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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Thursday, February 11, 2010

Members Present

Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Sandy Lee, Hon. Michael McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland

The House met at 1:34 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the Chamber. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Robert McLeod.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 67-16(4):
ACTIVE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to provide Members with details on the Active After School Program which is part of the GNWT's Healthy Choices Framework.

As you know, the Healthy Choices Framework is an interdepartmental initiative that includes the departments of Health and Social Services; Education, Culture and Employment; Justice; Transportation; and MACA.

The government is raising awareness of the direct link between good health and positive lifestyle choices, through the collaboration and the integration of healthy choices programs across these departments.

Through the Healthy Choices Framework and the Active After School Program, the GNWT is working to build our future by promoting healthy and active living among children and youth. Improving the physical and mental well-being of our youth will create healthy, educated Northerners as envisioned in the 16th Assembly's vision of Northerners Working Together.

Mr. Speaker, in 2009, Active Healthy Kids Canada reported that 87 percent of children and youth in Canada, including the Northwest Territories, do not meet Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommendations for daily physical activity and that 90 percent of Canadian children and youth are spending far too much time in front of television, computer and video screens. It has also been found that the most inactive time for youth is the "after school period," which is 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

The benefits of physical activity are widely known. Individuals who are physically active are less likely to be affected by chronic heart diseases, osteoporosis, diabetes and some types of cancer. It is also clear that physical activity programs can positively affect the ability of a student to learn and keep young people occupied during times when they might find other, less desirable activities to be involved in.

Mr. Speaker, the Active After School Program is a collaborative effort between MACA and the NWT Sport and Recreation Council that will provide funding support for 18 after school physical activity pilot programs across the Northwest Territories this winter. The projects will stretch across the Territory and incorporate a broad range of activities, including cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, Nordic walking, hip hop, floor hockey and badminton.

In some cases, funding is being provided for much needed equipment such as soccer balls and basketballs, or to set up fitness centres with cardio and weight machines, or to provide students with a healthy snack to fuel their play.

Although the programs vary in the types of activities they offer, they all have two key things in common. First, they are trying new ways to encourage more youth to be physically active, particularly those who may not be attracted to our more traditional sport and recreation activities. Second, they are providing physical activity programming for youth in that key after school time period when they might just as easily sit down in front of a TV, video game, or computer screen before their parents are home at the end of their day.

Through the leadership of the NWT Sport and Recreation Council, each of these pilot initiatives will be evaluated to determine their effectiveness and to see if they made a real difference in encouraging our youth to be physically active.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to providing Members with an update on these important projects later in the year.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 68-16(4):
MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members that the Honourable Bob McLeod will be absent from the House today to attend promotional events related to the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HIGH ENERGY COSTS IN THE NWT

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, as we heard from several Members in this House regarding electrical rate reviews, I think it's important to realize that the high cost associated with anyone's billing, regardless if you are a homeowner, a resident, a business operator or even a community government, is the high cost of energy in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this government is going in the right direction with regard to electrical rate review and we have to find a way of bringing down those high electrical bills, especially in our smaller communities where we are paying in excess of \$2.38 per kilowatt in Colville Lake and in Nahanni Butte I believe it's \$1.60 per kilowatt.

Mr. Speaker, we also have to realize that we have some 30 rate rider systems in place. We have 38 applications that we have to go through every time there's a rate review. Mr. Speaker, that is a major cost to not only the Government of the Northwest Territories but to the residents of the Northwest Territories who have to pay the cost of those reviews. I believe we have to find a way to reduce those high cost expenditures in small communities. I believe that we should seriously review this in this House, hopefully sooner than later, and find a solution to the high energy costs in our communities and find a system that's fair to all communities in the Northwest Territories, to ensure that we are able to show that we really care as a government for the communities that are not on hydro and are dependent on diesel transported into their communities and stored in fuel tanks and used to heat their homes.

We don't have apartments in our communities. We have, in most cases, single dwellings where people have to operate a housing unit, which costs a lot more than in large urban centres where there are apartment blocks with 70 or 80 residents who share the cost to operate the facility. I think it's appropriate we, as the people responsible for the Legislature, seriously realize the implication that power has, the consumption of power, and the cost to sustain the residences in the small communities.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. KRUTKO: We do have to realize the high cost of energy in our communities and the effect it has on our residents, especially in our small communities. It is right now unaffordable; we have to make it affordable.

As a government we have an obligation to all people in the Northwest Territories to bring down the high cost of energy and also share in that pain throughout the whole Northwest Territories. I look forward to the rate review before this House sooner rather than later. I will be asking questions to the Minister responsible for the review.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HIGH COST OF FOOD IN NUNAKPUT

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost one year ago today several Members' statements were dedicated to the high cost of foods in small, remote communities across the Territory. In Nunakput the highest cost of food then was the highest cost of food in the NWT. Earlier this week my colleagues were very passionately describing the seriousness of the situation in their communities.

This government calculates northern living allowance based on the location and the cost of living compared to the central communities such as Yellowknife. In addition, they fund various offices and programs based also on comparison. This results in the government paying people more in the Nunakput communities where they cannot afford the standard of living they deserve.

It's impossible for an average family in Nunakput and the Beaufort-Delta, based on the average income, to practice healthy eating for themselves and their family. I cannot understand why the GNWT can explain two jobs in Yellowknife and one small, remote community doing the exact same thing, requiring the same level of education, and the same income with a difference of only a few thousand dollars.

My region in Nunakput is by far the most expensive region when it comes to eating healthy. The situation being equal, dollar for dollar more people almost have to live in poverty conditions than other regions in the Northwest Territories. This has got to change.

During my travels through Nunakput I see people in the airports putting food they purchased in their bags at the airport in Inuvik, paying \$5.77 per kilogram. This means a carton of milk that was purchased in Inuvik for \$4.00 becomes well over \$10.00 and is still a huge savings. That is wrong.

I think it's a great shame that many of our elders in our Nunakput communities choose between having to buy food or pay various bills because they get so little. I see a growing trend of empty cupboards and refrigerators for elders with the luxuries that they have. There are no food banks in most of the Nunakput communities.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement

---Unanimous consent granted.

MR. JACOBSON: What I found unfair in this government is not considering is that the Nunakput cost of living is 81 percent higher than it is in Yellowknife. Having our residents access healthy food must be the highest priority for this government and anything less is unacceptable.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN YELLOWKNIFE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister for the Housing Corporation spoke yesterday on the release of the 2009 Housing Needs Survey results. I'd like to draw attention to the realities of buying or renting shelter in Yellowknife, and how the City of Yellowknife is working to make housing more affordable.

Our government doesn't collect housing market data, so we have to rely on CMHC's 2009 housing report for Yellowknife. If you want to buy an average house in Yellowknife it will cost you \$314,000. Only 12 percent of homes go for less than \$200,000 and one in five sells for more than \$400,000.

The news isn't much better for renters. An average two-bedroom apartment in Yellowknife cost \$1,450 a month last year, with vacancy rates of less than 1 percent. The result: nearly 20 percent of moderate income families -- the households making \$40,000 to \$100,000 per year -- are overspending on shelter, according to the 30 percent rule for housing costs as a proportion of income. That's 405 households.

People with household incomes of \$100,000 a year in Yellowknife can't afford to buy a home. Two people making minimum wage would spend more than half their combined income for an average apartment, if they can find one.

The City of Yellowknife is taking ambitious steps to ease this problem through development of an Affordable Housing Strategy. Initial work on the strategy has brought forward the growing concept of non-market housing, a market segment between the public and private markets. The development of non-market housing is an innovative new approach that could break the price bottleneck holding people

back from their first homes. Improving the affordability of first homes will take pressure off the tight and expensive rental market.

The city needs all the support this government can provide. There has already been tremendous support from CMHC and the NWT Housing Corporation to develop the strategy, but we have to follow right on through to implementation. The Housing Corp could continue to help by being a part of the affordable housing committee the city will be creating soon. What we'll need most of all is the Housing Corporation's commitment to working with CMHC and the city for the development of non-market housing units.

The 2009 Housing Needs Survey shows we have to use every tool available to improve availability and quality of shelter. When one of our partner governments acts boldly to bring new solutions forward, this government must be there with action and commitment. Mr. Speaker, let's show up at the table. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM AND POLICIES

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to speak today about a situation that has arisen with a constituent in his efforts to get schooling to fulfill his apprenticeship program. He is currently attending NAIT to finish his second year electrical apprenticeship. He has set himself up with accommodation, transportation and other logistics in Edmonton to conduct his schooling. An opportunity has come for him to start his third year schooling almost immediately upon the completion of his second year. He is comfortable being there and familiar with his surroundings, which is conducive to him ultimately being successful at his schooling, training and in life. It would make perfect sense, Mr. Speaker, considering he has the required hours to let him stay at NAIT and conclude his third year.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, common sense and the ability to be flexible is often thrown out the window by idiotic government policy. The government's answer to this young man is to finish your time at NAIT, move yourself back to Yellowknife, we have a seat for you waiting in Fort Smith in April. This would impact him in a negative way, Mr. Speaker. He would obviously earn less at work in the time that it takes for him to get back here and before he goes to Fort Smith. It will cost him more to get back to Yellowknife and then to Fort Smith. And, in fact, by the time the course starts in Fort Smith he would have already been done his third year schooling and making more money working here back home in Yellowknife.

I find the response to his request to stay at NAIT is totally and completely unacceptable. A stated goal of this government is to train and develop a northern workforce. Why then would we put roadblocks in the way of anyone pursuing an apprenticeship? Is there not any flexibility in the policy and why, Mr. Speaker, are people who pursue the trades and apprenticeships treated differently than those going to college or university? Why do we force them to go to Fort Smith? We should encourage them to go to Fort Smith, not force them to go. We don't force college students who are attending Mount Royal College or Red Deer College in the South to stay in the Northwest Territories because the program is offered here. Why are apprentices any different, Mr. Speaker?

The government should never, ever be an impediment to someone's pursuit of training and a career. Why are we not fully supporting this young man and others like him who find themselves in similar circumstances, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to talk about something today but I am going to wait until tomorrow to speak of it. Mr. Speaker, that is the Deh Cho Bridge. I cannot give the detail because the Minister of Transportation has kindly shared information with us, as Members, behind closed doors and had asked us to hold our fire until he has a chance to get out ahead of us with the press release.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to hold my fire, but I am going to give a heads up to this government that tomorrow, after that press release has been issued, I am going to stand up here in this House in a reply to the opening address and I am going to lay bare all the facts of this project which at this juncture, and from the most current information we have, potentially has the ability to impact this government more than anything else that has ever come across my desk in the 15 years that I have been an MLA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HERITAGE WEEK

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned by the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on Tuesday, this is Heritage Week and yesterday was Heritage Day. Here in the city of Yellowknife, we are lucky to have an active and effective Heritage Committee. This group of volunteers and city councillors work to preserve this

young city's heritage, to publicize the history of the city and to educate Yellowknifers about the city's heritage. Over the years, the Yellowknife Heritage Committee has managed to save some of Yellowknife's original buildings from demolition. They have put in place a successful plaque program to recognize and publicize the sites of heritage buildings which did suffer demolition and are no longer around to be seen. They have documented hundreds of original buildings and sites built when the city was a small mining town. Last but not least, the committee organizes a week of activity to celebrate Heritage Week and recognizes a resident who has made significant contributions to this city's heritage through an annual heritage award.

Heritage has a sense of origin, Mr. Speaker. It is something that is passed down from preceding generations. It is our tradition and knowledge and it is the legacy we leave behind for the next generation. There is an old cliché which says, "you can't know where you are going until you know where you have been." To know and understand our history, our heritage and our culture, allows us to understand and respect ourselves, to understand and respect our family traditions, to understand and respect our community's reason for being, and knowing and understanding our community connects us to where we live and gives us a sense of place. Every one of us as residents of the NWT must play a part in preserving our heritage, our own personal heritage through knowledge of our ancestors, our community heritage through maintaining buildings, special sites and trails and our territorial heritage through documentation of people and places.

I congratulate the City of Yellowknife for recognizing the importance of heritage. I also specifically congratulate Ms. Yvonne Quick, who is the city's Heritage Award winner for 2010. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MRSA "SUPERBUG" IN TLICHO REGION

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak today on the MRSA or the drug resistant bacteria or the super bug cases that have been announced in a press release in the Tlicho region. I am concerned about how Health and Social Services will manage this not only in this region but all of them, Mr. Speaker.

I have had constituents impacted in the past and typically Health and Social Services has indicated that occurrences are no more than other jurisdictions. Now we find that we have a region that is severely impacted. Overcrowding and poverty is listed as a cause of contributing to this. In my riding, Mr. Speaker, I have the very same

conditions and would like to ask what is being done to have a publicity campaign or monitor my communities to observe any increases of this bacteria.

I am glad that NWT health authorities have had a press release with this information. This super bug has gone up by 50 percent in each of the past three years, with 99 in last year alone and 18 cases in the NWT since January 1, 2010. I would like to see a public campaign that is active in all our regions. Health and public safety is a thrust of our government, and we must continue to do our best to advise all residents of such a major increase in health risks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ISSUES WITH MEDICAL TRAVEL PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to use my Member's statement today to talk about a number of medical support programs that have been failing our people. I've taken these to the Minister's office lately and I'm noticing a serious trend: our medical travel process is not supporting the people, in my view, the way it should be.

First off, medical travel, in my view, seems to have this overriding control over what doctors would request as required treatment. Now, of course, the Minister will shamefully defend the denials by saying the process does not ensure these identified things, even though doctors say they are necessary treatment. I say shame on that Minister for being insensitive.

But what am I really talking about? I'm talking about people who require specialized back pain clinic that you can only get in Edmonton, specialized weight clinics that doctors have recommended that they can only get in Edmonton, and specialized diabetes treatment that they need in Edmonton. They cannot receive these treatments here. So what does medical travel do? Stop them. I say that's a real shame. There's been no transition of people who have already been going to these clinics for these specialized services and one day they go to process their medical travel form and are told sorry; sorry about your luck.

I think this Minister needs to intervene immediately and say anybody who has been receiving these services can have a transition plan until they are established here in the North. If it makes sense to have these here in the North, then it makes sense that if we can establish them here why we would send them south. But we don't have these programs up and running here, so what do we do? We make these people, who have doctors' orders to go get treatment, sit and wait until it comes.

I think the Department of Health and Social Services tends to forget about the psychological cost that is now put on these particular people who require these services. They pull the carpet out from underneath them and they're sitting there kind of lost, wondering if they will ever get help and if their government cares about them. I start to wonder if that's actually true.

I think the Minister can show true compassion to this problem today by saying that she'll look into this problem and say anybody who was receiving these types of treatments who were previously being sent out for specialized services should be able to continue until we establish good programs here in the North to do this. But to tell a patient that you have to sit and wait until we develop a program and no treatment for you until then is the wrong approach.

Let's grandfather these people. Let's stop this shameful approach. I think we can do something and we can do something now.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NEED FOR COMMUNITY DAYCARE SITES

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I talked about the importance of a well-run daycare and the great job that the dedicated staff and parents are doing in daycares in Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e. Today I'd like to talk about the infrastructure needs for these daycares.

Last spring the community of Lutselk'e came up with a community education plan and called for a coordinated effort for the school and community to work towards an integrated education system and identified a suitable location in the community. The plan calls for an education-type complex to have a new Aurora College, a daycare, and a preschool connected to the existing school. Today there is no space for the daycare in the school, and grades 10, 11 and possibly 12 are held in the old library.

In Fort Resolution the daycare operates out of an old building. To meet code requirements the building has to be renovated and has been renovated numerous times over the years. The building is still cold and is plagued with furnace and plumbing problems, and there are no heating vents on one side of the building and no ventilation fans anywhere in the building.

As you can see, both communities in Tu Nedhe are desperate for the need of immediate support to meet its daycare infrastructure needs. I speak of this today because the GNWT has a responsibility to ensure communities have adequate early childhood development programs. As a matter of fact, in the department's 2006-2007 Early Childhood Development Report, the vision states

the Northwest Territories will be a place where children are born healthy and raised in safe and respectful families and communities.

If this is a vision of the early childhood development, then why does Lutselk'e have no facility to house a daycare program? Why do children in Fort Resolution have to go to a daycare that is cold and always has mechanical problems? Something needs to be done as soon as possible.

Under the NWT Child Care Act standards and regulations the GNWT has the responsibility to ensure compliance with the act and regulations to ensure daycare facilities provide a safe, nurturing environment and this includes compliance with fire and safety codes in these daycares. Again, I will ask for the daycare staff in Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution, something is not working there.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 5-16(4): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2008-2009 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2008-2009 Human Rights Commission Annual Report and commends it to the House.

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations reviewed the 2008-2009 Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission. The committee would like to thank Ms. Mary Pat Short, chair of the Human Rights Commission, and Ms. Therese Boullard, director of human rights, for their appearance before the committee.

Now I will pass the floor over to my colleague Mr. Hawkins to continue with the report.

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

2008-2009 Annual Report

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The 2008-2009 annual report was the fifth report of the Human Rights Commission. The committee recognizes the effort and accomplishments of the commission.

The commission used a variety of methods to provide information on human rights to communities. An essay contest was held for students in grades 7 to 12. Students were asked to describe a role model who exemplifies the human rights principles of inclusivity, diversity, peace, and

respect. Awards were given to both essay winners and role models. As well, 10 presentations and workshops were held in five communities. Two were offered at the NWT Teachers' Association/Education, Culture and Employment conference. The conference had 925 educators in attendance.

The committee is pleased with the commission's plans for the next year, which include offering workshops on workforce human rights issues and continuing outreach to schools. However, there appears to be very limited contact with residents who live in remote communities. The committee encourages the commission to use its excess revenue from 2008-2009 to send commission and/or staff members to more regional events and more communities.

The commission staff responded to 259 inquiries, of which 33 were considered complaints. After reviewing the investigation, four complaints were referred to hearing by the adjudication panel. In the future the committee requests the commission provide detail on the region of origin of inquiries and the location of the hearings.

The rate of honorarium for commission members was reduced as of April 1st, 2009. The Board of Management adjusted the honorarium rates to bring them in line with government policy. The Human Rights Commission chairperson noted that the reduction has led to less willingness on the part of some members to attend meetings. In some cases if members must take time off work they lose money, as the honorarium does not cover their salary. The Standing Committee on Government Operations recognizes the need for participation of commission members on ongoing leadership within the commission activities.

I'd like to now pass back the report to my colleague and chair of the committee, Mr. Menicoche.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank Mr. Hawkins.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories include the Human Rights Commission in its Human Resources Manual, section 8(10), civic leave, thus making board members who are GNWT employees eligible for civic leave with pay to attend meetings.

Conclusion

The committee commends the commission work and achievements to date. We look forward to seeing more outreach to communities and look

forward to monitoring the continued advancement of human rights in the Northwest Territories.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days.

That concludes the report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations on the review of the 2008-2009 Human Rights Commission Annual Report.

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 15-16(4) AND MOVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, CARRIED

Therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Committee Report 15-16(4) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Committee Report 15-16(4) will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I am very pleased to welcome the Leishman family from Kakisa here. We had a good meeting today and they are down to visit and support one of their family members that's in the hospital here at Stanton. I want to start off by recognizing Chris Leishman. Chris is down, along with his wife, Kathy, and Savannah and Christian. They drove up from B.C. Mr. Speaker, we also have Ian Leishman and his son Cameron. Ian is a captain on one of our ferries, the Merv Hardie. I'd like to welcome him and also their mother, Margaret Leishman. I'd like to say hello and welcome to them. Thank you.

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

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Weledeh constituent Dana Britton. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to welcome the Leishman family, particularly Chris, who I haven't seen for a number of years, and Ian. Welcome to the House. It always brings back memories of my childhood when I run into those guys. Nice seeing you guys.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. Similar to Mr. Ramsay, I'd like to recognize the Leishman family as well. I remember Chris quite well from my Akaitcho Hall days, and I certainly remember Ian quite well when we used to play hockey together. Of course, I played net and stopped all his shots on goal but... In all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome the whole family here today. Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome my constituency assistant, Leah Ipana, to the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the gallery. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings.

Item 7, acknowledgements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 9-16(4): MS. YVONNE QUICK – 2010 HERITAGE AWARD RECIPIENT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to recognize and congratulate a constituent of Frame Lake, Ms. Yvonne Quick, the 2010 recipient of the Yellowknife Heritage Award. Ms. Quick has been a tireless heritage volunteer for many years. She's worked on 11 committees at least during her time in Yellowknife and she's currently the coordinator for Arctic Ambassadors, the people who greet Yellowknife's arriving visitors at the airport and elsewhere. The award will be presented to Ms. Quick at a ceremony this evening. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 8, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 303-16(4): MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today I talked about the insensitive Medical Travel Policy that is not responding to needs suggested by doctors for serious and necessary treatment. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health and Social Services is: will she investigate these denials for medical travel and medical support and see if we can grandfather these into the system until we have true, fair and honest treatment available here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is -- and I think it's something that everyone agrees in the Territories -- that we have one of the most, if not the most, generous benefits program under our medical travel, as well as extended health benefits. It is really important that we maintain the integrity of the program and that we make sure that everybody follows the rules. So anybody who is not approved under medical travel or extended health benefits is because they do not meet the program guidelines. That's what we expect the staff to do with respect to this policy and we will continue to make sure that that is the case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I'm really glad the Minister brought up the fact of not approved. Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about people who were approved and sent down for medical treatment and were getting consistent medical treatment. Then one day someone decided maybe this doesn't quite jibe with the policy so let's completely cut them off and not offer them an alternative treatment here in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, that's specifically who I'm talking about and exactly the issue. So would the Minister be willing to reconsider and commit to this House that she'll investigate these files and perhaps grandfather them until there's an alternative, real solution here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, this situation that the Member describes has to do with weight loss reduction clinics as well as pain clinics. As I've already said in the House before, those are not benefits that are eligible under the Canada Health Act. Weight loss reduction or weight loss procedures are not covered anywhere in Canada. It is not an approved medical procedure. Neither is pain clinic in private clinics.

I want to say that we do approve those as an exception where a doctor feels that that is appropriate, especially in pain management. What we require from our patients is that they go back to the physician to make sure that the doctor is paying attention to the treatment that this patient is receiving. So nobody's being denied as long as they follow the process with regard to pain management. With regard to weight reduction, that is not a covered program under any health care system. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister quite often underrates her authority as Minister and I think she could be in charge on this particular problem. We are talking about medical travel that was approved. Regardless of how it got into the system, the fact is people start to depend on these both emotionally, physically, psychologically. These

become major setbacks when all of a sudden one day you're told your illness is no longer important for us to care about because it's not on our list.

Mr. Speaker, in short, these are medically supported by doctors and even the Minister says exceptions can happen. So would the Minister be willing to go back and tell this House that she'll re-examine these files and perhaps we can find some way to solve this problem to help these people? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I think the Member is mixing up the facts here, because the situations that he's brought to my attention are cases where our residents got approval for exception pain clinic appointments in Edmonton or wherever two or three years ago and then that process continued on under medical travel, which is against the policy, and we need to make sure that everyone follows the Medical Travel Policy. When they get an approval for pain clinic or something under exception, they are required to go back to the physician to make sure that the doctor follows up. So where they're having no doctor intervention for two or three years or a long period of time, we need to make sure the doctor supervises the treatment that these patients are receiving and that's totally within the rules. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Lee. Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister is now confusing the problem. She said they were approved and now we're not approving them. So, Mr. Speaker, maybe if we could go back, and if the Minister is willing to commit to go back and see if we could re-evaluate these files through her office, perhaps we could solve this problem and show a little humanity on this particular issue and see if we can send these people out for these particular cases. And may I remind the Minister: pain is not a very comfortable thing to live with every day of your life. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: As I stated earlier, we do have a very good medical care system, extended health benefits systems, Medical Travel Policy, medical escort. We invest lots of money to make sure that our residents who need care are receiving that care. I think we have the right to ask that doctors are involved in these treatment processes. When we discover that a doctor has not been reviewing the file or the patients have not been going to the doctors to make sure that they are being supervised, we need to ask that, and that's what we asked to do. That's how the policy will be implemented. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 304-16(4):

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bear questions today for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. It gets back to my Member's statement where I was talking about a young apprentice doing his electrical apprenticeship. He is currently at NAIT wrapping up a second year studies there at NAIT. There is a seat that is opened right now that he could go into to begin his third year. He has enough hours. I find it completely and utterly unbelievable that the government would tell this young man to pack his things, come back to Yellowknife, earn less money and then go to Fort Smith in April. That is the best that we can offer this young man. I find that is completely ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister how it is that this could come to pass that this young man would not be allowed to pursue his studies at NAIT, given the fact that he has a seat there and could start immediately. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We are sponsoring Mr. Ramsay's constituent he is referring to on a second year level training. We are talking about the third year that that particular program is also offered at the college campus in Fort Smith. Exact same programming compared to NAIT's program. We have to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, we have to support our own campuses as well here in the Northwest Territories. If we send any individuals out, we pay approximately \$5,800 to NAIT for one student. We pay \$650 to send them to Fort Smith. That is a substantial savings. That money should be going to our campuses throughout the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the young man is already in Edmonton. He is set up there. He has accommodations. He has transportation. He is comfortable in his surroundings there, which would be conducive to him succeeding at school and getting back here. If he has to come back here, he is going to be here for a few months earning second-year wage, not third-year wage and then he would have to go to Fort Smith. Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister if it is okay to do this to young apprentices or if people getting their apprenticeship to force them to go to Fort Smith. How come we don't force college students where we have programming in the Northwest Territories to stay in the Northwest Territories? Why do we allow anybody else to be free to go to whichever college they choose, Mr.

Speaker? Why are apprentices any different? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, again, we do provide these apprenticeship programs in the campuses that we have here in the Northwest Territories. We do support them 100 percent as much as we can. This particular student has a great opportunity to take the program in April. The Member is referring to March. There is one in April that is close to home, close to the family that can certainly take on the opportunity. Those students are taking on other courses. There are other courses down south as well that they can take on, but the fee structure is different in the Apprenticeship Program that we have in place. Mahsi.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, again, I think we should be encouraging people to attend our post-secondary institutes here in the Northwest Territories. However, we should not be forcing people to attend post-secondary studies or apprenticeship programs here in the Northwest Territories. The program the Minister talks of in Fort Smith starts on April 7th. As I mentioned in my Member's statement, this young man would already be concluded his third year studies at NAIT, back here working in Yellowknife as a third-year apprentice earning more money. Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister should at least take a look at this situation and I am not sure where the flexibility might be, but somebody should do something about this. This should not be allowed to happen, Mr. Speaker. Somebody should intervene on this young man's behalf. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, We can't say that we force students to attend the campuses in the Northwest Territories. We like for them to attend. They have opportunity to go to NAIT, SAIT, elsewhere, but they have to cover their own costs as well. We provide savings to these individuals coming to the Northwest Territories. We have to take that into effect when we spend over millions on updating or upgrading our equipment that produces these talented individuals in the Northwest Territories and are working for us in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The argument the Minister is using doesn't hold any water when it's not fairly applied across the board to all people seeking post-secondary studies and going through apprenticeship programs. People should be treated the same. According to the Minister, they are not being treated the same. We have investments at Aurora College here in Yellowknife. We have investments at the college campus in Inuvik. We have investments here in

Yellowknife. Again, why pick on apprentices? Why isn't everybody treated the same, Mr. Speaker? Again, I want to ask the Minister, will he take a look at this young man's situation so that he can complete his third year and get back to the workforce here in Yellowknife as soon as he can, to start earning a third-year wage and not wait around two months until the program opens up in Fort Smith? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, we are not picking on this individual, the student we are talking about here. We are talking about the program that is being offered here in the Northwest Territories in April, three weeks after the one that is starting up in NAIT. That will cost us over \$4,000, Mr. Speaker. That \$4,000 can go into our campuses here in the Northwest Territories as opposed to going south. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 305-16(4):

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN YELLOWKNIFE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by following up on my Member's statement and commending the city for the progressive action they are taking on affordable housing initiatives. I would also like to express my appreciation for the supportive role of the NWT Housing Corporation to date. I would like to ask the Minister, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit the NWT Housing Corporation to provide continuing support through which participation on the affordable housing committee with the City of Yellowknife or which the City of Yellowknife will be creating very soon? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is right; housing did take part. They were a part of the financing of the report that came out that was being worked on. Housing will continue to be at the table through this whole process and see it through in identifying housing solutions for the city of Yellowknife. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the Minister there. I am sure that will be good involvement. Will the Minister also keep Members and committees informed of the progress of their work with the city's affordable housing committee so that opportunities to align upcoming departmental business plans can be pursued? Mahsi.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I will commit to the Member that, as I get information from the committee, I will share the information with the Members and get some feedback. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that housing issues are huge across the North and in our regional centres as well. Will the Minister work with the NWT Association of Communities and the city to see that the lessons of affordable housing are spread as we look towards the housing crunch that could result especially if there is a go-ahead on the Mackenzie Gas Project? Will he work to ensure that lessons learned here... I think there are a lot of hardworking voluntary efforts from the citizens and so on through the city, and our folks in the Housing Corporation get that. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to learn as we go along here and identifying housing issues that could have potential impact across the Northwest Territories, especially if, as the Member says, the pipeline goes ahead. There will be quite a crunch. It is always an ongoing issue with the Housing Corporation to always update our information and make sure we are prepared for any future expansion of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 306-16(4):

PUBLIC RELEASE OF ELECTRICITY
RATE REVIEW DOCUMENTS

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are directed probably to the Premier in regard to the reviews that have been taking place on the energy needs and the Power Corporation and looking at the affordability of energy in the Northwest Territories. I'd like to ask the Premier how soon we can have a debate in this Legislature where those documents can be brought forward and tabled in this House so that a public debate can be had on this issue and the people of the Northwest Territories can see where we stand on this issue and what it's going to do to improve the power rates for the majority of the people in the Northwest Territories.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The work of the Minister in lead of the Ministerial Energy Coordinating Committee has presented early phases of the work to the standing committee and there are hopes that we'll be able to put our GNWT response in as soon as, I believe it is April but I'll have to confirm that.

MR. KRUTKO: As I said in my statement, I think this is probably one of the achievements we can make as the 16th Assembly by doing something that will really show results. I think we have to move on this. I think the people in our communities, especially the smaller communities, who are struggling to pay their bills these days, especially

the ones who are now unemployed and looking for work. It raises the importance of high energy costs and finding ways to reduce them.

I would like to ask the Premier how soon they can come forward so we can have a debate on this issue in this House.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: The response that we're working on will have to come forward here. Any structural change to the way the rates are set up will have to come through this Assembly. There will have to be a debate. As I stated, the timing right now is looking at probably our spring session as an opportunity, but we're hoping that if all goes well, that we could be looking at changes, if this Assembly agrees to them, before the next winter season hits us.

MR. KRUTKO: I believe that we do have to change the system and change an obsolete process. In regard to the legislation we have in this House, we have some outdated legislation regarding the PUB and the Power Corporation. I believe we will have to make some legislative changes.

I'd like to ask the Premier if he sees any legislative changes coming forward and when he intends to deal with them in this House.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: The rates, depending on the full response we put forward to the report that was put out there, we know there will be some structural changes using our existing legislation that is in place. For further changes we will have to go back to Members to see what can take place. I know that in the response we're working on we'll come forward before committee and lay out a timeline for that discussion and changes to be in place and implemented.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Premier for that, because I believe it's fundamental change that people don't like. Like anything else with change, it's human nature to react first before realizing what they're getting into. I'd ask the Premier to move on this matter and keep the public informed on where we're going. I think at the end of the day they are the ones who will determine where we stand on this issue.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Indeed we know that any changes to our electrical structure rates and regulations will have an impact on the people we represent. We must have that discussion in this forum so that we know they are all aware of what the plan is and how we plan to move forward. There is a commitment that we will have that debate here. The Minister responsible will be providing further information on timelines. As I stated, if everything goes as we've anticipated, and the discussions and

final plans are put in place, we could see changes going forward as soon as the next winter cycle.

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

QUESTION 307-16(4):

COST OF LIVING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my questions are for the Premier. Considering that in Nunakput we have the highest cost of food in the NWT, will this government get more aggressive, comprehensive when calculating GNWT salaries and northern allowances for smaller northern communities?

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member has highlighted that we, as the GNWT, through our Collective Agreement have a northern allowance that deals with the cost differences in our communities. That is a process that we use as we get into negotiation cycles. It's difficult for me to put much detail on that, as it falls into our negotiation process. The Minister responsible would probably be able to give more detail on that. It is something that comes up during the cycles of negotiations with our employees.

MR. JACOBSON: Considering that two GNWT jobs, one in Yellowknife and one in the small, remote community, are doing the exact same things, requiring the same level of education, with an income difference of only a few thousand dollars, will this government finally implement realistic initiatives and policies that truly calculate salaries and earnings and other benefits for small, remote communities?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: It's always been a challenge for the Government of the Northwest Territories to have a competitive environment when it comes to our employees in our more remote communities as well as in our larger centres when the economy is heated. For us, as we go forward, it is something that is taken into consideration when the negotiation cycles come into place and that is something that we have discussions on with unions as well as we go forward. I'll commit to getting the information from the Minister to the Member on how the northern allowance process works and the ranges that are in place for our communities.

MR. JACOBSON: In Nunakput right now the economy is not heated. I wish some of the diamond mines would start hiring from our region. Will this government progressively work with the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Government of Canada to adopt changes to the Food Mail Program that will actually assist residents in the small, remote communities to eat healthy and live healthy?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: We are involved in that review to a certain extent. It is a federal program but we have our commitment to stay involved and track it. We have offered suggestions and worked with the leaders that see this program and are involved and have requested changes. We're staying committed to following it through to see what changes the federal government may bring forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the cost of living in the most northern communities makes healthy living a luxury for only the privileged that have government jobs, and given that currently the residents of Nunakput could pay up to \$10 for small bags of salad and you can't get anything else for \$10 in Tuk, given the current approach, it seems just the revised status quo. Will this government place current review program on the food mail for the elders and assistance programs and priorities to get them involved?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Again, the Food Mail Program is a federal program that we've become involved in in the sense of trying to come up with a coordinated approach from our side to the federal government. They have their hand on this. We'll continue to pursue that from our side for any changes and so on. Again, we would have to work with those that have presented their case as well, to see what or how we can influence the federal government in making the necessary changes.

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

QUESTION 308-16(4):

NEED FOR COMMUNITY DAYCARE SITES

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I talked about infrastructure needs for daycares in Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution. I'd like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment questions on that. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to reviewing the education plan of Lutselk'e and communicating with the local district authority on the plan? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are educational plans underway in several of the regions. That information can be shared with the Member and also education boards as well. So we can continue to talk in that area on where we can improve the program delivery, whether it be the child care subsidy or the operation costs or the school system itself. So, yes, Mr. Speaker, we can continue with discussions going forward. Mahsi.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, although I'm not aware of a written education plan by the DEA in Fort Resolution, would the Minister commit to communicating with the Fort Resolution District Education Authority to discuss a full spectrum of their educational needs including daycares? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, when I said there was a review, maybe some regions haven't conducted their reviews yet on school operations and the overall school review. So if Tu Nedhe want their review, whether it be one community or two communities, that can be requested by the divisional education council, and working with the MLA and with my department we can initiate that discussion. We do have somebody that is specialized in that area that does go into the community to review those. Mahsi.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, part of the infrastructure of daycares includes adequate landscaping and outdoor play equipment. Will the Minister commit to ensure that daycares in Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution go into the capital plan complete with proper playground equipment and proper landscaping? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to infrastructure, we do not provide the funds for infrastructure in the communities when it comes to a daycare establishment or a facility. However, we do provide funding to offset the cost of rent or mortgage expenses and also the start-up of a facility or operation costs. Mr. Speaker, just for the Member's awareness, that we are looking at moving early childhood into schools since enrolment is down in the Northwest Territories. So that is an option that we are throwing around so we can deal with the enrolment issues in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Your final supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to looking at other options to increase funding and directing his staff to begin dialogue with the communities of Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution on the examination of the education plans through his department?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, we will take that into consideration. In 2007, we did have an increase of 30 percent into our programming dollars. So we do continue to improve and enhance our programming. We also have improved early childhood programming, family literacy, outdoor play space, nutrition and staff training. Those are just some of the programs that are available to the communities. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 309-16(4):
PRESS RELEASE ON
DEH CHO BRIDGE PROJECT

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Transportation. Mr. Speaker, there already is rumour and speculation out in the public about the status of the Deh Cho Bridge Project. Tuesday night MLAs received an update on the project. This is Thursday. The update that we received was substantial news, shall we say. This is Thursday and I believe the public needs to be aware of what is happening with this project, because, as I said in my Member's statement, it could have very far-reaching effects for the operations of this government.

Mr. Speaker, this is a public government and I would like to ask questions about next steps and what the plan of the government is. I would like to ask the Minister, when will he issue a press release. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is right, we did a confidential briefing to the Members of this House as to an update and developments in recent days of the Deh Cho Bridge and we plan to have a public release tomorrow sometime. Thank you.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'd like to try to honour the commitments that we make as committee members when we receive briefings from Ministers not to divulge the contents or detail of those briefings when it is provided on a confidential basis, which this was. However, tomorrow is the last day of sitting in this week and I have made it clear that I would like to... I don't see any reason not to make this public unless the Minister can explain some reason to us why he can't do that. But I would like to speak to this tomorrow in the House. It's Friday and it's an early sitting day, and I would like the Minister's press release to precede the discussion here in the House. Will the Minister agree to that? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I recognize the Member is biting at the bit to talk about the bridge. It's always been at the forefront of our discussions here in this House. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of reasons we are still requiring some time before we have a discussion in this House. First of all, we are still talking with the contractors and negotiating, in fact, for a new contract, the new contractors that have come on stream. Of course,

we are also looking at making changes and having discussions with the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation. We are also engaging with the lenders and all of these are very sensitive discussions and could have a bearing on some of the results at the end of the day. We haven't concluded those discussions so that's the reason we're not issuing a press release at this time.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that those discussions will be concluded before the time tomorrow, at some time tomorrow when the Minister has already committed to issue a press release. Even if the Minister can't provide the specific details, I think there are some substantive pieces of information that could be made known to the public. I would like to ask the Minister again, would he release that, in as much detail as he is able to release it, before the House sits tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'll release the information that's available and that I can provide publicly. I have to reaffirm that we're in negotiations and discussions are very sensitive with the Bridge Corporation, with the lenders, with the contractor. In fact, with the information we provided in the supp, it all, at this point, should be kept confidential, but the Member is wanting a statement in public and I committed to do that and I'll do that tomorrow. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Your final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, because this information will necessarily result in having to strike a plan for where we go from here and next steps, and there will be other subsequent decisions that will have to be made, I would like to ask the Minister if he can assure us here today that no substantive agreements will be entered into on behalf of the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation or this government that would not be reversible prior to this being able to be discussed in public. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not too sure what the Member is referring to, but we don't plan to have any signed deals overnight. We would like to have a better plan that we can present to the Members tomorrow or sometime next week, but that is something we're still working on and we don't plan to have any signed documents overnight. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 310-16(4):

MRSA "SUPERBUG" STRATEGY IN NAHENDEH

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I spoke about the MRSA press release that happened in the

Tlicho region yesterday, the superbug or the anti-bacteria. Anyways, Mr. Speaker, I noted that I do have a communication and management plan for the Tlicho region and they're quite active in pursuing it there. I'd just like to know what is the strategy in the other regions and are there cases in other regions, most specifically, of course, the Nahendeh riding. Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the public health officer made it clear in her press conference yesterday, along with the CEO of the Tlicho Community Services Agency, we are aware of a cluster of MRSA cases in some regions in the Territories. It's important for people to know we are on top of that, that they should not be panicked about it. Mr. Speaker, the system, as a whole, has been working and putting enormous efforts over the last number of months to make sure that our process for infection control in our facilities are strong and clear. The public health officer has been communicating regularly with all of the health agencies and front-line to make sure everybody knows what they need to do to control that.

Secondly, we know that there is a prevalence of cases in the Tlicho and there is a very aggressive plan for the staff there to go on door-to-door visits to make sure that people are aware on the ground to prevent this from spreading.

Thirdly, the public health officer also announced an NWT-wide publicity campaign to make sure everybody is aware of this and taking proper precautions. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I would like to know what other efforts in terms of monitoring any more increased cases in other regions and communities are being done. Is there a strategy for that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, every health authority, every health centre, every authority has proper guidelines about how to monitor, prevent and follow up any infection possibilities. They do regular testing and take samples and make sure they are sent and tested. All of the trends are monitored by health care staff in every community and region and it is guided by a public health officer, Dr. Kandola's office. So Members and the public should be assured that there is very stringent and aggressive monitoring going on and that all proper steps are taken. We understand now that there are some clusters in communities and we are engaged in a publicity campaign to let every individual know about what steps they can take to make sure that they don't contract this and if they do, it can be treated easily by early detection. We do everything we can to prevent any further spread.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Just in terms of the strategy in the other regions, does that mean the Health and Social Services department has contacted the leadership, the band councils, the village councils, the Metis councils? I think part of the press conference they are talking about is it's a community approach that's got to be taken in this, especially if there are increased numbers in some of those communities. Does the strategy include advising the local leadership, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: The communication is to the front-line staff and the regional health authorities. They will be going out to the communities to do a publicity campaign. I will make sure that they make contact with leadership to ask for their assistance, very much like we did with H1N1.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me comfort that we have strategies in the other regions and communities. In terms of monitoring, is that something they are doing with the health centres and the community health nurse? They are aware of the symptoms to watch for in local community members? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, every health centre and staff at the health centre and hospitals are aware of what symptoms to watch for and what precautions to take to make sure that this does not get contracted or spread once contacted. So, yes, there is a very close monitoring going on of all infection cases in all health centres. Dr. Kandola's office keeps very close touch in that they know exactly what numbers and what the trends are and fighting aggressively on this situation. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 311-16(4):
APPEALS PROCESS FOR
NON-RCMP INVESTIGATIONS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Justice. I have questions for him in regards to the concerns of a constituent of mine and some concerns which were recently brought to my attention. A complaint was laid against my constituent. She's a member of a self-regulating professional body, and an independent investigator was fired by that body and the investigation took place. The resulting decision, unfortunately, compromised my constituent's ability to practice. The problem is that the individual feels that the investigative process was flawed and unfair and that it should be reviewed. I would like to ask the Minister what recourse for Justice exist for someone in these circumstances. Thank you.

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

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The particular investigation, of course, is under the RCMP "G" Division. At the same time, there are avenues that individuals can pursue. One of the avenues that is always open is the Public Complaints Commission. That is an avenue that we encourage people to apply if they are not satisfied with the outcome, whether it be an investigation at the local level, at the district level or even at the headquarter level. But those are just the avenues that we usually send them to first at the local level and then, if they are not satisfied, then the Public Complaints Commission is always open for them. Mahsi.

MS. BISARO: Unfortunately, the Minister did not understand the nature of this situation. This is a member of a self-regulating professional body. It has nothing to do with the RCMP. This individual had a complaint laid against them. It was investigated by the NWT body. The individual feels that the whole process was unfair and that it wasn't valid and that it should be reviewed. Again, what recourse exists for my constituent? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, we need to be aware of what kind of investigation it was. We don't have any background in this area. If the Member can share that information, I can have my department look at it even closer, what kind of investigation was undertaken by whom and what kind of processes are available to that individual. We need that additional information before I speak to it. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MS. BISARO: I am afraid I have to disagree with the Minister. I don't think that the details of this particular situation are relevant at all. This is an example that I feel goes extremely... It is a very pointed example relative to the need for an ombudsman. This is an investigation that was done under the regulations of an NWT professional organization. There is nothing within that organization which allows for any kind of an appeal. The only avenue of appeal is then presumably through the courts, which is something that this person does not want to do. Other than the courts, can the Minister tell me if there is anything for someone who is a member of a professional body, has been investigated by them, feels that it is unfair? What can they do?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, there again, I need to look at the file. There are processes within our GNWT system, within Justice, but we need to know what happened along the process. What kind of options are available through our department to assist those individuals? Of course, there is the court avenue that the Member has alluded to. That might be an option, but they

can be dealt with in a manner that satisfies both parties, those are options that we need to look at. We need to look at the case file. I am not aware of this case file, but if the data can be shared with us, we can certainly look into it further.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister. I reiterate, I don't think the details of the file should impact. The Minister mentioned there are things available, but he didn't go into the detail of what things he is referencing when he says there are things available that can be done. Could he itemize for me the things that are available for such an individual as he mentioned in his previous answer?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The process I can certainly share with the Member in writing about the process itself, what kind of assistance is available to this individual. Due to the nature of the incident, we need to clarify that as well. Providing options of where this individual can certainly look at when it comes to options, I will commit to providing that information to the Member.

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

QUESTION 312-16(4):

ISSUES WITH MEDICAL TRAVEL PROGRAM

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue questions with the Minister of Health and Social Services on the area of medical travel and services provided to our constituents. Part of the issue here is that we go to great pains to provide medical services to people who self-inflict particular issues to themselves, whether it's through alcoholism or drugs. We have people with weight-loss problems and diabetes problems. who the Minister is saying are exempt from the policy. I think that's wrong, because people are burdened with an unfair chance and we don't provide them the support.

I'm trying to get the Minister to go back and review these files, because I'm talking about people who were previously approved and even recently approved, as far back as last fall, to go to Edmonton for specialized services. Would the Minister go back and review these files to see if we can make sure these people can get back in the queue and get services for medical treatment?

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

HON. SANDY LEE: As I've already indicated, we have very good medical and health care coverage. The weight loss reduction procedure is not a health

care program that's covered anywhere. We have discovered that some of them were approved by mistake and we are not going to approve that. We are working on developing a program that can help these clients in the North, because we have in fact discovered that some of the programs they were getting down south were in private clinics and something that we could look into doing here. We do need to do more here.

With respect to paying clinic files, those are private clinic treatments and the only thing we're asking is that they make contact with their physicians to make sure that the physician supervises their files. I don't think that's asking for much. Our program is still very good and we need to respect the integrity of our programs.

MR. HAWKINS: I appreciate the Minister's answer but it's lacking a particular element that even recently, this last fall, that this constituent went for medical advice, they got a recommendation from the doctor, the doctor processed the papers through the normal channels, the normal channels approved them, and they went to Edmonton to start their treatment. Then, of course, when they tried to do their follow-up, all of a sudden the policy doesn't apply. So one day it applies and the next day it applies. That same type of treatment was successful on another family member and they used the same travel policy to get services. Would the Minister review this file and take a serious look at this and say, wait a minute, why are we doing this to people? Why are we supporting them?

HON. SANDY LEE: I'm not sure what files he's talking about and we can't talk about private files here. I do want to say that our Medical Travel Policy, I don't think he's talking about the Medical Travel Policy because medical travel comes when our residents are approved for a procedure outside of the NWT and we cover for that. It comes from what the original procedure is that they were approved and our policy is sound. We found out that the policy was not applied properly and we made sure that whoever was approving those procedures was informed about the fact that those procedures they were approving are not allowable within our guidelines. So we're following the procedure.

MR. HAWKINS: I continue to get further disappointed, if it's possible, on this particular case. We have a system that has approved people to travel. We have a system now that says, well, I'm sorry, our system doesn't like this particular case, we're not going to allow you to travel down for needed medical care. This is doctor prescribed care. This is not sort of somebody saying, hey, you should do this. This is needed care. It's quite demoralizing when one day you go down for treatment and the next day you're told, sorry, you don't qualify. I'm asking for some empathy in this

particular question. Could the Minister show some compassion to these particular files? I brought three recently to her particular attention. Would she be willing to review them and see if there's a way to make this work?

HON. SANDY LEE: The Member knows that a lot of situations and files come to my desk. We review them to make sure the policy is applied. If the physicians order procedures that are not eligible for coverage under our program, they would be advised, which is the situation that happened with the weight loss reduction procedures. All the doctors have been given clinical guidelines to make sure that they understand this. We have lots of doctors coming and going in the Territories and they need to always be getting these messages. So I'll be happy to look at any file that the Member is asking, but we would always make sure that our policy is being adhered to.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 313-16(4):

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to follow up with some more questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I wasn't really satisfied with the responses that I got from the Minister on the fact that we are treating folks who go out for training for apprenticeship training differently than we are treating college students. I'm just wondering, according to the Minister's logic, why the Government of the Northwest Territories, because we have infrastructure on the ground for post-secondary studies here and programs running in the Northwest Territories, why do we fund students to attend southern institutions in the area of nursing or teaching, for example. Can the Minister explain that to me?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We do fund all students as best we can; the 1,400 post-secondary students that are out there and the apprenticeship students that are out there. I think we have to keep that in mind that this particular campus that we're talking about, it's also geared towards apprenticeship because, as I stated, we've invested so much already and we continue to invest in upgrading our facility so it's one of the top of the line courses that is being offered. At the same time, other students are taking those post-secondary programs as well at Smith campus and Inuvik campus or Yellowknife campus. We do sponsor all the students, but there are at times courses that the students want to take outside and then it's their choice to do so.

MR. RAMSAY: Again I'm just having trouble understanding the Minister's logic because, yes, we have an investment in Fort Smith, but the same could be true for the Aurora Campus here in Yellowknife at Northern United Place where we as a government have contributed a tremendous amount of money into the Northern Nursing Program that's now affiliated with the University of Victoria. So why doesn't the Minister go out, round up all the students we have in southern Canada and put them here in Yellowknife so that they can get educated here in the Northwest Territories? His argument makes no sense. I want to know why apprentices are treated differently than college students. Why are they made to go to Fort Smith?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I think there's also a cost factor to keep in mind where we have students who are going to NAIT or other southern institutions that we pay well over \$5,000 for one student. If you add let's say 100 students in the Apprenticeship Program, that's \$580,000 going outside the Northwest Territories where that can be spent to our campuses in the Northwest Territories. We say we have 1,400 students going south. I'm sure it doesn't cost us \$5,800 for one student. There is a fee that we pay at the NAIT campuses, because they have their own NAIT institution act that they follow that we have to pay for a seat. Those are some of the differentiations in how the cost factors are in play. But it is \$580,000 that we are looking at.

MR. RAMSAY: I think we should treat everybody fairly and equally. That includes apprentices and anybody wanting to further their education. If that's in southern Canada, then it's in southern Canada. Either we're going to support people or we're not. Apprentices should not be treated any differently than anybody else. I'd like to ask the Minister if he has any flexibility whatsoever when it comes to this policy so that when somebody is caught in a predicament where they can go to a third year and get it done while they're already there, which makes absolute sense, is there any flexibility that the Minister has to make sure that this can happen. What's right should happen.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, there is flexibility where if a program is not being offered at our campuses, we send students down south such as we did with this individual on his second year. So we continue to promote that. But we do have to keep in mind that we do have campuses here in the Northwest Territories that we need to sponsor and support. It's our true northern campuses.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: I think the Minister is missing my point. The point is that this individual can start his third year almost immediately. He can be concluded that third year prior to April 7th when the program

starts in Fort Smith, which would enable him to come back home to Yellowknife and pursue his further apprenticeship. I would like to ask the Minister, has there been allowances under the policy in the past that saw individuals allowed to attend back-to-back years at NAIT or SAIT?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The intake, again, is for March at NAIT and three weeks later it's at Fort Smith campus. So there is not much time difference. At the same time we're not just talking about one student. We're talking about other students that will be lining up at our door saying, pay for our institution down south. We don't want to close down our facility in Fort Smith, Inuvik, or Yellowknife campus. That should be our first priority, supporting our campuses in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 9, written questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 20-16(4): INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING FUNDING

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Would the Minister provide the following details specific to inclusive schooling funding particular detailing each community and school districts over the past three years including the projected trends for the next two school years:

1. How many students are categorized as inclusive students that require one-to-one support that would not otherwise be able to attend school safely?
2. How many students are categorized as special needs students that require special assistance with modified school plans?
3. How much funding is provided to each community and district school board for each question as highlighted and categorized above?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 10, returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 71-16(4):
ANTI-POVERTY DOCUMENTS GIFT LIST

TABLED DOCUMENT 72-16(4):
ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY SUPPORTERS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have two documents I would like to table today. One identifies the contents of the Christmas present that was given to the Legislative Assembly yesterday by the Anti-Poverty Strategy supporters. The second is a listing of the Anti-Poverty Strategy supporters.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Motions

MOTION 11-16(4):
DEVELOPMENT OF AN
ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY,
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS every person has the right to a standard of living adequate to the well-being of their families and themselves;

AND WHEREAS approximately 10 percent of Canadians, or 2.9 million people, lived in poverty in 2007;

AND WHEREAS in some NWT communities, up to 50 percent of households have a total income of less than \$30,000;

AND WHEREAS 40 percent of NWT households with a senior have incomes below \$40,000;

AND WHEREAS health indicators, educational achievement, child apprehension rates and family violence can be directly related to poverty;

AND WHEREAS poverty is human-made and can be overcome;

AND WHEREAS the GNWT currently has no official definition of poverty and no clear and integrated strategy to combat poverty;

AND WHEREAS it should be a priority goal of the GNWT to eradicate poverty in the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS eradicating poverty will significantly contribute to the achievement of all of the Legislative Assembly's goals and priorities;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that the government develop an Anti-Poverty Strategy for the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHER, that the Premier initiate discussions towards this strategy in partnership

with business, organizations and those living in poverty;

AND FURTHER, that the government and partners start by developing a definition of poverty;

AND FURTHER, that the Anti-Poverty Strategy identify specific, measurable targets, with clear cross-departmental mechanisms for coordination and integration of actions;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the government provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I brought this motion to the floor of the House because I believe poverty is a huge issue in the NWT and I believe this government can do better in our efforts to eradicate poverty. We already have a number of programs and services in place, programs and services whose goal it is to assist those residents of ours who are marginalized, to reduce the level and amount of poverty in our Territory. But these many activities are not coordinated across our government system and they are not coordinated with the activities and non-government organizations and local governments.

Currently there are gaps in the services that are available to our residents. There are holes in the poverty safety net. By working together, we can close those gaps, mend those holes and accomplish so much more. A comprehensive targeted strategy to address poverty in the NWT is what is needed.

The preamble to the motion mentions some poverty statistics. About 10 percent of Canadians live in poverty. In the NWT's smaller communities, up to 50 percent of our households have a total income of less than \$30,000 per year. Too many of our people either live in poverty or very close to the edge of it, Mr. Speaker.

Right now, I think everybody should agree that poverty has an impact on our systems and on our residents. The causes and effects are well documented. Again, I quote from the motion's preamble, "health indicators, educational achievements, child apprehension rates and family violence can be directly related to poverty."

For the GNWT, these effects of poverty on our residents puts added stress and strain on our health system, our social service system, our justice system and our education system. If we work together to eliminate or even reduce poverty experienced by our people, the results will be positive, both by a financial perspective and a

human one. But in order to achieve those results, we need a comprehensive targeted strategy to address poverty in the NWT.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel, either, Mr. Speaker. Six Canadian provinces have adopted anti-poverty strategies and two more are in the throes of doing so. There are several provincial strategies which we can use as a template for our own NWT one. I am advised that the Newfoundland and Labrador strategy in particular is one that we should look at with the view of using it as a foundation or base document for the development of our own strategy.

This motion calls for the Premier to initiate discussions to develop an NWT Anti-Poverty Strategy. But it emphasizes that any development must be done in partnership, in conjunction with business, organizations and those living in poverty. The development of a strategy without the involvement of these groups is a strategy destined to fail. So let's not do that, please.

The motion also calls for the development of a definition of poverty, a definition that applies to the NWT. It's something which does not exist at the moment and we can hardly initiate an attack on poverty if we don't have a clear definition of the target of the attack.

The other element that must be part of any discussion is the identification of a tool to adequately measure poverty. Several measures exist throughout Canada but none applies particularly well to the NWT and there's no agreed on measure of poverty that is used consistently throughout the government.

Mr. Speaker, every NWT person has the right to live well. The goals and the priorities of this 16th Legislative Assembly speak to healthy, educated people. We need to add to these goals. We need to make the eradication of poverty in the NWT a priority goal. This motion will get us started on that road, Mr. Speaker. I urge all Members of this House to support this motion which can only benefit our residents. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. I'll go to the seconder to the motion, the honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to stress the comments, many of the comments of my colleague Ms. Bisaro. She's laid it out quite thoroughly there.

Basically we are at the point where we need to define in order to measure and then go out and measure poverty. I think somebody said at one of our get-togethers that if we don't measure something, we don't care about it. I am afraid that encapsulates some of the aspects of the issue we

are dealing with through this to get an Anti-Poverty Strategy in the books.

The historical patterns and the development of poverty, of course, are familiar to many. It involves colonization, cultural upheaval, residential schools and so on. We know that many of our communities have suppressed economies. We need healthy, vigorous economies. That's one of the aspects of dealing with poverty.

Some of these events have been portrayed in the last couple of days and can lead to a downward spiral into poverty unless we have a comprehensive strategy in place to catch those things when they happen. This government, I believe, is developing a lot of experience in that itself.

The boom/bust development scenarios that we have experienced and seem to persist on seeking often creates the devise of those that have and those that don't. That tends to exacerbate poverty in our communities. Those in poverty face many barriers: access to child care, which we've heard much about recently; housing; fuel and food costs; addictions and mental health issues and the linkages that work between those. Income security, we have a lot of good things in place, but they are not linked together in ways which capture things, so there are big gaps in between. Income security does not keep pace, for example, with rising costs. We do adjust it from time to time, but it's not very sensitive and we know there is an extremely high cost of living today.

Developing a poverty eradication plan must be based on a foundation that ensures a more equitable distribution of benefits through the vision of socially, environmentally and economically sustainable development. We are also talking a lot about that these days.

So I see the opportunities here, Mr. Speaker, as huge. I don't see this being a huge budget item because I think we are spending a lot, but because we don't have a comprehensive and integrated approach, we have gaps, a lot of our folks are falling through that. If we start measuring the incidents of poverty, so we actually know how we are doing and evaluating the work that we're doing and thus learning and using an adaptive management approach to this, we can do a lot of catch up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I obviously will be supporting this motion and I urge all Members to do so. Mahsi

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to say I will be voting in favour of this particular motion. I support any efforts to move this issue forward. Poverty is certainly a demeaning

situation where people are struggling everyday to get out of it and we have to find ways to assist in the breaking of the cycle that is meaningful and productive. Mr. Speaker, I don't think anybody in an impoverished situation dreams that dream. This is something this government needs to commit to with a focus of saying how can we help people to break the cycle, get up on their own two feet, and celebrate the opportunities that lay before this land of the Northwest Territories.

In closing, I just want to emphasize that I do support this and I think that if we can help break that tailspin that people are in, I hope very dearly that we can provide them every opportunity that all these families deserve who are stuck in this cycle.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this motion here today. I believe that in our small and remote communities we do have poverty issues and overcrowding issues in our housing. However, I believe that the direction that this motion gives is to have a consolidated plan for our government and that our communities with grassroots ideas and organizations that they can work with government to better help their communities. I think that we're going in the right direction with this motion.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting the motion. I, for one, feel, as I've stated many times in this House, that a government is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable in our society. What we're seeing statistically and looking at the results of what poverty does, just look out in our large cities with regard to homelessness, people having to go to food banks, people having to go to relatives' homes and sleeping on their couch because they have nowhere else to go, visiting each other so you can share the food that you have with a family member, or in some cases having the whole family living under one roof because they cannot afford to be in social housing or to strive on their own. They need the support of each other.

Poverty is alive and well in the Northwest Territories, yet as a government we continue to spend millions of dollars for big corporations, the diamond companies, to develop infrastructure which should be paid for by the private sector regardless whether it's office space. I for one feel that we as a government have to do a better job to deal with the poverty-related issues which are confronting us every day, whether it's walking down the streets of Yellowknife or Inuvik or our home communities. We see these people come into the band office, or my office as it's in the same building in Fort McPherson. There are 20 or 30 of them

there for the lunch program because that's probably the only good meal they're going to get for the whole day. It's sad to see, but that's the reality of what we're seeing in our communities.

With that I will be supporting this motion.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I will be supporting my colleagues Ms. Bisaro and Mr. Bromley on this motion, because of the poverty situation that exists in Nunakput already and all of the Northwest Territories. Communities, like Mr. Krutko said, he said it all regarding the way things are happening in the communities. We have people with no jobs; there's no work going on. You never, ever heard of a food bank in the communities, but now they're coming up to the community of Tuk. They've started a food bank and that was not heard of. Rich to resources and now it's time we all step up to the plate and help our people that need help. If we put enough effort into this like we do with our diamond mines and oil and gas companies, we can do the same thing with our people to help them.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Members for bringing this forward as we dealt with some questions in the House yesterday around the anti-poverty issue in the Northwest Territories. The Members have followed up with this motion. We as the Government of the Northwest Territories are doing what we can in the way we have been and realize there is room for improvement in building and working with our partners across the North. There are significant areas that we do invest in as the Government of the Northwest Territories, and Member Bromley pointed out that while we do expend a significant amount of money in the areas of coordination and working with our partners is vital as we go forward. As I stated in questions and responses yesterday in this House around this issue, we're looking forward to working with our partners across the Northwest Territories to strengthen our systems in an environment where our resources are stretched. So the more partners in helping this issue, the better for us across the Northwest Territories. As this motion is a direction to us, we will be abstaining from the vote.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. I will allow the mover of the motion some closing comments. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to first of all thank my colleagues for their comments and their support. I think it's been well stated, the issue at hand.

I think it's important to note that this motion particularly requests that a dialogue gets started,

that we start talking and also that we start talking to our non-government organization partners, to our businesses, and to those that are living in poverty. There's an opportunity for efficiencies to be gained here from talking to everybody in one place.

I hear the Premier state that this is direction to the government, but I think it's really only direction to the Premier. It does state the Premier initiate discussions. I would ask the Premier, if he wants to abstain that's fine, but I'd encourage the rest of Cabinet to vote.

I would ask for a recorded vote.

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

Recorded Vote

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposing the motion, 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. SPEAKER: Results of the recorded vote: for, nine; against, zero; abstaining, six.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MOTION 12-16(4):
SETTING OF SITTING HOURS BY SPEAKER,
CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that the Speaker be authorized to set such sitting days and hours that the Speaker, after consultation, deems fit to assist with the business before the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 2, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2009-2010; Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act; Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Summary Conviction Procedures Act; Tabled Document 62-16(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2010-

2011; and Minister's Statement 47-16(4), Transfer of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'll call Committee of the Whole to order. Today we have under consideration Bills 2, 4, 7, Tabled Document 62-16(4) and Minister's Statement 47-16(4). What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee would like to continue on with the detailed consideration of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and perhaps, since we're getting an earlier start today, maybe even make it into the opening comments and general comments on the NWT Housing Corporation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that we will take a short break and start with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. Prior to the break, we agreed to continue on with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister of Education if he would be bringing in any witnesses.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Everyone agree that the Minister bring in his witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witnesses in.

...(inaudible)...27, operations expenditure summary, income security, activity summary. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions. The first on the seniors heating subsidy. We have a lot of seniors that are eligible for the seniors fuel subsidy and then lose their eligibility if one of their children move home or anything like that where they can, indicating, I guess, from the department, that there's any income that person has or the history of the income goes toward the senior and they lose their fuel. In reality the individual is not contributing to assisting the senior with the cost of operating a house. It puts a burden on it and it's difficult for the senior to deal with the adult child that's moved back into the home. I'm wondering if the Minister could just, I mean, I guess it could be a fairly standard answer that's up to the senior to deal with, but it's difficult

for them and they don't even like to discuss that with me, but they do in a confidential way and ask that I take the issue to the department. When I do speak on the issue it's a fairly standard response. I'm wondering if the department has looked at that situation to maybe do things differently or maybe do it more on a case-by-case basis as opposed to always taking the income of the adult child into account.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Lafferty, before you answer the question, I guess you should introduce your witnesses. Introduce your witness for the record.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. I have with me, to my left, Mr. Dan Daniels, deputy minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and also Paul Devitt, director of Business and Strategic Services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Welcome, witnesses. With that, Mr. Lafferty, you can respond to Mr. Beaulieu's questions.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. This particular area has received a lot of focus for the last year or two. We did make some changes there when Members in the past approached us about how we should deal with it and gave us advice. One bit of advice, of course, was increasing the threshold, which we've done successfully. I believe it was \$10,000 across the board.

We continue to change the program. As the Member alluded to, we're trying to do things differently. Yes, we are. We are making change as we go along. This particular area is on household income. The Member is correct on that. I did instruct my department to look at options of how to deal with this because we don't want to have an impact on the seniors. If they have older kids living with them and if they're earning enough income, some are working at the mine and should be able to pay the subsidy. So instead of having a burden on the senior, why couldn't we put that invoice towards those individuals who are living with them? Those are the areas we are exploring as we speak.

MR. BEAULIEU: Just on the public housing rental subsidy Income Support Program. I'm pleased that the government has returned the subsidies back to NWT Housing Corporation. However, in this business plan the 34 million-odd dollars plus the \$12 million recoveries from CMHC are still in this business plan. I understand why, because we're going to do the transfer back during the next fiscal year. I'm wondering if the department and the Housing Corporation could maybe work together to speed the process up. I feel it should be a fairly simple process to transfer it back. We have a month and a half to be able to transfer as much of it back as possible. So I'm wondering if the Minister would make a commitment to work with the

Housing Corporation Minister to see which local housing organizations are ready to take the subsidy back and start dealing directly with the clients' rent on April 1, 2010, as opposed to the target date of April 1, 2011.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I thought we were transferring that program and the money is still here, so that's a good sign that the money is still with us. But it's in the transition period. We are going to be transferring the program over to the NWT Housing Corporation. We're looking at possibly between June and August or September, because there are a lot of details that need to be worked out. We're still working closely with the NWT Housing Corporation on identifying those individuals and also LHOs at the community level are taking on the additional workload. There are still a lot of areas that need to be fleshed out before we transfer the program, but it will happen later on this summer.

MR. BEAULIEU: Same topic. I just again ask the Minister as a final word on this from me if they could look at something a little bit quicker than the summer. I recognize that there are certainly some logistics to transferring the program back, but because it's broken down by each LHO and, I think we're talking about 19 LHOs, I'm not 100 percent positive, but I would implore the Minister to try to get this done on April 1st.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Really it comes up to the two departments and LHOs and organizations that we need to work with. If we can expedite the process, we are certainly open for that. As long as we have our ducks lined up and the transition period is as smooth as possible, we'll take those into consideration as well. The Housing Minister is here, as well, listening to the process.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Next on the list I have Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions here. One has to do with Income Security Program. When we discussed the business plans, there was some indication from the Minister in response to one of our questions that there is a review of income security for persons with disabilities. I wondered if the Minister could advise if that is indeed correct, and when we might see the results of that review, and what recommendations are the results of the review with the recommendations that would be arising. When would we see that?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. We are working on that review of the disability portfolio area. As soon as that's done, that's part of the planning process for next year's business cycle. Once we're done with that we can

share that information with the standing committee on what needs to take place at the next level.

MS. BISARO: I don't believe I heard a timeline in there. I wonder if I could get an approximation of... I understand that the review is being done for next year's business planning process, but when might committee, for instance, see the results of the review and the recommendations in it?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, we are hoping to complete the review of the particular program we're hoping by this fall and then we will present it to the standing committee. Then it will be part of the business planning cycle for next year.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for that. I have one other question. I mentioned in my general comments that I was very dismayed to see that we have other expenses, another under other expenses. In this department particularly, the other expenses are some \$56 million and they're broken out reasonably well, except then we come down to other within other of \$2.419 million. It's a pretty large other without any kind of definition. So when I asked the Finance Minister, we did get a sheet which told us what all the other expenses were. The education one, the \$2.419 million is bad debts expense. So I, unfortunately, didn't understand that either and kind of went, well, what's that mean. So I'd like to pass that question on to the Minister and his officials, please. Why do we have bad debts expense for \$2.5 million in the education budget? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chair, this is an allowance account for student loans. Most of the \$2.4 million is for the remission of loans when our students complete their programs and return to the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: First off, I would hope that next year I won't see \$2.4 million in an undescribed expense. Secondly, it seems a little strange to me that when we forgive a loan for our students it's considered a bad debt. Is that the only way that we can account for it from an accounting perspective or is that simply the language that the department chooses to put on it? Thank you.

MR. DEVITT: That portion of it is certainly not a bad debt. It is a debt expense, and I think that's why it's in this category. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Maybe next year we could split it out so we have a debt expense and bad debts. But thank you. That's all I've got.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): More of a comment, but if you'd like to respond, Mr. Minister.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we can certainly do that for next year,

break it down so it's more clear for the Members. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Next on the list I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, I've got a couple of areas I'd like to ask some questions about, or tackle. One of the issues that I've been in contact with the Minister is regarding home heating fuel for seniors, elders that live on the land just outside of Yellowknife core but still live within the city limits. They don't live on your traditional legal land, as such, that's gone through the normal process of land tenure. Does the seniors home heating subsidy take that into account, that we have people who are living, to some degree, a more traditional lifestyle than living in the downtown of Yellowknife, and would the home heating subsidy fuel apply to them? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Education.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that particular area that has been addressed by the Member, we did look into that where individual seniors, if they own a home, then they're eligible for the seniors home fuel subsidy. There is a criteria for that where they have to own the home in order to qualify. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chair, does the Minister have an opinion in the context of what's the difference between owning land outright through a tenureship of title as opposed to living in your home on untitled land? I'm trying to understand the particular differences between the two. I mean, it's a senior who needs home heating fuel. So we've got two areas we've checked off. It really comes down to the fact is who owns the particular land and why is that an obstacle with the department. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, if the Member is referring to those seniors that are living on the highway, if they own the home then they'll clearly qualify for the program for the seniors home fuel subsidy. But with the policy itself, it is policy driven and we can clearly look at other options that the Member is also referring to. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: I appreciate that answer and I look forward to the next step of where that will go.

Mr. Chairman, one of the issues that comes up from time to time is under income support assistance. The government does not allow a telephone as part of an allowable expense, and I'm trying to get some rationalization as to why that wouldn't be included as a real expense. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, this particular program is basic needs, food and shelter. If we go beyond food and shelter, where do we stop with that? Plus it's just a subsidy program so we

would prefer to spend on shelter and food for the families. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: I wouldn't want to argue with the Minister on that particular point because I agree with him that income support is there to provide for basic needs and certainly food and shelter are a basic need. However, I would like to think that safety and security certainly could be provided in that. Where I'm going with that is if you were on income support, of course, you're in of those positions, as we discussed earlier, sort of, that poverty cycle, that motion that we had passed earlier. So people have to make choices between food or clothing or support for their kids versus safety. So in other words, what if you need the phone to call an ambulance? What about a job? You know, trying to get those things, I mean, it's yet one more element of tearing down a person's ability to climb out of the poverty cycle.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to ask the Minister, would they take that suggestion back to the department and perhaps evaluate it. I mean, most phones don't cost a lot of money. If the territorial government agrees through income support if we only provide basic service for phones it may not sound sensitive enough, but maybe it means we have to strap the phone, which is, you know, those are part of the agreements that people can't make long distance calls to ensure that the phones don't get out of hand and lose control. I feel that even though it's taking some of the empowerment away from people that I always strive we should have, but it also provides safety and security, which is the next step of where we should be. Would the Minister take that consideration back and evaluate that? Because I think it's a missing element of our income support program. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, we take into consideration what the Members throw at us. We appreciate that and we can have that as an ongoing discussion that we have, but we have to keep in mind that this is basic food and shelter. If we start providing and paying phone bills, whether it be \$32 or \$260, are we going to pay for gas to go to the clinic, as well? One can argue that it's a necessity and as an emergency factor, but this is a basic program subsidy that we provide through the Income Support Framework Agreement that we have. Mr. Chair, we have to keep that in mind, that we do provide subsidies to all Northwest Territories. That suggestion can be part of our discussion, but we have to keep in mind it's just the basic food and shelter. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, I look forward to what solutions and considerations will come out of that. I think it would be a step forward and certainly an empowerment.

Mr. Chairman, on this section here, the last area I think at this time or, sorry, the second last area was

student loans. Another colleague of mine, I believe Mr. Ramsay, has raised this issue before. I certainly agree with the issue. Under the student loans program, has the department ever contemplated building into a program that helps buy student loans back? What I mean by that is, if we are struggling in a particular area of staff, obviously in cooperation with the Department of Human Resources, has the department ever contemplated on buying student loans?

I know American hospitals and whatnot will scoop into Canada and go to these colleges and say, you're a radiologist. We need them at the hospital. We will pay you twice as much as they pay you in Canada and we will buy your student loan and we will buy the contract that whoever paid to send you here, we will buy you out of that contract.

I know there are a lot of areas as we have run into such as auditors. I have raised that particular spawn with the Department of Finance continually, that we have always understaffed in the Audit Bureau. I am just wondering if the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has ever thought about that type of strategy, building it in.

I can speak from personal experience where I actually had a cousin who graduated I believe with radiology. She was approached as well as she told me a number of people had been approached. Now they have sought employment in their home towns and their communities in Canada. When we have particular areas to fill that we just cannot fill whether you are a nurse in a community... I mean, can you imagine being a southern student and say, look, if you go to Tsiigehtchic for three years, we will buy your student loan out? We need a teacher in Sachs Harbour. It is difficult to get one. We will buy your student loan out and transplant you there for a couple of years and we will get you a job right away. It is that type of philosophy where we have certain positions and I am sure it is easy to identify them where it is a difficult challenge to staff people and a difficult challenge to attract people. It is that philosophy that I am suggesting. Does the department have an element to start building in that sort of thinking and flexibility to maybe develop in that direction? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, we have already thought about those areas. It was brought up before. We are working with Human Resources on creating an incentive program where the student loans can be paid off immediately if they go to a community, more so in isolated communities. It has been brought up as well. Mr. Chairman, yes, we are exploring all avenues that we possibly can, to make it more attractive for those students to go back to our communities and pay off their loan as quick as possible. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, the last year I wouldn't mind just getting some clarity in the budget

here. Our allocation for child care subsidy programs, I am just curious as to what is the percentage basis still being provided to day homes or child care facilities for kids that are not in school. Is it still based on percentage and sort of like a head fee and further based on attendance of children, or is the department contemplating that these types of facilities, regardless of where they are located whether they are in Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Inuvik, who knows where, they are based on actuals running these types of facilities so then they can keep the doors open and they don't run at risk when they have shortfalls by having to shut their doors? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Chairman, this was brought up as well. We provide funding to facilities or establishments to offset their costs of their mortgage or start-up costs or operation costs. Not only that but, as I stated, we are exploring options because enrolments are going down. Not only the schools, but also, if it happens to be a child care area, it is also based on the enrolment of attendance of the children or in establishment. We are also looking at that. It has been brought up in the House here, exploring options of attendance versus the operation costs. At the same time, we are looking at some consequences in that respect. Mr. Chairman, this is a work in progress period that we need to improve on. We continue to improve in this program. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Next on the list I have Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If we are done the comments on this page, I would like to ... If there are other comments out there, I would be happy to hold my comments, but if not, I will go forward at this time. I want to follow up on some of the debate we had yesterday on the \$400,000 for the nutritious food plans. I just want to mention that we have had motions and recommendations both from the House, from the Social Programs committee over the years without any response from this department. Calling for a milk subsidy for prenatal or neonatal, preschool and early school year children, the responses over the years have varied from good intentions to work with the food baskets, to work to reduce electricity rates. In more recent weeks, the responses have varied from funding yet another nutritious foods survey within the NWT, as if we needed one, and most recently, forming an NWT Nutritious Foods Steering Committee. I have to wonder what it will be next week, Mr. Chairman.

While this was raised for debate yesterday, the Minister went off on a new direction and said he would be funding things like I think it was NWT Foods First Foundation. I think he also mentioned a breakfast program in schools and said that he is

meeting exactly what we want. Now, that is good to hear, but I haven't developed any confidence in that because of the ephemeral nature of the department's current stance on this. I think we ended the debate expecting that the Minister will provide us with details that will assure us, give us some confidence that, in fact, we know exactly how these dollars will be spent and that they will be used to supplement food programs, nutritious foods programs for children where they are needed and very similar in some of the remarks that the Minister came out with. I think this should not be onerous and, to that end, I have a motion, if I may, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister, do you want to respond?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. The \$400,000 has been debated in the House yesterday. Maybe we can make some points clear that we are on the record saying that the \$400,000 will be going to the Food First Program or the breakfast program, the nutritious program, the snacks program that are currently being offered. Those may not have been addressed or fell through the cracks. We want to subsidize those programs. This \$400,000 will go towards that.

We talk about the steering committee. I guess we need to stay away from that terminology where we just want to have a coordinator approach where it is identified what is needed in the community. Let's put the money towards that. We are going to work with the schools and the department such as Health and Social Services and NGOs, the Food First Foundation and Breakfast for Learning, because, Mr. Chairman, over the last three years, Food First Foundation has provided just well over \$250,000 for Kids in the Kitchen Cooking Program in nine of the communities. Maybe we can top up on other communities that may have been left out.

Those are the prime focus of the \$400,000 to meet the needs of the communities that are somewhat left out where we can talk about Breakfast for Learning currently supporting breakfast, lunch and snack program as it was identified yesterday, 42 out of 49 schools. Maybe this will cover an additional seven schools as well. On top of that, other subsidies that will certainly benefit other communities or the schools, but we need to work with those organizations.

We have to keep in mind that after we've listened to the Regular Members about addressing their concern about the study, their concern about the steering committee and now I've made a commitment in this House that the \$400,000 will go towards the Nutritious Food Program. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate those comments from the Minister. I think that's going a good ways in the direction that we'd like to see this. The Minister mentioned in his remarks yesterday that 90 or 95 percent of these dollars would be going directly into those programs and I think as long as he agrees that that's the sort of figure we're looking at, I think that would satisfy the committee for now and I'd welcome his response to that. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We talked about 90 or 95 percent yesterday, but after hearing the Members, I will rank it up to 100 percent. Mahsi.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh!

MR. BROMLEY: I'm smiling. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We're on page 10-27, income security, operations expenditure summary, \$71.533 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Moving on to page 10-28, grants and contributions, income security, activity summary, grants, \$9.240 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Moving on to page 10-29, information item, active positions, income security. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Moving on to 10-30, information item, Student Loan Revolving Fund. Questions? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 10-33, details of funding allocation... Page 10-31, sorry, details of funding allocated to education authorities, information item. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask the Minister how many of the divisional education councils are currently in a deficit position.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Education.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. My understanding is that as of the last fiscal year there is none at this point. Mahsi.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Okay, well, that's good news. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. Actually, I just wanted to ask about the Western Arctic Leadership Program for 2010-11, Mr. Chair. What is the status and progress?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Education.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. That Western Arctic Leadership Program, we are in partnership with them as well. So we contribute on

an annual basis towards that particular program and they do have other partnerships that contribute to their leadership program as well. So we continuously support this area. Mahsi.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: That's all the questions I had there.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Okay, page 10-31, details of funding allocated to education authorities, information item. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to 10-31, again, or 10-32, information item, active positions, education authorities. Questions? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 10-35, Aurora College funding allocations, information item. Any questions? Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just wondering what the status is of the campus in Yellowknife in terms of a secured space. Do we know when our lease is up on the current space and longer term plans there? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Education.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. The college campus itself in Yellowknife is part of the education plan review that's being undertaken right now and that should be completed by April and we can share with the Members in due time. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: I think that there will be high interest in that. I'm just wondering, though, if we know when our lease expires on the current Yellowknife Campus building. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That will be two years from now in 2012. So that's the reason why we're doing this school review. Mahsi.

MR. BROMLEY: So I wonder, do we feel that's sufficient time, or I wonder if we have any early thoughts on this. That seems like a pretty tight window of time. I know we're looking at our whole strategy of space in Yellowknife and so on. Is there at least an option to renew on a short-term basis, if not a longer term basis, on our current space? Do we know? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: This should give us some time to review the overall plan of the Yellowknife Campus itself. With the outcome of the review, that should give us an indication of where we need to go next and the negotiations stages start from there. It's going to be just less than two years going forward. So it may or may not be enough time to put a package together, but we'll do what we can out of the review and then get together as a department, but we can update the Members as we progress forward. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Okay we're on page 10-35, Aurora College, funding allocations, information item. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to say on the record that I support the long-term vision of an independent college/university established here in the Northwest Territories and hopefully that the independence, what I'm referring to is a Yellowknife Campus. Mr. Chairman, I'm a little cautious that we would have a mass exodus out of the Northern United building, which at present the college in Yellowknife is located. I would caution, you know, both the department or any Member suggesting that we should jump out of that, only because we have to keep in mind what we're doing. In that particular facility, the Northern United building, the college provides itself as an anchor tenant to that building that may be difficult to replace. Now, in most cases, most people wouldn't care if the government is an anchor tenant or not, they think move ahead, but it's what that anchor tenant does that is very important.

The territorial government represents a significant amount of income to that building that allows them, in turn, to provide low, cost-effective housing for people who otherwise couldn't afford housing. In other words, the government, which pays a reasonable market fee, helps offset and allows that building to make sure that elders, whether they're a new Canadian, whether they're whatnot, have an ability to house...somewhere to live in a safe and secure environment and it's very affordable. So I'd just be cautious that anyone would suggest the long-term vision should not include some type of tenancy in that building.

I've spoken to the board there and said that my long-term vision of the college is to migrate out of there, but yet, I would like to see it as an independent campus here in Yellowknife, and I think that's the next phase for it. I'd be surprised if there were too many people in this city that didn't think so.

But we cannot forget government's social commitment and that building provides a lot of housing for people and it's extremely affordable where it's very difficult to find affordable housing if you're a single person with some kids. As I said, if you're a couple that are in your elderly years on an extreme fixed income, I mean, that becomes one of the most viable options for you, and that building does provide a safe home for a lot of people that otherwise would be extremely at risk. And furthermore, they'd probably be on maybe income support as a possible option to be able to get through. The government tenancy there also protects independent living by these types of people. It also being in my riding, I know it extremely well, and I can tell you right now that

there would be a lot of families put at risk if government did some brash move without, sort of, thinking.

I've always been a stalwart supporter of saying that the campus must evolve, and I think we'd be going backwards if we didn't look forward. But, that said, the government still, I think, has a social commitment to what that facility does, or I should say, that building does. So we should be cautious and tread very lightly on any potential changes on that building and realize the full impact it will have in this community. I'm not sure government would be prepared for the changes and, certainly, the dynamics that would fall out of that and I'd be very concerned.

Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to make sure that that got on the record, because, again, I'm not against the college leaving. I'm certainly in support of that. But we have to make sure we have a plan that's appropriate and that needs to be considered in this review. At least if it's not the college's problem, we should certainly make sure that the government understands that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Minister of Education.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're always very cautious on when we deal with those matters at hand, especially when the review comes into play. Once it's produced, then there will be plenty of discussion to take place, and we will be keeping the Members up to speed on what the next step would be. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Okay. Back to page 10-35, Aurora College, funding allocations. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 10-36, information item, work performed on behalf of others. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 10-37, again, information item, work performed on behalf of others. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Moving on to page 10-38, work performed on behalf of others. Any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Work performed on behalf of others, \$7.57 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Can we turn to page 10-7, department summary. Education, Culture and Employment, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$306.888 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that we have concluded the Department of Education, Culture and Employment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, I'd like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out?

The next department that we'll be looking at is the NWT Housing Corporation. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation if he has any opening comments. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Go ahead.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's main estimates for the fiscal year 2010-2011, which requests a total GNWT contribution of \$37.122 million. This is a decrease of 1.8 percent from the 2009-2010 Main Estimates.

Including revenue sources such as client rent, public housing subsidy, CMHC cost-shared funds and lease and mortgage payments from clients, the Housing Corporation will have approximately \$138 million available to spend on housing in the Northwest Territories in 2010-2011.

Federal funding for housing programs in the Northwest Territories in 2010-2011 will total over \$43 million. As Members are aware, 2010-2011 represents the final year of federal investments in housing in the Northwest Territories as part of its stimulus package to boost the Canadian economy. This funding accounts for \$29 million of the total federal investment in housing in the NWT this year. This government has committed to match this funding through the GNWT's contribution to the Housing Corporation. Canada has also provided a further \$4 million in unilateral program funding through programs to support our non-profit and cooperative housing sector, \$2 million for the modernization and improvement of public housing and a further \$500,000 for renovations through the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). In addition, this funding includes approximately \$9 million of debt recovery related to the repayment of cost-shared mortgage with CMHC.

Mr. Chair, this funding will be utilized in a number of areas, including program and capital delivery, public and social housing operations, debt repayment and administrative costs. The Housing Corporation will once again provide approximately \$22 million in homeownership and repair assistance through its Housing Choices Homeownership Programs. Of this \$22 million, \$9 million will be

used to build 36 new units for delivery through the Homeownership Entry Level Program (HELP). Eight million will be invested in repairs and renovations to private homes through the Contributing Assistance for Repairs and Enhancements program (CARE), which includes a \$2 million additional investment under the Reducing the Cost of Living Strategic Initiative to fund repairs for lower-income households. The remaining funding of \$5 million will support homeownership assistance through the Providing Assistance for Territorial Homeownership program (PATH), CMHC repair programs, third-party non-profit renovations, and preventative maintenance activities. Our Homeownership Programs are designed to ensure that the housing programs and services we provide foster client independence and respond directly to client needs in a manner consistent with our resources.

In an effort to strengthen the long-term viability of our public housing stock, the Housing Corporation will invest \$13 million to construct approximately 46 replacement public housing units. We continue to promote the sale of existing public housing units as part of this replacement process. We will invest just over \$18 million in the existing public housing stock, including \$15 million in major modernization and improvement projects, \$3 million in minor modernization and improvements, and \$230,000 for mobile equipment expenditures. As part of the modernization and improvement plan, \$1 million identified through the GNWT's Energy Investment Plan will focus on energy assessments and retrofits of the public housing portfolio.

As always, the corporation's largest expenditure is related to the delivery of the Public Housing Program in our communities. The approximate 2,400 units in our public housing inventory cost \$40 million to operate each year. A large portion of this funding is provided to LHOs through the Public Housing Rental Subsidy which, as Members know, will be transferred back to the Housing Corporation during the coming fiscal year. Approximately \$5 million is collected through tenant rents. Our ability to deliver the Public Housing Program depends on the rent we collect and it is important for our tenants to play their part in the program's success by undergoing income assessments and paying the portion of rent required based on their income.

Mr. Chair, it is clear that Canada is an important funding partner required to support the efforts of this government to improve housing conditions in our Territory. As noted previously, at the end of 2010-2011, funding for new construction under the Economic Action Plan will cease, and changes will be made to federal programs such as RRAP and AHL. Earlier in this session, I outlined new housing need data showing an increase in our core housing need from 16 percent to 19 percent over the past five years in spite of significant investments by both

levels of government. If we are to continue to make progress in improving housing conditions across our Territory, it will be critical for us to put pressure on the federal government to continue to invest in northern housing while also recognizing that we can do more as a government to improve housing conditions on our own. I, along with my territorial counterparts, have called for a new approach to northern housing that would provide long-term predictable funding to the Territories, based on need rather than population, and including funds to not only build housing but to operate and maintain them as well. I see this as a critical step in making improvements to our communities and improving the lives of our residents.

In closing, it should be noted that we are pleased with the federal government's commitment to the North through housing investments. The sustainability of our existing public housing stock, however, will be at risk if we are unable to secure a long-term funding commitment from the federal government. Once again this year, federal funding for the operation and maintenance of public housing has declined and it will continue to do so until lapsing completely in 2038. The annual impact of this decline is beginning to be felt more severely. The Housing Corporation recognizes this problem and is developing strategic approaches to deal with the decline of CMHC funding. These approaches will build on our own capacity to address these challenges as well as ongoing strategies to ensure that our public housing stock remains viable. Protection of these housing assets are critical as public housing is perhaps the single most important means we have to adequately, affordably and suitably house residents in the greatest need.

That concludes my opening remarks. At this time I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, I'd like to ask the Minister if he will be bringing in any witnesses.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, I will, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): With that, Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses in.

For the record, Mr. McLeod, can you introduce your witnesses?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me, to my left, Mr. Jeff Polakoff, president of the NWT Housing Corporation, and I have, to my right, Mr. Jeff Anderson, vice-president of Finance with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Welcome, witnesses. General comments. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just wondering, under the Canada Economic Action Plan funds that have been and are being spent in the Northwest Territories and recognizing that we are losing our federal funding steadily with the levelling out at zero in 2038, are any of the Economic Action Plan dollars stimulus funds being directed to really build our capacity for building and maintaining our houses with local people and resources so that we can start to shoulder some of those things ourselves and circulate what dollars we do have in the communities instead of exporting them out of the NWT.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Lafferty, would you like to respond to the general comment?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. With a lot of the money that we've gotten from the Canada Economic Action Plan, a lot of it was going more towards the multi-family-type units where there would be a cost savings to maintain and operate. We're starting to see a lot more of that within the Housing Corporation, but a good portion of the money that we did receive was to go towards doing the multi. Also, a lot of it was going towards some of the repairs needed in the community and we've had some communities say that they've never had so much work before from the Housing Corporation. A lot of that is due to the investment made by the federal government.

MR. BROMLEY: I realize these are general comments, so I'm trying to keep my questions general rather than as comments. I suppose my comment there would be I hope that we do maximize our opportunity for building capacity with these funds. Certainly we can't help but generate jobs when we're throwing \$50 million out there. Some real focus on directing funds to build that capacity in meaningful ways other than just units on the ground, and I know that's essential as well, could help.

Just my second one, really, is related. I'm happy to see we're lobbying and I'm sure we're being more effective in joining our voices with other northern jurisdictions on this, but certainly the federal government seems implacable at this point in time and we know they're facing their own issues in terms of deficits and so on. I'm wondering just again what sort of contingency funding or contingency planning we're doing to help prepare for that day. I know we're 20-some years ahead here, so hopefully something will happen by then, but at the same time, our funds are going down year by year by year. We have gotten lucky over the last couple of years, which has really helped, but obviously our needs survey has shown that it

hasn't been the answer completely. So we will be facing a tighter and tighter ship as we go on. I'm just wondering, does the Minister have any thoughts on what contingency planning we can be doing in the future on that. I'll use some of my time on that.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Hopefully we'll be around in 2038 to see it, well, not hit zero. I'm thinking, as I said before, part of our strategy is the design of our homes going to the more multi-unit-type homes. I think we may come to a point where we may have to make some hard decisions on how we provide houses. Are we a public housing provider? The homeownership, we'll have to see that. The bottom line is we'd still like to secure funding from Canada for the operation and maintenance and we'll continue to lobby them for that part. But I think it's going to come to a point where maybe it's a question of asking the Assembly for more money to replace some of the money that we're losing to CMHC. We will have some hard decisions that we'll have to make and we'll have to sort out our priorities and see where we can best use what money that we have.

MR. BROMLEY: I understand there are some tough realities here. I think ultimately it comes down to the communities themselves. That's the ultimate endpoint provider. I tip my hat to the City of Yellowknife for their Affordable Housing Initiative. I think it's not a precise model for our smaller communities, but I think it's a pretty good indication of some direction we could and should be going and focusing yet again on community capacity for dealing with some of these issues, because ultimately that's where they end up residing. We can play a big, supportive role there, at least. That's it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General comments. I'll come out.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): And next on the list is Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to the Minister's statement and also the housing programs, I note in this statement that he talked about promoting the sale of existing public housing units. I think that's a great idea. I think we have something like 1,000 units that we're trying to get rid of. I think the plan a number of years ago was 100 units a year for 10 years, take those dollars, reinvest it as one of the ways of dealing with the declining social funding from the federal government. Yet, I believe we have sold very few units. One of the major problems of that is we've overestimated the value of those assets and are expecting to get \$80,000 or \$90,000 for these units in our communities. No one will pay \$80,000 or \$90,000 for these old units which are over 35 and 40 years old.

I think we have to be realistic here. I think we should do whatever we can to deal hard-to-house people, people who are in the present system who do make a reasonable wage and can afford to maintain a unit, and have shown that they are able to pay their rent even through the economic rent system. That's a frustration that we have. We have a lot of clients in public housing who can afford to maintain a home, but they get frustrated, too, because they see other people who aren't in social housing get into public housing units that are being built. There are also units in our communities that are sitting vacant. I think the whole idea was to get people into those units, yet we have a lot of vacant units, especially the newer units that are coming on. We're not doing anything from either end trying to get those units occupied by people who can show that they do have the capacity to maintain and operate these units.

Another issue that I didn't really hear much of is the whole area, I know I raised it quite a few times, about people with disabilities in communities. I think that it was a pilot project tried in Yellowknife, but it has never gone to anywhere outside of Yellowknife to identify how this is especially designed for people with disabilities so that they can occupy these units, have it designed for their needs but, more importantly, have those units available, for we have high numbers of people with disabilities. I think it is crucial that we, as a government, seriously take a look at that. Again, it is something that I don't see anywhere in the Minister's statement.

The other area I think that we do have to realize in the areas dealing with the Department of Health and Social Services is seniors care facilities in communities regardless if it is permanent care, long-term care or basically just simply elders care facilities that make sense. As long as the numbers are there, we have the adequate number of people that we can put in these units and not build units just simply for the sake of building units. I think we have had some examples of that in other areas.

Again, I think that we do have to find a way of revamping the programs that we do have. I know that the Auditor General, a number of years ago, in the report, clearly stipulated the government has to find a system to do ongoing reviews of these housing programs and to ensure that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing, but more importantly, they are achieving the results we are hoping to achieve. I have raised the issue in this House in regards to how those programs and services are being delivered. I think that's one of the biggest issues you hear from clients, especially in my riding. The income threshold that is used and in most cases they are refused because of their income. But yet, to operate and maintain a home in a community, especially in isolated communities, you have to have a decent income to operate and maintain those units. I think we have to be realistic

when we set these thresholds. Make sure that it is meeting the increases regardless if it is the price of fuel, the cost of maintaining and operating a home and have the ability to adjust those types of programs.

Every time the government needs a supp, they come forward because the price of fuel went up. They are looking at some reason that the cost to operate those units but we have to come forward. If any time the government justifies coming forward for a supp, needing more money for fuel increases, we should look at increasing the threshold for programs that the Housing Corporation delivers on the same argument. I think we have to develop programs with realistic numbers; numbers knowing that we have different costs associated with homeownership, the operational cost, the cost to maintain the homes in our smaller communities is very high and you do have to have a pretty reasonable income to maintain a home in a lot of our communities.

Again, I will leave that with the Minister. Maybe he can answer a couple of those questions, and then I have a few more after that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, the Member is right.; there was an effort to promote the sale of some of the existing public housing stock. We have managed to move a few. We have identified I think it is another 63 that could be sold. He is also correct that there was some concern with the cost of some of these units. We just have to make sure that a lot of the folks that maybe would buy these units would be able to maintain them. Some of them are older units. It is a concern there.

The vacant units is one that we hear obviously quite a bit about. In some communities we hear from folks there that have had units vacant in the community almost since the time they were built. We have taken steps to address some of that and find some solutions and to fill in these units. Our wish is to have folks that are able to qualify for the program be in the program, and that goes to another point that the Member raised on the income threshold. It is one area that when I first got the portfolio with the senior officials, I did say there was a gap of people that Members have been talking about for a long time that we need to address. Some of the smaller communities where folks are making a pretty decent wage, they are somehow over the income threshold and they fail to qualify even though we all know they'd be able to maintain their own unit.

So that is one that we are going to concentrate on for the next little bit. There is an ongoing policy review. We have one in 2010-2011 where we are

evaluating the Housing Choices programs. Obviously we would be discussing with committee and getting some feedback from them as to what they are hearing. We hear it quite a bit in the House. Also as part of this, there will be a review of the rent scale. The people with disabilities, we've doubled the amount of money we have available to convert houses to disabled access units. So they would be able to take us upon that money. We also have some designs and in some of the communities, the LHOs recognize that they have some disabled tenants and they take steps to try to address that.

I think I may have touched on most of the Member's points and I will wait for the next round. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. KRUTKO: One of the other areas that the department should seriously consider is family size, especially when you start off as a single couple and then maybe you have a few children. What we are finding is it is leading to overcrowding. A lot of people that got into Homeownership Program were basically newlyweds. In most cases, they might have had one child or something. A couple of years later, they have four children and the house is not designed for six people. Is there a possibility that the government can look at the programs wherever possible and instead of having to do a major retrofit of that unit by expanding the unit, if they could swap houses with the government... You are going to have other clients in the same predicament where they are newlywed couples. They are needing more than just a two-bedroom unit versus a house where you need a four-bedroom unit where you have a family with six people occupying that unit. I think there has to be some flexibility in our programs and services that we can in our communities, wherever possible, than having to have the people apply on a program where they're going to have to go to the bank, get a major loan to expand their unit. It might make more sense just to swap out units between the Housing Corporation and the people, because they are our clients. They came to us for a program. They managed to get the credibility of going to the bank and sign onto the mortgage. Something this government has to look at on the progression of growth. You start off as a single couple, you have children, you have a family. As we grow, we have to look at housing with regard to a transitional period when you start off as a single person. Then you get married and you move through life. Eventually the whole cycle of housing has to be considered here.

I find it really, I wouldn't say challenging, but for people in communities, especially families that realize their house is too small, they've got four kids and it was only designed for three people. We talk about the area of statistics and overcrowding, health conditions and everything else, that brings up the area of health care and not only the

affordability of housing but the adequacy of houses. I would like to ask the Minister if that's something they could consider looking at in light of these units we have in our communities. It might make more sense to deal with somebody that already has the credibility with the banks, who has the track record of actually being on board, paying their mortgage. They're getting ahead, but they just cannot get that assistance to expand their unit, which probably makes more sense to go to the house and say can we do a swap here. I believe we already do that in some cases, where we actually take back units and then basically offer them to other clients. I'd just like to ask the Minister if that's something they can seriously consider. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: This was part of developing a local market where people in the communities become homeowners. So if there's a deal that can be worked out between two homeowners, because you have people that would receive the unit when they had a fairly large family and then they've all moved out so there's opportunity there. If a person owns their own home in the community and they realize that it may have gotten too small for them, if they've done all their forgivable part or if they've paid everything up, then there's an opportunity for them if there's a market there -- in some cases there is -- to sell their unit and maybe move into a bigger unit. But that was the whole idea of developing a local market.

I think we've seen cases in some of the communities where people have switched houses or someone's had a smaller house, they've sold it and they've managed to get into a house, maybe where there was a quick claim. So there's always opportunities like that and as long as the person is the absolute homeowner, then they have to agree to it and sometimes they'll initiate the discussion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister. Next on my list I have Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to respond to some of the opening comments and the challenges of the NWT Housing Corporation. Of course, in the Ministerial statement a few days ago the Minister did mention about the stats in the Nahendeh riding that were one of the highest regions with regard to adequacy in our communities. In plain words, we've got lots of really old homes that require repairs. We've got lots of overcrowding, especially in Fort Liard. We do have lots of new homes coming up, I'll grant that there, Mr. Chair, but the challenge is that in Fort Liard we're not adding new homes, we're just replacing the old ones. So we're not really increasing the units. But at the same time, we are getting new units, which is a good thing for the community of Liard.

We still got a long way to go, particularly in Fort Liard. The need is still for an increase in public housing. I've got maybe half the community there that probably won't be eligible for the HELP program of purchasing their own homes, but the need would definitely be public housing, I think. In my last discussions with the Hamlet of Fort Liard, we're looking at at least 30 to 50 more units just to catch up to the population that's there to replace the older homes and house the new younger generation. So I'd certainly like to work towards that.

The residents of Fort Liard continue to indicate to me about mould issues. Mould is still high there. There's the black mould that's really creating health problems, especially if you've got a household of six to 10 people, it only increases the ability of our people to get sicknesses and disease from this mould. So the mould strategy is still needed. I raised it in the House several times. I'm not too sure where we've been going towards that. And the houses that do have mould there, Mr. Chair, they probably need to replace the walls, replace the drywall, et cetera, doors, et cetera.

But these people, a lot of the people not only in Fort Liard but in many of the communities I represent, are in arrears. Arrears are really disputable. So people are saying, well, I've got a house but it wasn't really fixed, so I stopped paying. Or else, yes, I did get a mortgage, or I got the repair program, but it wasn't adequately fixed so I'm not paying back the loan. That kind of stuff. So, to me, actually, to the Corporation, on their books it certainly is an arrears, but for me it's about appealing it and coming to some kind of dispute resolution where each individual client is going to take lots and lots of work, Mr. Chair. But I believe my constituents, that they have real concerns with the original construction, or original paperwork, or original additions, et cetera, and they really did have concerns. Even though I advise them that it's probably not the best thing to stop paying, but still, they're adamant and frustrated that no one's come back to fix their light switch or finish painting. So they do have real concerns. At the same time, it disallows them from future programs.

The community of Wrigley, I've got about probably 10 or 12 homes that are not eligible for repairs and they're badly needed repairs. The community of Wrigley had actually done a health assessment two years ago and took numerous photos of all the homes, of the dilapidated conditions. There's even mould in Wrigley, as well. Inadequate flooring, furnaces, just a whole gamut of issues with each and every one of those houses. They do need repairs, but this whole arrears question is a barrier and the corporation does have their rules and guidelines.

So for me, I've always been pushing the appeals mechanism, the appeals process. Questioning the Minister in the House the other day, he did indicate that we are looking at establishing the appeals system. I'm hoping that, like last year, the commitment is the same, that we can have it up and running by April 1st. It was supposed to be running by April 1st last year. But I believe that by having an independent appeals system we can bring resolution to each individual, especially in the Nahendeh riding. A lot of my memos of support of constituents in each of the communities is actually an appeal to the corporation saying, look, you know, this went wrong, that's why they're not paying, or else they felt the paperwork wasn't done.

So it's going to take a lot of work, but I believe that with a strong initiative, that we can begin the process of addressing each individual's concern and try to resolve them. At the same time, it will be a good opportunity to improve the living conditions of our constituents and our people in the regions and the communities. Also, it's the level of arrears as well. If the arrears are nominal, \$1,000 to \$3,000 to \$5,000, can we roll it into any new program? I know they've got a mortgage repayment program that's quite successful that way. But if someone's actually just applying for a repair program, is there room to actually add the \$2,000 or \$3,000 of arrears to that repair program, because it's repayable anyways. I think that will go a long ways in having suitably repaired homes, good floors, et cetera.

That's one of my thinking. That's why I'm adamant. I've been pushing that appeals process for almost six years as an MLA now, and I'd like to see us work towards that, Mr. Chair.

Just a little bit more on the arrears, Members have also spoken about arrears that are very, very old. So if the Minister is going to comment to my remarks here, if he can also address the fact of what efforts are being to change the NWT Housing Act to allow the corporation to write off some of these very, very old debts, because it's probably good fiscal practice to do so. I don't know any corporation that holds debt on their books forever. So there's got to be a way to erase that. It will probably look better for accounting processes and as they deliberate their budgets. A lot of that debt, and it's arrears to people, people might have programs 10, 15, 20 years ago. Even they don't even remember they got arrears until they actually try to access Housing Corporation programming. There are many, many reasons to forgive debt. So all this has to be looked at. I believe that slight change in the NWT Housing Corporation Act of eliminating some of the arrears, eliminating some of the debt, that we can also move a long ways in helping our constituents and communities and regions in improving and allowing constituents to

access more NWT housing programs, which is the real reason why we're here. I'm often criticized, as I travel through the region, that I cannot get the housing program.

We are getting new clients. They're often working. They got income. But those that aren't working are the ones that are really impacted. They're the ones that have the homes that are in need of repairs. Those are the people that seem to be in overcrowded conditions. I really believe that we have to address this whole area of arrears and establish the appeal process. At the same time I think that will reduce a lot of the, I hate to say the word "negativity" towards the Housing Corporation, but I think it's more the barrier that's there. Front-line workers are governed by our guidelines and procedures so they do have to say no, but at the same time, we as legislators can work with government and the Minister to try to make those changes that make lives a little bit better for our people

With that, I don't mind if I get some comments from the Minister with regard to those issues.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next on my list is Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly wouldn't mind hearing more about what the Housing Corporation is actually doing with the declining CMHC funding. This is my seventh budget, if I remember correctly, and I think for all seven I've heard the same standard line. Not just from this Minister but from some of the previous Ministers. I'm curious as to what headway has been made on this particular issue. Have we negotiated anything? What headway have we made with other provincial governments or territorial governments on getting this initiative really on the agenda as one that can be solved? Or is this one we just cannot solve? It always seems to dominate the future of the Housing Corporation as the critical element, and rightly so; it's the money. But ultimately each year -- and I don't certainly blame this Minister by any means -- I've heard the same line. This is the seventh time I've heard this story. I know the Minister, when he was on this side, would have heard the story told to him by the old Minister. I want to get a sense as to what actually is being done and what success. Furthermore, I think equally importantly, if I may say, what success have we made.

I wouldn't mind hearing as to what, you know, I'm an environmentalist in the moderate sense, I'd like to think, and I'd like to hear what the department is doing about energy efficiencies and through developing our housing stock down that road. What are we doing to take those things into consideration? Whether it's repairing our homes or developing our existing housing stock, with those

type of things in mind, ensuring that our new housing stock is reflective of these type of needs. I'm always about common sense. How are we planning to heat these things? I'm not about suggesting we have to be splitting atoms on any sort of new design, but I think there are lots of excellent examples out there on energy efficiency that could provide strong examples of doing business better.

The other area that I think I'd like to hear a little more from the Housing Corporation is what is its plan at this time for the expansion of housing for disabled people. One of the big things that I always try to trumpet in any way and every opportunity is housing for people with disabilities. I feel very passionate about that cause and I've worked very hard with the department in the past and certainly have been successful with one of the older Ministers -- I should say one of the past Ministers, not older -- about getting the eightplex building built downtown and quite fortunate that it was even in the riding of Yellowknife Centre. It provided a new type of living for people who had not had decent and adequate housing that met the standards of basic needs for people in the situation of having a disability. I think the department at the time responded most excellently in the sense of achieving a standard. I shouldn't call it a new standard, but certainly achieving a new standard in the way that the people with disabilities are living in public housing in the existing situation in Yellowknife.

When I travel to the communities it's very odd, because what I'll find is the number of people in the communities, whether I'm in Inuvik or Fort Smith, people know that was a big cause of mine in my first term. They're asking, because they had heard that this was something I had always said, not unlike what Mr. Krutko had said a minute ago, I had always presented it as a new way of doing business better for people with disabilities and why couldn't this model be rolled out in some type of form territorially. Start maybe with regional centres and see how far deep into our network of communities we can go.

We do have people with disabilities who need supportive living. It's not just in Yellowknife. It's not just in Hay River. It's not just in Inuvik. Whether you live in Gameti or Trout Lake or Sachs Harbour or Resolution, there are people out there. I don't think our public housing stock reflects that individual need. As I emphasize individual, I will note that the department in the past has done some good work on trying to address case-by-case situations, which I certainly give them great kudos for their support in trying to identify individual cases and help them on those measures, but I always find that it's one-offs. That's why I'd like to hear what this corporation is doing to develop a plan to help with the low stock, or in most cases a non-existing stock of public

housing that suits people with disabilities. I think that seems to be a missed focus here. Like I say, I know that they try very hard at working on one-on-one cases, but I don't think the plan exists.

Furthermore, I think that needs to be a focus. I know the president speaks very highly of aging in place and I certainly share his passion on that particular case. You can certainly see the investment that's been done in our community over at the Aven Cottages. I think it really requires a hard and serious focus as to what plans we should be considering. We need to come up with a strategy and that just doesn't exist today. Recently I've had a constituent who is bound by a wheelchair and we don't have public housing that can facilitate this family's needs. So if one person is wheelchair bound, they're almost held hostage to the system that there's nowhere for them to go. One of the options then becomes that we have to break up the family and I think that's the wrong focus.

We should be trying to say to ourselves where is our strategy to make sure we have public housing that reflects this type of need. I know that is a very important thing for me and I certainly hope that with the team over at the Housing Corporation it will be identified as an important issue for them. One of their jobs here is trying to find these type of milestones within the department's focus for the next year. I worry that this issue has gone by the wayside and back to the one-off approach. The one-off approach tends to be like trying to pull hen's teeth. It's always a struggle getting one person individually accommodated. If the housing stock doesn't provide for that need, they go to income support and income support is sometimes forced to pay an exorbitant market fee because this particular facility may be the only one and it is private, so the income support is further held hostage by the fee that we can only get these facilities for.

I guess I certainly hope that my concern, my passion and certainly a little element of my frustration on this issue is heard. It is not meant to be at anyone personally, but the fact is that I really want to make sure that the corporation starts speaking to me about strategy. I know it is great to use all these buzz words on how we are going to do things, but eventually I would really like to see a plan in my hands that says, look, we are going to commit to five units here this year. We're going to commit to two units in this particular community. We are going to do this. That is usually one of the most exciting things we can do here, but we have to see it on paper. I am not really looking for buzz words about we are going to rethink and change and do this and that. I would like to hear where we have a plan in place and we are just waiting for this budget to activate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I believe at this time that is all I have for opening comments. I shall provide more as I see fit throughout the budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. We are on general comments. Just for reference, communities like community plan for placements I believe is on pages 63 to 65. We will get to that when we get to it. General comments. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to see that there is more money being put into repairs and renovations by NWT Housing Corporation. I think that is a substantial increase from when this government first started. I do believe that the original repair and renovation budget was \$792,000. It went up to \$2.1 million and then now to \$8 million, so this is very good news.

I hope that the money is able to get out to communities that have the higher needs and up to the groups that have the higher needs as well. When I speak of the groups with higher needs, I am referring to the different groups that I always felt that the corporation should be strategizing towards addressing the core need groups, and the different core need groups being seniors, families, couples and single people. If we look at the core needs across the Territories, although I didn't review the needs for what was tabled yesterday, I don't know how the core needs are reported. My assumption is that core needs are continuing to be reported in that way where there is a difference between seniors, singles, families and so on and so forth. My feeling is that, if the corporation uses strategy to approach the different core need areas or the core need groups, then I think they would go a ways to actually addressing the core need issues in a better fashion, I do believe. Although this is not about the needs survey, this is about the main estimates. I realize that.

Of course, it is a disappointment to see that the needs have grown from 16 percent to 9 percent. My understanding is that the needs have dropped substantially here in the city of Yellowknife. I guess when you see that number, it is kind of a scary thought because if you have half of your households in the Northwest Territories located in the city of Yellowknife and the core needs in Yellowknife drops from 11 percent down to 5 percent, say, as a rough estimate, that is a 6 percent drop in half of the households across the Territories. If there is an overall increase of 3 percent, then of course I am saying that then there must be a 9 percent increase outside of Yellowknife. That is just doing the rough math on that, right? That is a real disappointment. That is essentially what I have been standing up in the House over the last two-plus years and saying.

Does the Housing Corporation have a strategy that is actually designed to lower core needs?

The responses I have been getting is we have these four programs. I keep saying, they don't seem to be working. When you build a home in Fort Resolution and nobody moves into it and when you build a home in Fort Resolution or Lutselk'e and a teacher that has a high paying job moves into it, then I have no issue with housing teachers. Don't get me wrong. They need housing too, but that does zero to address the core needs issue. That is a \$250,000 expenditure that does nothing to the core need. That is what my issue is. I have been saying all along. We have to have a strategy that addresses the core needs by community.

The communities that have the highest need, you have to go in there, develop a strategy that addresses that issue. You have to take a look at the core need groups.

Seniors still continue to be the highest core need across the Territory. We have to have a strategy to address the core needs of seniors. The families are having the highest core need issue. If small community families and small communities have the highest core need issues, then the Housing Corporation, if they are serious about lowering the core need and not just reporting it, have to have a strategy to address it. I have yet to see or hear of such a strategy.

We can't continue to say we have programs that are addressing this issue and have vacant houses right across the Territories. If we are going to pump all our money into vacant units or pump our money into units that eventually become market housing units in small communities, we do nothing to address the core needs issue.

We have people that are very poor in the small communities. We have very low employment rates in small communities. However, they might have arrears with housing. They might have arrears with land tax, lease arrears, whatever they do have. All I do know is that the income they have only takes them from month to month. They have arrears and are not addressing those.

We see those commercials on TV. Food or shelter: one million Canadians can't afford both. The Northwest Territories percentage of that is much higher. I am assuming over one million families across the country is based on the fact that we have 30-some-odd million people in Canada, but that ratio is much higher in the Northwest Territories. We are supposed to be addressing those issues.

It is not just an income issue. It is in a lot of cases these guys have no income. They are getting income support. They have only pensions as a fixed income. And yet the Housing Corporation

does not have a strategy, unless I am wrong and the Housing Corporation does have a strategy and they are going to present it to us saying, this is how we are going to address the high core need issue in Lutselk'e. This is how we are going to address the high needs core issue in Fort Resolution. That would be something that I would love to hear. I would like to hear how that strategy is going to roll out and how we are going to look at each of those groups and address those issues.

Those strategies work because they applied. The strategic planning is applied. They are worked on all the time and they work. You go after those issues. You don't develop a program and throw the program out there for the people in the field to deliver, and you don't build empty houses and think that you are addressing houses that remain vacant and think that you are actually addressing a core need issues. I don't believe that is the way to go.

I will have questions through the detail of the corporation, but it is probably questions that I have asked all along. Now I think I have come to a point where, and I made Member's statements in here saying I am frustrated with the process.

The one area where it is very difficult to achieve success as an MLA when you are trying to work for you people is in housing, and that is because the Housing Corporation, in my opinion, does not have a strategy to address issues, no strategy to address core need issues dealing with the people. The Housing Corporation has regional staff. The regional staff are fairly close to the communities, the regions are fairly small, districts are fairly small. It is not a huge district which are understaffed. They have fairly small districts and they have a fairly decent staff complement. It is just that people have to get out of their offices, go into the communities and get to know the people.

As a program officer, they are dealing with 100 units in Lutselk'e, 200 units in Fort Resolution. They should be able to visit every household and have a good information session with every family in Tu Nedhe without having any problem at all, but that is not what happens. I think my time is up, Mr. Chairman, so I will leave the rest of my comments for the detail. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Next on my list is Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really want to commend my colleague Mr. Beaulieu for his statement. I feel the same because housing is such a big part of our problems in Nunakput. Either a shortage of houses, young families can't have a house due to none being there. There is a rental market, no private industry to bring in units for the housing market.

I really like what I see in regards to the infrastructure investment summary. I just have a

couple of comments in regards to that. I am happy for Paulatuk. We got the six major retrofits coming up. One replacement and a fourplex which is going to be there this year, which is going to be good for the young families that I have in Paulatuk.

Another thing in regards to Paulatuk, I promised my elders two years ago, when Minister Miltenberger was the Housing Minister, we promised the community and the elders in the old-folks home that we would build a back deck. Still there is no back deck. I don't see this in our executive summary. That has to get done. For the fourplex in the community of Paulatuk, it is a good thing.

For Sachs Harbour, I have two new units and a major retrofit. Sachs Harbour is a community in need of units. Yesterday we heard in the statement that we don't need units. There is teachers going in, there is no private units in the community again that we don't have units for rental. We have young families that want to live in Sachs Harbour but there are no units. We put a fourplex in there would be fine for this upcoming year, but that isn't going to happen, we just got retrofits. I hope the Minister is listening because this is what is going to be needed in Sachs.

For Tuktoyaktuk, we have the one new unit and four major retrofits. Four units need replacement and one new unit for our fourplex. I think it is a fourplex, or one unit, but that is good. I think Tuktoyaktuk needs to get the nineplex in the community... It is really run down. It is probably about 30 years old now and has to be replaced. We have young families going in there with babies that are, you know they are scared to go in there and live, because anytime you get a west wind you have snow blowing in your house almost right through your living room. If we tore that nineplex down, we would be able to get a couple of new fourplexes in there and everybody is happy.

Ulukhaktok; now it is good to see the retrofits that are going on in the community. We have the one new unit and a major retrofit and the materials for another unit, so it looks really good. But again I see the short change in regards to what the communities get and then what the South Slave get again. I turn the page and I see for Behchoko four new units and then 14 major retrofits with 12 new units in that community. Last year, I asked just for two, you could throw up twelve and you would never know the difference. We are short units. That is how bad it is in our communities. We have people having to move to Inuvik because there are no units available. Now you have 16 units going into Behchoko, all brand new and you have two major retrofits in Sachs Harbour. If we took two off of that, we would be happy.

Then you get Yellowknife with a private market that has the capability of private businesses in regards to the 12 new units in Yellowknife, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, I think that if it isn't spent yet, you could change this, you know? We could just get a little bit out of Yellowknife anyway. Sorry, Ms. Bisaro. Then you have 26 retrofits for Yellowknife as well.

All in all, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I like what I see. I think we still have a little bit of work we could do for, hopefully, this upcoming year in the planning keeping Sachs Harbour, Ulukhaktok and Tuktoyaktuk, my communities that I represent. We are short units. Whatever report that you were given out of Inuvik with regards to the statement yesterday, I think that is totally wrong. I really looked forward to the planning session, but I will have the rest of my comments for the page by page. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. We are on general comments. Anybody with general comments? I will turn to the Minister for a response. Oh, sorry, Mr. Krutko. Did you have a question. I'll turn to Minister McLeod for a response.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I would be willing to wait if Mr. Krutko had some more general comments and I will respond to them all at once. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just going raise a question in regards to the Auditor General report which was presented February 2008. I know I raised issues in the House yesterday about the Homeownership Program. One of the recommendations in regards to the report, it says that the evaluation of Homeownership Programs is not performed on a regular basis. So I would just like to know when is the review taking place on the program and exactly what type of review are we looking at in regards to performance review, in regards to client surveys. Are we going to be looking at the whole area of accessibility and also ensuring that we do have a system?

I know we've raised the issue of appeals and whatnot for clients who have had issue with it. I know that the Auditor's General report was pretty intense and basically went through quite a few things, and I know that the department has made efforts to review some of those recommendations. But I'd just like to ask exactly where is that program going.

One of the other areas that I think we've raised a lot of times, especially from our small communities, is log construction. It seems like this government or this department does not want to see log houses built in the communities. I think for our residents in our communities, especially the aboriginal communities, they've always worked with wood in

regard to log cabins, log homes that they've built themselves in the past, and there are still people in our communities that have log houses. But I think that we have to start using the timber resources in the Northwest Territories, especially our forestry resources, and stop importing a lot of our wood products where we can produce it in the North, especially where we have the potential of wood misers or sawmills or even looking at the areas that we have for that potential. I know that the government in the past, through previous governments, have looked at log housing initiatives. I think that, for myself, we have to not totally exclude that opportunity that's there, especially where we do have the timber stands, we do have the resources close by our communities or around our communities and that people have had experience with building log houses in the past. Again, I think that we have to look at those types of initiatives.

The other initiative that has been very successful, especially in my riding, is the area of the Elders on the Land Program where people that basically want to live out on the land but also don't really want to be in town, but having the ability to implement that program. I know, especially for seniors and people that we talk about improving the quality of life for people, one thing that we found in McPherson especially is the seniors that do have the elders units on the land is that they're probably one of the healthier people in our communities, if not the healthiest. They still carry on a very traditional lifestyle. They still continue their traditional pursuits such as fishing and dealing with the caribou meat and making dried meat, dried fish, and also continue to be independent where they cut their own wood, they pack their own wood, pack their water. Yet, that traditional lifestyle is not acceptable in existing housing programs we have. I think a lot of people, I don't know if it's a question of allergies or whatnot or just dealing with housing construction, you hear from a few people that because these new, modern homes, they make them so energy efficient that they basically are circulating a lot of the air in the units where you don't have that ability.

I'd like to ask the Minister if he'd seriously consider looking at those types of initiatives and, more importantly, reviewing exactly what was suggested by the Auditor General of having a regular review of the program services on a regular basis so that we can see exactly what the pros and cons of those programs are and making them better than what they already are and, if anything, improving on what we already have. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Krutko, for that second set of general comments. I'll call on the Minister to reply to all comments. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There were a wide range of comments that were brought up and obviously housing is an issue that's felt very strongly about in the communities.

Mr. Menicoche was speaking about the mould in some of the units. Most of the technical staff in the regions now do have mould remediation training, so they're getting educated on how to deal with the mould issue.

The comments made by Mr. Hawkins on the barrier-free units, he talked about a strategy but a strategy is a report and we realize that we have probably 300 barrier-free units in our public housing inventory. For those that are living in private housing that apply for the CARE program and qualify, if they are a disabled person, the money that they would qualify for doubles what most people would qualify for, up to a maximum of \$180,000 to convert their unit into a barrier-free unit, which I think would go a long way in assisting them with their quality of life.

There was a lot of discussion on arrears. Arrears always seems to be one of the big problems that we hear about across the Northwest Territories and is one that my office gets a lot of calls about is the amount of arrears and I can't qualify for a program. We have to understand that the Housing Corp has gone a long way into trying to assist most people with homeownership. A lot of the homeownership that they're applying to get repaired are units that were given to them originally by the Housing Corporation, and you have a lot of folks out there that honour their commitment, that make their regular payments. It must be discouraging for them to hear, too, that folks that are not honouring their commitment or asking for forgiveness of their loans when they've been paying faithfully for 25, 30 years. I think that's one of the reasons that we find ourselves \$10 million in arrears in the mortgage file. Recognizing that, the Housing Corporation also recognizes that work needs to be done on some of the units that these folks have. So as part of the CARE, the home repair program, they've allowed up to \$5,000 in arrears. So that would help a lot of people. If you're \$5,000 in arrears, then you could qualify for a repair program.

The CMHC funding, that's always going to be an issue. This is a national issue; 650,000 units across Canada. A business case is being developed for Parliament to make them realize that this money is still needed in all jurisdictions. We hear about the core need groups and the community needs survey we did will go a long way in determining our infrastructure allocation for the next budget. This particular budget that we're dealing with now has already been set, so we're going to use this information that we gather to plan for our 2011-12 fiscal year. So those communities that are in higher

core need will obviously be given more of a priority in allocating infrastructure projects. That goes to some of Mr. Jacobson's points that he's got a community that needs units and if it's identified as part of the community survey, the core needs survey, then they would be given a priority.

I'm just trying to go down the list here. Mr. Krutko's remarks on the Auditor General. I think we're updating committee here quite shortly. I mentioned before that 2010-11, this fiscal year there will be a review done as per the Auditor General's recommendations. I think this is going to be year three so we'll have a review of all the programs, the Housing Choices programs and our programs across... The log houses, we quite agree. I mean, I'd like to see more log houses, but now with the crunch on dollars, it's getting to be a little more difficult. If there's a business case that could be made for doing it cheaper than stick-built then it's something that we're always willing to look at. Talking about local suppliers of lumber, I know with the wood miser and everything it would be awfully difficult because building material has to meet a certain standard right down to the moisture content. That's why a lot of the stick-built material comes in. So a business case mostly for the log houses.

The Elders on the Land program, I mean, we agree, there's a lot of good benefit to having that. Also, it has to be, I think one of the stipulations is it has to be their primary residence. We have a lot of folks out there that have had some of the program dollars for Elders on the Land, but it's not their primary residence. It's basically a cabin in the bush. I mean, we'd love to see more people out on the land. If that's their primary residence, then we'd be willing to work with them.

We hear a lot about the frustration of the way the Housing Corporation operates sometimes. Most of the frustration is around arrears and it's frustrating on our part to have to tell a Member that we've received a call from... Well, first of all, a person didn't apply and then they had arrears and if we start overlooking the arrears, we are setting a very expensive precedent. Everyone will say why should I bother paying and then we'll have an issue where we will have more money in arrears. I would think we need to be fair to everyone and we try to be as fair as possible. We've proven that with allowing up to \$5,000 arrears in the Home Repair Program, but we need to be fair to all those out there that they are honouring their commitments, they are paying quite regularly. We have public housing tenants all across the Northwest Territories that are faithfully paying. So we have to make sure that we are fair to everybody and we send the right message out there.

The Housing Corp has a huge responsibility in providing homeownership but also tenants and clients have a huge responsibility in honouring the

commitments, and I think when they do that, we'll see an improvement. Just imagine how much more we could do with all the money that are outstanding in arrears.

So, Mr. Chair, I hope I have been able to address some of the Members' questions and concerns. I think I've touched on just about all of them and I'm sure I'll have more comments and questions as we go through page by page. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Does committee agree that that concludes general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, committee. Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to report progress.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: I move...

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Once again, please.

MR. JACOBSON: I move that we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): Thank you, Mr. Jacobson.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bromley): I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Bromley?

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 62-16(4), NWT Main Estimates, 2010-2011, and would like to report progress. I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF OPERATIONS (Ms. Bennett): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Priorities and Planning committee tonight at the rise of the House.

Orders of the day for Friday, February 12, 2010, 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements

4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 2, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2009-2010
 - Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act
 - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Summary Conviction Procedures Act
 - Tabled Document 62-16(4), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2010-2011
 - Minister's Statement 47-16(4), Transfer of the Public Housing Rental Subsidy
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, February 12th, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

