



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 6, 2009****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 10:07 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good morning, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Premier, Mr. Roland.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 8-16(3):
ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE
16TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in this Assembly we came together as Members to establish our vision, goals, and priorities. Members agreed we would not simply work for the status quo. Rather we would work collaboratively to achieve real progress for the Territory. Since then our government has used the vision and goals and priorities of the 16th Assembly to formulate our plans and actions.

Unlike the typical stovepipe approach to the way we worked in the past, Strategic Initiatives Committees have been formed to direct investments into the priority areas identified by Members. These committees involve a cross-section of Ministers and deputy ministers to benefit from the various departmental and personal perspectives they offer.

We have taken the unprecedented step of inviting Regular Members to participate on all of those committees. So far, Members have all expressed an interest in the new Refocusing Government committee, with two Regular Members currently participating in the work on issues like board reform and program reviews. We have established a committee to specifically address small community issues attended by two Ministers and small community Members. We are finalizing the terms of reference for a plan of change committee,

again with participation from Regular Members and Ministers.

Much attention has been focused lately on the displeasure of Members with the record of this government. I believe the people of the Northwest Territories expect all Members to work together and I believe that most people in the NWT have not lost faith in their government.

We cannot move forward as a government and as a Territory if we are constantly threatened with removal from office. Yes, Cabinet should be held accountable, but if the threat of removal is held over a Minister's head every time we come together for session, it cannot be long before paralysis creeps in bringing our collective efforts to a grinding halt. Our Territory, the people we represent, and we ourselves deserve better.

When we talk about accountability of government we must be clear what we are talking about. I believe accountability should be measured by results and it's hard to achieve results when we are working against each other.

We started with a conservative fiscal approach in our first budget, getting control of the growth in our spending. Some reductions were necessary to begin to achieve this. Yesterday Mr. Miltenberger delivered another good budget, appropriate for our time.

Our budget process is testament to the collaborative work of Members and Cabinet. Our first budget passed unanimously and so far comments on this most recent budget have been positive. This government believes that infrastructure is the cornerstone of the future success of our Territory. If we want to see roads to resources then we have to have the visionary approach to support it.

Yes, we have committed to the Deh Cho Bridge Project, an initiative of the previous Assembly. The partnership approach to this project supports the development of capacity and the economy in our small communities. It's exactly the type of project our economy needs right now, just like other infrastructure projects in our other communities around the NWT; the road to source 77 Tuktoyaktuk, water treatment plant upgrades in Aklavik, tank farm upgrades in Deline and Fort Good Hope, the Adult Supported Living Facility in

Hay River, school board replacements in Fort Simpson, runway extensions in Tulita and Fort Good Hope.

Changes to the Supplementary Health Benefits Program may have been rolled out prematurely, but we have promised to review the changes, consult with stakeholders and the public, and bring back a better revision to the program.

The lending of money from the Opportunities Fund is a necessary step in these economic times. Governments in other jurisdictions are supporting their businesses in similar ways and our government should be no different. The talk is generated by businesses that are an important source of revenue for the GNWT. Hundreds of jobs in communities are supported by this loan. We look forward to Members' input on the future use of dollars from this fund.

When I look back on this Assembly so far I don't see disappointment. I see progress. I see many good things happening that this government has already achieved with the collaboration of Regular Members. Going forward it is the type of progress we should all focus on as Members. A few examples:

We were one of the first jurisdictions to conclude an agreement with Canada under the Building Canada Plan for infrastructure projects in the NWT.

We've made changes to the capital planning process that will improve how the GNWT plans, acquires, and delivers its infrastructure projects, and developed a strategy to reduce our infrastructure maintenance deficit.

We've made significant progress with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and aboriginal governments on the NWT Water Strategy.

We have introduced a new Species at Risk Act, currently in the public consultation phase.

We continue with the implementation of the New Deal for NWT community governments.

We've established the Alternative Energy Program to encourage community governments, businesses, and NWT residents to implement alternative energy solutions like solar hot water heating, photovoltaic technologies, wind turbines, and ground-source heat pumps.

Some of our own capital projects, like the North Slave Correctional Facility, Chief Jimmy Bruneau School, K'alemi Dene School, and St. Joseph School, are using wood pellet boilers.

We've signed an MOU with NWT diamond mines to increase efforts to get more NWT residents

working at the mines and bring more mine workers to live in the NWT.

We've established a new policy and program for support for entrepreneurs and economic development.

We continue to move ahead with the full implementation of the framework for consultations with aboriginal governments and organizations.

We're moving closer to realizing the Mackenzie Gas Project.

And we've submitted a proposal to Canada to bring resolution to the devolution file on our terms.

On the ground, in our communities, we're doing things that make a difference in the lives of our residents.

We've reached an agreement with the Yellowknife Association of Concerned Citizens for Seniors for the construction and operation of a Territorial Dementia Centre.

We've introduced ice-spraying technology to speed the opening of ice roads in the Beaufort-Delta resulting in opening for the Dempster Highway Peel River crossing and Arctic Red River crossing approximately three weeks earlier than usual.

We've partnered with Canada to upgrade water treatment and sewage projects in Fort Smith, Hay River, and Fort Simpson under the Canada-NWT Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund.

We've successfully implemented the Affordable Housing Initiative, with more than 450 units built to date, with more units to build during the 2009-2010 construction year.

We've received greater than our per capita share of new federal housing investments, evidenced by recent federal announcements of a second \$50 million investment in NWT housing, and our share of the \$1 billion fund for public housing renovations.

We've increased investment in the quality of our housing stock through investments in CARE and renovations to public housing.

We've opened victim services offices in Aklavik, Paulatuk, Behchoko, Gameti, and Whati, with a new Sachs Harbour outreach position in Inuvik.

We've re-opened the Sachs Harbour RCMP detachment. Officers have been hired to police Gameti and Wrigley from nearby communities while infrastructure is being put in place.

We've taken innovative approaches to our fuel purchase and transportation requirements that

allow us to reduce fuel costs in our communities, as Mr. Miltenberger announced yesterday in the budget.

I believe it is too easy to send the wrong message to ourselves, to our constituents, and to the rest of the country. Not everything we do will find favour with everyone, but it is incumbent on us as elected representatives of our residents to determine the best course forward for the Territory.

There are good times ahead for our Territory, despite the current economic turmoil. All Members need to re-commit to the initial spirit of collaboration we expressed at the start of this Assembly to achieve the best for our residents.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 9-16(3):
AVALON VENTURES LTD.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, rare earth elements are being increasingly sought for their importance in the development of green technologies.

It is rare earth elements such as dysprosium that allow electric motors to remain lightweight and small, yet deliver the efficiency and power required for modern vehicles. Europium is used in florescent lighting which cuts energy use by 75 percent compared to incandescent lighting. Terbium is used in energy efficient fluorescent lamps. Yttrium is used in almost every vehicle on the road. Yttrium-based materials improve the fuel efficiency of engines.

Despite continued challenges for the mineral exploration industry, Avalon Ventures Ltd. continues to be diligent in advancing their Thor Lake Project in the NWT, a rare earth element deposit located 110 kilometers south east of Yellowknife.

For the NWT, the importance of this project cannot be overemphasized. Rare earth elements represent another market for products from our resource-rich Territory. It is one that we anticipate will grow significantly in coming years, particularly in light of statements by U.S. President Obama that he would like to see U.S. manufacturers focus on developing more efficient cars that cause less pollution and will contribute to U.S. efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Avalon's ongoing presence in the NWT, along with similar exploration and development activities in our Territory, is an indicator that our region is

recognized as a source for these rare and important resources.

The development of rare earth elements in the NWT will provide us with yet another opportunity to maximize the benefits from our Territory's resource development and to promote growth in our economy. Ultimately, the advancement of world-class deposits such as Avalon's Thor Lake Project will mean jobs for our people and the potential for new, exciting and diversified industries.

Yesterday, Mr. Bill Mercer, vice-president with Avalon Ventures Ltd., joined members of this government in celebrating the launching the Mine Training Society's Surface Diamond Driller Helper Training Program in which Avalon Ventures is an important partner.

This is the first time that the exploration industry has partnered in a Mine Training Society project. It is another example of our government's priority to invest in partnerships for the future and to maximize opportunities by investing in education and skill development.

More importantly, it is a testament to the commitment of Avalon Ventures to our Territory and to the potential that exists for our communities, our people and our economic future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 10-16(3):
REGISTERED DISABILITY SAVINGS PLAN
EXEMPTION

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, this winter the federal government implemented a savings plan to assist persons with disabilities and their families.

The Registered Disability Savings Plan, or RDSP, is a tax-free investment to financially support persons with disabilities. For every dollar invested into an RDSP, the federal government also provides a contribution in the form of grants or bonds, which are based on the beneficiaries' annual household income.

When withdrawing RDSPs, beneficiaries will receive a combination of the accumulated contributions, grants, bonds and income. Upon withdrawal, beneficiaries will only be taxed on the grant, bond and income.

Withdrawals from RDSPs will not affect federal income-tested benefits and credits, such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, the Goods and Services Tax Credit and Old Age Security benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to confirm today that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will fully exempt both the RDSP asset and RDSP withdrawals from consideration in the assessment process for all ECE income security programs.

The Government of the Northwest Territories supports the federal government's plan for persons with disabilities. This program supports our vision to give NWT residents the opportunity to become self-reliant as individual capacity allows, to participate fully in community life, and to share in opportunities available to them in their communities. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A society is measured by the way it treats its most vulnerable in its society from the elderly, the disabled, the homeless, the widows and the people who are living in poverty in our small communities. Mr. Speaker, a lot of programs and services totally undermine the fundamental basics of society that really cares. Mr. Speaker, without communities, policing, nursing, the fundamental services of mental health workers, alcohol and drug workers, income support systems that totally exclude people from the fundamental basis of having someone live with you, elders who are basically not able to access fuel subsidies to heat their homes where they have to use their pensions...(inaudible)...excluded them because they had outstanding arrears with government some 15 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, a government that undermines the fundamental basics of protecting the vulnerable in our society clearly shows that the government does not care. Various Members of this Assembly passed a motion several times unanimously to change the income support system and make it fair and accessible to all people in the Northwest Territories. What we have seen, Mr. Speaker, is the opposite of this government going full speed ahead doing whatever it wants, telling everybody where there are deadlines, April 1st or before September 1st, seniors health supp is going to be implemented. I am sorry; you can have all the consternation in the world, but that tells me that they are going to continue to go full speed ahead and undermine the people of the Northwest Territories with the attitude of this government. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NEED FOR IMPROVED HIGHWAY RESCUE SERVICES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: ...(inaudible)...the village of Fort Simpson and the Fort Simpson Fire Department have told me that they need a highway rescue vehicle to respond to emergencies of travelers on highways. They need a highway rescue vehicle because it includes specialized equipment to cut and safely extract people from their vehicles after an accident. The closest vehicle with this type of lifesaving equipment is only 400 kilometres away in Hay River. We also need a highway rescue vehicle because now, when there is an emergency on the highway, the village is left without an ambulance sometimes for the greater part of the day to look after its own emergencies.

Health and Social Services and Municipal and Community Affairs are supposed to be working on a plan including highway rescue services. I haven't seen results from that work and I haven't seen anything in the budget. I would like to hear from the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs on this important matter. Mahsi cho.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON OPPORTUNITIES FUND LOAN TO DISCOVERY AIR INC.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was talking about the loan from the Opportunities Fund to Discovery Air. I just wanted to stand up in the House today and make a short statement. It wasn't my intent yesterday to speak of Discovery Air or their shareholders in a negative light. I appreciate and welcome the contribution that Discovery Air provides to the economy in the Northwest Territories and everything they do for our residents.

My big issues yesterday, Mr. Speaker, were with the lack of a process that saw that loan approved, the lack of any meaningful discussion with Regular Members prior to the policy change, that saw the Opportunities Fund go from a passive investment vehicle to a high risk loan fund, and the fact that both the Minister of ITI and the Minister of Finance showed up for two consecutive meetings without any backup information pertaining to the loan or pertaining to Discovery Air.

Again, my apologies if I have offended anybody at Discovery Air. I do think that they are doing a wonderful job here in the North and I welcome again the contribution that they provide to our

economy. My issue is with the government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HEALTH CARE ISSUES IN THE SAHTU

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, as I listened yesterday to the territorial government budget address, I was very sad to hear that our region in terms of programs and services hadn't been mentioned. A case in point: the hydro initiatives. I understand that Lutselk'e and Whati were mentioned but Deline has been working for many years on the mini-hydro project and they see no support on Deline being mentioned in terms of this project.

That is why I am very frustrated with this government in terms of things that are very high for us in the Sahtu region and other areas, the cost of living, energy, infrastructure... I can name so many things that we do not seem to get the attention as other areas are getting millions in terms of improving their standard of living, reducing their cost of living, that our community seems to be overlooked because our infrastructure is not put in place. We have been asking for so many things in our region. Number one, again, to me is the hydro project. Believe in the people in Deline when they say they have a solution that could work. It may not work for this government or by the board of directors of NTPC and the staff at NTPC, but the people in Deline believe it and I believe in my people. This will help the community. This will help the region. That is where I have issues with this budget here. My people need infrastructure desperately.

I look forward to the details in this budget in terms of what type of health care can my people expect in terms of a regional wellness centre or some sort of hospital. There is no indication from this government that they're even going to look at it. They have good answers in terms of why we don't have it right now today but planning for it. But right away we get \$15 million for the Territorial Dementia Centre in Yellowknife over the years. My people are sick and tired of jumping on small aircraft with 2010 rules and regulations coming from Transport Canada to come to a larger centre for health care. They want to stay home...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ETHICAL ISSUES FACING GOVERNMENT

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest again this morning as our Finance Minister was on the radio talking about the blind ambition of particularly myself, political ambition to sit on this side of the House. Mr. Speaker, let me tell the people again of the Northwest Territories that I did sit on the other side of the House at one time. I believe it was two governments ago. In 2000 I sat in this House on the Cabinet side and as a result of some things that occurred, which were highly publicized at the time, this House decided to strike a committee of inquiry which determined that as a result of a tape recording of a statutory officer, that I should resign. I did not put it to a vote on the floor of the House. I did what I thought was the right thing after the findings of that inquiry and I voluntarily resigned. Mr. Speaker, might I suggest that I then returned to the Regular Members' side of the House and I continued to do my work, honoured the work, as an honourable Member for my constituents. I was subsequently elected two more times to this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity this morning to read an excerpt of a report that was signed off by Mr. Miltenberger and Mr. Roland at the time of the conclusion of that inquiry, because I think it's very relevant to the situation we find ourselves in today and why, in my opinion, the Premier should have resigned and done the honourable thing a long time ago. I quote: "It is in the view of the committee, a poor measure of the moral standards of this government and it reflects on all those who are associated with it, be they as elected Members or staff. Mr. Speaker, the measure of moral conduct is not that which occurs when the world at large may be watching. The measure of moral conduct involves taking the right action even when only those directly involved are privy to the circumstances. Ethical behaviour is not behaviour that is undertaken for demonstration purposes, it is undertaken because it is right."

Mr. Speaker, that statement was signed off on by this Premier on my lack of a moral compass for tape recording a statutory officer for which I took responsibility and resigned from Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier was sleeping with the committee clerk of our committee for six months and did not find it necessary to disclose that to us while she sat through all of our confidential briefings, in camera meetings, and did not think it was necessary on his moral compass to disclose that to us. He is the one who should be resigning, Mr. Speaker, and he should quit trying to blame others for his immoral and unethical behaviour. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TPA DRUG TREATMENT FOR STROKES

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to talk about strokes and possible solutions for them for northern residents. Stroke is an injury to the part of the brain. It happens when something goes wrong with the blood flow to the brain. Blood vessels, called arteries, carry blood and nutrients through the body. One way the brain may be injured is when an artery of the brain becomes blocked and the blood supply is cut off. Without a supply of blood, the brain does not get the oxygen and nutrients it definitely needs. The patient will suffer permanent brain damage if blood supply is cut off for more than a few hours.

One treatment that can be offered to patients within a couple of hours within the onset of a stroke is called TPA, which means Recombinant Tissue Plasminogen Activator. TPA, in short, Mr. Speaker, is a clot buster. This clot buster is used to break up the clot that is causing the blockage and destruction in the flow of blood to the brain and the blood flow to the area of the brain that has caused problems. This is given through intravenous. In order to determine whether the TPA treatment can be offered, a CT scan of the brain must be done as quickly as possible. This is to find out if this is that type of stroke that TPA can help. If bleeding into the brain has caused the stroke, TPA can increase the bleeding into to the brain. If this is the case, TPA cannot be used for the treatment; it will cause more harm than good. A blood test may also be taken if there is a bleeding condition. If the CT scan shows no bleeding in the brain, then the clot-dissolving drug, TPA, can be used as a long and positive solution to meet their needs. TPA treatment has risks. There is a chance if the bleeding into the brain happens after TPA is given it may cause the patient's stroke symptoms to be worse and could even result in death. However, the death rate is the same, Mr. Speaker, with or without TPA. There is a greater chance of recovery if this drug TPA is used in the treatment of people with strokes.

Mr. Speaker, the best chance for a full recovery of stroke caused by blocked arteries is the use of TPA. I encourage Stanton Hospital to consider this type of treatment for strokes.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions later today for the Minister about making sure that the TPA drug, the clot busting drug for strokes, becomes one of the tools that helps to save Northerners.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a constituent of the Great Slave riding, Mr. Christopher Dahlberg and his wife, Kimesha. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to recognize Chuck and Muriel Tolley up at the back there, constituents of Yellowknife Centre. I believe I see Jenna Jones. There she is; she's waving there. It's a pleasure to have visitors from Yellowknife Centre here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'd like to recognize Mr. Bill Mercer, vice-president, exploration, Avalon Ventures Limited and Mr. David Connelly with Ile Royale Enterprises, which is Avalon Ventures' local representative. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Mr. James Boylan, who I can't see up behind me but I know he's there. If there are any other constituents of Frame Lake, welcome to the Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize Annemieka Mulders and Lorraine Phaneuf from the Status of Women Council of the NWT, and, sorry, Heidi-Ann Wild from the Public Service Alliance of Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Loretta and Dick Abernethy and suggest they get an award to paying the most attention to this House.

---Laughter

I'd like to recognize Blake Rasmussen, another constituent from Weledeh. As well, David Connolly, I'd like to recognize him. I believe he's here with colleagues from Avalon Ventures. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize Harriette Paul, originally from Behchoko and the Ticho announcer on CBC. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a few folks from the UNW: Gayla Wick and Ms. Barb Wyness. I see Norm Smith up there as well. Again, I wanted to thank them for all their work they've been doing on the supplementary health benefits petition. As well, I've got a constituent up there on the camera, Mr. Amos Scott. Welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. Item 6, acknowledgements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 2-16(3): CONDOLENCES TO FAMILY OF SUSAN LAFFERTY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to send condolences to the family of Ms. Susan Lafferty. Ms. Susan Lafferty was a long-time resident and educator in Fort Simpson who will be greatly missed. My condolences to her family and I regret that I am not available to be part of her funeral today. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 70-16(3): FUNDING FOR MINI-HYDRO PROJECTS

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the lead Minister on the Energy Coordinating Committee as to his...My apologies, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance on the budget address in terms of...I don't know if it was done by accident or mistake as to why the Deline mini-hydro wasn't mentioned as to why the hydro stuff that we talked about in previous government

such as Lutselk'e and Whati. Why wasn't the mini-hydro for Deline mentioned in terms of continued support from this government?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the fund, \$60 million over four years, we mentioned some of the highlights. I've had discussions with the Member about the interest of Deline in terms of mini-hydro and the work that's been done to look at the Bear and the list, as we move forward on mini-hydro over the coming months and years, we want to look at mini-hydro wherever there are possibilities. We also have some good indication, for example, from Good Hope and the Ramparts. That budget address was not exhaustive in its reflection of all the projects and areas where funding is going to be spent. There is going to be, I believe, plenty of opportunity in the coming weeks as we flesh out the detail and move forward, once the budget is approved, to capture more of the areas that need attention.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the communities of Lutselk'e and Whati have also been in the same situation as Deline. Again, I ask the Minister this specific project that's been on the books for a long, long time with this government in terms of continued support, why was it not mentioned in the budget as the two other projects that have been ongoing with this government in terms of the funding? That's what upsets me and upsets the people in Deline in terms of this mini-project. Why was it not mentioned?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, the intent was to reference our commitment as a government as a Legislature to alternate energy in the mini-hydro and other alternate uses of energy. We've identified Whati and Lutselk'e as communities that there is work that is quite a ways along. We recognize that there are others on the list to come, including Deline and the arrangements that could be made. I talked to the Member about Tulita. So the first focus in the budget reference was some of the ones that were further along in terms of the planning. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, the Minister is correct that we had talked somewhat on some of the other initiatives that we could go ahead with in the Sahtu region. The Deline mini-hydro project concept; it was my understanding, Mr. Speaker, it has been on the books for 16 years. Again, in terms of the work that's been done there and discussion that the Minister made reference to in terms of the Fort Good Hope ramparts or in the Tulita area, it just has been known for a year or two and the Deline mini-hydro project has been on the books for a long, long time. For them to see that

they're not getting anywhere and want again to see from this government is that there's going to be some solid commitment that better be considered like they mentioned in the books -- Lutselk'e and Whati -- and that is not something that they could think about later. I'd like to see that from this government here.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Member's interest and concern. As I've indicated, this fund is a brand new fund. Should the budget pass, then we would be in the position to lay out the work plan. The hope is that it's going to extend past four years. We want to get things on the ground that are far enough along in the planning as we move forward in consultation with communities and with committees and if you look at the next phase of the business planning process, there will be an opportunity to address this plan to reflect all the priorities of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to when this government, through the lead Ministers, can go into Deline, sit down with them, prove that this commitment is something that they're committed to do by sitting down with them and making this project a go. There's going to be lots of discussions there. I look forward to when can this government direct your staff to go into Deline and sit down and sign off on the progress to the Dene mini-hydro project. Right now, for them there's nothing mentioned on this. Again, that's one of my disappointments on hearing the budget yesterday. This mini-hydro project has not been mentioned and shame on the government for the oversight.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, once this budget is passed, we will be in a position to look at how we're going to move forward. We've identified in the budget address some examples. It wasn't a comprehensive detailing of every expenditure in the main estimates. We also recognize that what Deline is proposing is by many standards new technology that's being developed and in some cases not necessarily proven out for the rigors of use in the North in the river of the size being proposed.

There is a clear interest on the part of the government to look at all the small communities. I said that in the budget address. There are alternatives to fossil fuels in every community. We have to start the process recognizing that we cannot do everything at once, recognizing that we have committed to getting to all the communities with the different types of alternative energy, starting first with the passing of this first-time-ever major commitment to alternative energy. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 71-16(3):
USE OF TPA STROKE TREATMENT
AT STANTON HOSPITAL

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I have a family in the constituency of Yellowknife Centre and one of them had a stroke. When they got to the hospital they did not have the clot busting drug called TPA. It's been a little more than a year later and they're doing much better, but the fact is my research recently has shown that there is no clot busting drug for strokes called TPA being used at present at the Stanton Hospital.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, will she investigate this to see if this type of drug could be used and brought into the common day-to-day use for any type of stroke victim at Stanton Hospital? As well, look at a strategy of perhaps when she could do that and return that to me as soon as possible. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for the question but my understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that this TPA treatment requires the electronic radiology system where the message and imaging has to be sent south for observation and evaluation before the medication could be given and that medication has to be given within three hours of stroke onset. Also, we have had a chronic shortage of radiologists and we only have visiting neurologists. That's one of the reasons why Stanton cannot, at the moment, have that service available. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's answer but that still doesn't mean we couldn't have this drug sitting on the shelf so that when things do line up and we do have a visiting radiologist or we have all the staff and all the equipment working at that time, that this could not be the option that that family may be depending on. Would the Minister look at a strategy to make sure that that drug is available when we do have all our stars lined up in the context of staff there who can do the job and whatnot?. Mr. Speaker, it's very important. Would she look at that? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the Member that this is something that we should look to see whether we could have it available at Stanton. I could advise the Member, Mr. Speaker, that in the upcoming budget there are some investments on what's called PACS, short for

Picture Archiving and Communication System, and when they consent to investment in that, that allows transfer and exchange of picture images from different facilities. I think having that system in place will allow us to seriously look at having this type of treatment available. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, can I get some time frames on when we can get some of these dates on. I'll tell you, the reason I keep pointing at the TPA as a solution is because it seems to be the proven solution that works well and although alternatives are being presented and that will be good news for folks, not than anyone plans a stroke, but certainly in the context of if one happens people know the tools are there. I just want to make sure that we have some sense that this stuff is available and when. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I will undertake to get back to the Member as to what time frame we will be looking at and what resources and commitments we would need to set up that system at Stanton, as well as the time frame for the rolling out of the PACS system.

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

QUESTION 72-16(3):
HIGHWAY RESCUE EQUIPMENT AND
SERVICES

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up on my Member's statement and ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs about the plan to assist communities in acquiring highway rescue vehicles. What state is that and how much work has been done to date?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a report done a few years ago that recommended that this be looked into. It's something that the departments of MACA and Health and Social Services have identified as a priority. Money is available in the budget that we will be hopefully debating on the floor of this House to enhance some of the programming to the communities.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Has there been support from some of the committees that the government has established to look at this issue and to carry forward? Like I said in my Member's statement, Fort Simpson has many highways and it is a regional centre. I certainly support getting them a highway rescue vehicle.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: There is support of communities out there and their support from all levels involved. It's just a matter of identifying. Also there's the communities themselves who have their capital money flowed from MACA that they could use for mobile equipment. Also there's some federal funding that can be accessed. MACA is committed to going into the communities and helping them work out a plan to see what pots of funding they can access.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Just at what point will the department be initiating contact and speaking with the Village of Fort Simpson in terms of coming up with a plan and a strategy to address this lack of equipment?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The department will probably be in contact with the village very soon. It is a priority and I'm sure with the Member raising the issue that we need to expedite this. But I have informed the Member that through correspondence MACA will be in contact with the community to get this moving forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As well, it looks like there's got to be some federal involvement here. At what point would we be involved in the federal department to assist or what program would that be then?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The involvement of the federal government would be on the funding that they have available for this particular highway. It's called the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program and that is the program that they will be able to access some funding under. When MACA meets with the community they will be able to relay that information on to them and make them aware of all the potential pots of money that they can access.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 73-16(3):
PROPOSED MILK SUBSIDY PROGRAM

MS. BISARO: I have a couple of questions for the Minister of Finance. As part of the budget yesterday...I'll back up. Some months ago this Assembly passed a motion from Regular Members which stated that a milk subsidy should be incorporated into the activities of this government. It's well known that milk is an extremely healthful food and an excellent part of a preventative diet for children in particular.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance, since there was no mention of the milk subsidy in the budget

address yesterday, whether or not a milk subsidy for children from zero to age 12, for instance, will be included in the activities in our 2009-2010 finances.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion that was passed by the Assembly was looked at. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment along with the FMB reviewed the numbers and looked at that and looked at what options were available throughout our existing structure that we have in place, for example, our Income Support Program, and that was the avenue that was chosen to do any work that would cover off the basics for those who need most. As well, we tried to focus on other initiatives to bring the cost of living down in our smaller communities.

MS. BISARO: I appreciate the answer. It doesn't really go to the point of the motion passed by the Members on this side of the House. I believe that the government is trying to reduce the cost of living, but I think that one of the ways that it's going to be done is to try to provide commercial power subsidy and that is intended to reduce the cost of living for goods and services. I guess I would need to ask the Minister or the Premier when we can expect to see this kind of reduction in the cost of living in concrete actual programs, when it's going to be on the ground and in effect such that it's going to affect the cost of living for food for residents in our communities.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: I wouldn't want to put words in the Finance Minister's mouth on this matter, but my understanding as we work through this, as the Member has stated, that a commercial subsidy is being reviewed. They are prepared to go to committee on what structure they'll put in place to see how that would be passed on to try to ensure it would be passed on to the people who live in our communities through that structure. I don't have a timeline. I will have the Minister of Finance prepare a response for the Member.

MS. BISARO: That's, unfortunately, the answer that I was expecting. Our communities need assistance now. We need a program that can be put in place sooner rather than later. I feel that yes, I'm appreciative we're going to be consulted on this particular program of a power subsidy, if that's what it is, but that's going to take months. Literally months. Probably a year at least before it's in place. A milk subsidy is a targeted program and it is one that I think can actually be put in place within a matter of a short few months and probably could be in place for the first of April at the beginning of this next fiscal year. I would like to ask the Minister whether or not this government puts a priority on

assisting our residents in their communities and, if so, why this milk subsidy was not considered as a project that could be put in place in a very short period of time.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: There is ongoing work around our subsidy programs that deals with families in need across the Territories. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment has an ongoing review of their program and the cost of living in our communities and look at making adjustments throughout the year. As for the commercial subsidy issue of when that timing will come forward, as I stated, I'll have the Minister of FMBS and Finance come up with a response and provide that to committee. There is ongoing work on our subsidy programs that we have in place that helps offset the cost of living today in communities.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I need to ask the Minister what this government is going to have in place as of April 1st, 2009, that is going to be of benefit to the people in our communities to reduce their food costs.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: The first fundamental program we have in place for families in need would be through our Income Security Program. That food basket is looked at and reviewed by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment throughout the year. I don't have the timing of exactly when that next review and adjustments will happen, but that budget is adjusted, they do review on the cost of living of our communities and adjust on that basis.

For the commercial subsidy piece and how that goes out, as I've committed, the Minister of Finance and FMBS will respond to the Member on that issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to the budget address, day two of seven. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 12-16(3):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LAW
FOUNDATION
ANNUAL REPORT

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled Northwest Territories Foundation Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2008.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

TABLED DOCUMENT 13-16(3):
FEBRUARY 6, 2009, YELLOWKNIFER ARTICLE
TITLED "PREMIER, CABINET FACE
CONFIDENCE VOTE"

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'd like to table page 12 of February 6, 2009, Yellowknifer specifically highlighting a quote from Premier Floyd Roland saying, "Premier Floyd Roland said the motion is a personal attack. Their shadow Cabinet must now be thinking they are ready to take over real roles."

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Motions

MOTION 7-16(3):
SUPPLEMENTARY HEALTH BENEFITS
PROGRAM
CARRIED

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Minister of Health and Social Services had proposed to implement a new Supplementary Health Benefits Program on April 1, 2009, and has now proposed to defer the implementation of that program until September 1, 2009;

AND WHEREAS many northern seniors depend on the coverage for dental, vision, drugs and supplies for which they are eligible under the existing Extended Health Benefits Program;

AND WHEREAS many northern seniors live on fixed incomes, which do not allow them to absorb increased costs for drugs and other health care costs;

AND WHEREAS many northern families live with significant chronic diseases or chronic conditions

and are prescribed expensive medications and supplies to manage those conditions;

AND WHEREAS there are many low-income Northerners who are not covered by an employer's Supplementary Health Benefits Program and not eligible for coverage under the existing Extended Health Benefits Program;

AND WHEREAS the new Supplementary Health Benefits Program would have limited the coverage for some residents who are currently covered;

AND WHEREAS the new Supplementary Health Benefits Program would have created disenfranchised groups amongst NWT residents, contravening the principle of fair health coverage for all;

AND WHEREAS the performance of the existing program administration should be reviewed and evaluated;

AND WHEREAS the new implementation date of September 1, 2009, does not allow adequate time to conduct comprehensive research, engage stakeholders in meaningful consultation, develop a new program based on input from these stakeholders and comprehensive research and analysis, share the proposed program with the stakeholders for final consideration and approval, and implement the new program in a timely and responsible manner;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that this Legislative Assembly recommends that the Minister of Health and Social Services stop the implementation of the proposed Supplementary Health Benefits Program and develop a new policy and program to cover low-income families who do not have supplementary health benefits coverage through their employer;

AND FURTHER, extend the September 2009 implementation date to April 2010;

AND FURTHER, conduct comprehensive consultations with Northerners about the ways to improve the Supplementary Health Benefits Program and services offered by the department, including whether or not means testing should determine eligibility;

AND FURTHER, ensure that thorough research into the program's complete costs and full implications is undertaken and presented to Northerners including:

1. the cost to the NWT of families moving south; and

2. increased costs on the health care system resulting from more people accessing services within hospitals;

AND FURTHERMORE, fully involve the standing committees of the Legislative Assembly in the review of new policy proposals before any implementation is considered.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm making this motion today because I believe that Cabinet and the Minister of Health and Social Services are making a mistake, a mistake that would adversely affect all northern residents, a mistake that will cost this government both directly and indirectly. Fortunately this is a mistake that can be easily remedied.

Let's go back a bit and talk about why Cabinet and the Minister are going in the direction they are with respect to the Supplementary Health Benefits Program. Low-income families who do not have any medical coverage through their employer don't currently have access to supplemental health benefits other than coverage for a specified medical condition. This means they're 100 percent on the hook for all dental costs, all the costs related to purchasing glasses and all the costs related to prescribed medications, excluding medications required for specified medical conditions such as diabetes.

Given that these individuals are low-income earners, they are the individuals who would benefit most from support in this area. To their credit, Cabinet was trying to help these individuals. That's why their forcing this short-sighted and inadequately researched policy down the throats of Northerners. I agree that we must find a way to help these individuals. I don't agree that it should be done at the expense of other stakeholders in the NWT.

Within our system of government, Cabinet has the right to design and implement policy, programs and regulations. They aren't required to request the House approval to do so and aren't even required to share them if they don't wish to. Fortunately most programs, policies, and regulation changes won't adversely affect residents of the NWT and bringing them into the Legislature for approval or debate isn't always going to be necessary. In fact, it could be considered a waste of time in many situations.

However, from time to time these types of changes can be significant and have major ramifications on

the GNWT and the NWT as a whole. The changes currently in question fall into this category.

When designing or redesigning programs, policies, and regulations that will have major ramifications, Cabinet should demonstrate a standard of care which involves actively engaging Regular Members and other stakeholders who may be affected by the changes. This is a public government and we have a responsibility to listen to and engage our residents in meaningful consultation.

Further, information or facts are required to make responsible decisions. Decisions made in the absence of information or facts are bad decisions. In the case of the changes to the Supplementary Health Benefits Program a significant amount of information or facts are required in order to make a responsible and informed decision. Unfortunately, it's clear that the Minister and Cabinet did not gather the required information or facts. They don't have a clue of the ramifications of implementing this new policy. How do I know? I and many other Members have continually asked for the information. How much do they think they will save by cutting off seniors and individuals with chronic conditions? How much will it cost the NWT when affected residents choose to leave the Northwest Territories? Not just by way of the \$22,000 federal transfer payments but also along with the taxes they pay, the money they spend on goods and services, and the non-monetary benefits they provide by way of volunteering. Also, how much will it cost based on the inadequately low threshold levels put forward by Health and Social Services to cover low-income earners without benefits? Cabinet can't or won't answer any of these questions. I don't believe the analysis was done. How can we feel confident that they have demonstrated a reasonable standard of care or due diligence if they can't even answer these important questions?

Here's what should have happened. It's clear that this government needs to do something to help the low-income families and individuals that have no medical coverage through their employer. The department should have researched this issue, compared cost analysis, defined where problems exist, and what potential challenges may exist in providing this new coverage. Once collected, the department should have engaged potentially affected stakeholders in meaningful consultation where the information is shared and stakeholders are encouraged to offer recommendations and participate in a process of developing a reasonable program. If the information had been shared and affected stakeholders had been actively engaged, they might be willing to make compromises in the best interest of the program as opposed to being confused, scared, or resistant to the changes due the lack of any real involvement or understanding.

A draft policy should have been developed for consideration and review by the Regular Members and the potentially affected stakeholders. This would have ensured that these individuals had the opportunity to confirm or verify that their points of view had been heard and incorporated. It also would have provided the department with an opportunity to explain the decisions they made that are different from what the stakeholders wanted to see.

Once general agreement or consensus on the new program is reached, the comprehensive communications and the implementation plan would need to be designed and put in place. Adequate time is required to ensure that all affected residents have the time required to be made aware of the program, complete the paperwork or applications where appropriate, and ensure that all their i's are dotted and t's are crossed before implementation to ensure no disruption in services.

This is a reasonable process. It's completely different than what happened. Here's what did happen. Cabinet decided to update the Supplementary Health Benefits Program to include coverage for low-income earners not covered by employer medical benefits. They told the department that they weren't willing to spend more than was currently allocated to the programs so they must fund any changes from within. No research or financial analysis was conducted. The department designed the proposed program and took it to potentially affected stakeholders for consultation. Unfortunately it wasn't really consultation. It was more of an information session where the stakeholders were told what was going to happen, not asked for input or to make any suggestions.

To be clear, consultation is a process by which the public's input on matters affecting them is sought. Its main goal is to improve the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in projects, laws and policies. It's a valuable process when making significant changes to any policy that may or may not adversely affect large groups or, in this case, ultimately all residents of the NWT.

It's clear that Cabinet and the Minister don't understand what consultation is. The Minister is adamant that they have conducted consultation. She's indicated it several times in the press and to Regular Members of this Assembly. I've talked to a number of the groups that the Minister claims to have consulted with. All indicate that they weren't consulted. Rather, they were told what the department was going to do, when they were going to do it and how they were going to do it. They attended information sessions veiled as consultation.

After the department completed the design of the program, the Minister announced that the program was being implemented on April 2, 2009. Here's where things got interesting. Residents were stunned, shocked and disgusted with this short-sighted program.

Honestly, I'm not even remotely surprised. It's an incredibly bad program. The program fails to meet the needs of a significant number of Northerners and, by default, adversely affects everybody in the NWT. Further, the threshold levels established for low-income families are so low that people originally targeted for assistance won't be eligible. To fund it, Cabinet chose to cut off a significant number of seniors and individuals with chronic conditions, who will choose to leave the NWT rather than experience the significant increase in their cost of living. This will result in a significant loss of revenue for the GNWT. Also, the changes will drive residents into hospitals where medications and services are free as opposed to going through treatment in their homes. This will increase the costs of the NWT health care system, which will adversely affect every resident of the NWT. Our health care system is already too expensive. Can we really afford to make it more expensive? I don't think so.

Since implementation I have heard from hundreds of people on this issue. Not one person is pleased. The City of Yellowknife passed a motion where city council directed the mayor to write to the Minister of Health and Social Services to express the council's opposition to the changes to the Supplementary Health Benefits Program and urge her to cancel the implementation of the new program.

Petitions were filed in this House earlier this week with thousands of signatures, signatures of people who are 100 percent opposed to the implementation of the new program.

I got an e-mail from one resident where she indicated the following: "One of the goals of the 16th Assembly is healthy, educated people and one of the priorities for the goal states: 'improve support for children and adults with special needs and disabilities'."

She is a long-time resident with one chronic physical and two chronic medical conditions and has been on CPP disability pension for almost five years. She has supplemented her disability pension with RRSPs, RRIFs and savings. She pays her own dental bills and eye glasses. However, she receives 100 percent coverage for prescription medications for her chronic disabilities through the GNWT.

Now, based on the new program, she will not qualify for any of her prescription medications, as she is single, under 65 years of age, and had a net income of over \$25,000 last year. She feels that this new policy does not support this Legislature's priority of improving support for children and adults with special needs and disabilities. I agree with the resident.

Another resident made the following comment and asked the following questions. This is from the resident: "The questions just seem to come and the answers don't seem to be there. Anything new can be scary at first and I understand that, but is the territorial government really ready for this? Have they thought it through? Who is going to fall through the cracks or no longer fit the criteria? What are they supposed to do? Who is the program really aimed at? Does something need to be developed separately to assist those who need it instead of changing something so quickly and without consultation?"

People are concerned in the communities and in the Northwest Territories. Given the massive numbers of comments I raised, I can keep quoting these all day. However, for the sake of time, I won't, but it is important to recognize that many people are very upset. Residents have asked questions and they deserve answers.

It's clear. After listening to the people of the NWT, it is obvious that there is nothing good or worth salvaging in the program as presented. It's time to go back to the drawing board.

In a recent press release, the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services indicated that it is clear that some elements of the proposed program might create undue hardship for some residents. This is a bit of an understatement and is evidence that she and Cabinet have not considered the full ramifications including increased costs to the health system and loss of revenues. It's good that she acknowledges that the proposed program will adversely affect some residents, but does not demonstrate an understanding of the magnitude of the potential problems.

In response to these undue hardships, the Minister has agreed to defer the implementation date of the program. To address the concerns of the public, the Minister indicated in her press release that the program design will be reviewed before the program is implemented. Unfortunately, Cabinet and the Minister are still committed to means testing and continue to demonstrate that, although some minor modification will be included, the policy is pretty much going to move forward as is and be implemented on September 1, 2009. I perceive this direction as more of a delay tactic than actually

trying to do the right thing for the people of the Northwest Territories.

Means testing for health care is wrong and should be avoided at all costs. Cabinet is committed to means testing most, if not all, programs offered by the GNWT. In respect to health care, this is a bad decision; as bad or worse than previous decisions they have made, such as rolling the public housing subsidy program into ECE where it has resulted in huge deficits in the local housing authorities. History has shown that when a bad decision is made, the Cabinet would rather keep the blinders on and request more time. The right thing to do would be to acknowledge the mistake and fix it. So in this case, a year or two down the road when health care costs go up and our revenues have fallen off directly, they'll say everything is alright and that their uninformed and short-sighted direction is not to blame. Means testing might work in some program areas, but the provision of supplementary health benefits is not one of them.

Although I'm happy that the Minister has deferred implementation, I don't see it fixing the real problems. It is no more, as I indicated earlier, than a delay tactic. It's an attempt to fix a significantly redesigned program on the fly rather than acknowledging poor Cabinet direction and sending it back for a complete review, analysis and suitable design.

September 1, 2009, does not allow the Department of Health and Social Services to follow a reasonable and responsible timeline in order to get the inclusion of services for low-income earners or design a fair and equitable system with public input and consultation.

Let's break down the timeline. We all know that very little will be done over the next six weeks on this policy due to session, which is going to consume everybody's time. Immediately after session, many Northerners will be going on spring break. So it's safe to assume that very little can be done by way of public consultation until the beginning of April. In April they will begin their version of public consultation. You would hope that they have done some financial forecasting and conducted research into the effects of different options and how similar services are provided in other jurisdictions. However, I'm not optimistic that this will have happened by this time. Real public consultation will take a couple of months. Conceivably, given their timeline, they might have the consultation done by May. So design will have to take place over the summer. Given the number of people who take advantage of summer for holidays, I don't really believe that it will be given the attention it deserves over the summer months. So summer is over and they implement what they have designed. To implement a program of this

magnitude, you do need a couple of months to communicate the changes and ensure that all affected residents complete the paperwork required to ensure no gap in services. This means that the program should be completed by July 1st at the earliest. That's not much time.

No matter how you look at it, a comprehensive review, analysis, consultation, redesign, acceptance and implementation cannot be done in the time given. So it suggests that some steps will be skipped completely or paid no more than lip service. We're going to get the same program we have now with a few high profile yet not substantive changes. It's a delay tactic.

If they move forward with the date proposed, the Regular Members of this House won't have the opportunity to discuss and debate it in this Assembly as it will be implemented prior to the next significant session. Yes, there is a seven day session starting at the end of May, but there is no way that there will be a reasonable product to discuss or debate at that time. It's hard to believe that they will even have completed any real or thoughtful consultations with potentially affected stakeholders by then. Our next substantive session will begin around the middle of October, one and a half months after the new program has been implemented. As indicated previously, once Cabinet makes a decision, they don't go back and reverse it. So we'll be stuck with a bad program.

The right thing to do is for Cabinet and the Minister to start again. Completely withdraw the proposed program and timelines and start again with the development of a new policy to cover low-income families who do not have supplementary health benefit coverage through their employer, a program where the implementation does not lead to significant loss in services to other groups.

Develop it based on a reasonable and realistic timeline. April 1, 2010, is a date which will allow proper research, consultation, design, debate and ensure adequate time to promote the new program and implement it. It's the right thing to do.

Prior to the last session, the government released documents on revenue options. Based on the information contained within those documents, it was clear and obvious that one of the best ways to increase our revenues and ensure that this Territory has the financial resources to provide the services to our people is to increase the population. Cabinet stressed that we, as a government and a Territory, need to do things to encourage people to come and live in the NWT and for those that live here to stay. The budget address yesterday suggested the same thing.

Now we are telling many people -- seniors and individuals with chronic conditions -- that we don't want to do what is required to encourage them to stay. This is a complete reversal from what Cabinet was saying only a few short months ago and doesn't make any sense. We have people leaving, such as diamond polishers, because they don't have work. We can't afford to chase people out who really want to be here in the North -- people who call the Northwest Territories their home; people who have lived here all their lives.

Prior to the mid-1980s seniors and people with chronic conditions didn't stay in the Northwest Territories. They left. At that time Northerners, seniors and the NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities, championed for change. They made their case and these fantastic supplemental health benefits that we have now were established. Now Cabinet is telling these people that they don't deserve the levels of support that they currently have; supports that they believed would exist when they were planning for retirement and their futures; programs that made it possible for seniors on fixed incomes and individuals with chronic conditions to stay and live in the Northwest Territories.

It's time to reject this direction and reapply common sense and good judgment. It's time to work in the best interest of northern residents. It's time to do the right thing. This motion encourages Cabinet and the Minister of Health and Social Services to do the right thing. I hope they are listening to us and the public. I hope they choose to do the right thing. Go back to the drawing board. Start again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I am pleased to second this motion that has been brought forward today by Mr. Abernethy. I appreciate the work that he has put into this issue along with other Members and to his analysis of what has happened. It is so thorough that it is difficult to know what to say and to actually add to it. He has pretty much covered all the bases.

Mr. Speaker, just to summarize and let you know what my concerns are about this change to the Supplementary Health Benefits Policy, I have indicated we did feel for several years as a government that it was necessary to do something to assist those families that were not covered by any other supplementary health benefit insurance and that it was difficult for families if unforeseen illness or medical requirements such as prescriptions or other extraordinary costs were to

come upon them. It could be actually devastating for a family that did not have insurance coverage. So I can remember for as long as I have been a Member of this House, that we thought it was necessary to do something to assist that group of people. Little did I know that when the supplementary health benefits review was taking place it could inadvertently affect seniors in this way.

I believe that we spend an extraordinary amount of time as a government trying to figure out how we can attract people to come live in the North. We have companies that offer incentives for people to move here, to live here, to participate in our communities and yet this action, if played out, would drive seniors out of the North. I have heard those comments made by seniors. I have absolutely no doubt that they are true. It is a matter of fact. The cost of living is probably felt most acutely by those on fixed income. I would say that most seniors are on a fixed income.

I haven't once heard from this government that this support for seniors is not sustainable but they actually have done the analysis that would indicate what the actual costs are of this program. I just haven't heard sufficient rationale. Honestly, even if I did hear what the rationale was for it, I would still probably consider that this would be an appropriate expenditure of this government to continue to support seniors in the North with the supplementary health benefits. Yes, it is a good program. Yes, you can compare it to other jurisdictions and say that maybe it is more than seniors in other jurisdictions receive in some instances, but I think it is still money well spent, well invested. When you look at some of the alternatives and some of the alternative costs, if those seniors do become ill or unable to continue to live healthy, independent lives. I think we need to take a very broad look at this on a cost basis even. Even if it turned out that there is a net cost to this government, I think that the people of the Northwest Territories, the taxpayers, the people who have other insurance, would support this group of seniors who would be impacted by this. I think it is a fairly small number of people. In a strange way, it targets quite a small group of people.

My experience with talking to seniors, whether we are talking about the rate scale or programs like this, is that seniors are not adverse to paying and contributing in some fashion. That is why I believe that a part of the investigation and analysis should include this government taking the initiative to see if there is any kind of group insurance that the government could cost share premiums. I am thinking of some nominal fee like \$25 a month or something. Not every month or every year are seniors over 60, who would be beneficiaries of a

Supplementary Health Benefits Program, in need of eyeglasses or pharmaceutical support. I haven't specifically heard from seniors about this, but might I suggest that they may not be opposed to some nominal premium which could go some ways towards offsetting those costs. I have heard the same thing from seniors who live in public housing where right now the rate scale says you pay nothing. People who live independently pay everything. I don't think they expect continued support with no contribution, but that is something that could possibly be investigated. There are insurance programs that are out there...

MR. SPEAKER: Mrs. Groenewegen, you may be steering away from the intent of the motion.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Suffice it to say that I do not support the April 1st implementation of this policy. I do not support the September 1st implementation of this policy. I think that we need to go back to the drawing board and take a very broad look at what the implications would be of changing this seniors' Supplementary Health Benefits Policy. Even when consultation takes place, I would be very supportive of ensuring that our seniors over 60 in the Northwest Territories continue to have insurance coverage for these items. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to state that the comments from Mr. Abernethy have pretty much covered everything. He has done an excellent job in summarizing comments we have heard from any number of constituents, residents of the Territory, seniors, those who are non-seniors but who also are affected by the change in this program.

At the outset, I want to say that I am in favour of this motion wholeheartedly. As stated in my Member's statement the other day, I feel that this is poorly thought out, poorly presented and based on a poor policy and this program should not go into effect.

The intention of the policy is to provide coverage for a group of people who currently don't have it and who are currently left out. That is the lower income end of our workers. Nobody disagrees with that, Mr. Speaker. We need to provide coverage for people who currently don't have any, but these proposed program changes solve one problem and creates many others. It cannot go ahead as it is now. I appreciate that the Minister said that there will be revisions, but my problem with that is that it is based on an unworkable premise. That is the premise of income testing or means testing. It

creates different levels of coverage amongst our residents. To quote a comment from a resident in an e-mail: "it will cause bad karma between peoples." I believe that that is already there and it may be get worse.

Canada proudly trumpets our health care system and with good reason. We've got one of the best health care systems in the world. We don't have to worry about our medical costs. Our system provides universal coverage, but this program change that's being suggested by the territorial government will go against this particular principle and I can't agree to that. I'd like to quote again from another e-mail that was sent to me by a constituent: "These changes impact a larger group than just seniors. I'm very concerned about the impact of the changes on staff with chronic illnesses and conditions. Anyone of any age can have a chronic illness or condition and not everyone works for the GNWT with good benefits. Our full-time staff who would be impacted by extraordinary costs for prescriptions and supplies are productive adults who are helping us address the needs of vulnerable people. They make too much to meet the low-income cut-off being suggested, but not enough to pay for the costs themselves. I hope the Minister and the GNWT are not suggesting that affordability means diverting RRSPs for those of us without adequate pension plans or cashing in all of one's vacation days."

Those words should be heeded by all of us, Mr. Speaker. The roll-out of this new program was a boondoggle. It was prematurely presented, absent any semblance of good analysis and research. The information available to stakeholders was minimal, confusing and complex to understand. Extended health benefit users, those currently accessing our system, who were unable to adequately understand the program assumed the worst, and often they correctly assumed the worst. Since that time, and since they got some information but not enough information, they've been suffering what I think is needless stress and concern. That's been happening for a number of weeks; it hasn't been a number of days, it's been a number of weeks, Mr. Speaker. I think that it's needless concern on their part. It didn't need to happen and it could have been prevented by a better roll-out of this particular program.

Members of this House and stakeholders still lack clear information and proof of the value of this program. Many people who are potentially affected by this program are seriously considering moving out of the Territories. I believe that they are seriously looking at it. It's not an idle threat. I believe that there will be people who will move out if this program impacts them financially.

Not only does this program need to be revamped, but the policy on which it is based needs to be reviewed. If true consultation is to take place, the Minister and the department must start with a blank page; no preconceived ideas at all. We have to develop a program that satisfied the initial goal, that of coverage for lower income workers, but that does not make others suffer or does not make others give up something to give to the lower end. The government must, as was stated the other day, have a conscience and do the right thing. Every time I say that I think of Wilfred Brimley and the Quaker ad where he used to say, "It's the right thing to do." This is the right thing to do. The actions that are suggested by this motion are the right thing to do.

I'd like to give you another question that came from another e-mail: "What kind of community do we want to live in?" And this question was related directly to the impacts of the Supplementary Health Benefits Program. We would all be wise to think about that and to think about this particular program as suggested and pass this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was also in support of this motion and I'd like to back up, really, many of the comments that I've heard from my colleagues today. There's little else to add but there certainly is volume. The number of contacts we've all received from our constituents has been huge.

On the public consultation front, let me just cite the Yellowknife Seniors' Society who were shocked and surprised that there were no consultations with the NWT Seniors' Society or seniors in general prior to the Cabinet making this decision in reference to the 2007 meeting. Alternatives North says presenting the outline of a program that is already planned is not consultation, at best it is publicity. I'll leave that there.

On income testing, I also agree with my colleagues that this is not the way to go. It moves, as I said the other day, directly away from universality in coverage and I think we need to think about that. The income testing does not reflect ability to pay. I saw no discussion of gender analysis in there. As people know, when you look at incomes by gender there is a difference between men and women. There doesn't seem to be a separation between single parent families versus couple families. There are big differences there, both in relative cost and income and depending on the gender of the single parent, that's even stronger divergence. This all reflects on ability to pay and leads to much of the angst over this. Numerous problems were caused

also by this inability to pay. Bad decisions can be made, shortcuts taken that end up having other health repercussions.

On the drug program, again, we need to commit ourselves to pursuing a policy of purchasing generic drugs. I haven't seen that discussed but it's an important opportunity for cost cutting. Bulk purchases and the whole Pharmacare program, many people are aware of that. In 2004 the First Ministers committed to going after that, but we haven't had a champion. This is an opportunity for this government to become a champion at that and get that back on the national agenda, and enjoy the benefits available.

Again, on the funding issue, Canadians have a strong record of being willing to pay through our tax system for universal health coverage. Fundamentally in a universal plan, everyone knows that if they ever require additional support, it will be there for them. With this understanding, the people have demonstrated a willingness to pay according to their ability, for example, through the taxation system and as my colleague Mrs. Groenewegen has suggested, other means. Where is the discussion on this important concept and ability to tweak the program in an important way?

Mr. Speaker, I don't think we have seen the good and thorough work that would typically be behind a new policy proposal. That has not been clear at all. Health programs and actions require careful scrutiny prior to, during and after development if they are not to result in potential unexpected and destructive affects which can then negate the desired impacts and this is a good example of that.

The development of this policy has failed to look holistically at the social environments in which people live their lives both in sickness and in health. This gets us similar questions I raised the other day. A constituent submitted a series of questions that could be part of the new process here. If I can just read these because I think they're quite relevant and the Minister may find them useful. Policy development should answer these questions:

- What is the nature of the problem to be addressed by the policy proposal and what is the magnitude?
- What are the sizes of the cohorts targeted to provide solutions?
- What is the character of those cohorts? And that means holistically, what are the roles in community and community's well-being?
- What will be the effect of the policy changes on the cohorts?

- What will be the effects on government and the public of those effects experienced by the cohorts?
- Balancing positive and negative effects, what is the net gain or loss to the situation addressed and what are alternative solutions?

Mr. Speaker, let's make this review a redevelopment of this policy. Let's take advantage of the extensive knowledge and experiences and perspectives of all and relax the time schedule to that which is required. We need a better policy on supplementary health benefits not just a new one. With this clearly in focus we can move forward. That's my hope and expectation and on that basis I'll be supporting the motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, before I go to the next Member, I would like to draw your attention to the visitor's gallery and the presence of a former Member of the House. Mr. Leon Lafferty is with us. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do support the motion that is before us today and I'd like to thank the chair of the Social Program committee, Mr. Beaulieu, and Mr. Abernethy for all the work that they've done on putting this motion here. The work that Mr. Abernethy has done was quite extensive. It covered off a lot of bases. Also, I wanted to thank everybody who has contributed in one way or another to getting this motion here today and that's the Yellowknife Seniors' Society, the Northwest Territories Seniors' Society and everybody else that's out there that called us, e-mailed us, phoned us, talked to us on the streets and gave us their opinion of what the government was trying to do. I appreciate every bit of input that I did receive on this.

Mr. Speaker, I'm left wondering how the government could even take out such a controversial change in supplementary health benefits without first getting an analysis to these changes and how they would impact the residents. I certainly do look at this as a shoddy, poorly thought out and disjointed plan. Answers have certainly been hard to come by even for the Minister. How is it that the department and the Minister could take this out and cause such an uproar amongst our seniors and persons with chronic conditions? The department, the Minister and the government should be embarrassed for themselves over the lack of evidence, analysis, and figures associated with the proposed changes. The Minister can't even tell us how many people we're trying to help by trying to address the gap which is the working poor and low-income families. I agree wholeheartedly that this is something we should try to address as the government, but it

should not be on the backs of seniors and those with chronic medical conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very sceptical of the September 1st implementation date. I believe that these changes have been in the works for years and another six months over the summer is not going to do this justice. We need to get it right and allow the oversight of the Social Programs committee and other Members of this House to make sure that this is done properly. We owe it to our residents to get this to a stage where we can take it back out to the public. The move to September 1st to me is a way for the government to dodge some of the tough questions that will come up, to take some of the heat off of the government. Mr. Speaker, I think it's just a delay tactic and that's why, again, I fully support the motion to look at advancing that implementation date to April 1, 2010, to allow the proper type of work, analysis and consultation that needs to go into these changes.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I just wanted to thank the Social Programs committee for all their work and Mr. Abernethy and everybody else who has contributed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, the elders that are having problems with this issue are the elders that built the North. They were the trailblazers. They developed our communities. They developed our roads. They taught us as children and also they took care of the sick and weak in communities by our health care system. These people have made the North their homes. Mr. Speaker, they paid for what we have today. They developed the North; the trailblazers. Yet, Mr. Speaker, what do we do? We impose hardship on them at a time when they are struggling to maintain a life and enjoyment of the days they have to come.

Mr. Speaker, I, for one, support a universal health care system for all people in the Northwest Territories and get away with the debate on race, creed, colour. Mr. Speaker, I, for one, take offence to the racial overtones that have developed because of this policy, in regards to treaties, getting free health care, Metis benefits. Mr. Speaker, it has to be clearly noted that treaties were signed with the people in the Northwest Territories in 1989 in regard to Treaty 8, and 1921 in regard to Treaty 11. There are land claims agreements that have been settled with First Nations people. There are self-government negotiations going on so that First Nations people can take care of their own programs and services. For this policy to become racial is directly on the

feet of the Minister who allowed it to get to that state.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is not a province. The Northwest Territories receives funds from Ottawa because we are a Territory. The programs and services we get by way of education, services, health care services, housing, programs and services which are becoming universal. The intent of the change to this policy was to ensure everybody had access to health care and that we find a system that's fair to all, and not to use a system that we know is totally dysfunctional by using income thresholds as a means to get to the goal by putting pressure on people to have to leave the North because they can find a better system of health care elsewhere, that is not the state that we are in. We have the financial means to provide services to all people in the Northwest Territories and we should do that and not be eliminating people simply based on the amount of money that you have earned in your lifetime or having a policy that's better than one policy or another. It should be universal for all people.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion and again I'd like to reiterate the comments that were made. I take offence to the racial overtones of what's been said on First Nations people in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, quite obviously I support this motion without any type of hesitation. The fact is I stand with the citizens that are going to be hurt by this policy and I think that the government needs to hear and realize this. I've also suggested to the Minister that if she goes back and reworks this policy and makes it fair and reasonable to all, that I'll support her in those efforts and, of course, if the policy comes back I've also explained to the Minister that my choice of support has been taken away from me. This is that chance and I think that she has heard loud and clear that this policy needs to be reworked. In my case, there is no reasonable justification why these changes need to be done.

There's been a group talked about many times, the low-income group that has not received coverage. I've not heard one single voice in this community that says they do not deserve coverage. I've not heard one opposition to that. Mr. Speaker, those dollar amounts have never been laid before us to say could we find another way. I believe that there are other ways. I've heard from constituents who have said if you had to raise my territorial taxes by 0.25 percent, by 0.5 percent, maybe even up to 1 percent this would show an equal commitment

amongst Northerners that health care is important to us equally.

Mr. Speaker, as the policy has been reworked and suggested at this time, what it's really done and being highlighted quite clearly by Mr. Krutko is it's unfairly pit neighbour against neighbour when they've worked, lived, and some will live and die here in the North together, but it's caused friction that is unnecessary.

Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that the numbers have never really been run. I'm confident that there is no number of saying we need just \$1 million, because if we hear that we needed just \$1 million or we needed \$1.5 million, this side of the House would do whatever we could to make it happen. I don't believe in any way that people should be put to an income test, because I think you are discriminating against one group and that's the whole problem here. Coverage for our seniors, coverage for our families, coverage for Northerners should be coverage, not where do you come from. It should be about who you are and how can we help. That should be the first statement.

Mr. Speaker, there are many ways to do this. I guess I'd say the first time around there was no meaningful consultation and, yes, there will be arguments of saying I was in committee or this policy had found some policymaker to talk about once or twice, but it was always kept in the bowels of government and it was approved by the 15th Assembly of Cabinet, not this Cabinet, not this Assembly. The 15th Assembly had said we're going to make the 16th Assembly responsible for implementing this. Well, I'm telling you, that's got to stop today. I think clearly the voices out there, the petitions out there, the e-mails out there, the phone calls out there, they've been ringing true with the same thing. Just slow down, think about what you're doing, because what you've done is caused a ripple effect that will be difficult to cure and to stop. Mr. Speaker, yes, many people promise that they will leave and, yes, some will. Some will treat it as an idle threat and I know deep down inside that their heart is truly in the North, but what we've done is we've put an unfair burden, an unfair financial burden on a small sector. I'll tell you today, I can guarantee that those who have means will use them. Their cost of living continues to rise; power bills, oil bills, gas bills, and now health bills, Mr. Speaker. When does it stop?

We could stop it here today. We could hear from the Minister. I hope she will speak and say that she will slow this down. If changes need to be done I hope she will say we will do a full, open, blank-paper consultation, we will get out there and will change what necessarily needs to be adjusted. But the fact is the broad-brush coverage that needs to be there should not change.

I say again, there are other solutions. Put it around the table how much you need, we will find it. Put it on the table what you want to do, we will work together. I will work together as hard as I can. I'll make any compromise I can to make sure that coverage isn't take away from our people. The important bottom line is the fact that people feel abandoned. People feel that their trust has been thrown away because of this policy.

I think we always gave the respect of showing them that the timeline is unreasonable to come forward with reasonable consultation. The timeline designed is just too forceful. And the fact that the opposition that has come to date deserves the respect and it should be given. The fact is, nobody wants this.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I rise too in support of the motion. I have had the opportunity to travel throughout my communities of Nahendeh to speak to the seniors about this particular issue. As well, many seniors from Fort Simpson attended a constituency meeting. I was very happy to have them there.

As I went to explain the program and how it works I really found myself in the position where I couldn't make a good explanation of it. There was no analysis in the documents given. There was no costing of the initiatives. How much does it cost to provide these supplementary health benefits? How much will they save if they remove it with the income testing program and the two-tiered program they had designed, and the costs for actually helping those that were identified in need and are unable to access our Supplementary Health Benefits at all?

As I discussed it with them it was apparent that there were two different issues here. One was that the supplementary health benefits were going to be removed from seniors that made, I think the Minister said roughly \$66,000, in that area. I don't think it's actually working income either. I think it's retirement income that is included into it. The seniors have made it very clear to me that they have worked hard for these benefits and they work hard in identifying communities they want to stay in. They make a conscious effort to stay in our North. It's not something that they just do. It's a conscious effort. It's planned. They make arrangements to live in the North. Knowing that it costs slightly more, this is their home. That's very, very important.

When they spoke about it they said, well, this is paramount like taxing us. That's the way they view it. It's an additional tax to the seniors to live in the

North. In fact, one of my constituents felt very strongly about it. He said, "We're mad as hell and we're not going to put up with it". He goes further to say, "If you don't like it, we'll leave." Pretty serious words. That's nothing that we, as legislators, as MLAs, want to see happen. We want our people, especially our seniors, to continue the good work they do in their community. They're volunteers. What income they have they're spending in our communities and sharing their wisdom and knowledge with our communities.

Once again, no information, apparent lack of recent consultation, and there must be a better way of doing this. The Minister has deferred it, but the motion speaks about a little bit more examination and analysis of this whole area. I think that there are two different issues here. Supplementary health benefits is one and the other one is to find funding for citizens that cannot access any benefits now. In fact, I'm a firm believer that Supplementary health benefits should not be taken away at this point.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting the motion. The reason for my supporting the motion is that there doesn't seem to be a lot of work done that gives comfort to the MLAs from the smaller communities that there are any benefits going from this change to the people in the smaller community ridings. However, there's definitely a possibility that few of our seniors who were lucky enough to have held good jobs in their lifetime in these small communities will be adversely affected.

In addition, any loss of residents across the NWT would have an adverse effect on all residents of the NWT by dropping transfer payments and removing seniors with good incomes who make their purchases in the NWT. These seniors buy and operate their vehicles in the Northwest Territories. These seniors buy their food here, buy their clothing here, do their shopping here. They volunteer here; seniors that are homeowners and operate their homes through local purchases, never mind the transfer payments. Just the fact that their incomes will no longer be circulating in the economy of the Northwest Territories has an adverse effect on the people across the country.

Today in tough economic times the government should do all it can to try to retain all the people who have made a decision to retire up here and make homes here and made a decision to spend their money here. This program would have an adverse effect upon that. And what has an adverse effect on the NWT in general, usually the impact is

felt greatest in the smaller communities where the economy is poor already.

Because my feeling is that this change to the supplementary health benefits has a very negative impact on the communities, whether it's individual or not, I feel the negative impacts are there. Therefore, I will be supporting this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: The Minister has indicated the possibility of implementing this policy in September. I plead with the Minister to reconsider those dates as that leaves about eight months to implement this policy. Eight months of copied e-mails from the other Members to me in my office in terms of the questions that are out there for clarification by the seniors, concerns by different Members in the Northwest Territories in terms of some very technical and scientific economic formulas that have been used in terms of how do we implement this policy. I don't believe we can satisfy all these questions within this eight-month period. I think that this implementation date should be scrapped and the whole program should be looked at, reviewed, get scrapped, and see if it does make sense and they have some hard answers to questions that we are going to pose in regard to this whole program.

I do agree with the MLA from Mackenzie Delta that there are some fine issues we don't need to bother getting into in terms of this whole thing about the medical health care plan, because there were certain agreements made from our grandfathers in terms of how do we take care of health under certain treaties with our people here.

The seniors in the Northwest Territories, we as Members here, and we'll go right across the board, are the ones who need to speak up for them. That's what we're doing today. We're protecting the need to heed their voice in this House on this issue. I didn't realize the amount of concerns and issues that were out there until I started to see the e-mails in my office here and discussions that have happened. I thought we were doing something for the low-income support families. I thought we were going to help them. I didn't realize the amount of concerns that seniors had about what we were doing. That caused me quite a concern.

I think, if anything, we should make some type of legislation for any seniors in the Northwest Territories. We should really be taking care of them as our first priority, number one. With fuel, with energy, with health, they should be given primary care in terms of how we run this government.

These seniors have walked a long life way before us. These seniors have guided us in some of our teachings as we grow up as to how life is going to be. Falling back on that, if these seniors and elders are the ones that are guiding us, shame on us for causing disruption to their well being, their emotions, their health, and for allowing this to happen.

I think we need to take a step back. I think that needs to be done. The timing is not right. The action is not right. I think we need to really think about how as a government, how as legislators we view our seniors, our elders. Really think about what that means. I had a discussion last night about how this government could be in a position to treat our seniors and elders in a certain way. How is it that we've come this far in our life that we can do this to our seniors or our elders? Where have we gone? The fact that the seniors are the fastest growing population in the Northwest Territories I think that's the value of our elders. We place the values of the elders on our list of values in terms of how we treat seniors in the Legislative Assembly.

Our seniors live on a fixed income. I think by doing the proper thing, by having proper consultation, interpretation, I got a call from Tulita asking what this is all about. Can we get a plain language presentation as to what we are really doing with seniors? What are the impacts?

I plead to the Minister and the rest of the Cabinet to really think about this in terms of how we look at this overall. If it has any type of impact on the seniors we should really back down and support our seniors in the years that they have left with us is this world here. I think that's something that should be considered in terms of this whole issue here. Maybe this whole issue here with the Supplementary Health Benefits Policy, I like to look at this issue here as having brought out some good in terms of how we view our elders and seniors in our government. This causes a lot of things to think about.

I will be supporting the motion to look at the bigger picture as to how we take care of elders and seniors in the Northwest Territories generally. What is our view of them? So they totally have my support from the people of the Sahtu.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Basically I'm the last guy to be standing up and supporting this motion, so a lot of good things have been said. Today I'll be supporting the motion on supplementary health benefits. I support my elders and my people with

chronic conditions and disabilities throughout the Territory.

As Northerners we take care of our own, no matter where we're from in this great Territory. I do agree to throw this program change out and start over. I did help Mr. Abernethy on his statement too.

---Laughter

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: I'd like to thank the Members for all the information and statements that they've presented today. I'd also like to thank many members of the public who have actively participated in expressing their views and concerns about how do we improve this program since it was announced in December.

As I have already stated in the House and outside, the changes to the Supplementary Health Benefits and the Catastrophic Drug Costs programs were designed because the Government of the Northwest Territories believed that nobody should be without access to supplementary health benefits because they can't afford it. Under the current system that is happening, we do have a group of people who don't get access to supplementary health benefits.

The government is committed to providing supplementary health benefits to eligible residents and families who do not have access to a plan. Conversely, we have to use our resources wisely and a government program should not be designed in a way that encourages people who can have third-party insurance to opt out of third-party insurance while at the same time not covering those people who do not have supplementary health benefits.

I believe the intent of the policy is reasonable and obviously provides comprehensive supplementary health benefits to those who cannot afford them, and protecting Northerners from catastrophic drug costs. Those who can afford to should contribute to the cost of benefits that supplement their health care.

The program details will be adjusted, and I have stated this on many occasions, to ensure that the program fulfils our intention and does not unfairly impact some of our residents. Also, the program redesign will ensure that the program is fair and equitable. The goal is to make sure that all residents in the NWT who need assistance will get it, particularly the low-income families, the seniors, and those with catastrophic costs of supplementary health care.

I have already stated on many occasions that we will work hard to bring together stakeholders in a public forum, as well as meeting with many NGOs and seniors' societies who have expressed their views to us. I have already stated that we'll do that in the form of two-way exchanges and workshops, because we understand, and I have learned, that there are lots of complex layers in dealing with supplementary health care plans.

I should also note that I have made it my practice as a Minister that I consult regularly with the Standing Committee on Social Programs on many issues. Not only that, I also make it a practice to invite Members who are not part of Standing Committee on Social Programs to have the benefit of the briefing or information that I'm providing and there's no reason to think that I will not continue to do that. I intend to work very closely with the standing committee as we go through the public consultations process to deal with some of the shortfalls and many of the shortfalls that have been revealed since we announced that.

I'd like to thank the Members very much and the public for their input. I should also note lastly that as it is a convention for the Cabinet to not vote on a motion that is a recommendation, we will be abstaining from voting on the motion. But I would like to assure the Members that we take all of the views that were expressed today very, very seriously and we will consider them all.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, as Minister Lee has pointed out, the work that has been done, the principle and the intent of the program, the input of Members of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, as Minister Lee has pointed out, as convention we will be voting on that, but for the record as well, when the talk and when the e-mails went around on this issue and as the gaps were identified, I made a call to Mr. Abernethy and Ms. Bisaro about the program and what was needed, got some advice from them as to what...(inaudible)...or looking at delays, so seeing the work that's been done, we look forward to working with Members, going back to the table, reviewing this, reworking the implementation so it does work for the majority of people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Alright, I will allow the mover of the motion, Mr. Abernethy, to make closing comments.

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be quick. The northern voice opposing this motion and this program...I'm sorry, opposing the program

change is loud and it's clear; not just here in this House, but in the streets and communities of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, the Minister and Cabinet must stop the implementation of this program as it is now. It must go back to the drawing board and design a program to help those low-income families, but not on the backs of the seniors and those experiencing chronic conditions. Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded vote, please. Thank you.

RECORDED VOTE

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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Bromley.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposing, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Lafferty; Ms. Lee; Mr. Miltenberger; Mr. Roland; Mr. McLeod, Deh Cho; Mr. McLeod, Inuvik Twin Lakes; Mr. McLeod, Yellowknife South.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 11 for, none opposed, seven abstaining. The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Colleagues, before we go on to the next order of business, the Chair is going to call a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: I will call the House back to order. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MOTION 8-16(3): REVOCATION OF APPOINTMENTS OF THE PREMIER AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL DEFEATED

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS pursuant to subsection 61.(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, the Legislative Assembly chooses a Premier and recommends to the Commissioner the appointment of Members to the Executive Council;

AND WHEREAS pursuant to subsection 61.(2) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council

Act, the persons appointed hold office during the pleasure of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS many events have transpired that have eroded the confidence of the general public and Members of this Assembly in the performance of the Premier and Executive Council;

AND WHEREAS this Assembly is only 16 months into a four-year mandate;

AND WHEREAS it is essential that this Assembly has a Premier and Executive Council that acts in the best interests of the electorate we collectively represent;

AND WHEREAS the role of Regular Members in consensus government must be respected and full participation should be encouraged and seen as beneficial to the constructive functioning of government in the best interests of all NWT residents;

AND WHEREAS a full Territorial Leadership Committee meeting would afford the Premier and Executive Council Members a free and secret vote to confirm confidence in Members of the Executive Council;

AND WHEREAS such a vote would allow the 16th Legislative Assembly the opportunity to re-establish confidence in the Premier and Executive Council;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that pursuant to Subsection 61.(2) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, this Assembly formally revokes the pleasure of the Assembly from the appointments of the Premier and all Members of the Executive Council effective Monday, February 9, 2009, at 1:30 p.m. MST;

AND FURTHER, that this Assembly recommends that a Premier and Executive Council be chosen without delay and that the Commissioner be notified of the recommended appointments at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. There's a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have brought this motion forward as the chair of the Priorities and Planning committee. I do support the motion and, Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke quite extensively in this Legislature about where I feel the 16th Assembly has got to this way and it is today where the workings of this Assembly

seem to be dysfunctional and not in the best interest of the people of the Northwest Territories. There is a great long list of junctures and incidents and workings that could be recited here, but I gave quite a lengthy list of those yesterday. What I would prefer to do today is allow Regular Members and Cabinet Ministers to speak to this motion and at the appropriate time, I will conclude debate on the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the seconder of the motion, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, as the seconder of this motion, I have been here for some 14 years, four terms, and I've seen several incidents where the executive branch of this government has totally ignored and disrespected Members on this side of the House. In regard to the issues at hand, in regard to supplementary health benefits, income support, support reform, motions that were passed unanimously in this House by Members on this side of the House which directed the government to seriously deal with these fundamental issues that were affecting residents of the Northwest Territories and totally ignoring the issues on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the conduct of the Premier in regards to this incident, we are all aware of the fundamental breach of confidence when it comes to the workings of this Legislature. We have three levels of government; the judiciary, the executive and the Legislature. Each of those play a very important role in regards to how we do our jobs. It is very sad to have to say here today and we are now having most of our meetings in camera without the clerks at our meetings because of the incident that occurred. For myself, that was a fundamental breach of what we are supposed to do. Those individuals play a very important role to assist us in doing our jobs.

We have a very important job in regards to the government's committee to review the Legislative Assembly's direction to review the language legislation after five years, in which the clerk at the time played a very important role in assisting the committee to do our work. Because of the incident that had occurred, it fundamentally undermined the committee's work and responsibility of due diligence in ensuring that we do have a report that really makes a difference to this House.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of fundamental challenges that we face. Again, we as a Legislature, as I stated in my statement today, show that we really care for the underprivileged people in our society in regards to people who are struggling to heat their homes. They are struggling to even get eligibility for income support because of situations where they either did not go into an

office, had an argument with an income support worker or because they basically had someone living with them taking care of an elder. I think it is fundamental as a government that we do have to show that we are providing good benefits.

Mr. Speaker, the issue that I have is the deterioration of respect that Members on this side of the House be involved in critical decisions such as the \$34 million loan that was given, and under here there's a \$60 million loan that is being looked at, and then the application in regards to the power review of the \$80 million purchase by ATCO Power with no involvement of this side of the House whatsoever and then full speed ahead on those issues, especially when it comes to board reform. Again, the land claim organizations in my region are negotiating self-government. The Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in are in the process of negotiating self-government to look at what type of structures they want to negotiate for themselves and not be dictated by a government telling them that this process is going to change halfway through negotiations. We will have a system that is basically a service board for the communities and be carrying that opportunity to those aboriginal organizations.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, is the whole incident that has clearly occurred. The Minister clearly stated that April 1st the board reform issue will be implemented and the same thing in regards to the question of the supplementary health benefits. September 1st is the drop dead date and they are going ahead. For me, that is not the way a government should be conducting itself and also knowing that those issues could have been pulled over on government's process and left here with the future governments or negotiations with First Nations government did not occur. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion today. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, a democracy is about representing the people, giving them a voice and treating them with fairness and respect towards fair, responsible and responsive government. Being an MLA, a representative of the people in the Weledeh constituency, is a huge honour and a huge responsibility. But there is one thing I most fully appreciate. It is the privilege provided to me on behalf of my people to be heard and to have my opinions and perspectives justly considered by the government.

When MLAs are elected to the Executive, their responsibilities increase. These honoured and privileged people must shoulder the extra burden of trust. This trust is associated with the extra responsibility of knowing many things not

commonly known and making final decisions to a lasting benefit to all of our people. Finally, with having to assume the leadership in treating our public with respect and with ensuring them their opportunities for direct input on issues. This last responsibility, ensuring public input, is done both through ensuring that the opportunities for meaningful input from Regular MLAs is constantly realized and through providing for thoughtful consultation via the flow of thorough information and analysis in which to receive feedback.

Much of this is a matter of communication, but we cannot assume that good communication is easy or automatic. It begins with the recognition of responsibilities in this area followed by a commitment to play in these obligations in an intentional manner. To do so brings substantial rewards of good judgment, good decisions and an engaged Assembly and a public. Failure on this front is what brings us to where we are today.

Examples of these failures are numerous by now; a sorry list that's familiar to many: the Deh Cho Bridge, reductions in personnel and spending, Strategic Initiatives Committees that we heard our Premier mention this morning -- a group of committees that, overall, produced such gobbledy gook, such pact, that we did indeed refuse to participate in them -- review of boards and agencies, the supplementary health benefits issue and its impacts on our seniors and those with pre-existing conditions, et cetera, the Opportunities Fund and so on, others that are painful to mention. The angst, the fear, the painful frustration this government has engendered amongst our public is shameful. This at a time when people are dealing with the rising cost of living and now the recession and all the normal trials and tribulations of life to date.

Mr. Speaker, we did not have the confidence of our public when they realized we, their duly elected representatives to this consensus government, were turning to them for information on what our Cabinet was doing and deciding. Things have become so dysfunctional that the person on the street was better informed about significant decisions made by our Executive Council than their own representatives.

Mr. Speaker, the judgment of our Premier in relation to his relationship with our clerk reflects poor judgment. His inability to share the responsibility for this bad judgment further undermines my confidence in his ability to be our leader.

In our Premier and some Members of our Cabinet, they put trust that was given to them in this House and failed to engage the public on crucial issues time and again. We are required to react.

The motion we have before us today is not one that is put forward lightly, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said this morning, we have repeatedly raised our concerns, but to no avail. I and my fellow MLAs have been trying to work with this Cabinet and have voiced our concerns over and over again, but despite the Premier professing to hear our pleas, we have seen no change.

Public accountability is the keystone of a democracy and this government has shown that they are accountable to none but themselves. If we allow this to continue, we as MLAs would be failing to uphold the principles we swore an oath to protect.

As I said before, this government's communications record is a crime against our people and it now begs some kind of final resolution. Mr. Speaker, I will be acting to perform my obligations by supporting this resolution. Thank you.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: This is a sad day. It is unfortunate that we have to be here at all to consider a motion of this magnitude. It is unfortunate that this 16th Legislative Assembly had to get to such a negative place.

I was born and raised in the Northwest Territories. It is my home and I love it. There is no other place I would rather be. When I die, what is left of me will be buried in the ground here in the Northwest Territories.

I ran for MLA because I wanted to do good things for the people of the Northwest Territories and I still want to do good things for all of the people in the Northwest Territories. I believe in consensus government. I defend it every chance I get. Unfortunately, lately, my ability to defend it has wavered. I began to question consensus government as an institution. Can it be effective and can it work? Here's what I know: It used to work.

As indicated earlier, I have lived in the NWT all of my life and I have paid attention to the government. I have been interested in how a consensus government works as long as I can remember. Prior to division, although there have always been minor hiccups now and again, it worked pretty well. Back then there were 24 Members. Of these, eight were appointed to the Executive Council and there were 15 considered Regular Members. With that particular division in numbers, it was critical that the Cabinet-of-the-day had to provide rational argument based on research and facts in order to

get a consensus on any topic. They had to work pretty hard and engage Regular Members early on in the process, whether it was for legislation or policy development or any other political activity. As a result, there was a significant amount of two-way communication and healthy debate. Cabinet-of-the-day had to develop its policies that pleased the majority of the entire Legislature with what they wanted to pass. They had to get at least six Members to support their position or they were stopped.

Now, technically this is still true. However, since division, Cabinet only needs to get the support of two Members. As a result, they don't have to work as hard. They don't have to convince a large number of Members to support an initiative. It's easy to convince two. Based on the ease of getting two Members to come to their side, it isn't necessary for Cabinet to research the decisions and base their decisions on facts like they used to. If they want, they can simply base decisions on the desire and belief. Two Members can be brought onside to promises not even related to discussions currently at hand.

With the Members that exist, can consensus government work? I believe the answer is yes. However, it is hard work and takes commitment of all Members. All Members must agree to work with consensus government. Cabinet has to agree to do the research and the work required to make reasonable and informed decisions. They must then agree to share that information with the Regular Members and help them help us understand how Cabinet decisions are made so that Regular Members can also make informed and responsible decisions. Both sides need to agree to listen to each other's points of view with respect. Both sides need to engage in healthy ways. The Regular Members need to think about Cabinet's position and not oppose everything that Cabinet says just because Cabinet says it. We need to work to achieve consensus. Unfortunately, it is a lot of work and it takes a lot of time. It requires a lot of individuals to swallow their pride from time to time, and it is easier for Cabinet to ignore and do whatever they want; for example, supplementary health and board reform. Unfortunately, it is very clear that consensus government is not currently working at this time. In fact, I don't think it has ever been in worse shape. There are clearly Members on both sides who let their emotions and pride get in the way of their better judgment or what is in the best interest of the people of the Northwest Territories.

I support this motion. I haven't always. When I first heard rumours about it, I was completely opposed. However, some things have happened over the last couple of weeks that have forced me to support this motion. My biggest opposition to

supporting this motion is that I feel that a number of Cabinet Members are good. I have a significant amount of respect for the Honourable Michael McLeod, the Honourable Robert C. McLeod and the Honourable Jackson Lafferty. Regardless of how this motion goes, they will continue to have my support. If the motion passes, I will definitely put my X beside their name should they choose to run for Cabinet. Having said that -- and I will get into it a little later -- I do have a couple of concerns that I will bring up later with every Member.

If I support some and believe in them now, how can I possibly support this motion? It is simple. I don't support Cabinet as an entity.

On January 28th the Minister of Health and Social Services was quoted in the Yellowknifer saying, "A vote of non-confidence against us won't stop the policy from coming into effect." She was talking about supplementary health benefits. She went further to say -- and she was referring to a vote of non-confidence against her -- "This is really about political ambition and political gesturing and that it wouldn't make a difference because Cabinet has already made their decision and it won't change." To me, this confirmed what many of the public and on this side of the House have been saying and that I feared to be true. Cabinet as an entity doesn't care what we think or say and we don't care what the people of the Northwest Territories want or think either. They know best what is right and what is good. They are going to do what they want, when they want and how they want.

In my opinion, Minister Lee's comment suggested that the entity which is Cabinet had betrayed consensus government, the Regular MLAs and the people of the Northwest Territories. Something needs to be done to restore our faith in this government. I am no fool. I know Cabinet is made up of individuals. I know that we have no idea what the issues they fight for are or what they stand for in that Cabinet room. It is really difficult to pick out an individual Minister for a decision of an entire Cabinet. We can't. When they leave the Cabinet room, whether they have consensus or not, they speak with one voice and in one entity. Minister Lee's comments came to the entire Cabinet at the same time and they must all be held to account. How can we separate out individuals when Cabinet direction and blind devotion to Cabinet solidarity is really the problem?

I and other Members have tried to get Cabinet to work with us in many different ways. I have met and talked with Ministers. I expressed the need for communication. I have asked for inclusion in decision-making. I have asked questions in the House, but to no avail. Nothing has worked. Something drastic that will hopefully get Cabinet Members to sit up and listen needs to be done;

something of a serious nature to get them or the Cabinet Members who replace them to take Regular Members seriously, to take residents of the Northwest Territories seriously. To practice consensus style government that we all profess to believe in warrants support.

To me, this motion is the only thing that I believe they would take seriously. Anything with less potential impact would be soundly ignored by the entity which is Cabinet. The beast would go back to its old habits. Cabinet would go back to business as usual and continue to ignore us. For instance, they have continued to completely ignore motions passed by all 11 Regular Members; motions such as the motion to return the public housing subsidy back to the Housing Corporation; ignoring important motions passed by all 11 Members with not so much as a rational or at least an attempt to provide the Regular Members with the reason why Cabinet won't listen or to act on the decision of the majority of the people in this Assembly. We speak on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories. The majority speaks. Cabinet must listen.

I said earlier that there are three Members that I believe are good and work hard for the people of the Northwest Territories. I don't always agree with their decisions, but I respect them for the way that they work and try to work with us as a Minister responsible for a department, not as a Cabinet Member.

There are two other Members that I am currently on the fence with, and I am deeply troubled by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of ITI for their involvement in the Opportunities Fund and their inability to help us understand how the decisions related to that fund were made and why. If this motion passes, I have a number of questions for each of them; hard questions that I will want answered before I consider putting my X beside their name. This motion will put ramifications behind those questions. If they can't be answered, they won't be getting my support. If this motion does not pass, asking them these questions will be meaningless to them and I don't believe that we will get a sincere answer. Once again, I have no option but to support this motion.

For all five of the Members, I do have one problem which needs to be answered by each. Our Premier admittedly had an intimate relationship with one of our clerks of committee. I know some people are asking: What is the big deal? Here's the big deal. Cabinet has their solidarity. The Regular Members have their committees. These committees are the only place where we can freely vent our frustrations about Cabinet and political issues and plan our daily business. It is supposed to be a safe place where we can trust that what we say won't

be shared with anyone. The clerk of committees that entered into that intimate relationship with the Premier attended all EDI meetings, Government Ops meetings and most Priorities and Planning meetings and is privy to all discussions. Regardless of whether or not she leaked the information -- and honestly I don't know if she did or not and, for the record, information was definitely leaked -- it was definitely a conflict and the Premier is smart enough to know that.

Nobody in their right mind would allow or support the hiring of a spouse or immediate family member of any Member of the Executive Council into the position of clerk of committees. It would be seen as a clear and obvious conflict of interest. The Premier having an intimate relationship with the clerk is no different. It is still a conflict of interest.

After meeting with the Premier in December at Caucus, I met with him one on one and asked him to resign. In my opinion, the relationship constituted a clear conflict and demonstrated poor judgment on behalf of the Premier. The only thing and the right thing for the Premier to do would have been to resign. I was told no by the Premier. I know that the majority of Members on this side of the House had exactly the same conversation with him. They were also told no. So that is my problem with all of the Cabinet Members, including the ones I respect. They didn't appear to do anything other than stand blindly behind Cabinet solidarity and support their Premier. Bad form.

The Premier created a serious conflict situation and should have been asked to resign by you, the regular Cabinet Members. It has happened in the past. Cabinet has asked Premiers to resign in the past. There is precedent. It should have happened this time. I was deeply disappointed that the entity that is Cabinet didn't feel the same way and was willing to stand behind this serious conflict of interest. It puts a negative light on this entire Assembly.

So why didn't the honourable Members ask the Premier to resign? If he refused, why didn't the Members tell him to resign and make it happen? As a Member of the Executive Council, each Member swore an oath that he or she would duly and faithfully and to the best of their abilities, skill and knowledge execute the powers of trust imposed in them as a Member of the Executive Council of the Northwest Territories. I trusted the Executive Council to do the right thing: live up to the standards of their office. Each Member swore to execute the powers and the trust that I and residents of the NWT placed in them.

I have a lot of respect for the Premier. He's done a lot for this Territory and he's been a strong advocate for the North and his constituents. He's

been a good MLA. In the 15th Assembly he was a solid and respected Minister. He's definitely capable and would be a good Regular Member, if that's the way things end up. Unfortunately, he's made a bad decision and he needs to stand up and take responsibility for his mistake and the damage that it has done to this Legislature. Unfortunately, he's unwilling, so it looks like we'll have to do it for him.

As Members -- and this is to all of us -- we all need to be cautious in our behaviour and our actions. As politicians put in office by the people, we have a duty and a responsibility to behave in a decent and an upstanding manner. We have to give up some of ourselves in the best interest of our office and oath that we've all sworn.

In closing, and again, I support this motion because it has teeth and I hope that it will make the entity known as Cabinet listen. Hopefully it will also make the individual Ministers think that as well, even the ones that I hope put their names forward and get back onto Cabinet. This is consensus government. It takes a lot of work, but it's worth it. The people are worth it. The NWT is worth it. Let's revitalize it and get back to work. We owe it to the people of the Northwest Territories.

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

MS. BISARO: At the outset I have to say that I'm dismayed that this motion has come to the floor. But it's nothing that I take lightly. It was a long time in coming and I think I want everybody to know that this is not something which was a spur of the moment decision on anybody's part. I had hopes that we as the 16th Assembly could have found a different or better solution, but there is none to be had.

I feel that I am driven to this step for a number of reasons, and these are my own personal reasons, my own views, my own opinions, my own feelings. Primary among these reasons is a loss in confidence in the Premier and Executive Council as a group. Some Ministers have performed well; some Ministers poorly. Similar to Mr. Abernethy, I feel that some Ministers belong in Cabinet and were the opportunity given to me, I would put them back there.

But I want to emphasize that for me it is a loss of confidence in the group. I am concerned for our Territory. I am concerned for our residents. I don't feel any comfort that this Executive is working for the best interest of the whole of the NWT. The culture of this Cabinet and its Premier is insular, adversarial, and inward looking. I'm sorry to have to use those words.

There is a lack of cohesiveness amongst this group. Each of the seven Members of the Executive seem to operate independently of the others. Actions are taken by one Minister that the others are unaware of. An example: For the last four to five months I've been asking the Premier's office for the NWT government's response to the federal government in regards to the McCrank Report. I was assured several times that it was being developed, that coordination was required because several departments were involved, and that I and other Members would get a copy once it was complete. Imagine my surprise when I was told two weeks ago by the Premier's office that a letter of response about the McCrank Report had gone to INAC's Minister Strahl in early December of 2008 from the Minister of ENR, apparently without the Premier's knowledge. If this is the government's considered coordinated response, why was the Premier not involved?

This example is indicative to me of the "every man for himself" attitude that permeates this Cabinet. Not only have I lost confidence in this Premier and Executive, but so has the public. For months now I've been hearing from constituents and members of the general public that they see the government as inadequate and ineffective. They don't believe that this government is taking us anywhere; that we are as a ship adrift at sea on an aimless journey, no visible charted course.

On the flip side I feel that the long-term goals of this Cabinet and its Assembly are good, but the short-term actions are sorely lacking. On the negative side there's this comment from a constituent: "For every action there is an equal and opposite government program."

A second reason is in my short time as an MLA I've perceived a distinct lack of leadership from the Premier and the Executive and I feel that the leadership has to come from that group of seven people. I elected seven people to positions of authority and accountability, expecting that they would take charge of this Assembly's goals and objectives and those goals and objectives that we set as 19 Members back in October 2007. I expected they would take our goals and objectives and lead us forward. I expected them to fill the sails of our ship with wind and move us purposely to the harbour. I don't see that leadership, nor do I see that purposeful forging ahead that I anticipated 16 months ago. We need to make some personnel changes to get the leadership and the attitude that this Territory needs to forge ahead.

Thirdly, the communication from this Cabinet has been woefully inadequate and ineffectual. I mean communication to both our residents and stakeholders and to us as Regular MLAs. Comments made in the press by Ministers have

been contrary and unnecessarily blunt. Ideas and actions put forward by Cabinet have been presented to constituents and to MLAs as a *fait accompli*, a done deal. What I hear that's telling me from Cabinet is, don't bother telling us what you think; we don't care and we'll do what we want no matter what. Unfortunately, perception is nine-tenths of the law and the public perception is that this Cabinet is running a dictatorship, not consensus government.

The word "consultation" does not seem to be in the vocabulary of this Executive Council. Witness the presentation of the Board Reform Initiative and the Supplementary Health Benefits Program policy. In both cases the model has been predetermined by Cabinet. That model to be implemented is not in question or for debate, only how it will happen. That's hardly consultation, in my view. Where is the openness to other ideas? Where is the openness to the consideration of a different way of implementation?

I am constantly amazed at the reticence of this Cabinet to use the considerable collective wisdom and experience of the Regular Members' P and P committee to vet their initiatives and significant policy changes before making a Cabinet or an FMB decision. This group of 11 has a lot to offer. Why do you persist in ignoring a thoughtful, willing and cost-effective sounding board?

We're at a point in the life of this Assembly where a review of our Executive Council is due. We could wait for the halfway point of this Assembly -- that would be October upcoming -- but I feel it would then be too late. The review must occur now. This motion provides that opportunity; the opportunity for a review of the Premier and all Members of Cabinet. It's an opportunity for Members to reaffirm their confidence in those Ministers whom they feel deserve their confidence. Who those people are depends on each of us as Members. We all have different experiences which colour our opinions and feelings, and thus there are differing views on the worth of each Minister.

Should this motion pass, a Territorial Leadership Council will be held. I hope that all the current Ministers will submit their names for a Cabinet post. I think they all should. The Leadership Council process will allow us all to consider the record of Ministers over the last 16 months, and any Minister who has the confidence of this House will be reinstated to their post.

To conclude, this motion may seem like a drastic measure, but it is, for me, a necessary one. I regret we couldn't find another way to send our message to those across the floor and I regret that I must support this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Before I go on I'd like to move a motion.

MOTION TO EXTEND SITTING HOURS
CARRIED

I move, pursuant to subsection 6.(2) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly, that this Assembly continue to sit beyond the hour of daily adjournment to conclude the item under consideration.

---Carried

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that a review of the Executive Council is necessary and should be a standard practice of our consensus style of government.

Firstly, I'd like to thank the many phone calls and e-mails of concern from Nahendeh residents on the potential upset of government. The concern of the interruption of services, existing negotiations and working relationships is a real one and I acknowledge that. I also thank those that shared equal support for this action as well.

I have been consistent in requesting a review of our Cabinet at the two-year mark. There was enough momentum and concern during this sitting to introduce this review sooner than later.

Previous Assemblies have reviewed Cabinet, but the mechanism was agreed to at the start of their term. Regretfully, we did not entertain or take the time to fully agree on the process to review our Executive Council. The only way that we can have a say is to put forward this motion. The wording is harsh. The implications create uncertainty and unrest amongst our people. Revocation of the Premier and Executive Council. However, for me it is a statement to our government and this House that this consensus style of government must include such a review. I really believe that the messaging of this motion is to ask Cabinet to continue working with us.

I want to speak a little bit about the calls and concerns of the people that are sitting and working together. In my previous career working with Enbridge Pipelines, which had a very tense and local working conditions and conflict of personalities, the managers sat us down and said look, you're not paid to like each other, you're paid to work together. I'd like to send that message to this House here today as well. After reflection upon this, our working relationships did improve.

As well, I just want to speak about how Cabinet work is a reflection of me as an MLA and how I do

my work. When I'm unable to get answers or get negative answers, I have to report to my constituents and tell them this is the response. It's me that they're not happy with, not the Cabinet's decision.

As well, in terms of the recent Discovery Air loan, I went home with many constituents coming to see me who said, you must have known about this loan. Why didn't you say something about it? We did have a briefing, but I never really did have a say. But constituents do not know that. All they know is that I'm part of government and I must have had a say. I couldn't really defend that either. What I can say is it's instances like that which create this disharmony. When Cabinet has to work with us, they can't really come to us and say this is for your information and expect us to make a proper explanation of it to our constituents and members of the public that are concerned about the many, many issues that affect them and that we have control over. I think that's just it. To say that I'm outside the process and I have no control does not carry water.

I think this motion, like I said, harsh as it is, I'm going to support it. For me it's about review of the Executive Council and, as well, unless they're beginning to say, look, something's wrong here, Cabinet, something's wrong here, government, it must be addressed and this is one way that I choose to address it.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I am not in support of this motion. Originally I seconded this motion and supported it. I withdrew my support for the motion because I felt that some of the Ministers that we voted for only 16 months ago still have the ability to carry this government forward. There's no guarantee that the approach of taking the entire Cabinet out would put those Ministers back in.

I have lost the confidence in the abilities of some of the Cabinet Members. I lost the confidence that some of Cabinet have the ability at this time to move this government forward where the people in the small communities would benefit. I came into this Legislature and saw a lot of inequity between what is provided to the larger communities of the Northwest Territories and what's provided to the smaller communities.

If this motion is not carried, Cabinet should look at itself. They should look at themselves and say, wow, we just made it. However, most of the Regular MLAs that represent the majority of the people of the Northwest Territories do not have confidence in us, so don't hold your heads too

high. If this motion is not carried, some of the Cabinet Members better thank their Cabinet colleagues for the fact that some Cabinet Members still have the confidence of some people from this side of the floor.

My non-support of this motion does not mean that Cabinet has 100 percent of my support and 100 percent of the support of the people of Tu Nedhe. There are some dysfunctions in Cabinet and that is very apparent. Cabinet better become functional and start looking and making sure that the people in the small communities are given and afforded the same things that are afforded to the larger communities. My issue has always been that; that we come here to represent people here as equals and we represent everybody in the Northwest Territories as equal. That's not the way things go.

Under any other circumstance this should be a wakeup call for Cabinet. If this motion was not such a broad-brush motion, if it was more focused, I would be here supporting the motion. Cabinet should not feel satisfied that some people from this side are not in support of this motion. Cabinet should look at themselves and say there's something wrong when the majority of the House on this side hangs up and does not support what they're doing.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is one of the toughest positions as an MLA that I've found myself in. We've got a lot of issues at play here and it seems that both sides have come to an impasse, which brings us to the motion that is before us today.

I think there was a way out. There was a way that maybe it didn't have to go this way. Maybe we didn't have to end up on the floor of the House moving a motion to remove the entire Executive and the Premier. I think that is excessive. For the folks out there it is a drastic, drastic measure. But you know what? Tough times call for tough measures.

When we're not receiving any information, when Cabinet is making decisions such as the recent loan off the Opportunities Fund, people are asking us questions on the street. People on the street do not differentiate between a Regular Member and a Cabinet Minister. They think -- and my colleague Mr. Menicoche alluded to this -- that we're privy to the same information that Cabinet is. That's not always the case. I know Cabinet cannot share every bit of detail and information with Regular Members, but on something as substantive as a \$34 million loan, a risky loan, out of the Opportunities Fund, I believe it's incumbent upon

the leadership of this Territory to share that information with Members.

Now, the policy and the process that allowed that to happen is something else that is very, very suspect.

Again, I don't understand how two Ministers could show up to a meeting on two consecutive different times over two days and not have one piece of paper, not one single solitary piece of evidence that the \$34 million we are putting into that loan out of the Opportunities Fund and putting the public purse at risk was a good thing to do. They came twice, they had no information and that speaks volumes about the way Cabinet takes Regular Members for granted, Mr. Speaker. I personally was offended by that and it's something that shouldn't happen. You know, what we need to do, folks, is we need to try to find a way to work together.

I don't know if Members here have talked about the issue with Premier Roland and the situation he was in before Christmas. My assertion early on, and I told Premier Roland this and I respect Premier Roland, I respect the work that's done on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories, but he got himself into a situation that was certainly a conflict of interest. My belief was that he should have resigned and we should have moved on. Nobody in this Territory wants to see us in this House fighting with each other and personally I am getting very, very tired of fighting with Cabinet, you know? I am not going to apologize. I am not going to stand here and apologize for doing my job. That's what I am here to do. My constituents send me here, they voted for me and they sent me to this House to do my job. I ask questions and to be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, the level of detail on the questions coming out of the government in the 16 months that we've been here in the 16th Legislative Assembly has been poor. Let's be honest with one another. Oftentimes questions aren't even answered and I am not sure why that is the case, but it is the case, Mr. Speaker.

Some of this going back and forth in the media, there's been a lot of discussion in the media. I have been quoted in the media saying maybe the entire Executive Council should come out. I do support the motion, but I do have a tremendous amount of confidence in the skills and the abilities of many of my colleagues over there. We are colleagues, Mr. Speaker, and I respect everybody over there. However, some of them have put themselves in a position where they've lost the confidence of the House and a mid-term review would be coming up in October anyway. This is another way to get to that mid-term review. We aren't quite there yet, but given the gravity of what's been going on...

You know, I talked about the loan to Discovery Air; the supplemental health benefits. You know, why the government would go out and cause the angst and the anger out in the community across the Northwest Territories with a shoddy piece of work. Somebody at the Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for that leaving this building, going out across the land in the state that it went out to scare the life out of everybody. People are so scared that they are going to pack up and leave the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker. That's not what this government...The government on one hand says we want to keep people here, we want to trap people here, but then on the other hand they're slapping seniors in the face and people with chronic medical conditions and they're not thinking before they do things.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest problem for me, and I've said this in this House before, I am a decision maker. I like to make decisions for a living. That's why I studied political science. That's why I got involved in politics. That's why I like to represent people, my constituents. In order to make a sound decision, you need to have some analysis. You need to have some background information. What I've seen far too often from this government is you make your decisions without doing the proper analysis. It goes to board reform, the supplemental health benefit changes. The list goes on and on. We go back to when we were first elected, Mr. Speaker, and we got together as a group of 19 Members. It was shortly thereafter what we talked about, some fundamental issues that were important to Members on this side and Cabinet Ministers. We talked about those things, we put them up on the wall at the Baker Centre. We went away and it wasn't a month later that the new Cabinet, newly sworn-in Cabinet, seemed to switch directions on us 180 degrees, \$135 million in reductions, all these Strategic Initiatives Committees. We had never talked about any of that. What Regular Members wanted or what Members wanted after that election was the government to go out and do the work that was necessary to find out exactly where we were spending the money and which programs and services were working and which weren't. I know you have a program review office up and running now. I'm looking forward to some of the work that's going to come out of that, but that's the kind of thing that as a decision maker, you need to have the information at hand to make decisions. I am not sure what Cabinet is basing their decisions on.

You know, I don't know if you can lay the entire blame at the feet of Cabinet on this. I think the bureaucracy itself needs to be shaken up, Mr. Speaker, if you will. You know, some of the work these guys are getting is coming from the bureaucracy that I believe is giving these guys not

all the information, not the correct information. You know, we need to take our senior management here in the Northwest Territories to task and that's the job of the Cabinet and I haven't seen enough of that, Mr. Speaker. I think that's another thing we have to get at.

Now in terms of communication, that's a two-way street and I think Regular Members too, we are part of this as well. The communication goes back and forth. The communication from the Cabinet to the public has been poor. Communication between the Premier's office hasn't been what it could be. Now is that an issue of personalities or is it an issue of something else? You know, we have to address those things. If it's egos, if it's personalities, we need to sit down...It's too bad we couldn't have locked ourselves in a room somewhere and sorted this out. Surely we could have worked something out. I don't understand why it has to come to a motion on the floor of the House to remove the entire Executive Council and the Premier. It just didn't need to happen this way, folks. I am personally getting tired of the back and forth. It's like a soap opera. It doesn't need to be that way.

Personally, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be seen as a guy who tears things apart. I don't want to be that guy. I want to be seen as a guy, a person, who can help build things and can help make things better for residents of the Northwest Territories. There are a lot of people out there across the Northwest Territories today who are questioning what we are doing here today. And they have every right to question what we are doing here today, but believe me this wasn't arrived at just yesterday. This has been working itself up, working itself up. There are a number of issues that brought us here and, Mr. Speaker, I really wish there was another way. Like I said, the Ministers that have my full support and my confidence, you know who you are. Those who don't, that's the way it is, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that has been bothering me lately is the fact that some Cabinet Ministers are saying this motion is based on sheer political ambition and motivation. You're wrong. It's not built on that. It's built on the fact that we want to get a government here for the people by the people and when you're not listening to us, you're not listening to the people of the Northwest Territories, folks. That's why I am here and, you know, it's not out of political ambition; although I shouldn't be ashamed if I have some political ambition, and I do. I don't mind saying that, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, I am not ashamed of it. I don't think that should be held over my head for standing up for what I know is right and speaking my mind. I will continue to do that. I will not be intimidated by anybody or be bullied by anybody. My parents taught me to stand up to

bullies and that's what I do, Mr. Speaker. That's why I support this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this Chamber today to inform the Assembly and my constituents that I cannot support this motion that is one that in a sweeping way fires the current Premier and entire Cabinet indiscriminately. No one can deny that we in the NWT face unparalleled recession, economic downturn that is deepening, and it's even finding threats here in the North where once we believed that we had an economic boom led by diamonds, the pipeline and even hydro.

Let's not mince words here. This is a time of uncertainty for many people whose jobs could be affected by this economic climate. This is a time of despair for those who have been laid off or for those who have businesses that are floundering or even potentially failing any day now. This is a time of worry for all of us with investments and pension plans, which we assumed would carry us through the golden years. These are the times we are living in.

At this crucial time Northerners are looking to this Assembly for stability, leadership and principled decisions. This House is built on the ability to define consensus within itself. In the best traditions of this Assembly, this should be a time where we put ambition and politics aside, where we come together and provide sound leadership and courageous decision.

We are at one of those points I'd like to call political interception, where hard decisions have to be made. The people of the North should be able to look inside these walls and find that every single Member is working as creatively and passionately as possible to meet those enormous challenges that are hitting us day after day.

Yet, what do the people of the North find when they look inside this Assembly's walls? They see a set of people who have been distracted; some by opportunism, some by anger, some cloaking it under patriotism. Everyone has their own motives. Many are right; many are wrong.

I also see the people looking into this Assembly and seeing it paralyzed by power brokering and anger. They see in the leaders that they have elected an inability to set aside their differences for the greater good of our people of the North. That goes on both sides of this House.

Instead of inspiring policy and unity, they see divisiveness and disarray. This is not what the

people of this Territory expect from them. This is not why I ran.

Extraordinary times call for unprecedented leadership. That leadership rests not just on the Premier, that rests on every single one of us. So we must find the greatness within all of us, the ability to cast aside our differences. Our personal favourites and principles must find a way to find progress. We must find a way.

We need to ask and set aside dislike. We need to find forgiveness, because nothing less should be expected from us in these difficult times. For this is a time of collaboration and not compensation. If Regular Members have issues with particular Members of Cabinet, then let's have that discussion to the people and have our courage and conviction, and say name them by name and we'll deal with them one by one. At the same time, the accused will have their say. Isn't that the way to move forward? Isn't that the way to deal with this problem?

To sweep out the entire Premier and Cabinet in a single sweep is not a responsible answer, in my view. Removing seven to get to one or two is not a level-headed approach, from my view. I've had many e-mails speaking to that as well. In fairness, I've had a few e-mails that think this motion is the right approach.

Let's assume that this motion passes. Will it all be fine tomorrow? I'm not so sure. There's no plan of leadership, so I think that creates a destination of failure.

If this motion passes, for me it will mark truly one of the saddest days; a day in which, when called upon to run parallel leadership and collaboration in the name of the people of the Northwest Territories, this Assembly chose to paralyze its frustration in the hour when people need us most.

In opposing this motion I will not let difficult decisions and discussions which I've had with a number of Ministers cloud what is important here today. I know when I've spoken to many of the Cabinet Ministers they have listened and respected the views I've taken on positions. Sometimes they've agreed; sometimes they haven't. They haven't chosen to budge on the issues I've raised, but there was still mutual respect. And make no mistake, I've been disappointed, but the fight goes on. The fight goes on on behalf of my constituents.

There are no faults and contempt out there that have made this Cabinet so rotten we must humble every single one of them by throwing them out in a single stroke of a single vote. I did not become a Member of this Assembly to watch the liquidation of common sense and sound judgment, because

we can do better than this. We can do better in what we are doing now. So I will not let the actions of some say this is the only way, because I am telling you this is not the only way.

What is right for the people of the North is to say we can work this out. Because we can do better. The people deserve and are entitled to an Assembly that, when faced with crisis, is willing to put aside differences for common good. This Assembly must call upon its inner strength to end its differences among itself. It is not for itself to the people of the North. I know no singular better reason than to work for that end.

Many have gotten e-mails saying this is the only way to end board reform. Many e-mails have come forward saying this is the only way to end the supplementary benefits changes. I say there are other ways. I say we will have votes on those. I say we will be in positions to hold budgets hostage and put our opinions clearly on the floor. I will say that this Assembly has still much work to be done on both sides of this House.

In closing, I'm going to say that I believe we can do better. This motion calls upon a significant change in the way we do business and I cannot let personal conflict or frustration lead the day, because deep down inside I know we can do better together.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the last couple days I've had some pretty early mornings thinking about how the motion is going to be discussed, and how it's going to be talked about amongst the 18 MLAs in the House here, and what the interpretations might be in the public in terms of what we are looking at and what we are doing. What are the different analyses of the meetings? What are the interpretations of the meetings? How will this play out in our communities? How will this play out amongst ourselves? Looking to this day as to how it will roll out.

The motion, as I read it, is a strong signal to this leadership, specifically to the Executive Council, about the sentiments, the thoughts and feelings from the MLAs who are considered the Regular MLAs. This motion wasn't something that came overnight. The other Members have talked about and I had thought about this and had a discussion with Mr. Roland yesterday as to is this salvageable. Is this something we can fix? I was thinking, where in our life did we get to a point that this motion has to be on the floor. Something we could have done. I had some e-mails saying don't throw the baby out

with the bath water. So I was thinking that day where in our system that it got to this point.

This motion is speaking to that point. I don't know if it's pride. I don't know if it's blaming. I'm not too sure if it's the recent briefing that we got on Discovery Air or the additional information we got from the Ministers on this Opportunities Fund that says okay, that's it, or maybe other factors.

It's about leadership that Members talk about; the strong signal to leadership. It's all of us. We operate in a very unique system; a system that Members on this side are the majority and the Executive Council is the minority. This is what this motion maybe is signalling to the people of the Northwest Territories, that consensus government is strong and alive, that the people in the Northwest Territories need to know that we need to work together. They have told us: work together. Our elders have told us: work together.

Twenty years ago the Sahtu Tribal Council in Deline, Fort Franklin at that time, us young leaders, we were fighting amongst ourselves. Maybe this is déjà vu, but elders stopped us in that meeting and the elders scorned us as young leaders rising up and helping the people in the Sahtu region. They actually put us in our place. We went back to work again. Hard feelings were set amongst ourselves in the Sahtu region. Thank God for the elders that told us what we needed to hear even though we didn't want to hear it. That's part of our culture. That's what we bring into this Assembly here. We bring those values, those upbringings into the Assembly.

My comments to this motion from a small community is that there needs to be, as the Minister indicated in his territorial budget, a storm. There's got to be a shaking in terms of how we respond to the people in our communities. It's got to be a real hard shake in terms of this is what we're going to do for our people in our communities, because we still lack the basic infrastructure of health care. Our people are still being diagnosed months, years after they have seen the hospital with cancer, leukemia, other sicknesses, something basically is wrong. We're just not getting the work done. Cabinet has indicated through many good proposals about what they're going to do. Fair enough. Not all programs and services can be equal across the Northwest Territories because of numbers and economics, but there's got to be some basic services to be brought about amongst our discussions to say yes, when we go into one of the communities, you can have this service here, not every six weeks, not every three months, but you can have this basic service.

Elders in our communities have talked about things that they want. Dust control is one. Why are elders going to Wal-Mart and buying filters in the summertime, putting them in the house and changing them because of the amount of dust? That program was evolved through other means to funding the communities, but we know the communities, they need more than more basic services and they compete against each other. So we allow them to fight amongst themselves to say what do you want.

I think there are some basic services that this government really needs to be serious about. Our education system for example. Elders have talked about how we should improve our education system for our people, but we somehow have to follow the Alberta curriculum. When I was sitting down with an elder the other day, in talking about some of these things, one of the things I researched as to why is it that we have some of our ceremonies passed on by our elders. Couldn't get it. Mr. Speaker, the reason why we have some of our ceremonies is because it reminds us where we come from, how we grew up in our communities, what makes us unique as a human being, either Dene or a Metis or even a...(inaudible)...that makes us unique. I do know that as an aboriginal person these ceremonies should be taught as mandatory in our schools. I brought up the issue of picking berries. Students picking berries is a very special ceremony. But, no, we compete with this academic curriculum because we have to prepare our children for the future, but we're not really balancing it properly. I haven't yet seen from this side that these are core programs that should be in the education system, spring time, fall time, winter and summer. There are certain things that really need to be important. Elders have told me this.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable Member from Nahendeh is correct because we also get questioned on things that we aren't privy to. Again, on one hand, we have to defend or are put in the position of defending some things that we're not privy to. We're not here every day and not in our system, to understand the system, how we work the system. There are very good people across here that work for us. Strong message that we need to work really hard for us, especially in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to Cabinet, people in my region, we are taught many times as to where this government is going to go. We have heard or read mostly about one of my constituents in Norman Wells. I think unofficially she's the Minister of Transportation of highways. She is so adamant and insistent about talking about something she believes in. Mr. Speaker, there are different opinions as to her comments in the paper. Mr.

Speaker, she is an elder in my region. She is someone that has the belief and the vision that something could get done in the Northwest Territories such as extending the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I guess from our side, I guess from myself, I'd like to fight for something that's worthwhile fighting for such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I was very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, hearing the federal government not making any mention of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I know this Cabinet has made efforts to get the Prime Minister to see something that could be done, but I think we need strong leadership, regroup as a leadership to push the issues like this. The federal government stands to gain millions and millions from the Northwest Territories and there are opportunities to build the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I think that's what the message is for Cabinet, as I read this motion. Some basic core services in our communities. I've named off a few that could be done, that needs to get done. Other communities that take programs and services for granted, we are desperately fighting in our communities to get. Something's wrong so something's got to move. I think it's a good signal and change is good. I think that opportunities always present themselves. Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to say that I will be supporting the motion.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Today it's probably one of the toughest positions I've been put to task for in my elected career, as MLA for Nunakput and in my political career as a whole. For Nunakput I've been very fortunate to have my colleagues on both sides of the House support me on anything I've done. In regard to giving me the access road to Tuk and anything that I've asked for basically. My leaders back home, they phone me and tell me, support the government, support them to keep them in to try to work together as 19 as a whole. It's a really tough call for me because you know some of the stuff I've seen, people don't see what goes on here behind the closed doors of the Legislative Assembly. With all that's been going on since the summer, I mean I sit as vice-chair of EDI, you know what happened with our worker there. That's bad. That is bad for all of us in regards to having an affair. I mean, as a family man, it was a real sickening feeling I had in regard to the family. To me, in my growing up, it was family first. That, like I said, brings me to a real sick feeling. I can't judge my Premier in regard to that; he'll be judged by the good Lord.

I came to Yellowknife and to the Legislative Assembly as MLA for Nunakput to make a

difference for my people. I think I've been working together with my colleagues as a whole to do that. The bottomline is we have to quit pointing fingers either through our side, not so much our side, it's a two-way street, and we use the media to get our points across. Some days you think you're in All My Children or in some soap opera. Like I said, it's a really awkward position I'm put in. I really think notice has been given in regard to this being brought up to my colleagues across the floor. You guys better start doing your job, start serving your people. You're not. Half of you are doing an awesome job. The thing is we've got to start working together to get it done.

Health benefits, Sandy, throw it out. It ain't going to happen. You know? The other things, the little things, you forget about the people in the communities. The high cost of living. I could go on and on. People are starving up north. No fuel. Are you going to buy fuel for your kids or are you going to buy food? What are we going to do? It's up to you seven Members across the floor to serve the people of the Northwest Territories and not serve yourself.

The whole thing that this came about, it wasn't shot from the hip. Things kept building up in regard to where it's at today. For me, I'm put in a tough situation in regard to my leadership back home and my supporters. They tell me, support the government. We are in tough economic times right through and they're saying if we did this it's going to crumble. I don't think it will if it went either way. I think there are Members here who could do a job on either side of the House who are more than capable. I'm just put in that situation in regard to...

I listened to a lot of people. I even had phone calls from people who I never heard from in 10 years and they're phoning me at my apartment. Two o'clock this morning I got a phone call. For the past two days I'm not sleeping. I'm worried about this day. Now it's here. Today I'm really reluctant to go with or go against, but for me Blackberry wireless has been giving me e-mails steady from my constituents telling me to support them.

I'm giving you guys one more chance in regard to what's going on. To my colleagues on this side of the House, I apologize. One more chance. Next time it comes up and one of you are not doing your job, I'm going to make sure I follow through. Also, I really get tired of reading the newspaper everyday in regard to my colleagues Ramsay and Groenewegen. People taking shots at them. All they want is the best for the people of the Northwest Territories and sometimes it gets taken out of context. Bottomline: let's start working together, let's grow up. We've got to serve our people. People are starving. I'm putting you on notice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, this is not an easy time. I've been on both sides of the floor during times like this and it's not easy. A couple Members, I respect the brutal honesty and their stand on the position. We are all here to...There's reason for each person to do what they do and they feel whatever they have to, to do best.

I was walking here this morning and I was wondering where I was going to start. I was going to start from the time I got in here, my expectations of being an MLA to what I saw after I came in here which didn't impress me at all and Jackie's made reference. The politics within the politics is what got to me and I could not believe that. I didn't want to believe that, but unfortunately it's true. I've seen it during the 15th; I've seen it during the 16th.

We profess ourselves to be leaders across these Territories. There are times when we act like leaders when it's for our convenience, and there are times when we don't act like leaders and people expect more of us. I hear people talk about my Northwest Territories and my Northwest Territories goes from Sachs Harbour to Fort Smith, from Fort Resolution to Aklavik. It includes all the Northwest Territories. I hear from people. We can't fool people out there. We can't. I really wonder sometimes where we are going. Where are we going? Are we doing what's best for this institution or are we doing what's best for the Northwest Territories as a whole? I really thought about this morning as I was walking here and I was also thinking I picked the wrong time to try and quit smoking, because I could sure use one right about now.

---Laughter

I agree with some of the comments over there. I hear some of the comments over there and I appreciate the brutal honesty of some Members. Like I said, everybody has a reason for doing what they do. It's not an easy position to be in, whether you're on that side, where I've been twice already. I've been here for four and a half years, I think this is the third, maybe the fourth time I'm going through this and people across the Northwest Territories are saying well, that's fine, hold people accountable. You're putting too much energy into it and that energy could be best used somewhere else. The communication issue, it happens on both sides. It happens on both sides. I sat with the Regular Members for the first 12 months of the 16th and here for the last going on four, I think four months to the day, and I see that it works both ways. That's something that has to be cleaned up. Throughout this whole exercise, and I'm really glad

we've had this debate in public on the floor of the Chamber because the people out there can see. Throughout this whole exercise, I think it's become evidently clear that we have to fix the line of communications and, in my opinion, so many times the ability to move forward is hindered by dragging stuff from back here. We can't move forward if we are constantly dragging weights. That's the God awful truth.

We all talked about moving forward for what's best in the Northwest Territories. If I have done anything wrong, I would face the Members and I would stand here on my merit and be judged as to whether I had done my duty or not. I would accept the consequences. Look me in the eye and say I have no confidence in you, don't pull the trigger. I can respect that and I can live with that. But to be put at the side of the ditch and machine gunned into the ditch is not something I truly respect.

I have heard talk of a ship out in sea. You know, you get an imbalance of people paddling on one side, ore on one side. We are going to veer off and I think it's happened too many times in this case. Perception, we can stand up here and I can be up here saying all about the Northwest Territories, people don't always hear what you say. They see what you do. Perception is nine-tenths of the law and what you say or what you do actually speaks a lot louder than what you actually say.

Mr. Ramsay mentioned fighting with Cabinet and that's a true statement. I mean we all have our differences in here and we aren't always going to see eye to eye. We sit...Cabinet, Cabinet doesn't always see eye to eye. We don't always see eye to eye with each other. But at the end of the day we have to put all that aside and we have to not just talk about doing what's best with the people of the Northwest Territories, we actually have to do it.

Mr. Abernethy pointed out this is a great place. This is a great place to live. It truly is from the time you're born until you're planted, we live a very good existence here. Our schooling is taken care of. You see our kids in school, they don't have to find part-time jobs because their SFA will look after them. We have a good system here. It's not perfect. I'll be the first one to say that. There are glitches as the Members like to point out, but for every glitch there are probably 10 or 12 good things that are happening and people across the Northwest Territories are being looked after, sometimes not as well as they would like, but they are looked after and I believe looked after very well. In my opinion this Territory in this country is the best place to be living.

You are concerned with leadership issues. Leadership, in my opinion, is 19 Members of this Assembly. We have to set aside any issues, any

differences, we have to set all those aside and we have to start moving forward, we have to work together and I've always been confident in people's ability. I've always been confident that at the end of the day a good common sense decision may be made based on what we keep talking about is best for the people of the Northwest Territories and to blow up the government right now, is it the best use of our time? Do we not have work we have to do? If a message was being sent, the message is heard, I guarantee. I listened to each one of you as you spoke over there. I have heard what you were saying and I am sure we've all heard what you were saying. That's a good start and something we have to work on and that's something that we have to nurture and just to make sure that is something we continue to do all the time. It goes both ways. Like I said, I sat there for twelve months, four months on this side, it works both ways, it works both ways. I think that's something we are going to have to sit down, I think as Jackie said, we have to sit down and get things ironed out. Why can't we, as Rodney King said, why can't we all just get along? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this certainly isn't an easy process that we're going through. Certainly there are two parts to my statement and I will certainly be speaking my language and also at the same time, I will be speaking English right after.

[English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say a few words that I have spoken in my language. Of course, my statement will be short and right to the point. Mr. Speaker, I will be selective and choose my words wisely as this is an important era in the territorial government, in this 16th Assembly. Ever since I got elected in this 16th Assembly, this whole Assembly has been going around in circles. It's like a circus.

My Speaker, I am speaking from my heart. We're not getting anywhere. We're trying to get ahead, but we're here today again to talk about certain issues that we must overcome. Government is a serious business. We simply cannot be changing leadership every time we may be pissed off about one or two Ministers or whatever the case is. Mr. Speaker, this particular incident or issue, the whole ordeal, has a huge impact on the Northwest Territories, our communities and our people that we serve. Is this really what the people of the North want? We don't know. We should find out if that's the case.

Regardless of the vote today that we are faced with, we are in a time of fiscal restraint and economic uncertainty. This government has the responsibility to be fiscally responsible and look to a new innovative way of ensuring essential services remain available in the Northwest Territories for the residents. Changing the Executive Council does not change that fact. It only prevents the government from doing the work it needs to do in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to reflect for the record, those people who are listening on the radio, those people who are watching us, I think it's key that we are talking about this particular motion. This motion we are debating here is a non-confidence vote on the Premier and the whole Executive Council, meaning that everyone here, Members, Regular Members, are telling us they lost confidence in us, they lost confidence in me as an Executive Council Member. You need to tell me sitting here as a Council Member, Executive Council, what we've done wrong, what we've done so wrong that you do not want our leadership. You need to face me also, eye to eye, and tell me to my face what I've done wrong. Have I broken the law? Have I broken a rule, policy, regulation within our government?

In my role as Minister, I have always been transparent and accountable to each and every single one of you as Regular Members and also my colleagues, also my constituents of Monfwi riding and I will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

So far to date, Mr. Speaker, there has been only one Member that came to my office and explained why this motion was brought forward. Mr. Speaker, this is truly a serious allegation to the North and our communities and people are watching carefully on how each and every one of us will be voting on this particular motion. This motion of non-confidence in our government, the Government of the Northwest Territories, a motion of non-confidence and me as a Member of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work ahead of us, a lot of new ideas, a lot of new initiatives that we need to start implementing. We just heard about the budget. That is going to benefit the whole Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, this particular motion to me is a selfish one. You need to think about the North, the people that we serve, the Northwest Territories. If this issue here is a perception of a lack of communication between the Executive and Members that we've heard over and over, we simply need to improve our communication dialogue, not dissolve the Executive Council as a whole. Every organization, government, has the

ongoing challenges that we are faced with today. It's not only us, but nationally, internationally.

Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly, we talk about working together, cooperating as a consensus government, which I simply do not see here today but we can certainly fix that. The onus is on every one of us sitting here; 18, 19 of us. It goes both ways, as Mr. Ramsay indicated. We should be sitting down discussing issues, discussing challenges, and finding opportunities, finding solutions to resolve all those issues we are faced with. We can certainly do that together, all of us together. Let's not wait for others to come to our rescue. We simply cannot afford to continue operating in this fashion constantly changing leadership status.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, anything is possible if we all work together, put our personal differences aside. We are here to serve the people of the Northwest Territories. They depend on us to make the most important decisions for them. All of us as elected Legislative Assembly Members need to strengthen our working relationships and everyone needs to do their part. Mr. Speaker, can we make this government work? Mr. Speaker, yes, we can. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Michael McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I am sure all the people in the gallery and all the Members in this House and all people listening on the radio and watching on television can feel the tension in the air. It's so thick you could cut it with a knife right now and it has been for some time. Mr. Speaker, it really is a tough situation we are in. It's tough for all of us. We heard from many Members here speak with great emotion and voice some real concern.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I have to mention it's really a strange situation we are in also, because usually a government's confidence is voted on after they present the budget, not before.

Over the last few days, I have been really trying to take stock of where we are at and how we ended up here. I certainly, if there is an issue with Cabinet, I take my share of the blame if there is concern about our conduct. I really would have liked the opportunity to see how we can resolve it.

Mr. Speaker, I considered resigning if Members are considering that I am not doing my job. I will continue to offer that. I think that should come in the form of a review. I was somewhat surprised to see this motion come forward and I tried to talk to a number of Members over this issue. Why don't we have a mid-term review? That's not something

that's being contemplated at this point. They thought it was too late. Some Members said it was complete lack of confidence in our government. Some Members even went as far as to say I didn't get what I wanted from this government for my riding, so you guys got to go.

Mr. Speaker, I have also heard from the general public. The issue I have been hearing is there's a clash of personalities amongst us as 19 Members. There are a number of people who will probably never get along in this forum and that's something that is very serious.

Mr. Speaker, I say that because I am a strong believer -- and I make no bones about it -- in the consensus government style. Consensus government is something that I have worked with all my life. It is the only style of government that I know and participated in. I have worked with band councils. I have worked with Metis councils. I have worked with regional governments, aboriginal governments and when it works, it works well, but if people don't respect it, it won't work. That is the basis of consensus government. It takes trust, it takes respect and it takes an awful lot of communication.

Mr. Speaker, I have also watched the party system. I have studied the party politics style. I've never liked what I've seen. I've seen a lot of people, there's a lot of yelling, a lot of arguing, and very little communication or sharing of information.

What concerns me is since we got together as Members of the 16th Assembly, we all had high hopes. We had lots of smiling faces in those days. We really tried to work together. That was a really strong theme amongst all of us, was to work together. As soon as Cabinet was selected we started to see lines being drawn. I think before Cabinet even moved one decision we were being accused of doing certain things. That has made it very tough to go about our business. We're starting to see that escalate now. We're starting to see our consensus style of government being brought to a virtual standstill. There is starting to be a lot of what I guess could be called threats, a lot of strong words amongst ourselves, and absolutely no chance of us getting together for a group hug or anything of that nature.

---Laughter

I'm trying to make light of it, but the reality is it's going to be a real challenge for us to continue to work together. It's at a time when our economy is really in a downturn situation. It's a very difficult time for a lot of our communities. I think a lot of Members have mentioned that. It's a lot of tough slugging for our residents and businesses. We

should be looking for solutions and to make tough decisions.

As I looked at what could be the possible outcome of this whole exercise I'm really struggling to find any win in any form, no matter what the outcome. If we remove all Members on this side of the House and put them on the other side of the House and change seats per se, we still are not going to be functional. We'll have the same debates. We'll have the same stalemates. We'll have to wait for the new budget to be drafted. I don't believe if the Cabinet goes down, the budget is going to stay. We'd need an interim budget. If the government is recognized for its budget -- and that's their signature series of what we're doing, the decisions accumulated -- then that's going to be really tough. It will take a transition period.

Even if we change some Members of Cabinet, depending on who gets into Cabinet we still may have the conflict that we have amongst some Members. Whether it's on the Cabinet side or some Members go on the Regular Members' side, the dispute is still going to be there. I think our only chance of surviving this government is to keep the current government in place, continue to try to work together to try to look at what are the serious allegations and challenges and issues that have been raised by the Members and try to work them out. Almost every Member has raised an issue over process, about how we're not doing well enough in communicating, how we're not doing well enough for giving advance notice, how we're not doing well enough to responding on different issues. I think those are issues that can be overcome. But we need the opportunity.

The only other solution would be for all of us to resign, all 19 Members, and start again. Because there'd be no easy way to get through this and we'll just be at a stalemate after stalemate for the rest of our term.

I think we are to take the time to review what our challenges are and deal with them. We should take the time to work on a better communication system. We should also improve our decision making process. We should all commit to work together, put aside our differences, to help the people in our communities, help our workers, our businesses, then not be spending time on issues that many people are viewing as a clash of personalities.

We need for the NWT to see us emerge from this as stronger; stronger from going through this financial crisis, going through this political crisis. We have to focus on our future, not our differences. I would personally believe that it's a waste of time for us to go through the TLC process again. New Ministers would have to take the time

to become familiar with the departments, their new portfolios, and set a new agenda. We'd probably see a lot of commitments we made to the communities, those things may have to be postponed. Programs and services that we're working on may be delayed. And for sure the credibility with the public or other jurisdictions would certainly be compromised, if it's not already.

I think all of us have heard from the leaders in our communities, from our constituents, from the NWT Association of Communities, from the Chamber of Commerce, from aboriginal governments, from aboriginal leaders, and they're all basically saying the same thing. The message is pretty clear: Set aside your personal conflicts, work on issues, get on with the work that's needed for the people of the Northwest Territories. Give the people of the Northwest Territories the comfort of having a stable working government that's going to be there during the difficult times. I'm serious. If we can't do that, then we may need to look at the only alternative we have, which is to go back to the polls and let the people decide.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: I'd like to thank the Members for the comments to this motion. I see there are lots of people in the gallery and I'm sure there are people around the Territory and perhaps some parts of Canada who are watching, to see how we're going to emerge from this motion.

I've been here for 10 years. I was elected in 1999 and this is my third Assembly. In that time I have seen a lot of things. So what is happening today is new in some ways and not in others. I see that there are lots of people who watch us who are more familiar with how the consensus system works and how conflicts arise and how some of them are resolved.

But I have to say that in the five situations where Ministers were removed, two of them had to do with conflict resolution and three of them had to do with some matters involving court. What is new here is that we've never had a motion to remove the entire Cabinet. Obviously this is a very serious motion and I have listened very carefully to what the Members are saying, because obviously there's a reason for bringing that forward.

What I'm hearing is lack of communication or breakdown in communication and process, and some of the Members have said it's an unhappy situation to have to tell their constituents negative news. But that is new to me. If we are judged by negative news that we need to give, I would suggest to anybody else who wants to run for Minister of Health and Social Services that they

may not want to consider that portfolio. It is a really high burden to put on any political leader that you cannot give me that news and that that will be the standard to which you will judge.

I just want to say, obviously I understand that this is a very difficult situation for everybody and everybody has given a really well thought out opinion about why they stand on this motion on one side or the other. But I was thinking this morning and over the last few days about how we got to where we are and how we get out of it. This morning, when I was listening to Mr. Miltenberger's interview and the reaction from the budget, in most jurisdictions the confidence motion is on the budget. That is the most important thing. When you look at us, the general response we're getting from the motion out of the budget is that Regular Members here who support the motion support the budget.

For any government a budget is the most authoritative and legitimate document on the confidence of the government. So when I look at the budget and see if we have worked together for the last two months, because we have, because under consensus government Members have a preview to the budget document first. If we were able to work out an agreement on a \$1.3 billion expenditure and set out priorities and where the capital money will be spent or program money, surely we have more in common and we have some kind of system that works here and allows us to do that. I understand that there are differences, but surely we have to look for what is common ground that we can build on.

I think we've all been influenced by President Obama, who's been elected in the United States, and his favourite saying -- and he is, I think, spreading the word around the world -- that you can spend all your time thinking about what divides anybody. We can spend all our time thinking about what divides us, what makes us upset, what's not working for me. But we can also spend that time thinking about what works for us, what unites us, what is a common ground.

Another favourite saying that I used to hear from President Clinton is what is wrong in America, not saying what is wrong in America cannot be fixed, but what is right about America. I have to believe that as long as I'm a Member here, the 19 of us are here, we've been elected duly by the people who sent us here, and we are here to do good work. There has to be some kind of common ground we can work on.

Mr. McLeod put out a really strong statement about the state of where we are, and I think it is worth reflecting on what we are doing, regroup, work on a communication channel, make it public. But I do

believe that at the end of the day if we could agree on a \$1.3 billion expenditure, understanding that we will have some debates and arguments on that, then surely we have a lot more in common than others.

With respect to any remarks made here about the work I have done as the Minister of Health and Social Services, I have already stated that I take those comments very seriously. Before I announced the changes to the supplementary health benefits I went around to Members' offices and a lot of Members said to put it aside here, take it to the side and it will get better. Member Yakeleya told me this. Member Menicoche said that. Member Beaulieu said that. So I think I don't want to create a feeling that we don't have a mechanism to communicate with each other. We're always here. We're talking to each other. I could, one by one, talk to all 11 Members about some of the things they have asked me to do that we are working on.

I think this is a motion that has a serious message and it's telling Cabinet and all the Ministers that we need to do better; some of us more than others. Surely if the 19 of us could put our heads together we could work our way through this.

I also want to say that this is not the first time in this Assembly as this Cabinet that we have been questioned with a non-confidence motion. In a way this was the biggie, this was the super motion. There is a gauntlet thrown down. But I'm hoping that once we resolve this, that we respect the decision of the House, that we work together and that Members on that side know that myself as a Minister and the Cabinet are listening. Surely we are adult enough and are leaders enough that we can work out a process to work out the differences and also to pay attention to the fact that there's a lot more that brings us together than what divides us.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Like my colleagues have mentioned, this is a very serious issue not to be taken lightly and I've listened very carefully to what everybody has said on both sides. Like everybody here, I'm very proud and honoured to be an MLA. I'm also proud and honoured to serve my constituents for the past 16 months. I have been proud and honoured to work with my colleagues on both sides of the floor. I've been proud to work with GNWT staff both here in headquarters and up and down the valley. Their efforts are crucial to our success and I applaud them all.

The past several months have been challenging for all of us. Since I became Minister, very early on I was reminded that we could be taken out, because we were put in by the Caucus. And I've taken that very seriously.

Also, I've been singled out as being delinquent in my communications. I want to point out that this is something that I think all of us can improve upon. Depending on the outcome of the motion, I'll continue to work very seriously to improve in this area.

I thought about it and I said, well, how could we improve on the process? We have a well established process of committees and Cabinet and so on that's been here for some time. How can we improve on communications? Is it a systemic problem? I don't think it's a lack of will to communicate. Perhaps now that everybody has Blackberries we'll make sure that we send messages to everybody. But I think it's more a function of getting together, reconfirming how everything should work, and agreeing that we will communicate and work together.

So I will commit to all my colleagues, both Cabinet and Regular Members, that I will continue to work together. Several Members have mentioned that maybe we needed to get to this point so that it will cause us to reflect on how we can work to find ways to work better together and to go forward. People are relying on us to show leadership, so let's set aside our differences and find ways to move forward.

Improving communications is critical and we should all commit to doing that. I think we all could have done a better job of communicating, including myself. I'll continue to try to improve in that area. I'll make a commitment today to make a concerted effort to communicate more and better. We have a lot of hard work ahead of us. I know all of us work very hard and all of our families will attest to that.

I'd ask everybody to reflect on the good work that's been done and to find ways to move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I'd venture to say that everybody with a computer terminal or a radio or a TV or whatever other means have it tuned into the House. They are watching with great anticipation and bated breath.

We are existing in the worst economic downturn since, they say, the Great Depression. Job numbers today and on the news were 129,000 Canadians lost their jobs in January; 600,000 in the States. Conditions continue to worsen.

Yesterday we tabled a \$1.3 billion budget that was a result of months of collective work together; surely a testament to one of the big things that we can do together. But we stand here today in a consensus system airing our differences with a draconian motion that probably has no equal in the life of the Legislative Assembly with the impact it could potentially have on the government, on the people of the Northwest Territories.

The consensus government that we all subscribe to is under stress. I would say it's showing some fractures. I agree with my colleague Mr. Ramsay from Kam Lake that there has to be a way for us to repair this institution, which we all say we cherish. We have an underused part of our process that I would suggest to you we should consider putting back into much greater use and that is a simple function of the big round room right up here called Caucus, where Mr. Ramsay says we should lock ourselves away and have those kind of frank chats. I heartily agree.

I've been here going on 14 years now. The role of Caucus has always been central, right from division and before division, to helping us work our way through extraordinary circumstances in a forum many times with no staff but the 19 Members, or the 24 when we first started, a way to put those things on the table so that we don't come to this point in our history, whereas it's been noted we seem to be paralyzed. I think it is incumbent upon all of us -- and I agree with Mr. Beaulieu -- nobody should be happy about how this vote is going to turn out, nobody should look upon this as a victory or a loss. What it is, and I agree once again, that it's a wake-up call, that as we face these incredible economic challenges, whether what I think and what I have heard most Members say is a good budget and when you look at the flood of e-mails and all the communication and traffic that is going on in terms of people in the North, 10 of us, we elected you to come and fight for us, we did not elect you to come and fight among yourselves. This is the time and the test for us is to get past this moment.

We are only 16 months in and we have already reached the point of this type of motion. It tells us that our system needs to be looked at and I think we have to have that common commitment to do that. If we can't, then it bodes very, very poorly for us and all the people of the Northwest Territories.

The budget that is before this House has a tremendous amount of good things. I have heard all the concerns in the communities. We have a clean energy piece in there, we have alternate energy, cost of living issues. People are waiting. One of our biggest capital infrastructure budgets, and yet we are in this House, in the legislative bubble, as I call it, debating this issue. Clearly, it

needs to be debated because it is here and we cannot avoid it.

As we share some of the angst and stress of being in this Legislature, I would like to just share a bit of the stress of being on this side of the House.

We were barely elected when Minister Bob McLeod was told he was going to be taken out because of the unhappiness of the Members; but months. Our very first budget, the attempt was made -- it was very, very close -- to prevent the budget from even making it into the House. To bring down, in effect, this Cabinet before we even got to present a budget.

Last October, as I made a trip down the hall to the offices of the Premier and the Minister of Health, telling them that they're going to get taken out because the process was, decisions were being made at one end of the hall and it was also coming down the hall. Now, 16 months in, for the fourth time we have this motion. So we have reached the point where now the whole government goes. A very sweeping and draconian approach. I think if that is not a reflection or indication and a symptom that our consensus government needs our care and attention, then nothing is. I think we have come very close to the precipice, the tipping point, and that we should be agreeing that let's do as Mr. Ramsay suggested and figure out the way we get together.

There is a long tradition of history for the people of the Northwest Territories about the value of our system of government. In the face of tight economic times, we have come up with what I think and what I have heard is a very good budget. But first we have to fix our process. We have to be able to move forward and we can't stop the issue of the budget to do that. We have to be able to multi-task in this case.

So I want to commit, as well, that I will shoulder my responsibility and blame for what point, the point that we're at. I take very, very seriously all the comments. We have struggled for 14 years with the issue of process and communication and it is not yet one that we have come to grips with. In every Assembly it dogs us. So I would hope that we can collectively put our goodwill first to get past the issues that are grating on us all, and rise above that to provide what the people of the Northwest Territories are expecting, which is a functioning consensus government that is going to deliver to them the services that they've elected us to provide to them. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Premier, Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are at a time that the Northwest Territories needs leadership; leadership that is ready to make tough choices...

---Applause

...and represents all the people, that looks at the big picture.

Mr. Speaker, I know that much of what has been discussed was about my conduct, both personal and professional. I have been told, quite some time ago, that it would happen to me too. I remember sitting in a Minister's office many years ago when that was said to me. I left there and I thought, what are you talking about, that that would happen to me too? As I questioned him, he responded by saying, to survive in this business, you need to have a thick skin. That has been pointed out to me on a number of occasions, that my conduct is one where I respond and react to what's been said to me, how it's been said to me, what's been stated in the paper about our government and our plans. That, I must say, as I did an interview once over the last budget that I was Finance Minister in past, that there was something said to me that I must have a thick skin, and that my skin was getting a little raw, because I had started taking things a little personally. I had taken the shots. I don't think anybody can say that they can do it without getting personal to a certain level.

In fact, it was after that budget process that I sat in the chair after the House had finished and I looked out that window and I thought to myself that in my path as a Member of the Legislative Assembly I have challenged other leaders of government and other Premiers, and forcefully. I went after them on issues, on expenditures and even agreed to disagree on our politics. I thought about that, Mr. Speaker, and I thought that the next time I see the Premier of the 14th Assembly, I am going to approach him and apologize, because I have taken such a strong stance at times and how it must have been difficult for him to take it and not take it personally.

So I had that opportunity, actually, up at the Dene Nation Assembly in Fort McPherson and I had a chance to apologize to Premier Kakfwi, Premier of the day. It just goes to show, Mr. Speaker, that at a time when we are in this House and we are before the Members and we are before this House, that things can get rather worked up and heated. And they will again from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, I have always tried to be careful with my words on how I responded to what was said or how I would say things to others, because I believe that after awhile you must be careful what you say because we live what we say. I think that's a

reflection of where we are today in the sense of taking a strong stance in my past as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. I say Members of the Assembly should and have the right to address the issues that come before them and their constituents about what is needed in our communities and how we represent the people of the Northwest Territories.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have thought and listened intently to what Members have said. As I said earlier this day, that I am prepared to recommit. We are prepared to recommit ourselves to a process of making it work as a Legislative Assembly, the 16th Assembly.

When we sat down shortly after the last general election, we sat down and put a vision together. That vision spelled out where we wanted to go as a Legislative Assembly. Cabinet's task from that point was to take that vision, take the fiscal resources we had, the programs and services already in place, and try to adapt as much of it as we could so that it represented the vision and goals of the 16th Legislative Assembly. And not without some angst and some concern and frustration, were we able to come out with what we thought was a balanced approach, a balanced document. Number one of having to first recognize we must live within our means.

We sent some strong, tough messages out there. As I spoke about running for Premier, that I was not about status quo. We needed to see change, we needed to see change internally, that is how we do things as government, and we needed to change things in how we interacted with people of the Northwest Territories. So we started that change. Strategic Initiatives Committees, yes, some Members will think that information is dry and hard to go through, but that's critical information that we are making decisions on that source.

As well, we've instituted a process of engaging with regional leadership with aboriginal governments and we are putting in place an engagement with the federal government. We have engaged with them. We followed the old process, but we are following with a different approach.

Mr. Speaker, as Members have talked about, there are a number of issues of concern about responsibility as Members and how we take those. Some particular issues, whether it's income support or ATCO proposal that came forward or the Discovery Air issue or the supplementary health package. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that with consensus style government has done a lot of work, even in the 16th Legislative Assembly. We've had one budget pass through unanimously in this House. We've worked on the second one with Members that is before the House now. We've

worked on a lot of things. Yes, there's room for improvement. I don't think anybody here in this Assembly can say there is no room for improvement, there is room in how we do things, in how we coordinate it in getting information out. Part of that is we need commitment from all Members. When we request time for meetings, we need that time for committee members, even if it means cutting into some of their summertime. We need that commitment of time so we can present the work we've been working on and how we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, there's been, and I must say if I have to sit back, yes, I've reflected on my personal life and my choices as have been mentioned in the media, mentioned again here in a manner that is very challenging. I have always tried to keep my personal life very, very close to myself. In fact, there have only been a few Members that have been elected as part of the 13th Assembly that still remain here, four of us: myself, Minister Miltenberger, Mr. Krutko, Mrs. Groenewegen. We've survived the turmoil of many Assemblies and we are part of the 16th Assembly. This is our fourth term and we've seen much happen in those years. Mr. Speaker, it is the time that we have to look at. That time and those places, many things have happened. Some of them we looked at and talked to each other. Here are choices individuals have made in their lives. They need to live their lives, try to create some separation. I would say there are very few people as Members of this Assembly that would know much about my family besides what they find on the web site about what my situation is like. The simple fact is I tried to protect my family and maybe too much as to what might happen in this House.

I refused to do interviews and so on about that situation. Though much could be said to try to give accurate information about what happened. Simply, Mr. Speaker, I have to put on the record, not because I want to but because I believe I have to, because it's being raised again that, number one, those that cannot protect themselves in this House, so I find in my role, because of my involvement with those individuals, I have to say a few things.

One, the fact that no information has come from what Members have said, media, a breach of confidentiality of information, there has been none. I will state that now on the record in this House. In fact, if you want to talk about information flow between Members and what happens in committee and what happens when it comes to Ministers, we have to look at ourselves. This is a consensus government. We share information. We talk to each other. We share that information openly. The trouble becomes when you are not ready to release it publicly and we are talking about

proposals that may go out to the media before we have all the documentation. So that we need to work together is absolutely true.

Number two, Mr. Speaker, again, the decision when it became public, it was ourselves, myself and the person I am involved with, we went to the appropriate people and notified them of what was happening. Yes, Members are concerned about the timing, but we had in mind families first when you talk about families. Deal with families first. It is never good, Mr. Speaker, when a family, man or woman, has to sit their family down and tell them what was happening. That's the message I had to deliver. I took it very seriously and I took that approach. From that point on, I said nothing about what's happened, how it's happened and tried to refute what was being said.

I will not go on beyond this. That is a personal choice I made in my life and I live with that and, as my colleague said, I will be judged. I will be judged by the Creator, as will we all about our own conduct. I have thought much about how I would react to this and how it would come forward and to what level I would go to settle a score of all the things said about myself and my involvement. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, one thing I will still stick to is what my father said to me: be respectful, don't talk bad about others and try to do the right thing. I am not a perfect man, never said I was and never say we will be, but when it comes to doing the job, Mr. Speaker, as we heard from other Ministers here, we have taken that very seriously. The rules of conduct, the processes involved, how we present information followed all the steps every step of the way.

If I am tarnished a bit because of my personal decisions, then I wear that as well, and I have been as it is very public. But as for the way we worked, it's a challenging environment to do the work we need to get done. Did we do a 180 turnaround from the vision and goals? I don't believe so. We have to take the vision and goal and make it fit with what we're presented with, the resources we have and we are still going to be challenged. Even at those times I remark that financial ripples can lead to dangerous waves. As Minister Miltenberger pointed out, those dangerous waves are here. Now, could I have predicted that when we made that budget preparation and having to live within our means? No, but we said enough. Our expenditures were outweighing our revenues. We had to make some decisions. Yes, we need to do a program review as we go forward to make some of the more substantial changes to how we operate as government, but importantly, Mr. Speaker, when you first take office you are going to have to do some changes immediately because we could not sit and wait for another six months or another year to wait for some of the results of the report.

So we find ourselves in a situation and unfortunately, as Mr. Miltenberger pointed out, there's been a number of occasions where I have had a visit in my office and been told this event will occur to you in the next couple of days, that your leadership is questioned. I have had to live with that and tried to work with Members. I agree there's a different way of doing some of our business.

When it came up to this motion, we went into Caucus and I asked if there was a motion. That's the avenue we used to deal with business in some of those areas. I hope we can use that avenue and that tool to do some of our work.

I think the opportunity is before us. We definitely have to take the message seriously. We have to change the way we do business. I am prepared to make that change and as soon as we can in some areas that we can make the change, we will work at doing that.

I have heard many things today and they do weigh heavy on myself as a responsibility as Premier of the Northwest Territories. They always have. When we talk about programs and services, I have to talk about the people we represent; small communities, large communities, trying to save the jobs we have in the Territory, try to build new jobs in the Territory, try to come up with the right balance.

We won't always come up with information or a decision that will make everybody happy. But as leadership, all of us will have to make some choices, and choices that we know will make some people back home not happy, I think, because it's in the best interest of the people of the Northwest Territories who make those choice, for the long-term sustainability of our Territory we make those choices. That's the focus we've been putting on. That's my personal focus, as Premier of the Northwest Territories, where we go.

There are a lot of issues that we can talk about how we've done good things for the people in the North, how we will continue to do those good things in the work that we will produce as Members of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

But we will also be challenged with some decisions to come up. There is a realism there that we will have to park some of these initiatives; some because they will cost too much to implement in this day and age. Will we have to back off on some of our infrastructure? We may have to do that. But right now, as we are working, we think we can do the work that's required of us to make incremental steps to make the lives better for the people of the Northwest Territories.

I am hoping that as 19 Members we can get the job done. We need to pull it together and get it done. It is not just the seven Members; I realize that. I understand Members very well. I've been a Member of this Assembly for four terms. So it's going to take 19 of us to get it done. It's not buying the votes. I am absolutely against that policy, that way of doing business: the old boys' club. From the day I got elected to now when I stand here today, I've worked to represent the people equally, even if that meant making choices that would affect my own community, my constituency in the greater good. I've done that. I've gone back home to tell them the bad news on a number of occasions.

I hope we don't have to do as much, but I'm prepared to do that again if we have to make more of those types of choices that affect even my constituency. Because at the end of the day, trying to put a package together that builds the North, strengthens the North so when we get through this economic turmoil we come out stronger and better and a better player in Canada, where our children have an opportunity for a future that is better than ours today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. I will now go to the mover of the motion for some closing remarks. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank everybody who participated in this debate on this motion today, both Members on this side of the House, and thank you to the Cabinet side for also contributing to this by sharing their thoughts on this motion that's come before us today.

I want to just wrap up. I don't want to take an extraordinary amount of time. The Members have very loudly put the concerns that have brought about this motion, this drastic motion, being brought to the floor of the House; as some have indicated, "unprecedented" in this history of this government.

Mr. Miltenberger refers to this as a draconian motion. But I just want to remind Mr. Miltenberger that in fact before the House recessed last time, some Members had said oh, we should have had a leadership review at the two-year mark, that would have been somehow better. But I do want to remind Mr. Miltenberger that we on this side of the House brought forward a motion to have a mid-term review within the next six months, but that motion was nayed by Mr. Miltenberger and so that did not proceed. So let's remember that, now that you're asking, you nayed on the last day of session when we tried to bring forward something like that.

So here we are with this motion before us today. Some Cabinet Ministers have chosen to refer to the concerns that are being raised here as our personal issues. These are not our personal issues. These are our constituency issues. We put a list of them right in front of the investment in the Deh Cho Bridge, in supplementary health care, to the board reform. I mean, I went through them all yesterday. I'm not going to through them all again. But we have hit a roadblock in terms of our having our voice and our representation of our constituents heard and respected by this government. These are not personal issues. These are the issues of the constituents who sent us here to represent their interests. And this today -- I'm sorry -- is the absolute frustration felt on this side of the House by a lot of Members. This is not just one or two Members; you've heard it. And if you didn't hear it, then you still don't get it, which we've been wondering about for quite some time, whether or not, even when we do communicate and we do try to share, whether Members who are elected get it.

Now, someone used the words whether taking this action and if we were successful in passing a motion, and I think Members have spoken enough that anybody can do the math now and see that this motion probably isn't going to pass. But if they think that this is about humbling Members on the other side of the House...This isn't about us. This is about the people we represent. And nobody sitting on that side of the House has a God-given right to be there. You're just there because we elected you to take that responsibility. This isn't about somebody being higher or better or, you know, somebody being humbled. We should all be the humble servants of the people that we're here to represent, and some have been honoured with the confidence of this House to take on special areas of duties and responsibilities on our behalf. And only see it as that, because when we begin to understand it as something different, that's when we run into difficulty. We are 19 Members. This is consensus government. We are all equals here.

So for myself, Mr. Speaker, this comes down to an issue of leadership. I've been listening to everything. I'm going what is the common denominator here for every one of these issues? Whether we're talking about an individual Cabinet Minister or an individual departmental initiative that comes forward that affects our people, it comes down to the question of leadership.

I don't know how this Cabinet can honestly function in this environment. There is a dark cloud hanging over this Assembly. I appreciate Mr. Roland, the Premier, sharing his thoughts with us today. It would be easy for us to say well, let's just go home and hope it gets better. But we've been saying that for months. We've sat down, we've had the heart-to-heart talks. We have gone to the office. I'm

sorry, but there is an issue that cannot be swept under the carpet here, that goes to the leadership and team building over here. I'm sorry, but for me that leadership is not there.

I had high hopes. I thought Premier Roland was an excellent Finance Minister in the last government. As second in command -- I don't know if the Finance Minister is second in command -- but as a second to Premier Handley, I thought he did an excellent job. But when it came time for him to take the reins, whether it was affected by his personal or family issues or whatever affected it, he was not able to build that team he needed to build over there, and therefore we've been coming up against Ministers and initiatives that seem to be happening in random and not with any sense of order and any sense of proper communication and vetting through this side of the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've been here a long time too, like Premier Roland. Myself, obviously I support the motion. I moved the motion. I appreciate the honest words brought forward by Members on this side of the House. This is not about personalities. I don't have any magic powers. When I go home to Hay River, I meet with my constituents. I barely have time. We don't get together. We get together here and I chair the Priorities and Planning committee. I try to bring out the strengths and the thoughts, and we respect each other and try to work together on this side of the House.

Now I see the leadership lacking on that side of the House, and I'm sorry, I think -- and I said this, this morning in my Member's statement and I'll say it again -- that the solution to this problem is for the Premier to resign and let somebody else take the job. I'm not going to mince my words here. I'm not known as a person who minces my words.

I listened to every Cabinet Minister over there speak today. I listened to Mr. McLeod, who said that if he failed to communicate, he took responsibility for that. I'm talking about Mr. Bob McLeod. He took responsibility for any parts he had in failing to communicate. In fact, I want to say that Mr. McLeod is one of the Ministers who when you send him an e-mail or ask him a question or send a constituent on to him, he personally answers the communication. I want to tell him today, on the record, how much I appreciate that. I don't know if it's something that deputy ministers do or if that's from his background, but he is a communicator. I mean, sometimes I do give him a hard time about not being a bit more animated in some of his dialogue with us. You know, he even takes that very well, and I like that. I like that about him.

Mr. Michael McLeod...This is the third term that I've been in the government with Mr. Michael McLeod. I

think Mr. Michael McLeod would make an excellent Premier. I think he could bring...If you want to talk about going forward in this House, what are we going to do after this motion today? This is my chance to give my personal opinion. I don't see very many options of somebody here who has not gone or taken sides and said things that you can't take back. We need somebody that can unify us and bring us together. I see Mr. Michael McLeod as somebody that could do that, that could bring this side of the House and that side of the House and let's get on with business.

Mr. Michael Miltenberger...Minister Michael Miltenberger is great on the energy stuff and he's very intelligent, he's very hard working. He lacks people skills. He annoys people.

---Laughter

He annoys people greatly, including me some days, but I cannot take away from him that he is an extremely intelligent person and a very hardworking person. I think he is very key to this Cabinet and I do applaud him on the budget he brought forward. It is a very good piece of work and we thank him for that.

Ms. Lee: passionate, terrible portfolio, I agree with her. What she said today, I agree with. The supplementary health benefits for seniors was a terrible mistake; I'm sorry. But we'll continue to fight about that later. But for the most part in terms of being...From my experience, and I know that not all Members share my thoughts, but we do need to focus more on the services to the people in the small communities.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: To my colleague Mr. Jackson Lafferty, a very up and coming finding his stride in a difficult environment, but deserves a lot of our respect too. I wished he was a little more hands on and left a little bit less to his staff in terms of his communications. But somebody with absolute promise in the long term. I thought I would never be back in this government again, but I would say keep your eye on Jackson Lafferty from the Tlicho, because he is somebody that will be here for a long time I hope and will do good things for the people of the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

To the Premier, I just very respectfully ask that he would do good by the people of the Northwest Territories and hold to a standard that has been the normal practice of this House, and that is to order your affairs in such a way as to not erode public confidence. I'm sorry; but no matter what he's done

in the past or how good he's done, the turn of events of the last six months has caused people in the North -- we've heard it all over the place -- to lose confidence in him as Premier. If he could do the honourable thing and resign, he may find himself back on that side of the House again, in a different capacity.

But I do support the motion. I support it and understand fully the frustration of those.

I forgot to mention Mr. Robert C. McLeod.

---Laughter

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. A very pragmatic leader as well. Somebody who calls it like he sees it and, again, getting acquainted with the role and the job that he has been elected to do. I'm sure that he'll find his stride. It's a learning curve; it's a steep learning curve. I'm sure he'll find his stride, he will bring great integrity and great service to the people of the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

So, Mr. Speaker, the motion is on the floor. I've taken enough time. The Members have shared their view. Please do not take this as a personal issue. This is about getting the business of the House done. I would ask that there be a recorded vote on this. I thank my colleagues for sharing. Thank you.

---Applause

RECORDED VOTE

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member is asking for a recorded vote, Mr. Clerk. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mrs. Groenewegen, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed to the motion, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Beaulieu; Mr. Hawkins; Mr. Jacobson; Mr. Lafferty; Ms. Lee; Mr. Miltenberger; Mr. Roland; Mr. McLeod, Deh Cho; Mr. McLeod, Inuvik Twin Lakes; Mr. McLeod, Yellowknife South.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the record vote: eight for, 10 opposed, zero abstaining. The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

Colleagues, I want to take just a moment to comment on the motion that has just been defeated and how it impacts the work ahead of us.

From my vantage point in the Speaker's chair, I have witnessed many times and occasions when Members from both sides of the House have displayed a lack of respect for each other and the roles that all Members play in carrying out their duties.

I've heard comments during the motion that tries to bring maybe some humour to this. None should walk away from this vote with a feeling of victory or defeat. Each of us, all 19, must walk away from this with a lesson learned.

There are many critics of our system of government. There are many that might suggest that we have not matured enough as a political institution to govern ourselves responsibly. There are many who suggest that party politics is the answer to our problems.

As Professor Graham White of the University of Toronto has written: "It is the possibility and the frequency of cooperation, compromise and accommodation that defines consensus government."

It is up to us to prove that we can make this system of government work. We can't do that through backroom deals, token communications and personal agendas. We can only do it through open and honest communication, and an understanding of and respect for our respective roles and accountabilities.

The time has come for us to focus our energies on the many challenges facing the people of the Northwest Territories.

I wish each of you luck and perspective as we continue the important work that lies before us in the weeks, the months and the years to come.

Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Clerk, item 24, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Monday, February 9, 2009, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements

7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 3 of 7)
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 7-16(3), Ministerial Benefits Policy
 - Tabled Document 11-16(3), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2009-2010
 - Committee Report 2-16(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Matters Referred to the Committee
 - Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Historical Resources Act
 - Bill 3, International Interest in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act
 - Bill 4, Public Library Act
 - Bill 5, Professional Corporations Act
 - Bill 6, Species at Risk Act
 - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, February 9th at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:29 p.m.

