Mr. Speaker, during the election I heard a lot of comments and concerns about crime in Yellowknife. It has been over a year and those concerns still exist in my riding. Specifically the number of B and Es is up. I've had constituents tell me they have witnessed drug deals on the streets in front of their homes, and I've even had one constituent assaulted in his own yard after interrupting a potential B and E. Solutions, I believe, are going to require a solid, dedicated partnership between the DOJ and the Department of Health.

Today I would specifically like to ask the Minister of Justice some questions. I would like to thank them for the work they've done with respect to auxiliary police and special constables, but there hasn't been much change on the street. There is still a lot of crime occurring. I think it's going to take some creative thinking to solve some of these problems. We need some eyes on the street. One group in Yellowknife that is doing that is the Yellowknife Community Wellness Coalition. I was wondering if the Minister of Justice could tell me what level of financial support they have provided to that organization this year and how that compares to funding they provided in previous years, specifically last fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it would take a partnership between the Department of Justice, Health and Social Services, and the community, whether it be the City of

Yellowknife or the coalition the Member is referring to. Funding has been allocated through my department and also through homelessness funding. There is certain funding provided to organizations to deal with these, whether it be for the break and enters or to assist the RCMP officers at the ground level. We as the 16th Assembly did make a commitment. It's one of the priorities of the 16th Assembly to deal with those issues at hand. Community policing was a big issue, which we need to deal with.

We will continue to be vocal with the federal government and also with my counterparts, the Cabinet and also the Members during the business planning process. I can certainly provide the Member with a detailed outline of the program dollars that are being transferred or committed to this coalition group. Mahsi.

Mr. Abernethy: Thanks to the Minister of Justice for that information. I was wondering if he could tell me if, in fact, the Department of Justice provided any financial support to the Yellowknife Community Wellness Coalition for the 2008–2009 fiscal year.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I need to get that further detailed information for the Member. I don't have it in front of me today, but I would certainly be more than happy to provide that detailed 2008–2009 contribution to the coalition if there has been some in the past.

Mr. Abernethy: I look forward to seeing that information once the Minister of Justice provides it to me.

In a similar line, would the Department of Justice consider core funding to the Yellowknife Community Wellness Coalition so that they would be able to hire a coordinator to provide further training to their membership and promote their organization? It would benefit not just Yellowknife. If this organization is established, they'd certainly be able to provide the best practices to some of the other larger communities in the Northwest Territories — Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik, Simpson — which may be able to benefit from their expertise and put in similar organizations within their own communities.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, we need to review all the contributions we made to organizations in the community. There is the John Howard Society; there is the City of Yellowknife, which is also in partnership with this particular initiative; the Yellowknife Community Wellness Coalition; and other sectors that we do provide contributions to. We have to keep in mind that we are going through the business planning process. We'll be discussing the importance of community safety, so this could be one of the topics of discussion.

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

Mr. Abernethy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and once again thanks to the Minister of Justice. Given that one of our mandates is to increase safety and security in our community and that falls under the responsibility of one of our new strategic investment committees, I could see this as being part of one of our new initiatives, one of our new strategic directions we could take. I would encourage the Minister and I'd like him to commit to talking to the Minister responsible for that strategic investment committee to work with these organizations and provide some longer term funding so that we can actually see some results on our streets.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I will commit in this House that I will continue to work with my colleagues on the importance of community policing, because we're here to prevent things from happening, such as the crimes that are in the communities.

Another thing I would like to point out is that we also work with the community justice programs and the community justice committees. I think that's an important factor we have to keep in mind. They're the ones who deal with the community's local issues. Certainly, I will continue to work with my Cabinet colleagues to initiate this process. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 10-16(3) LOTTERY FUNDING FOR THE ARTS

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of MACA, and it has to do with the lottery funds that I talked about in my Member's statement earlier today. What would be required to get that reviewed and some of those funds from the lottery program going towards arts and cultural programs, rather than just to sports?

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

Hon. Robert McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. MACA is working with the NWT Council of Sports and Recreation partners to review the overall management of lotteries in the Northwest Territories. As the Member pointed out, the money is earmarked for sports, and that's a good place for the money from the lotteries to be going. I'm sure the arts are another good place for it to go, but right now the money is earmarked specifically for sports and for the youth. That's an issue that we continue to try and find funding for.

Mr. Bromley: Thanks to the Minister for those comments. I don't actually disagree that sports is a

good place for revenues to go, but there is an additional need, still, for support for our arts and cultural programs.

As I mentioned in my statement, almost every jurisdiction in Canada does do that — provide some of their support to arts and culture. As well, most other jurisdictions provide dollars directly to sports programs. They don't just rely on the lottery revenues.

I'd like to find out how we can get this done. How can we modify this program? This is input from the public. It's not something I'm coming up with by myself. I'm sure you've heard the same. How can we get a review of how this can be done and start thinking about how we can dedicate some of those revenues to arts and cultural programs?

Hon. Robert McLeod: Mr. Speaker, as I said on answering the first question, there is a review. They're working with the Council of Sports and Recreation and doing a review.

As far as earmarking some of the money to sports goes, I mean, that's something they would have to come up with once they do the review, if the review gets done, and then decide from there how they're going to distribute the money.

Like I said — and the Member didn't disagree with me — the money from the lotteries is not that much. As the Member knows, it costs a lot of money to supply supports to youth across the Northwest Territories: bringing them to tournaments and helping fund some of their events. While both are very important issues, I think youth is still where the lottery money should be going unless a review is done and there is an agreement to divide up the funds.

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, I don't disagree with that. I just think that what we should be discussing is whether those dollars for youth should be going strictly to sports or whether they should be going to sports plus arts and cultural programs.

Are arts organizations represented in this review that the sports and recreation organization is doing? If they're not, then it's hardly surprising what they would come out with. So can we get arts organizations — territorial arts organizations, regional arts organizations — participating with the Council of Sports and Recreation in doing that review?

Hon. Robert McLeod: Mr. Speaker, arts aren't presently part of the review. It's a review done with the NWT Council of Sports and Recreation and MACA.

I think the Member is well aware that there was \$500,000 recently allocated to enhance arts and culture funding. As I said, arts are not part of the

review process. It's just between MACA and the NWT Council of Sports and Recreation.

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

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My fingernails are still recovering from my work trying to get the government to do that. I'm very well aware of that \$500,000. In fact, I acknowledged that clearly in my statement earlier today, and I'm very appreciative of that.

What we're talking about here is revenue dollars from the lottery. I would like to hear the Minister commit to put some attention into considering that arts be included in the beneficiaries of those lottery dollars, as per the request of people throughout the Northwest Territories. I'm not saying scoop it all. I recognize the importance of our sports programs and that lottery dollars do this. I think, as I mentioned, there could be a big effort on the part of the arts community to help generate more dollars from the lottery revenues.

Hon. Robert McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the money from the lotteries, as I said, will continue to go to the sports groups. The Member has asked if arts could be a part of this review. That's something we'll have to take up with the department and see if there is an appetite to have them as part of this review.

Again, I'll say to the Member that the money that lotteries collect isn't a huge amount, and it costs a lot of money to run sports programs in the NWT. It costs a lot of money to have arts and culture in the NWT too. But right now the priority is on the youth. We don't want to generate more revenue by saying, "Play more lotteries." That sends the wrong message.

I think the fact that the lottery money is going to the youth is a good start for now, but I assure the Member I will discuss with MACA the possibility of having arts at the table if there's an appetite for it.

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

QUESTION 11-16(3)

HEALTH CARE CORE SERVICE REDUCTIONS

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Health and Social Services. It's in regard to my Member's statement on the lack of services in a lot of our communities, especially core services like health care services such as nurses, mental health workers, alcohol and drug workers.

I think it's very important that this government take this issue seriously. It is having a direct effect not

only on our communities but on this government's ability to deliver other programs and services, as we can see with the major deficits we're running in different hospitals in different regions.

I'd like to ask the Minister exactly what her department is doing to deal with these core service issues, where we're finding that we don't physically have people in our health centres by way of nurses, mental health workers, alcohol and drug workers. What has the department done to deal with this issue? I've raised it here for going on years and years and years.

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

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Specifically to McPherson and Tsiigehtchic, I have committed to the Member to make sure that the mental health and additions funding for the community is reinstated. I know the community has been in need of that. I made that commitment, and I've advised the Member that I directed the department to work with the Beaufort-Delta health authority to see what options we have to extend the nursing coverage in Tsiigehtchic. I was in the community, and that was of concern to the community.

Now, on the larger picture, the Member knows there are lots of things at play in the way we are experiencing the shortage of nurses and doctors in communities. I committed to the Member and the Standing Committee on Social Programs to look at all options available to see how we go forward to enhance the services in any way we can.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Time for question period has expired; however, I will allow the Member a supplementary question. Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not only affecting my constituency; it's affecting other regions throughout the Northwest Territories. We have some 28 communities that are struggling with health care systems. We have ten communities that don't have policing or in some cases a nurse in those communities. I think it's important that we realize this is a challenge we have to face. Realistically, it comes down to quality of health care and services to all people in the Northwest Territories.

I know you're going to go around and have consultations and everything else, but for me that's just another way of not doing anything. I'd just like to ask the Minister: how soon can the residents in the Mackenzie Delta — Tsiigehtchic, McPherson and wherever else — actually see physical bodies in our communities?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I was not suggesting that I was going to engage in any consultation. The fact is that McPherson has a nursing station and residence and nurses there. Tsiigehtchic has nursing service. It's just that the nurses visit, I believe, once a week or every second week or so. We are working with Beaufort-Delta to extend the nursing coverage in Tsiigehtchic. I have asked them to give me all options possible, and I have committed to the Member that I will have an answer for him by the next business plan meeting, which is in November.

Mr. Krutko: Again, that is not health service that would improve the quality of life in communities. Having someone go into a community for a couple of hours once a week, in some cases once a month, is not medical service. I don't know which part of that picture the Minister doesn't get, but that, to me, is basically not services. I want to actually physically see a nurse operating out of the health centres in our communities. We have built health centres throughout the Northwest Territories, health centres that should be managed by a health professional in that community.

When can we expect to actually see the health professionals working out of those health centres that this government has spent millions of dollars to establish in our communities? When can we functionally see our health centres operating in our communities?

Hon. Sandy Lee: As the Member is well aware, the health centres and health care programs are being delivered by Beaufort-Delta health authority. The department is working really closely with them to look at all the funding available and see how we could help, from the department level, to enhance the nursing services in Tsiigehtchic. We do have a shortage of nurses everywhere. I know the Member wanted me to see if the visiting nurse at Tsiigehtchic could spend more time there. I am looking at that option, and I will get back to the Member as soon as I can.

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

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been six years since the community of Tsiigehtchic has had a nurse in that community. Six years. If you pulled that off anywhere in Yellowknife — shut down one of their clinics for a week — you'd have a protest on your hands. It's been six years since a nurse has been based in that community for any long period of time. For me, that is the issue we're dealing with here today.

I'd like to ask the Minister: do you have any idea when they can physically see a nurse in the community of Tsiigehtchic, since they've been waiting six years?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I understand that there was a nurse about five years ago, and that nurse moved to Hay River. Since then Tsiigehtchic has had a visiting nurse. The Member has been keeping me informed of the situation from day one. I am absolutely doing everything I can to extend the nursing coverage there. I have directed the department to work with Beaufort-Delta to enhance the services in Tsiigehtchic. That is a commitment I can give. I cannot give an exact date of when that's going to happen, but I've committed to the Member to get back to him on that.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, petitions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent to return to item 7, oral questions.

Mr. Speaker: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to go back to item 7, oral questions.

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Speaker: Return to Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Oral Questions (Reversion)

QUESTION 12-16(3) ADDICTIONS TREATMENT CENTRE FOR BEAUFORT-DELTA REGION

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other day Mr. Richard Nerysoo was here, and I had a chance to speak to him. He's the president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council. It's always a pleasure to speak to him, because he always has a lot of wisdom and experience that he brings forward. I learn a lot when I speak to folks like him.

In our discussion this year we had a talk about the Gwich'in Wellness Camp, and I posed a question to him: would the Gwich'in folks be willing or interested if some type of discussion could be created between the Department of Health and them about having a treatment centre located at that fine establishment they've created just outside of Inuvik?

My question to the Minister of Health and Social Services is: would she be willing to open up some type of dialogue with the Gwich'in Tribal Council to maybe pursue this type of initiative so that we could have a treatment centre in the North where our money is invested back into our people in the North? Would she consider that type of dialogue and discussion with Richard Nerysoo and the Gwich'in Tribal Council?

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

Hon. Sandy Lee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, and I have been having that dialogue and discussion. I've had a meeting not only with Chief Nerysoo but also with a former president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Fred Carmichael. I've also met with health reps of the Gwich'in Tribal Council. I had a meeting with the staff at Gwich'in Wellness Centre when we were there. We do have an active proposal on my desk and in the department. We are working through to see how we could assist with the wellness centre in the next upcoming business plan.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I was going to leave it at that, but just one thing did pique my interest when I talked to Mr. Nerysoo. He didn't seem to portray that any dialogue was actually happening to that effect. So I would ask the Minister if she'd be willing to recontact President Richard Nerysoo on this matter just to make sure that everyone's in the loop on this matter and that this initiative is going forward. Because as far as I'm concerned, helping people is the primary goal here, not where we're helping people, and that's why it's important.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, and I have been communicating also with the Member for Mackenzie Delta on this issue. I'm not sure if the wellness centre is looking for treatment programming. They have lots of creative ideas about how they want to use that facility, and the department is certainly there to assist them in any way it can.

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

QUESTION 13-16(3) HOMEOWNERSHIP DOWN PAYMENT STRATEGIES

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of questions for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. In the Northwest Territories the impediment to a lot of first time home buyers is a down payment. I know that we do have programming at the Housing Corporation that helps people in that regard, but oftentimes people have monies locked into pension plans, such as superannuation and whatnot. I'm wondering if the Housing Corporation has ever given any consideration to looking at implementing a program where people could access or.... They can't get this money, but they could use it as collateral toward a down payment and then pay it back over a set period of time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we've.... At least I haven't been involved in any discussion where loans would be provided on the basis that the Member has mentioned. I could indicate to the Member that we are right now reviewing our thresholds and different ways we can help homeowners deal with the projects that would enhance their homes in terms of energy efficiency. I could certainly include this as part of the discussion so that we can get a better understanding and see if there's a potential to do something with folks that have dollars locked in and want to utilize some housing loans to help them.

Mr. Ramsay: I know the Housing Corporation has helped many people in the North get into their own homes, and I appreciate the help that they have given. I think this would just augment it if they could look at something like this. It could augment a person's or a couple's ability to get into their own home. I think that will stimulate the economy. The more people we can have purchasing their own homes and living in their own homes, that's always a good thing.

I'd like to ask the Minister regarding what he was speaking of earlier. Is that going to come through committee? It sounds like he's interested in this. Will he be working with the committee to try to get our opinions on things that the Housing Corporation could be looking at?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it is something that we'd certainly like to consider. My direction to the Housing Corporation was to do a number of things on a number of fronts. One of the areas that had come forward from the Members was the concern over housing projects being left empty because people can't get into these units because of financing situations — whether it's low income or high income. We are currently reviewing the thresholds. We can make sure every threshold on the low end for the communities is able to accommodate people adequately. There are different income levels, different costs of living in each community.

We're also looking at the thresholds on the higher end so that maybe we can increase the number of people that would qualify by opening up by \$5,000 or \$10,000 more. We certainly wanted to be able to address the high number of people that we are starting to see in the community with high incomes but who just are not in the situation where they can go to the bank, either because they don't know the process, they're not able to qualify for loans for various reasons or they just don't have the ability to wade through the process that's there. That includes designing units from our organization. So

there are a number of things we'd like to do, even though they're over the threshold. The possibility of providing loans is something we can look at, as the Member has suggested.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Minister. I welcome his comments. Given the fact that it costs so much to live, especially in the smaller communities, people's ability to save money for a down payment for a home is inhibited by the cost of living itself and the high rents that they have to pay.

I thought I heard the Minister commit to looking at monies people have locked up in things like superannuation as a way and a means to perhaps allow them to get into home ownership. Again, I think that was a commitment I heard from the Minister, but he may just want to reiterate the commitment. I look forward to further discussions with the Minister. Mahsi.

Hon. Michael McLeod: As our budgets shrink and the commitment for federal dollars falls off the table, we certainly have to look at being creative, and I welcome any suggestions from the Members. I'll make a commitment to the Member, as he's requested.

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

QUESTION 14-16(3) MINISTERIAL BENEFITS POLICY

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last four questions on this topic went by so quickly.

The ministerial benefits policy. We got a very succinct answer from the Premier that, yes, they are set by the Cabinet. But we had kind of a less succinct answer when it came to who actually sets the policies that are in place right now. The Premier referred to perhaps looking at these and doing a review. But I'd like to ask the Premier: when he says that this policy is in place as a result of work done by the previous government, maybe he would know, having been in the previous government, was this ministerial benefits policy reviewed by the 15th Assembly Executive Council? Is that the scope of benefits that are being acted on today?

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

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The benefits policy was last reviewed by the last government and has come into effect for the life of this government. We as the Cabinet can do a further review of our own and make changes. As has been highlighted with the last round of changes that occurred, it gave the Cabinet authority to make those changes.

Mrs. Groenewegen: I really do appreciate the Premier tabling this, because this goes toward one of my issues with transparency. However, not everything that I want to know as a Regular Member is contained in this tabled document.

I would like to know if the Premier, in the spirit of transparency, would be prepared to table the results of the review that took place of the ministerial benefits policy in the 15th Assembly.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, the practice in this Assembly as well as other Assemblies.... This isn't made by another government and remain with that government. I'm unable to go into material and request that information. But I can ask our staff to prepare some summary notes and sit down with the committee on that.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Yes, that would be most helpful. If staff would have access to the ministerial benefits policies, including benefits, amounts, and so on, that were in place prior to the review by the 15th Assembly decision on a new policy, which took effect at the beginning of the 16th Assembly.... If they could compare those two and provide that to Members or table that as a public document, that would be what I'd be asking for. Would the Premier be prepared to do that?

Hon. Floyd Roland: After having a discussion with staff to see what we're able to do, I'd be prepared to give information to Members and, if we're able to, to even table it.

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

Mrs. Groenewegen: That's all. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, petitions. Item 10, reports of standing and special committees. Item 11, tabling of documents. Item 12, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 1-16(3) APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move the following motion.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Ms. Thérèse Boullard of Yellowknife be reappointed as director of Human Rights during good behaviour for a term of four years by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories as recommended by the Legislative Assembly.

And further, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of appointment to the Commissioner.

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

MOTION 2-16(3) APPOINTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ADJUDICATION PANEL

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move the following motion.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that the following persons be recommended to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for appointment as members of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel during good behaviour for a term of four years:

- 1) Mr. James Posynick of Creston, B.C.; and
- 2) Ms. Karen Snowshoe of Inuvik, NWT.

And further, that pursuant to section 50(1) of the Human Rights Act the Legislative Assembly recommends to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories the designation of Mr. Adrian Wright of Yellowknife as chairperson of the adjudication panel.

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

MOTION 3-16(3) APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move the following motion.

Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Monfwi, that Deborah McLeod be reappointed as deputy director of Human Rights during good behaviour for a term of four years by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories as recommended by the Legislative Assembly.

And further, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of appointment to the Commissioner.

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

MOTION 4-16(3)
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE
TO FEBRUARY 4, 2009

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move the following motion.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns on October 24, 2008, it shall be adjourned until Wednesday, February 4, 2009.

And further, that any time prior to February 4, 2009, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 13, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

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

BILL 1
AN ACT TO AMEND
THE HISTORICAL RESOURCES ACT

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move that Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Historical Resources Act, be read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

BILL 2
SETTLEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL
INVESTMENT DISPUTES ACT

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move that Bill 2, Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act, be read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

BILL 3
INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN
MOBILE AIRCRAFT EQUIPMENT ACT

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move that Bill 3, International Interest in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act, be read for the first time.

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

BILL 4
PUBLIC LIBRARY ACT

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move that Bill 4, Public Library Act, be read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

BILL 5
PROFESSIONAL CORPORATIONS ACT

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move that Bill 5, Professional Corporations Act, be read for the first time.

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

BILL 6
SPECIES AT RISK (NWT) ACT

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move that Bill 6, Species at Risk (NWT) Act, be read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

BILL 7
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, October 24, 2008, I will move that Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, be read for the first time.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 14, motions. Item 15, first reading of bills. Item 16, second reading of bills. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to go back to item 7.

Mr. Speaker: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to go back to item 7, oral questions.

Unanimous consent granted.

**Oral Questions
(Reversion)**

QUESTION 15-16(3)
NURSING SHORTAGE IN TSIIGEHTCHIC

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had a meeting that we attended in Tsiigehtchic, along with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice, in which the issue came up about nursing. The community made it clear to the Minister at that meeting that there was a nurse in the community who's served there several years. She's usually there during breakup and freeze-up — six weeks here, six weeks there. She's presently working up in Holman and also in Tuktoyaktuk.

The community asked her to follow up on that by way of checking with the individual to see if she's willing to spend more time in the communities so that they can have someone there. If we can't get full time, at least have someone committed to serve the communities in different spurts. I'd like to ask the Minister: did she follow up on that recommendation that came out of the public meeting we had in Tsiigehtchic?

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

Hon. Sandy Lee: Yes, I have, Mr. Speaker, and I have asked the CEO of the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority, who was also at the meeting with me, to follow up on that. My understanding is that this nurse is employed by the authority, and she floats around in different communities. She will, and I have already indicated that. I have directed the department, with the Beaufort-Delta, to look at extending nursing services in Tsiigehtchic.

I believe I've made this commitment at least ten times in the last two weeks. I'm not sure how else I could say that, Mr. Speaker. I am committed to seeing how she spends the nursing services in Tsiigehtchic.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, like I stated in my earlier question, there was a nurse who basically was there full time about six years ago. She was paid. The money is there for the health centre. She lived in the community for a number of years.

I'd like to ask the Minister: is there that commitment that this position will be committed full time knowing that there's an individual out there who's willing to stay in the community for that period of time?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, I have committed to the Member that we will work to extend the nursing coverage in Tsiigehtchic. The community has expressed interest in extending the nurse visits there, because right now the nurse visits weekly,

and then they have extended stays during the freeze-up and breakup.

I have committed to the Member in writing, verbally, in meetings, in committees that I have directed the department to revisit this issue and look at all options available to extend the nursing covering in Tsiigehtchic.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I just got off the phone with the individual. The individual told me herself that she likes working in Tsiigehtchic; she likes the people there; she's willing to stay longer if that's the point. Why is it that arrangements can't be accommodated with a person who's willing and committed to that community to serve that community? Why is it there are still roadblocks in the way by way of not offering that person a full time contract to work in that community rather than simply as and when?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, that option is not out of question; it's just that it is up to the board authority to agree to put this position full time in that community.

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

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how else to put this. The person is committed. The money is already budgeted for that health centre to operate in regard to its O&M — the cost to operate, the cost of health care — for that community. There are dollars earmarked from this Legislature to run a health centre in Tsiigehtchic.

The community is more than willing to work with the health department to do this, but because the Department of Health or the board in Inuvik, which has 45 vacancies, which they can't even administer.... They run a deficit.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not too sure how else to put it, but exactly why is there such a complicated situation here where a community's health is at risk and you have a person committed to helping the community solve its position? It's been outstanding for six years. But now that we have a solution to the problem, we still have roadblocks to solve this situation.

I'd like to ask the Minister: could the Minister get directly involved, make this appointment as the Minister, use her authority and override the decision of the board in Inuvik, which doesn't seem to want to do anything?

Hon. Sandy Lee: I tell you, I'd give him everything I owned if I could. I don't know what else to say, Mr. Speaker. The rule is that we need to have at least two nurses in each community. That's one of the reasons I have committed to the Member that I will

look at all options available to see if we could have this person stay there.

Mr. Speaker, if I had the power to order that right now, I would. I have to work through the health authority. We do have the Beaufort-Delta health authority board. They decide on how their block funding will be spent. I will get back to the Member. I've given him the commitment to review all options available to see how we could extend nursing covering in Tsiigehtchic.

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

QUESTION 16-16(3)
ENERGUIDE80 INITIATIVE

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Housing.

I appreciated his Minister's statement on the EnerGuide 80 Program — very progressive. The one thing I noticed is that it's actually for implementation in 2010. Everybody knows a dollar saved is a dollar earned. The same goes for greenhouse gas submissions. Why can't we get going and get some of this implemented this coming year?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We just recently decided to move forward on this initiative. We still have a lot of work to do in terms of design and engineering reviews and things of that nature. This is probably something we could fast track, but we felt that in order to do a good job, we needed the time that we've allotted for our people to be able to dedicate adequate resources to it.

Mr. Bromley: I thank the Minister for those comments. I realize that's probably a prudent approach, but I think the opportunity is there for at least some. Again, I'm not suggesting that we try and do this for every house. This is not new technology; it's off the shelf. This was adopted a couple years ago by the City of Yellowknife. There's lots of expertise available in this area. As the Minister has noted, other provincial and municipal jurisdictions have been doing this across the country. There's not much engineering work that's required here. This is really off the shelf.

I'd just like to encourage or see if I could get the Minister to commit to implementation to some degree this coming building season, 2009. I don't think it's too big of a task.

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Member is right; we're not here to try and invent anything new. There is a lot of stuff that's off the shelf.

We want to take the time for our staff to be able to evaluate the best techniques that are out there. We want to be able to see what's happening in other jurisdictions. We've already embarked on that. We have a general idea, but we need to be able to do further investigations and see what works best and what works best in the Northwest Territories. We've got to remember there is also a cost factor incorporated in going into this new design. We have to be able to analyze that and see how we are going to accommodate that concern.

Mr. Bromley: Thanks to the Minister for those comments. I recognize those situations.

Again, I think there is an opportunity here to save the taxpayer some dollars, to save the environment some greenhouse gas emissions. I think we heard the Minister of Human Resources talking earlier about how we want to develop a good working relationship with our employees and so on. I think challenges are something, especially for good causes, that our employees really react to.

Here's a situation. The environment is on lot of folks' minds, especially young engineers. The Minister's noted big gains that could be achieved with some of the renovations, upgrades. Surely some of those things could be put in place in the 2009 season and actually put in place in a way that would test some of these things. As the Minister noted, we're going to need to learn what works in the North. There's no better way than trying them out in the North.

Mr. Speaker: Do you have a question, Mr. Bromley?

Mr. Bromley: Would you commit to doing this in 2009?

Hon. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we will commit. I know the Member is very eager to see these new initiatives starting to play in, and we'll commit to doing something as soon as we can.

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

Mr. Bromley: Nothing further. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 17-16(3)
DELIVERY OF CORE SERVICES
IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Premier in regard to the issue of capacity in our small communities.

We know we have challenges, but we also have to find unique solutions to our challenges. I would like to compliment the Department of Justice in regard to policing in Sachs Harbour — looking at solutions on how to get policing into the ten communities that don't have police officers. Yet the Department of Health has had nurses located in our communities. Knowing that those capital dollars were expended, I would like to ask the Premier.... From our small communities we have unique challenges, but it seems like it's not really been addressed as it has been with the Department of Justice.

I'd like to ask the Premier: how is it that the Cabinet in this government is going to work with small communities to realize we have unique challenges and we have to have unique solutions? We can't operate under the same roof.

I would like to ask the Premier: what is he doing to ensure that we find ways to deal with decreased capacity issues in communities that are unique — because of our size, location and also logistics — to deliver progress and services to all people in the Northwest Territories and that we ensure that the health and well-being of our communities are the first and paramount priority of this government?

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

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the records show that previous governments and this government will continue, with the areas that it can, trying to deal with the capacity issues in communities in the Northwest Territories and deal with those challenges.

In fact, we began working with Members of the Assembly looking at one of the initiatives that we have yet to kick off, which is the regionalization of government operations, looking at how we deliver services and programs across the north. As well, there was a commitment made to work with Regular Members on the small communities group, and we're waiting for that confirmation to come forward.

We do have constraints to operate within in the Northwest Territories. For example, under the Department of Health and Social Services, the territorial health and social services act directs how the department can work with authorities as well as with Education, Culture and Employment. There are things we have to work with within our system that further constrain what initiatives we can take part in.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, we have built health centres in our communities. We have built infrastructure in our communities. We have built schools, health centres, municipal offices. Again, the government really knows that by making those capital investments, we expect there will be some

services out of those facilities we have in our communities.

I would like to ask the Premier: exactly where is the money, the dollars, going for those communities to operate and maintain those services so that we have a quality or standard of health care services throughout the Northwest Territories for all residents of the Northwest Territories? We have health centres sitting there empty, and we know nurses are out there who are willing to come to the communities and willing to work out of those communities, but we have policies or procedures hindering those efforts. I'd like to ask the Premier: is there a way this government can work these problems through with the affected communities and with affected Members, findings solutions to these problems and realizing that there are dollars already in the system?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, there are dollars in the system, but there is also quite a shortage of dollars in a number of areas.

This assembly, the 16th Assembly, has already dealt with the Stanton fiscal issue as well as the Beaufort-Delta fiscal issue. They've transferred block funding on how they make arrangements — their scheduling services and times as well as dealing with agency relief nurses that are needed from time to time in our communities.

There is a challenge there. The Minister has stated on the record in this House that she is going to work from the department side with the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority and look at what can be done in ensuring that the level of service is improved for our residents.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, you do not have to assure me. I think you have to assure the people in those communities that don't have policing, don't have nursing — don't have services — that they're just as much residents of the Northwest Territories as the other 43,000 people here. We cannot be discriminated against by communities, simply by where you live. Those days are gone. We are not on reserves. We're not in other foreign Third World countries. This is Canada; this is the Northwest Territories. But that's the feeling I am getting by the way treatment is being allocated here.

I would like to ask the Premier: with all the brainpower on that side of that House, can you find solutions to these problems, realizing that you may have to amend existing policies, that you may have to change the existing contract arrangements? We can't have people with certification. We know we're not going to attract those people to communities. We have to decertify some people so they can provide services. I'd like to ask the Premier: are these problems something that his Cabinet is looking at to find unique ways of solving?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, a number of the initiatives we were looking at within the government of the 16th Assembly is how we do business as a government, the level of services provided, if we can make it more efficient, more effective. Those are our goals.

So, yes, we are prepared to look at options out there. In fact, the Minister responsible for the refocusing government initiative is looking at boards and agencies and how they deliver services on our behalf as the government of the Northwest Territories. That is one of those initiatives out there that could have a direct role in how we deliver services in our communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Member stated and compared our services to Third World countries. I would have to take exception to that. We are doing the best we can with our services. I think we are far above Third World country status when it comes to delivery of health care in the Northwest Territories. There are communities that need an increased level of service; we recognize that. That is why we have undertaken the initiatives. We have to try to look at how we spend those dollars and where those resources are being provided and look to improve on that level of service.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final short supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we are going to resolve this issue here today, so I would like to ask the Premier if he is committed, before the end of the sitting of this week, to sit down with Members from small communities and put some of these issues on the table and hopefully get the discussions going between himself and Members from small communities. This is definitely affecting the services in our communities, and I don't think we're going to be able to resolve it with the present system we have. I would like to ask the Premier for that commitment today.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to meet with any Member of the Legislative Assembly — one, two, four. In fact, on the small community side there was a commitment — I believe I gave it during the earlier session, during the Second Session — to sit down with Members once we got the confirmation from Priorities and Planning. Again, that commitment is there; I'm prepared to work with Members of the Assembly.

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

QUESTION 18-16(3)
MEETING WITH REGIONAL
ABORIGINAL LEADERSHIP

Mr. Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I received a letter from the Premier indicating that some time

in the next week or so he's going to meet with the aboriginal leaders to discuss some important issues.

I want to ask the Premier to respond on behalf of my people in terms of meeting with aboriginal leaders. We had a new election that just finished. We have a new government. In terms of the bigger issues in the Northwest Territories — its direction, unsettled land claims, devolution, resource revenue sharing.... The spirit and intent of meeting with aboriginal leadership is to move the agenda of the Northwest Territories forward so we get a fair shake in dealing with the federal government. We need to become stronger in the direction we're taking on a number of issues, which people in the North want to see.

I would ask the Premier his intent to meet with aboriginal people, get them onside and knock on the door of Mr. Harper.

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

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process we have established for the 16th Assembly is the regional leaders meeting held with regional leaders and me and the appropriate Cabinet Ministers, depending on the items that would come on the agenda. That process allows for the regional leadership to put items on the agenda as well as the government. We have a number of working groups already established through our first number of meetings. The one area of devolution, resource revenue sharing.... We continue to have that on the table and will be discussing a number of issues around that.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, the commitment is that in each region we will have a meeting with the regional leader as well as the leadership of that region once a year. That commitment's there as well, and at that point the agenda items again are open for work from all parties.

Mr. Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, the previous Member, the Member for Mackenzie Delta, was talking about the issues of the small communities. Certainly, with a lot of aboriginal leaders who have to represent the small communities, that's something these types of discussions can clear for us in this House along with the regional leaders: how we deal with the federal government on some of these programs and some of these dollars that have been allocated to the Northwest Territories through this government for the people in the small communities.

It kind of gets confusing, complex. I'm looking at it in terms of the policing in the small communities that do not have RCMP and keep coming back with lots of other challenges before them. That is something the Premier could discuss with our

aboriginal leaders in terms of the obligations that Canada should have towards the aboriginal people in funding services and programs. Can the Premier elaborate on that type of discussion, besides the other big ticket items?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, as I stated, the parties at the regional leaders' table have opportunities to put things on the agenda — programming levels, service delivery. Those areas are up for discussion if both parties agree. We're prepared to have that discussion as well as to discuss the level of service we receive out of the federal government on specific areas. We're prepared to have those discussions with the leadership as well.

Mr. Yakeleya: Mr. Speaker, in terms of this meeting with the aboriginal leadership, would we see a game plan within the life of this government on how we approach the federal government to start taking over some of the devolutions, start devolving some of the programs and services? Would we see, for the people of the Northwest Territories, that we do have a game plan — this government, the aboriginal governments and the other governments — in terms of taking over some of the ownership of this land, starting to remove the fingers of the federal government so we can proudly say, "Yes, this is what we did in the 16th Assembly"? Will we see a game plan within the life of this government?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful that we will be able to come up with a game plan for the Territories. Again, we're working off the work of previous Assemblies with an agreement that was put on the table. We know what the federal government has sent back on revenue sharing and the cap. We stated that that's not a level we are ready to sign off on. We continue to work with the regional leadership on how we can move this forward. In fact, we will be discussing the last correspondence I had with the Prime Minister, as well, and then, hopefully, see if we can move that along any further.

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

Mr. Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly look forward to the discussions that the Premier will have with his colleagues in the aboriginal governments. Is the Premier also looking at how they assemble certain provincial leaders? I know they support us regarding certain initiatives up in the northern parts of the provinces that are in similar situations and have been left isolated. There are no roads going to some of the communities; there is a high cost of living in some of the provinces. Is there a game plan that maybe one day the partners in the Northwest Territories, along with partners in Canada, can go down to Ottawa? I

guess I'm looking for that date when we can say to the federal government that we mean business; no more handouts. We want to see a good deal for the North. I guess that's what I'm looking for.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, we use every opportunity to build the support with provincial colleagues across the country. In fact, the northern Premiers have worked together already. I chair that for the remainder of this year — maybe not the remainder of this year, but for the one year term that we have the seat. We had a meeting this June with a number of initiatives put forward. We've used the Western Premiers' Conference and the Council of the Federation to put forward our initiatives and continue building the support. So we will continue to use those avenues, continue to build their support. They have publicly and through press releases of these meetings supported our initiatives in moving forward with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, petitions. Item 10, reports of standing and special committees. Item 11, tabling of documents. Item 12, notices of motion. Item 13, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 14, motions. Item 15, first reading of bills. Item 16, second reading of bills. Madam Clerk, Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Principal Clerk of Operations (Ms. Bennett): There will be a meeting of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure at the rise of the House.

Orders of the Day for Thursday, October 23, 2008, 1:30 p.m.

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements
- 3) Members' Statements
- 4) Reports of Standing and Special Committees
- 5) Returns to Oral Questions
- 6) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
- 7) Acknowledgements
- 8) Oral Questions
- 9) Written Questions
- 10) Returns to Written Questions
- 11) Replies to Opening Address
- 12) Petitions
- 13) Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

- 14) Tabling of Documents
- 15) Notices of Motion
- 16) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 17) Motions
- 18) First Reading of Bills
- 19) Second Reading of Bills
- 20) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- 21) Report of Committee of the Whole
- 22) Third Reading of Bills
- 23) Orders of the Day

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, October 23, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 4:13 p.m.