



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, October 26, 2010****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:40 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 Premier, Mr. Roland.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 65-16(5):
DEVOLUTION AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE,
IMPACT ON LAND CLAIMS AND
PROTECTION OF ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories is only partway through a process on a devolution agreement-in-principle that has not yet concluded. Cabinet has not yet formally considered the proposed agreement-in-principle and we are still waiting to hear from aboriginal governments. While we have not made a final decision about next steps, I believe that it is important to take some time now to speak to some of the misconceptions and misinformation that have arisen since the leak of the proposed AIP a little more than a week ago.

Much has been said and reported in the media over the last week about the supposed impact of devolution on existing land claims and current land resources and self-government negotiations. There's been speculation that the draft devolution agreement-in-principle somehow prejudices current aboriginal rights negotiations and that governments would be violating existing land claims agreements if the draft devolution agreement-in-principle were to be approved. Nothing is further from the truth. Mr. Speaker, I would like to use my statement today to provide information on this subject in an effort to support the discussion that is grounded in fact.

First of all, the land claim agreements are modern treaties and, therefore, constitutionally protected. In concrete terms, that means if there were a conflict between a devolution agreement and a land claim, the land claim prevails.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out that existing land claim agreements anticipated

devolution. The Gwich'in, Sahtu and Tlicho agreements include statements that nothing in the land claim will prejudice the devolution of jurisdictions from Canada to the GNWT. It is important to understand this demonstrates that land claim agreements were never intended to prevent the devolution of authorities from Canada to the GNWT.

The GNWT has made commitments to the aboriginal parties to involve them in devolution negotiations. The GNWT has fully honoured these commitments and will continue to do so.

And, Mr. Speaker, the draft devolution agreement-in-principle includes specific protections for existing aboriginal treaty rights and settlements as well as future settlements.

It is important to understand that current regional land resources and self-government negotiations are based on, or a regionalization of, the 1990 unratified draft Final Dene-Metis Agreement. What that means in concrete terms is that land and cash offers are based on the unratified Dene-Metis Agreement. Devolution has no influence or effect on Canada's offer at negotiations regarding land and cash.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to clarify statements that the subject matters for negotiation in devolution talks are the same as those in self-government negotiations. Simply put, that is not true. First of all, devolution deals with administration and control over Crown lands. Land claim agreements and self-government agreements address the aboriginal party's authority to administer and control settlement land. Land claim agreements also address the land, water and environmental regulation throughout the settlement area.

This regulatory regime applies to all parties who own land, be it settlement corporations, aboriginal governments, other third parties, or the federal government or the GNWT as it administers Crown land. The single integrated system of resource management throughout the Mackenzie Valley was a central feature of the draft Dene-Metis Final Agreement and nothing in a devolution agreement can affect that.

Furthermore, the focus of self-government negotiation is in areas such as education, social assistance, child protection, adoption and social

housing. Devolution negotiations, on the other hand, only address the powers and authorities of a public government to administer and control public land.

I would like to assure Members of this House, the public, and our aboriginal partners that the ownership of land and resources, both surface and subsurface, recognized under existing or future land claims will not be jeopardized by a devolution agreement. Aboriginal people, through their claimant organizations, will continue to be significant landowners in this Territory. With or without devolution, the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Sahtu, and Tlicho will all continue to own the surface and subsurface lands identified in their respective agreements.

In addition, the Gwich'in, Sahtu, and Tlicho agreements have specific chapters dealing with resource royalties that already provide them a share of all resource royalties collected throughout the Mackenzie Valley. Additional resource revenues will be offered to aboriginal governments as part of our final agreement on devolution.

I believe we may have the basis for a deal on devolution that will create real benefits and opportunities, that will bring decision-making about the North to the North for all residents of the Northwest Territories. In the next few days you will hear more from me and other Ministers on the subject of net fiscal benefit, environmental protection, aboriginal participation in negotiations and A-base funding. I trust that the information we provide will contribute to an informed discussion as we consider the merits of the proposed AIP and our next steps over the coming days and weeks.

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

MOTION TO MOVE MINISTER'S STATEMENT
65-16(5) INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
CARRIED

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Minister's Statement 65-16(5) be moved into Committee of the Whole.

---Carried

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 66-16(5):
CULTURE AND HERITAGE UPDATES

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories has a rich cultural history we need to continue to explore and celebrate. I'm pleased to share successful projects

supported by the culture and heritage division at the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

These projects demonstrate our commitment to research, preserve and share information while highlighting our commitment to showcasing and promoting vibrant cultures of today.

This past summer the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre was a tourist destination for visitors and Northerners alike; over 12,000 visitors enjoyed the new exhibits.

This fall and winter the heritage centre is hosting three new displays of northern heritage, art and culture:

1. Frozen Eyes - Open Minds is a colourful display of over 80 photographs of youth and photographer mentors, showing modern life in Deline, Fort Simpson, Fort Liard, Fort Smith, N'dilo and Yellowknife.
2. The Sissons and Morrow Collection is a historic collection of carvings and objects on loan from GNWT Department of Justice.
3. Seasons of Beauty is a series of photographs by the well-known priest and photographer Father Rene Fumoleau.

The Northwest Territories Ice Patch Study continues for a fifth year on the ancient glaciers of the Mackenzie Mountains. This is a partnership program with the Tulita Dene Band and archaeologists from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the Ice Patch Study revealed ancient Dene artefacts, well-preserved in ice for thousands of years. The artefacts tell the story of when and where the Dene hunted for caribou and other animals.

In Canada, geographical features are named in honour of men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces who died in service of their country. In the Northwest Territories, official commemorations were made during, or shortly following, the Second World War to honour Canadian war casualties, Victoria Cross winners, military leaders, military actions and naval actions.

Three hundred sixteen official geographical names in the Northwest Territories commemorate war casualties. Lists are posted on the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre website in time for Remembrance Day.

Making creative art contributes to the quality of life for artists and for residents who enjoy art. Throughout the 25th anniversary of the NWT Arts Council, 70 creative projects were approved for funding. This is a testament to the continued vitality and talents of our artists.

I want to encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to visit the Prince of Wales Northern

Heritage Centre website to learn more about the upcoming cultural and heritage activities and exhibits. It will also give you a chance to become a fan of our new Facebook page. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker,

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Robert McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 67-16(5):
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT PROGRAM

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am pleased to provide Members with an update on several initiatives that support the 16th Legislative Assembly vision and goals by promoting healthy choices and lifestyles and contributing to the physical and mental well-being of our youth.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and its Healthy Choices partners -- Health and Social Services, ECE, Justice, Transportation, the aboriginal governments and the Aboriginal Sport Circle -- work with families, community governments and schools to encourage individuals and families to take responsibility for their well-being and to become physically active. Our common goal is to motivate all residents to lead healthier lifestyles. We consider physical activity an important pillar of the Healthy Choices Framework.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to report on a number of initiatives the department announced earlier this year.

First, the new Regional Youth Sport Events Program is designed to strengthen local programming in smaller and remote communities, to support athletes and coaches and to improve youth participation in physical activity. I am happy to announce that the department supported 24 sports events in 19 communities in the first year of the program.

Second, the Active After School Funding Program provides financial support to schools and community groups to offer programming that gets kids moving after school. In partnership with the NWT Sport and Recreation Council, the department is providing funding to the Active After School Program for the second time this winter. The program supported 17 projects in 13 communities in 2009-2010. Later this fall the 2010-2011 funding recipients will be announced and we anticipate that the 2009-2010 participation rates will increase significantly, with each community in the Northwest Territories hosting at least one Active After School Program this year.

Third, the department has also been busy expanding programming for youth. During the summer the department, assisted by some very energetic students and interns, supported the wide

range of single and multi-sport camps in 14 communities. During the upcoming winter the department will deliver 10 traditional northern and Dene game camps in five regions.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to our seasonal Get Active NWT campaign, created in 2006. Get Active NWT encourages community groups to organize local events that motivate residents to be physically active. The department, the NWT Recreation and Parks Association and First Air have teamed up to provide local program grants and other incentives. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs anticipates that nearly 100 community events for all ages will receive funding this year.

Mr. Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves. In 2009, Active Healthy Kids Canada reported that up to 85 percent of youth in the Northwest Territories lack physical activity. That is why our government must continue to encourage healthy lifestyle choices and promote physical activity so that we can demonstrate and document improvements in the health and well-being of our residents in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to celebrate our successes and thank all the Members for their support in these program initiatives. I would like to encourage Members to continue promoting a healthy and active lifestyles in communities and challenge you to lead by example. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DRAFT DEVOLUTION
AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last couple of weeks there has been a lot of talk about this draft agreement-in-principle which the government is currently considering.

Devolution and resource revenue sharing were important topics during the 2007 campaign. I heard many people from across the NWT. They were saying that it needs to be done and that it needs to be done now, that a deal must be struck.

So here we are; a potential deal is at hand. If this AIP is signed, we as a government and as a people will be able to take an important next step and begin the process of negotiating a final deal, a deal which would give residents of the NWT an ability to make decisions on managing public lands, water and resources, protecting the environment and managing the location and pace of development, establish our own NWT vision for land and resource

management, socio-economic planning and environmental stewardship, putting into place new approaches to meet NWT's resource development, infrastructure and investment requirements, and, Mr. Speaker, importantly, stopping the flow of hundreds of millions of dollars to Ottawa and providing the people of the Northwest Territories with net fiscal benefits from resource development.

Mr. Speaker, I respect the go-forward process that the Premier has referenced when asked questions on the AIP last week. Unfortunately, I believe that this is now impossible or at least seriously compromised. The details of the AIP have been released and are now public. They are on the CBC website. My concern is not that they be made public. Rather, my concern is that people don't understand what this AIP means. This is clear if you actually take a look at the CBC blog which suggests that, although it is available for people to read, they either haven't read it or, if they did, they don't understand it. It is not an easy read, Mr. Speaker. I am happy the Premier actually made some clarifications today.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important time for the people of the Northwest Territories. The Premier must ensure that everyone understands this AIP. We all must ensure that our constituents understand the AIP so that we can hear them and we can all make informed decisions in the best interests of all of our people, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike, and for the future of our Territories.

Later this afternoon I will be asking the Premier some questions on how he and his Cabinet intend to inform the people of the Northwest Territories on the details and realities of this AIP, how he intends to explain the content and ensure as much as possible that people understand how this AIP may benefit all of our people, how this deal improves upon the Yukon deal, how we will be able to use this AIP to negotiate a final deal with our aboriginal partners which gives us the ability to develop and implement vision for land and resource management, socio-economic planning and environmental stewardship.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the NWT public share in the optimism that the prospect of managing our own resources and gaining more control over our economy brings. We have been here many times before and somehow we manage to squander it every time it comes up. We must move forward based on mutual interests. We must work together. To make things better, we must be informed about the issues. We must want a strong Territory for all of our residents regardless of the geographical location and we must act.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we know about the benefits of devolution and about the risks. We care about making things better and know that we need to control our resources and gain net fiscal benefits to do something about it. So let's do it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CLOSURE OF EDMONTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am going to speak about the planned closure of the Edmonton Municipal Airport. This definitely will affect my constituents directly. Should this become an eventuality, people from the Nahendeh riding will have to experience a time element important for emergency medevacs. This amount of time can be the difference between life and death.

We, of course, do not see yet any alternate plans to serve the people of the North. The media in Alberta has reported the tentative plans of using the Edmonton International Airport and ambulances, and then there is the report that routing northern medevacs all the way to Calgary. This does not make any sense to us. It might for Albertans, but not to us Northerners. We are stakeholders in this whole debate. We should be part of the process of developing a strategy to accommodate medical needs should they close this airport.

I think it is also important for Northerners to know what our strategy is. What will the Minister of Health and Social Services and our government do to best serve our emergency medical needs? Remaining silent on this issue is not an option. Saying it is a decision of the City of Edmonton is the wrong thing to do.

We must be vocal and we must have a good strategy to take care of our residents in the Northwest Territories. We do have some time; a couple of years at the most, I think. Before this happens we should use that time wisely and use every resource we have to develop the best strategy for our North and Northerners.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Reports indicate increasingly severe effects of climate change on northern regions. The latest U.S. reports describe conditions such as increasing permafrost temperatures around the globe, the lowest snow accumulations in the North since 1966, warming

summers with longer spring melt seasons, and increasing rates of loss of sea ice.

Record low water levels reveal an example of local effects. How many props did you go through this year out on the big lake? It's estimated that permafrost melt at past rates will cost us greater than \$400 million over 20 years repairing infrastructure damage by collapsing soils. This figure can only be rising. Climate change is coming at us from every direction and the more we learn, the more extreme the picture gets.

Throughout this Assembly I've pressed the urgency of aggressive action to halt and start rolling back the NWT contribution to worsening conditions, demonstrating leadership that can be emulated around the poles. With the support of my colleagues, this government has taken strong action to get its House in order and I applaud these efforts. With public support, this government must now increase the contribution of our entire society through leadership and outreach.

In the current development of a new Greenhouse Gas Strategy, I'm pressing for ambitious emission reduction targets with clear plans on how to achieve them. I spoke on the review of MACA budgets on continuing inaction to establish energy efficiency standards for municipal infrastructure constructed with territorial dollars and other missed opportunities. More details were announced this week on the City of Yellowknife's incredible progress towards tapping geothermal heat for the centuries ahead. Fort McPherson is looking at local biomass heat. The NWT Association of Municipalities has launched its ambitious Climate Change Adaptation Project, with other staff looking at mitigation. Our partners across the NWT society are addressing the challenges and we can do more.

European examples show that when government leads by creating carbon emission limits, the economy takes over and drives the results on the basis of low carbon's improved economics. Government must lead by creating a systemic and interlocking network of law and policy to help our citizens do their part. The GNWT has had great success and we are achieving big cost savings. Let's do even better by harnessing the commitment of all our citizens.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
CLOSURE OF
EDMONTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to talk about the potential closure of the Edmonton Municipal Airport. This is a direction

provided by the City of Edmonton that they have been taking and studying for some time.

I've met and talked with the Edmonton mayor, Stephen Mandel, and have expressed the concern of many Northerners. He says they have a plan, which begs the question: What is the plan that our Territory has and how does it work for our residents when it comes to health care? Is our government ahead of this problem or even trying to get ahead of this issue? Or is it on the heels waiting for the final knockout? Is the government's plan a head in the sand or even, looking outside today, in the snow? Depending on the season, of course. Because leadership is not demonstrated by sitting and letting someone else make the decision for us.

I have asked the mayor of Edmonton to come to Yellowknife to talk to Northerners and he has told me he would. I've written to him to follow up and we need leadership from this government to encourage and certainly make sure he does.

Where is our plan? Change isn't always bad, but I can tell you when it comes to the unknowns, it causes great concern. Does the City of Edmonton's plan dovetail with our vision of future health care? I can tell you that there is not one person who doesn't care about health care in one form or another. This summer, while I knocked on doors as I do each and every summer trying to get to as many as I can, many people said this issue resonates with them. This issue resonates all across the North in one form or another.

We recently saw Envision Edmonton hammer away at this problem. They had an opinion, so where is ours? The mayor of Edmonton had told me they have a plan to accommodate. My question is: Does that work for Northerners? Are we involved in the development of that plan? That plan may not be bad, that plan may not be good, but we have to be involved in it on the ground level.

We are not voters in the city of Edmonton, but I told the mayor of Edmonton that we certainly are stakeholders and issues like health care are significant issues that affect all Northerners. This issue potentially could change the way future health care is delivered in our North. Again for better or perhaps for worse, that change will be received with passion and concern. Right now it's only driven by confusion. In an emergency when seconds matter, what is this government doing as time ticks away?

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FLIGHT AND AIRPORT REGULATIONS
AT AKLAVIK AIRPORT

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My statement is more in line with the airports and the

importance of airports to isolated communities with off-road access. I'm talking about Aklavik and the airport that's presently there and the concerns they have under the existing legislation coming into effect this year. This is regarding the CAR 704 regulation. I think the concern they have is that presently there are times when you do have to have certain types of aircraft, whether dealing with medevacs or bringing in goods and services, and the movement of people.

One of the issues includes the insurance coverage people have travelling into these communities on single engine aircraft. In most cases, government employees are not allowed to fly in single engine aircraft because of insurance reasons. The same should apply to the clients we have travelling for medical reasons or for government services.

I think it's important that this government takes a look at our Northwest Territories airports to ensure we are meeting our requirements under the regulation changes, by increasing the width of a lot of these airports from 3,000 feet to 3,500 or 4,000 so they can meet the requirements for the different types of aircraft. I think it's important to work with those communities that are off-road and that depend on air transport as a means of delivering goods, services and people to those particular communities.

At the appropriate time I will have questions for the Minister of Transportation.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CLOSURE OF EDMONTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to speak again about the provision of health services and the changing landscape of those services provided to NWT residents in Alberta.

Back in May I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services whether or not she had written a letter to the Government of Alberta or the City of Edmonton outlining our government's concern over the impending closure of the City Centre Airport in Edmonton. She said, yes, we have written letters. To make a long story short, it took over two months to get a response from the Minister. That was only after she was threatened by an ATIP request from my colleague Mr. Abernethy to produce the letters. The letters came and, lo and behold, none were signed by our Health Minister. Letters were written by senior management to other bureaucrats in Alberta and some consultant in Missouri.

The bottom line is that this Minister did not take a position to defend our government, our communities, and the health and well-being of the public here in the Northwest Territories. Given the

fact that the Health Minister did not get out in front of the closure of the City Centre Airport in Edmonton, how am I supposed to believe that the Minister is paying attention to ensure that the appropriate operational plans and infrastructure are in place before our medevac flights are moved out to the International Airport? Who is speaking for us and the public? Is it the Minister or is it her staff?

The Alberta government is currently undergoing some major health care reform initiatives that will definitely impact the services that our residents will receive in Alberta. It could very well mean that all medevac flights are directed to specific locations, such as Grande Prairie and Calgary. How exactly are we a part of these developing reform initiatives in Alberta? What will be the impact on our residents here in the Northwest Territories? What will it cost our government?

The Minister stated back in May that we are deeply involved in making sure that we minimize the impact of the possible closure of the Edmonton City Centre Airport. Well, I hope the Minister will take a leadership role in ensuring that we get the very best services and results for the people of the Northwest Territories.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NWT PUBLIC HOUSING AND DECLINE OF CMHC SOCIAL HOUSING FUND

MR. BEAULIEU: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I am seeking information on exactly what the NWT Housing Corporation is doing to ensure that this government is not left holding the bag on costs pertaining to the declining CMHC Social Housing Fund. As it stands, if the NWT Housing Corporation does not have a plan to address the impacts of the CMHC declining fund, we as the GNWT will be left with the responsibility of providing the budget to continue the Social Housing Program.

Currently CMHC provides millions of dollars for operations and maintenance of over 2,000 units across the Northwest Territories. As CMHC withdraws funding, it is anticipated by the federal government that the GNWT will develop a strategic plan to address the issue and make withdrawal of CMHC funds as seamless as possible.

As I see it, the only option we as legislators will be left with if the NWT Housing Corporation does not have a plan is to take the money that is currently going to supporting homeownership and divert it to fill the gaps in public housing by CMHC's withdrawal.

I spoke in the House on numerous occasions about the lack of money going to homeowners as is. We cannot afford to use the money that is normally targeted for homeowners to support the public

housing portfolio because the NWT Housing Corporation was unable to develop a plan to develop this serious issue.

The NWT Housing Corporation needs to examine its public housing portfolio and develop a plan that reduces the number of units in that portfolio. At the end of the day when the CMHC withdrawal is complete, the NWT Housing Corporation will only be getting enough money from CMHC to operate about half the units.

I don't want people in the NWT to pay for the lack of planning by the NWT Housing Corporation with their houses. As I have said in the past, the NWT Housing Corporation must start paying attention to their homeowners in the small communities where there is no market and low employment. If this doesn't happen, we'll have a major expense on our hands as far as homeowners' units across the NWT that are beyond economic repair and in need of replacement.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BEAULIEU: If this doesn't happen, we'll have a major expense on our hands insofar as homeownership units across the NWT that are beyond economic repair and in need of replacement at a cost of \$300,000 to \$400,000 per unit. So you can see, the strategic plan to address the CMHC declining fund is critical.

I will have questions for the Minister of the NWT Housing Corporation on the matter.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DANGERS OF DISTRACTED DRIVING

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I continue my efforts to convince NWT residents and some MLAs, unfortunately, that driving a car and using a cell phone are not compatible. I will put some more info out there and add to the public information, which apparently is necessary to make NWT drivers realize the dangers of distracted driving.

Someone on a cell phone while driving is four times more likely to have a collision than a not-on-the-phone driver. That increase is compared to the risk of collision when driving with normal background distractions, not compared to ideal circumstances where there are no distractions; a vehicle at rest, for instance.

Making calls on a cell phone are definitely more risky than listening to the radio or talking to passengers.

I'd like to share a very true but scary story, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago a car was observed settling into the bush at a bend in the road on the Ingraham Trail. The car had driven across the left-hand lane at the turn and straight off the road into the bush. There was no effort to make the turn at the corner, no evidence of any use of brakes, no skid marks on the road, not even any tire tracks in the ditch. The driver was seemingly not aware that the road had a turn in it and literally flew off the road. The person emerging from the vehicle, cell phone in hand, was very lucky; the car was totalled but the driver was not hurt. Thankfully, no other vehicle was coming the other way at the instant the car crossed the road, but a few seconds later there would have been a head-on collision. Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that this happened on an NWT highway, not a municipal road.

Just one week ago today, Mr. Speaker, the St. Pat's Students Against Distracted Driving recognized National Students Against Impaired and Distracted Driving Day. Part of their ad from last week's paper said, "It's legal but you know it's foolish so you don't eat yellow snow, so why would you use a cell phone while driving?"

Good question. How would each of us answer it? How many of us pull over to answer our cell or ignore the call and let it go to voicemail? Not 100 percent of us, I'm sure. In an informal poll conducted by the SADD students one morning last week they counted 27 or more people driving while using their cell phone in just one hour. That's a lot of distracted drivers, Mr. Speaker, and at the time of day when we have the highest volume of traffic.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: Lastly, Mr. Speaker, a local travel agency has an ongoing challenge to NWT residents and businesses challenging us to make our cars a safe cell phone zone; no use of a cell phone in the car. So far nine businesses have taken up the challenge, but that only means there's so many more who could join up. I'm hopeful my statement today will encourage more individuals and businesses to take up this challenge. It's easy. Just go to www.topofworldtravel.com, fill out the form and send it in. I dare everyone who is listening to do it. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DISTRACTED DRIVING

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to make my statement on distracted driving.

Mr. Speaker, distracted driving is nothing new. We like to associate it with texting and talking on cell phones, but when I was a kid growing up and we went on a road trip with our family, I can hardly believe my father wasn't distracted with five screaming kids in the backseat of the station wagon and occasionally had to reach his arm around and give a few of us a little discipline, shall we say.

Back in those days, also, Mr. Speaker, they had bench seats in vehicles in the front, and I often used to ask my dad why it took two people to drive that vehicle, because people would be sitting so close together, so cosy on that front seat. Hard to believe those people weren't distracted.

Distracted driving is not a new concept. However, Mr. Speaker, we had a motion come forward from this side of the House in a previous sitting and I was the swing vote, and I did not support the motion to recommend to our government that they institute, that they develop a legislative proposal to put in place a deterrent, a legal deterrent for people to be texting or talking on cell phones or handheld devices while they were driving a vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, although my name is Jane and I am a distracted driver...

---Laughter

...I am here today to say that if that vote were taken again today, I would have to support that initiative from this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, just the other day I was driving down Franklin Avenue, and I thought this could not happen to me, but I was texting while driving and I almost rear ended a vehicle in front of me. I really pride myself in being a multi-tasker and I thought that it's only other people who couldn't do this, like my husband, who is painful to watch him even text, never mind drive and text, and I thought that I was very good at texting with that one hand and that would never happen to me. However, Mr. Speaker, it gave me quite a scare and I do think that we, as a government, need to do the responsible thing and bring forward, in a timely manner, legislation that would fine and penalize people from texting and speaking on cell phones while they are driving, and bring this into effect as soon as possible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

It gives me great pleasure to introduce in the gallery today my constituency assistant from Hay River. Ms. Diana Yeager is here today.

The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to welcome into the gallery a constituent of Inuvik Twin Lakes who also happens to be the mayor of Inuvik, Mr. Denny Rodgers. Welcome.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Mark Bogan, a constituent of the Great Slave riding.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I may, I would also like to recognize His Worship Denny Rodgers, the mayor of Inuvik, who is also a little brother of my first best friend when I moved to Yellowknife, Canada, 32 years ago. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize Mr. Denny Rodgers, a board member with the Business Development Investment Corporation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 260-16(5):

CLOSURE OF

EDMONTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up with the Minister of Health and Social Services on my Member's statement that I raised about the closure of the Edmonton City Centre Airport, or the imminent closure. There was a recent city election in Edmonton and, unfortunately, the city supports the closure of the airport, but with that, Mr. Speaker, I know that when they get re-elected that there are a bunch of procedures that have to happen.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, does she have a plan to engage the new mayor and councillors and indicate how much of a stakeholder we are and how important the Edmonton City Centre Airport is for the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I mentioned that this was the responsibility of the airport, what I meant was the decision to close the airport was within the jurisdiction of the municipality of Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, it should be made clear, and I've said on many occasions, that this is a very important issue for us and we have a responsibility to make sure that our public and our patients that need to use the Alberta facilities and Edmonton facilities are taken care of.

In that regard, I have been communicating with the Minister of Health in Alberta who, along with his Premier, have set up a quality council who are going to review the medical travel component. Mayor Mandel has committed that the runway will not close until there is a clear and workable plan. Our officials, under my direction, are in direct contact with the head of the quality council, who is coming up with a plan.

I should also mention that our Premier has met with the mayor in person weeks before the Member for Yellowknife Centre also did, and that I am working with the Alberta government and Alberta health services to make sure that our interests are protected. We have a commitment from the quality council that they will be consulting with us directly throughout the process and we are working with them. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Minister has reiterated some of the plans and some of the engagements that she had with respect to the closing of this airport.

Has the Minister engaged the new mayor of Edmonton and the new council, and what is the strategy in order to let them know that we are just as an important part of the planning of the imminent or planned closure of the Edmonton City Centre Airport? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, yes, indeed. We have invited the mayor to come up this summer. The mayor had committed to come up, but given that they were going through the election this September wasn't going to be a good time. I was hoping that that could happen when the committee members were here.

Regardless, Edmonton as a municipality has made a decision to close that airport. It has been going on for many years. It started in a phased approach. The plebiscite was held 15 years ago. The recent election confirmed again the public position on that. My job as the Minister of Health and Social Services and this government is to make sure that our interests are protected and heard. That is what I am doing. We are directly involved with the Minister of Health office in the Alberta Health office who is responsible for medical travel. We are part of that discussion. We are very much involved.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that constituents hear, and also Northerners hear, is that as the days go on, the point of where the medevacs end up are getting further and further away. Now in the news they are talking about Calgary. I would just like to know how is our government getting involved to ensure that... I was going to say their wise and infinite...

How are they getting information from us on a daily basis? That is not something at least my constituents want to see going further and further away. In fact, I think for my constituents, the better alternative is to stay at the Grande Prairie Regional Hospital. How is the Minister continually engaging with the city and with the Alberta government in that regard, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, what our people need to know and I need them to know and the Members here should know is that when there is a medical emergency in any part of our Territory, they are connected with our medical providers at the regional level and a territorial level. There are doctors and nurses and care providers who are looking at the patient's situation and deciding on the medical course of action. They will be sent to the Territorial Hospital in Yellowknife if necessary or if it is something that needs to go to southern jurisdictions right away, that will be done. Then our medical professionals get on their network of contacts to see where the closest facility is for that patient to receive care. In most situations, those are in Edmonton. It could be Grande Prairie if they have services that the patient requires. Sometimes it is further away. They will be sent to the closest facility where the necessary medical services will be provided. That would not change. We will continue to work with Alberta Health to make sure that plan is in place before the airport closes. That is the work plan right now. Thank you.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly what I am looking for. I am looking for a strategy by our Minister of Health and Social Services as well as our government. What is the strategy to take care of the medical needs and the emergency medical needs of our Northerners, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe there was a question. I agree with the Member that this is very important to us and we are fully engaged. We are engaged at all appropriate and necessary levels, at the Minister's level and at the official level. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 261-16(5):
COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH
MACKENZIE GAS PROJECT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Finance from whom I received the written reply to my written question of May 19th regarding the cost to this government of supporting the Mackenzie Gas Project.

In my question, I asked the cost by year during the 16th Assembly for costs such as (b) travel and receptions by Ministers, MLAs and other officials, (c) staff positions and contractor services, and (d) communications, planning promotional events, publicity and advertising.

The tabled response I received, however, is inadequate and almost evasive. It does not supply the costs specifically requested by category in b, c or d. The amounts are lumped into mass totals by year and not detailed by the activities requested. Can the Minister tell me whether he will provide these amounts under the specific categories requested in my written question? Mahsi.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The information we provided gives a significant overview. The Member has requested more detail. I will commit to check with the officials to see whether we can pull that type of information together with any kind of alacrity. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate that response from the Minister. I had very good reasons, of course, for asking this detail. For example, the tabled response gives a sole identifiable cost of a particular trip to Calgary as \$1,455. However, I have learned that this one trip listed as \$1,455 actually cost several times this for travel plus additional costs for hospitality, media and consultant services. So \$21,000, in fact, is a far cry from the \$1,455 listed. I am not saying that it is not in the total response from the Minister, but it is very difficult to determine. Again, will the Minister assure that the information is in there so I can sort those details out? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the Member's other source of information is, but in my previous answer I made a commitment that I will check with officials and I will honour that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 262-16(5):
DRAFT DEVOLUTION
AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I talked about the AIP today. My questions are for the Premier.

What I am mostly looking for here is clarity. I think there is a lot of confusion about content of the AIP. I think it is up to us and Cabinet in particular to make sure that people really understand the content of the AIP.

I have read it. I have pulled it down from the CBC website and I have read it. I am curious what the Premier is planning to do other than what the Premier started with today. There was some information today, which is great. But what next steps is the Premier going to be taking to ensure clarity, ensure that people understand the content, understand what this AIP means to us in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process that we would have engaged in has a normal procedure that goes through with an agreement-in-principle. We would be preparing a public paper for their consumption in the areas of the AIP, what it means if there was a decision to proceed. Seeing that, as the Member pointed out, it is out there for public consumption and there are many comments being made now that some are made more in just not understanding the full document or out of context, and some positioning being taken out there by others, that we feel we will have to come up with a plain read document or somehow get out to the households in the NWT how we put the final touches on it. But we need to look at what type of information do we get out there and the timing of it, because we would also like to get the response back from the aboriginal leadership across the Territories and be in a better position to be able to respond from just the GNWT's side.

We are looking at doing whether it is a household package or attaching something to the website. We will be coming to Members with that type of information before we do anything, though. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Premier for that. I look forward to seeing the plain language document or whatever we are going to call it when it comes out.

Like I said, I have read the AIP. It is not the easiest read out there. There is a lot of information in there. There are a lot of things that need to be thought about, considered and talked about.

My question to the Premier is: What kind of timeline are we looking at? You mentioned that there are some things that need to be done before this can come out, but people are talking about it today. If you go out into the streets, people will ask you and they're asking me what does it mean, what is the content? Although it's out in the CBC, we aren't really in a position to talk too much about the detail. So when is this going to come out? When is this plain language document going to come out and be available to the people of the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: We will have to sit down and look at what a plain language document would look like, the timing of getting it out, the method, going to Members for your input, as well, to see if we are on the right track and ensuring we are protecting the process we are in right now and informing the public as to the work that has been done.

As the Member pointed out, we started today to set the record straight, so to speak, on some of the information that's gone out there. We are looking to do a number of other statements. So that is one of the ways we'll do that along with this public document that we're looking at creating. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: Once again, thank you for the statement from earlier today and I look forward to any future statements that are made by Cabinet to help encourage the understanding.

I'm curious, the document is out and as a Regular Member on this side of the House, I'm not scared of the AIP. I think it's an important document. It's nine years' worth of negotiations put into this thing. We've come to a point where we have an agreement-in-principle which basically just, if signed, allows us to take the next step and begin the negotiations. So I'm not scared of the document. Let's talk about it. It has been posted. Is there any reason why we can't table that document here in the House? I'm curious about process now that it's out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: In respecting the process we have with the partners with this, the aboriginal governments as well as the Government of Canada, decisions are yet to be made on this and I don't recall in the previous governments or whether it be with ourselves or other partners in this where a debate would happen on an agreement-in-principle.

We have almost 15 different tables of negotiations going on across the Northwest Territories about self-government and land claims and resources and those matters. As we go through those and a decision is made to sign an agreement to get to the final stage of negotiations, we don't put those documents out here for debate. What we do, much like previous governments have done with the Tlicho Act itself in establishing that self-government, that bill would come to the House.

Those things would come to the House for debate at that level.

But seeing that it is out there and there's much discussion and debate happening in the absence of the context of this agreement, one of the things we want to do is work with the partners in here to see if they're prepared to join us in doing something of this nature to get a plain language document out to households in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for the record, I'm not interested in renegotiating the AIP. I know that we've had professionals who have taken our message to the federal government and they've negotiated this deal and they've got to the point where the AIP is done. It's done. There's no more negotiation on it. It's in front of us. We either accept it or we don't accept it. So I'm not interested in renegotiating it.

I'm just interested in standing behind it. It's public. It's already gone. The press has it. It's on their website. I'm okay with standing behind this document saying, this is what we have, this is the deal that's been negotiated, this is what we have to make a decision on today and put it out in front of the people and let them talk about it and let us help them understand what it means. So that's the only reason I would suggest that we would benefit from tabling it, because it's out there. We might as well stand behind it and start helping people understand it. So I'm not sure if the Premier said he would table it or he won't table it. So just to that question, is there any chance we might table it just so we can really stand behind that document?

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: The process we have; one, Cabinet has yet to make a decision on this document. I think at that point, then it becomes something that we could either stand behind and support going forward or it becomes a moot discussion that there is no moving forward. But I agree with what the Member stated about the fact that we have come to a place, chief negotiators have sent a letter saying they've reached their mandate, this is it, time for a decision to be made. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 263-16(5):
NWT HC PLAN TO ADDRESS
CMHC DECLINING FUND

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in my Member's statement I spoke of the CMHC declining funds impact on the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. I have questions for the Minister of the Housing Corporation. Has the Minister given direction to the Northwest Territories

Housing Corporation staff to develop a plan to address the CMHC declining fund? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister of NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have started a preliminary plan on dealing with some of the declining federal funding from CMHC. The Member is absolutely correct. We are starting to look at how we can work with the different units we have putting multiplexes and just looking at the overall picture. So there is a preliminary plan that we are putting in place and we will continue to develop that as we go along. Thank you.

MR. BEAULIEU: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister provide this House with a framework of this plan that's been developed by the staff at the NWT Housing Corporation on the CMHC declining fund? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I'd be willing to provide Members with a framework for a plan. Obviously, we'd have to be looking at things like managing our portfolio a lot better, extending the life of the units we have on the ground.

Another part of the plan would be arrears collection. We have approximately \$23 million in arrears across the Northwest Territories and that would go a long way in helping to alleviate some of the loss of revenue we have from CMHC.

We are working with our colleagues in Nunavut and the Yukon to approach the federal government, CMHC, and let them know the effect the funding will have on the housing in the Northwest Territories, as well as working with my federal colleagues, the other Ministers of Housing, getting their support in trying to see if we can get that funding to continue. So we are working on starting to get the plans in place to deal with some of the funding. I'd be willing to provide Members with a bit of a framework, if that is what the Member is looking for.

MR. BEAULIEU: Can the Minister outline other aspects of the plan that the NWT Housing Corporation will be employing as it pertains to creating homeownership out of public housing tenants? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Ideally we'd like to see a lot of our public housing owners become homeowners. If it means a particular unit they are in, we are always willing to look at those options. With all the homeownerships we have put in the Northwest Territories over the number of years, we are getting to the point now where the Housing Corporation is actually starting to repair a lot of those units that we gave to the people in the first place. So that is something that we are going to have a look at. There may come a day where we

may have to determine are we just a provider of social housing and maybe ease away from the homeownership part of it.

It's hard for us to put up new public housing now because of declining funding, so what we are doing is putting up replacement public housing. So we are looking at a lot of different options that we can use as far as reducing our public housing stock and bringing new units on board to deal with the funding. Thank you.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Housing Corporation doesn't move away from homeownership. I think that's the way to develop and build small markets in the communities.

Mr. Speaker, the CMHC fund has been declining for over 10 years now. What has the Minister and the corporation done to address the decline to date? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The initiatives that I pointed out before were designed to deal with some of the declining funding to date; more specifically, the replacement rather than adding to the public housing stock. The Member is correct; we've cumulatively lost \$5.8 million in CMHC funding in the past 10 years. This year alone is \$676,000. We have a huge challenge facing us and we're doing, as a corporation, what we can to try to deal with some of the challenges and that one of the messages that I've been, I wouldn't say preaching, but across the Northwest Territories in all the meetings I've gone to with the public, is the importance of dealing with public housing arrears. Again, that \$23 million will go a long way in helping us deal with some of the deficit and it will go a long way to being able to invest some of that \$23 million back into the public housing stock. This is one where I think all of the NWT Housing Corporation tenants and clients are going to have to step up to the plate and realize that we are facing a huge challenge and that we're going to have to make some hard decisions very soon.

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

QUESTION 264-16(5):
CLOSURE OF
EDMONTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like a number of my colleagues here, I'll continue with the municipal airport closure issue. Assuming that does become the eventuality, this is going to cause significant concern.

When I met with the mayor of Edmonton, Mayor Stephen Mandel, he mentioned that Senator Patterson, the senator for Nunavut, had written a

letter expressing his concern about this particular issue. However, he did sort of only sprinkle light interest that the territorial government has played a significant role in this, other than the fact that he's basically mentioned that he knows of their interest. He doesn't mention anything about how they've taken a proactive role.

The primary point I'm getting at is that the mayor had suggested that quite conceivably the Edmonton International Airport may be the new venue for a triage where protocols will be developed. Maybe Star Ambulance will be based out of there in such a way that it will be responding to those emergency cases. Not at one time did he mention that the territorial government Minister of Health was involved in the development of that plan to make sure our territorial residents are protected and safe in those moments of need.

Where is the government on that particular issue to ensure that we're on the ground level of that development and that particular issue? I'd like to hear her perspective.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I can comment or respond to what the mayor said in his conversation with the honourable Member.

What I need to say is that while the decision to close the municipal airport is within the jurisdiction of the mayor and the city, the responsibility of looking after the medical travel issues is within Alberta Health Services and the Minister of Health of Alberta.

I am engaged in discussing with the Minister of Health in Alberta. My officials are engaged in directly communicating with her counterparts in Alberta. There is a quality council set up to work out a plan for medical travel. In fact, I believe I'm on record to say in the May session that one of the things that Alberta Health is looking at is a triage at the Edmonton airport. With all due respect to Mayor Mandel, I don't believe he's going to do the planning for medevac. It will be Alberta Health Services. We are involved with Alberta Health Services.

MR. HAWKINS: We've come to one of the main issues that seem to be the problem. It's no different than this draft AIP problem and certainly with the health one, which is the fact of who is communicating our message to the government. It's no different than when I had asked for plain language on the other issue. We need plain language on this particular issue to make sure that people know what's happening.

What is the Minister doing to communicate to the public exactly the territorial government's plan?

What is the message by this government to ensure that the health care of all Northerners will be enshrined in any change or process that this will be protected? I tell you, the only person who is speaking out there is literally the public talking to themselves and the media sort of talking. But they need leadership and guidance from this government. Where is that communication plan?

HON. SANDY LEE: I've said it many, many times and I say it again, and I don't know if anybody... I don't know. I'm on record on many, many occasions to say we are engaged. I am talking to Alberta Health Services. I am talking to the Minister of Health of Alberta, who is directly in charge of medevac services in Alberta and provision of services in Alberta facilities. The Premier has conveyed the government's position to the mayor. My deputy minister is in communication with the assistant deputy minister of Alberta. We have a commitment from Alberta government that we are going to be part of the plan. We are engaged. We are working on this issue. I will say it a hundred times again: The public has every right to know and I want to assure the public that we consider this a very, very important issue. We've been involved in this for two years. I don't know what else to say to the Member if he keeps saying he's not hearing. I am saying we are engaged.

MR. HAWKINS: I'd like to know what the Minister of Health and Social Services has negotiated on the public's behalf and I think the public deserves to know what the Minister has negotiated on their behalf. Furthermore, I think the public likes to see the proof of that, what they've done and created as a plan that will ensure that the health care for northern residents across the Territory will be protected and treated as a priority.

HON. SANDY LEE: The plan is in the works. The plan is being worked on. We are being consulted on the plan. The Premier of Alberta set up the quality council. Our Premier was engaged, as well, at his level. I am engaged with the Minister of Health in Alberta. We have two years before the last runway closes. Mayor Mandel has said that the runway will be open until we have a plan. The Premier of Alberta said that. We are engaged. I have talked to the federal Minister of Health. I have talked to Minister Ambrose, who is the Minister responsible for Northern Alberta. I want to assure the public that we are totally engaged in this file, that we are talking at all appropriate levels, and we are committed to making sure that our northern perspective is heard when that plan is being finalized. It will take a while to finalize that plan.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard plan, plan, and plan. The fact is we can plan until we're blue in the face. The fact is we want to

know, I want to know, the public wants to know what the GNWT is supporting. Are they supporting the closure of the municipal airport? At what cost are they supporting the closure of the municipal airport? Are they supporting it in the context that there will be a triage built? What does that actually mean to me? What does it mean to the Assembly? What does it mean to the general public? What is the GNWT supporting in this possible eventuality? That's the type of detail. What are you negotiating, what are you planning, and what is the GNWT's position? Do they support this and why?

HON. SANDY LEE: The question is not whether or not we support or do not support what a municipal jurisdiction in another province is doing. What we are doing is we're going to look after the patient safety of our northern residents. That's our job, that's what we are doing, and I am working, as the Minister responsible, for our residents, to make sure that our interests are protected.

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

QUESTION 265-16(5):
FUNDING TO ASSIST NORTHLAND
INFRASTRUCTURE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. I have spoken before about a portion of my riding where the residents are facing huge infrastructure replacement costs. The Northland residents are still struggling to finalize a plan for the project to replace their aging and decrepit infrastructure. They're trying to find a way to finance this plan. Recently the City of Yellowknife submitted a proposal to the federal government for some funding through the GNWT. I particularly want to thank the GNWT and especially MACA for their assistance with that proposal. I believe ITI also had a hand in that. I thank them for that.

I have some questions for the Minister with regard to the proposal and with regard to potential future situations that might arise. Firstly, can the Minister advise the status of the city's proposal to the federal government for funding to assist the Northland infrastructure replacement project?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Robert McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal and Community Affairs did support the city in applying for the federal infrastructure Green Fund. As far as we know, we're still waiting for word back on the application. Minister Bob McLeod, when he went down to Ottawa, had an opportunity to reinforce our support for the city's application to access funds out of the

Green Fund. As well, Minister of infrastructure Michael McLeod sent a letter off to Ottawa again reinforcing our support for the city's application.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister for that update. I appreciate the efforts that this government is making towards trying to get some answer out of the federal government. I expect there's as much frustration on the part of MACA as there is on the part of the Northland residents with regard to the proposal.

If the situation should occur where Northland has a major and sudden and serious sewer infrastructure failure, I'd like to know from the Minister whether or not there are any protocols, policies, guidelines that exist within this government that would govern GNWT actions in such a case; actions that the government would have to take to accommodate residents who have been shut out of their homes because of a public order condemning their properties. What protocols do we have that would guide GNWT actions in this case?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Should the unfortunate incident occur that the Member is speaking about, I mean, obviously the city would be in the forefront in trying to deal with some of the damage that occurred there. If the city asks for assistance from MACA or any other appropriate departments, we'd do what we can to assist the city to deal with some of the issues that would take place at Northland should that most unfortunate incident occur where the pipes burst and things go bad.

MS. BISARO: I appreciate that the Minister is saying that this government would provide some assistance to the City of Yellowknife if such a situation were to occur. I think it's important to note that Northland is a neighbourhood of about 1,100 people, which is about 2.6 percent of our whole NWT population. To the Minister, should the city all of a sudden have to find accommodations for some 1,100 people, what will our government do to assist them?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: This is a privately held condominium. We would do what we can to assist whenever possible, wherever possible, and if it is possible. First of all, we have to hope that we never get to that situation, because it would be unfortunate for the residents of Northland Condominium Corporation, who is facing a huge infrastructure crisis. I appreciate the Member's comments about the 2.6 percent population, but still it's a privately held condominium corporation.

Having said that, we still as a community, and I mean the Northwest Territories, have to do what we can to assist them through tough times if that does happen.

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

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to totally agree with the Minister. I absolutely hope we never get there. But almost every day, every month that this infrastructure doesn't get replaced the potential for a major sewer break looms larger and larger.

The Minister says that this government will do what they can. That doesn't really satisfy me in terms of details. One of the things that would be needed is that once this catastrophic sewer failure has occurred -- and the city is going to be on the hook for it probably -- what would the GNWT do to assist the city to get these major infrastructure repairs done? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. That's pretty well a hypothetical question until that happens, so I'm going to rule that question out of order.

---Ruled Out of Order

The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 266-16(5):
CLOSURE OF
EDMONTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to follow up with my colleagues. Mr. Menicoche and Mr. Hawkins had questions to the Minister of Health earlier and I want to follow up on that.

I find it very interesting that the Minister can stand up here in the House time and time again and say how very, very important this issue is and how deeply involved her and the government are when the decision to close the Edmonton City Centre Airport was made without any vocal outcry from our government or from our Minister.

Mr. Speaker, this happened when people in our communities were coming to us and saying, what is our government doing? What is our government saying about the closure of this airport in Edmonton? And all the Minister can do is stand up in the House and say we've written letters. Like I said earlier, it took us two months to get a copy of those letters. None were penned by the Minister to anybody in Alberta. So how can she defend that she has taken this issue so seriously when she hasn't even written a letter herself to anybody, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am on record to say that the municipality had voted on a plebiscite years ago to close this airport in a phased fashion. Two years ago we were aware that they were closing this and the letter that the Stanton CEO sent is not a letter to some consultant

in Missouri. That was, in fact, very appropriate and direct input that our government put in. We wrote to them to tell them how important this service is. We were involved exactly where we should have been.

Mr. Speaker, since then, the decision to close the airport has had overwhelming support within the municipality, and my job, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, is to work with my counterpart in Alberta to plan. We have a commitment from the municipality that the last runway will not close until we have a plan. The Minister of Health in Alberta talked to me about Premier Stelmach setting up a quality council and we have a commitment from them that we will be involved. Mr. Speaker, we are taking all appropriate actions and necessary actions to make sure that our view and our needs are part of their consideration. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister is missing my point. The CEO can write a letter and you can rest assured that if there is a decision by the province of Saskatchewan or the province of British Columbia that impacted the province of Alberta, their Ministers would be up publicly decreeing what that decision was and the impacts it would have on the citizens of Alberta. Our Minister was nowhere to be found when it came to defending the interests of the people of the Northwest Territories and the closure of that airport. That is very obvious, Mr. Speaker.

Now I'm trying to find some comfort in that going forward that we are going to have some assurances and certainty that the Minister will be more vocal on the needs and the desires of our citizens to have those appropriate services in place in Edmonton for medevac services, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: The Member is missing my point, with all due respect. Politicians can do their thing. At the end of the day, we have to be part of the plan. That's what the Members here expect. That's what our public expects. What is our plan to make sure that when our patients need health care in Alberta, that they will get their service as quickly as possible? We support Premier Stelmach's establishment of a quality council, and their mandate is very clear and includes identifying effective practices and making recommendations for the improvement of patient safety and health service quality. Our deputy minister is in, and I've said this about three times today, my officials are in touch with Alberta health officials. We have a commitment from them that we will be part of this plan. We have two years to plan this. This is very complicated work and we are involved.

Mr. Speaker, the decision to close the municipal airport happened years ago, years ago. They had a referendum 15 years ago. They had our support then. They have support now. The Member says I should have stopped that. I would rather spend my energy working out a plan that addresses the

patient safety issues of my residents and our residents in the Territory, and I'm doing that, exactly what I should be doing. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister is missing my point. My point is that the Minister was nowhere to be found during this discussion on the closure of that airport. There was no public statement issued by this government whatsoever, and I think that was the wrong thing to do, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, our responsibilities are to the people of the Northwest Territories and we have to make sure that our interests are known, respected and accounted for at every table. I don't think we should be going down there and telling them how they should develop their plans, but every interest of the people of the Northwest Territories has to be respected and known at those tables, and I want some assurance that the Minister is going to make sure that that happens. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I'm doing exactly that, so I'm sure the Member agrees with what I am doing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Your final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the Minister has listened. Again, she is the Minister of Health and Social Services. If anybody is going to defend the interests of the people in regard to health and social services here in the Northwest Territories, it's her. It's not her staff. It's not the bureaucrats in the department. It's the Minister, Mr. Speaker. I'd like, again, some assurances from the Minister that she is going to take more of a leadership role in being vocal about what those interests are for the residents in the Northwest Territories. Not her deputy minister, not the senior staff, but her herself. Thank you.

HON. SANDY LEE: I agree with him that I, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, should take leadership on this and give appropriate direction. I have done that. I have talked to the Minister of Health in Alberta on that. The Premier of Alberta has set up a health quality council of Alberta. Their mandate is to promote patient safety and health service quality on a province-wide basis, that means Alberta. They will set out guidelines on how patient safety will be taken care of. My officials are not doing my job. They are working under my direction. They are in touch with my counterpart in Alberta and we have a commitment from them that we will be consulted in this quality council. We're doing exactly what the Member wants to do and I will make a commitment that we will give you, in writing, as this project... I will give you in writing and we will inform the public about the work as it progresses, but understanding that we still have months to go in terms of working out the plan. I'm doing exactly what he thinks I should do and I don't know why I'm not being heard. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 267-16(5):
POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF
AKLAVIK AIRPORT RUNWAY

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to talk about airports, but the real airports that are important to the people in the North and have the ability to medevac people out of our communities so that we can medevac them to Edmonton where, basically, those requirements are essential.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Transportation is improving the access to communities by extending airports up to 4,000 feet in Fort Good Hope, Tulita, Fort McPherson and also in other communities that have been identified. Mr. Speaker, the whole reason for that is to mitigate aircraft weight consistency imposed by new federal regulations. Again, these runway extensions are essential to community services and, more importantly, improving access to communities by reducing the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to the situation of Aklavik, basically this issue has come to light and the community is requesting when is the community of Aklavik going to have their opportunity to have their airport extended up to the 4,000 feet, which is basically now in federal regulations. I'd like to ask the Minister when is the community of Aklavik's airport going to be extended to 4,000 feet in the upcoming years. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Michael McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2010 rule on aircraft specifies the landing and take-off approaches that need to be addressed on a number of airports and they apply to a certain type of category. In this case, there are 74 community category aircraft. We had done a study in the last government to review the runway issues across the NWT. We use that as a basis and a guide to improve the runway lengths. A number of communities, Fort Good Hope, Tulita and Fort McPherson and in the case of Aklavik, the runway is 3,000 feet and the aircraft that is being utilized in the community meets the 2010 rule. So there is no issue and our runway study that we did in the last government also indicated that the airport in Aklavik was sufficient and did not need to be extended. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the regulation is that because of the specific types of aircraft that are used in the communities for different reasons, regardless if it is for medevacs or

basically moving goods and services, such as DC-3s, Beech aircraft and, more importantly, the ability to reduce the costs of our communities so that they can bring in larger aircraft into those communities. Right now, the majority of the aircraft that does serve the community of Aklavik is basically the 207, which is a Cessna single engine aircraft. Again, the community would like to see an improvement on the aircraft that is being used. More importantly, to ensure that they also aren't going to be told, sorry, you can't fly that type of aircraft in there. If anything, all of our airports should be brought up to a certain standard such as 4,000 feet. Again, why are we excluding Aklavik from that proposal, yet we are putting airport extensions up to 4,000 feet in other communities?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the study that we undertook and the results that we used as a guide did not indicate that there was any demand for a larger 20-seat aircraft to go into the community of Aklavik. That is what the 2010 rule would affect. Those would be the larger planes carrying 10 to 19 passengers, such as the Beech 1900D and the Metroliner and others. Mr. Speaker, that is the reason we didn't look at extending the airport at Aklavik. Thank you.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, this again has become a political issue for the community of Aklavik. I would like to ask the Minister if he can accommodate myself in going to the community and have a debate on this issue with the community. I think it is critical that the community formulate these partnerships with communities like they are in Fort Good Hope where they are extending the airport for another 500 feet with a joint submission by both the community corporation and the Department of Transportation. Knowing that these things are happening in other communities, why is the government not open to allowing the same practice to be done in other communities and allow those communities to work with the department to basically allow us to have more modern aircraft flying in there? It is North-Wright Air that is having the same problems in the Sahtu with their arguments. That is the airline that is flying into Aklavik. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I must have spent at least two weeks of this summer in Aklavik. The issue was not raised to me about aircraft types and runway lengths. I would be very hesitant to say I would commit to going back into the community when I was there for quite a few days over the summer.

Mr. Speaker, the current type of aircraft that is flying in there for charter or sched services is the Cessna 207. The airport meets the demands for that. There is really no demand identified for the larger type of aircraft. The medevacs are done with King Air. The airport is adequate to meet that demand. I would

really at this point be hard pressed to be convinced that we should start looking and putting more money in the capital budget for an extension to the airport. Thank you.

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

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I would like to formally invite the Minister in. We can do our arm twisting in the community of Aklavik with the community members in a public forum and at that time we can have that discussion.

I have been getting calls from the media on this issue which they are being... This issue did come up at the meeting in Aklavik. I would just like to put that request to the Minister so that way we can basically allow the community to raise the issue with us formally and basically deal with the options going forward. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Member has already twisted my arm on several occasions on other issues. We have commitments to meet with the leadership over the next while. I would be glad to put this subject on the table for discussion, whether it means going into Aklavik or someplace in the Delta, or if the leadership is in town here, I would commit to meet with them on the subject and have the discussion whether it is something that is warranted. We would also, of course, have to spell out our fiscal realities and look at what the demand is for that airport. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 268-16(5):

COLLECTION OF NWT HC RENTAL ARREARS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening to MLA Beaulieu's questions to the Minister of Housing, and the Minister of Housing had said that the Housing Corporation is \$23 million in arrears. It is my understanding that the NWT Housing Corporation doesn't push their arrears to a collections agency. If they do, it seems to be selective. One more step that I am also aware that they don't do consistently, if at all, is it puts these arrears on people's credit rating. That is known as a significant problem out there. Would the Minister of Housing tell me exactly how they pursue legally, in a lawful manner, obviously, the collection of these arrears? Thank you.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We try to work with the tenants as closely as possible and not get to the point to where we have to go to a collection agency. That is one of the options that we are looking at, but it would be our

desire to just work with the tenants, work out a repayment plan with them. There is some garnisheeing that goes on, but as far as reporting to a collection agency, that is one of the options we have been looking at. It is one that we are quite hesitant to pursue, because I would personally, as the corporation would, like to work with the tenants and have them come to us.

I can assure the Member and public that if this continues to be a problem and with the declining funding, we may have to look at all options. If that is one of them, then we will look at that. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to stress I hope the Minister doesn't take this personally, but that is quite a travesty to hear that we are not motivating our tenants by those types of things. I can tell you for a fact, that recently someone had an overpayment and the GNWT, well, the FMB sends the leg breakers. They start phoning them regularly over a simple error. They threatened credit bureau. They threatened everything but the kitchen sink to be thrown at them. But housing arrears accumulate to \$23 million. Someone should be given a head shake over there to say, how long are we going to persist?

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is, if we don't take our arrears seriously, somebody who decides not to pay can go get a truck if they want because their credit isn't stained. They can go buy a skidoo. They can do whatever they want, knowing that nothing is hanging over their head.

Mr. Speaker, what is the lead foot problem on this issue to stop the government from saying, well, we will just talk to them? We need to motivate them. What is stopping the Housing Corporation today for initiating a new policy that says anybody who owes arrears, we will pursue it through the credit bureau and send it to a collections agency? We have the outright responsibility to do this. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to think the motivation for these folks is to be able to stay in their own homes. It is something that we are working on. I have told the Member that this is an option we are seriously looking at.

Part of the problem, as we all know in this Assembly and the Assemblies before, the collection of arrears becomes very politically sensitive. Everybody says you should collect the arrears and then when you try to put the process in place to collect on arrears, all the Members start getting phone calls. So it's one that we are pursuing. I can assure the Member that it's not one that we're just letting go by. We are pursuing this and we have looked at options. The Member said it correctly, we've had people complaining about a tenant with a \$50,000 truck sitting outside their house and they're in arrears and this person has got an old, beat up GM, but they're paying their rent faithfully every month. So it's situations like those we want to have

a look at. If reporting it to the credit bureau will motivate a few individuals to start clearing up their arrears is something that as a corporation we are seriously looking at. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: The Minister highlights a perfect example that I'm well aware of the fact that good tenants sometimes have to drive less nice vehicles, where tenants who aren't paying -- and the fact is we have people who aren't paying -- can afford, because their credit rating is good, so they can run out and afford to buy a fancy truck.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear the word "if" and when I hear "looking at the option," that tells me we're going to do nothing. Mr. Speaker, we can get a ministerial directive today in this House by saying we're going to do this, we're not going to sit on our hands and sit on our butts through this whole process, we should be collecting every single receivable we have because it's impacting.

So will the Minister, in this House today, make that commitment to the people here that they will follow up immediately and enact this to everyone? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Some of these tenants do have a nice, brand new Lexus outside their house, but I assured the Member that we are doing what we can to try and work with those that are in arrears. If reporting to the credit bureau is one of those, then that is what we are planning on doing. I mean, we have an Arrears Management Strategy that we're working on right now and we realize that arrears are accumulating. Part of it I've accepted responsibility as Minister of the Housing Corporation is because we didn't pursue them as aggressively enough as we should have to get to the point where we're in the situation we are today and we're having to play catch-up. So I can assure the Member and all Members of this Assembly that we are doing all that we can to start working on the collection of arrears, because it is going to have an effect on the funding from CMHC. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The time for question period has expired; however, I'll allow the Member a final, short supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be frank, the Minister shouldn't be worried about a little whining on this side of the House. The fact is the Minister should be more worried about the fact that they have \$23 million outstanding and, he's got it right, the declining funds should be motivation enough. The fact is if you start implementing a credit bureau process, you start implementing a collection process, what better motivation will it be to go and pay your past due arrears? Mr. Speaker, that's the issue. Would the Minister immediately enact a policy and stop talking about we'll think about, we'll look at it, maybe? Because that doesn't

show leadership. Would the Minister do this? Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: We do have a process in place. It may not be the one that the Member likes, but there is a process in place, it's a work in progress.

I've been quite encouraged by the number of people that are coming forward to work out repayment plans, because they understand that they need to deal with their arrears, it affects their ability to access Housing Corporation programs and we are looking at reporting to a collection agency and people are getting evicted and terminated for not dealing with their arrears. So we do have a process in place, it's been in place for a while. It's one that does have some challenges and needs to be improved on and that's what we're doing now, because we realize we need to start collecting on a lot of these arrears. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 90-16(5):
CONFERENCE OF MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITIES (SPECIES AT RISK)
ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010

TABLED DOCUMENT 91-16(5):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES SPECIES AT RISK
COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents entitled Conference of Management Authorities (Species at Risk) Annual Report 2009-2010, and Northwest Territories Species at Risk Committee Annual Report 2009-2010. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

TABLED DOCUMENT 92-16(5):
COMMUNITIES AND DIAMONDS:
2009 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES UNDER THE
BHP BILLITON, DIAVIK AND DE BEERS
SOCIO-ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Communities and Diamonds: 2009 Annual Report of the Government of the Northwest Territories under the BHP Billiton, Diavik and De Beers Socio-economic Agreements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole on bills and other matters: Tabled Document 4-16(5), Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project; Tabled Document 30-16(5), 2010 Review of Members' Compensation and Benefits; Tabled Document 38-16(5), Supplementary Health Benefits – What We Heard; Tabled Document 62-16(5), Northwest Territories Water Stewardship Strategy; Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012; Tabled Document 75-16(5), Response to the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project on the Federal and Territorial Governments' Interim Response to "Foundation for a Sustainable Northern Future;" Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act; Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act; Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act; and Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act, with Mr. Abernethy in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. On our agenda today are tabled documents 4, 30, 38, 62, 66, 75, Bills 4, 8, 9 and Committee Report 3-16(5). What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Committee wishes to continue with Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012, and do the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Finance and, time permitting, Bill 8 and Bill 9.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Agreed. Alright, with that we'll take a short break and we'll return with Tabled Document 66-16(5), Environment and Natural Resources, Finance and then Bills 8 and 9, time permitting.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. Prior to the break we agreed we would be reviewing Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012, starting with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Mr. Miltenberger, do you have witnesses you'd like to bring into the Chamber?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you please escort the witnesses into the Chamber?

Mr. Miltenberger, could I please get you to introduce your witness for the record?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to my right Mr. Gary Bohnet, deputy minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Department of Environment and Natural Resources starts on page 11-1. We will defer the department summary on page 11-2 and go straight to page 11-5, page 11-6 and page 11-7, the wildlife section. We are on Environment and Natural Resources, information item, wildlife, activity summary, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, \$250,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We will move along to page 11-8, page 11-9 and page 11-10, activity summary, Environment and Natural Resources, forest management, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, \$1.403 million. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to forest management, one of the things that the communities I represent is that forestry is a very important element to the community's ability and sustainability to use wood heat and using wood as a product for building cabins. To use those products, we have wood misers in all the communities I represent. They are fully utilized through different programs to use that type of product and ensuring that there are workshops in the different communities where different people

come from southern Canada who are experts in the field of different uses of wood products: the harvesting of wood, the management of wood, the usage of wood for constructing different products. Fort McPherson is part of the workshop where they built a tourism information cabin. They built it in just a matter of a couple of days as part of the workshop. I was impressed with what they were trying to do. It took the community's efforts, along with funds received from Indian Affairs through the band. This is the type of stuff the Department of Environment and Natural Resources should be doing in our communities, rather than having to use federal money through Indian Affairs to do these types of workshops.

I'd like to ask the department what we're doing to develop a cottage industry in our communities when it comes to usage of wood products and being able to use the different expertise that is out there to assist us in developing that industry in the communities, generating employment, and being able to use the resources around us such as the forest resources. I'd like to know where the department is going on that and what we are doing to really stimulate that part of our economy.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Not a hundred percent sure how that relates to this particular capital, but I will go to the Minister for a response.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have come out with our Biomass Strategy. We've met with committee. It's in the business plans and we'd be more than prepared and happy to have that full discussion when our business plans are before the House or anytime the committee would wish to ask us to appear.

For the purpose of today's exercise, while it's under forest management, our capital plan relates more to the support services for aviation and things like lightening sensors and those types of things.

MR. KRUTKO: My question is more around the activity description of forest management on page 11-8. I think as a department we seem to put a lot of focus on the managing or the forest response or forest repression aspect of the business. We're not doing anything to really look at using the forest resources and the trees before we have to respond to a fire. To having more of a management plan with regard to managing the forest products and developing forest inventories, looking at the different forest species. I'd like to ask the department if, as he comes forward to forest management, we could look at more than just how we're going to respond to forest fires. What are we doing to manage the forest in such a way that we're benefitting from the forest rather than just spending money on forest repression?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: As we look at managing forests we are doing a whole host of

things. We are continuing with our inventory that we're undertaking on Crown lands. We're working with communities on community forest management plans that are anticipating in the boreal forest area the development of possible biomass facilities that would allow communities to have access to ongoing biomass supplies close to their communities. We're working, with interest, as we've indicated in this House yesterday. For example, Member Groenewegen from Hay River South mentioned about biomass pellet plants. We're investigating that opportunity. As well, we're looking at our obligations and requirements under silva culture to make sure that we're replenishing the forests. We've been up the valley working with communities as far north as the Member's riding, looking at fast growing willows to see the potential there for biomass. We are doing a lot of work. We've tied in with Wilfred Laurier University through our science agenda to look at things like permafrost, the changes to the landscape, what's happening with climate change as the forest moves north, what that's doing to different species that make up the boreal forest. We are engaged on many fronts on this particular area.

MR. KRUTKO: In the previous capital estimates, I believe it was last year, there were dollars that were supposed to be allocated to a fire tower in my riding with regard to the Schiltee fire tower in Fort McPherson or outside of Fort McPherson. The money was reprofiled and expended in the South Slave region. I'd like to ask the department, at that time I had a commitment from the Minister that those dollars were going to be eventually reprofiled and spent on what it was supposed to be spent on in Fort McPherson, or Schiltee Rock as it's better known. The commitment has already been made in this House, so when can I see those dollars being reprofiled and allocated for what it was originally intended?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Bohnet.

MR. BOHNET: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is correct; there was a commitment from the department to follow up and reallocate those resources to another region last year because of some studies and some foundation work that has to be done. In the next business planning cycle that money will be seen for the Inuvik region and the site that the Member is referring to.

MR. KRUTKO: So when can I see it in the... Is the cheque in the mail or when do I get to see it?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the deputy minister indicated, it will be in the next business planning cycle for 2011-2012, I believe. Sorry, 2012-2013. So that will take us into the 17th Assembly. The Member for

Mackenzie Delta will be able to be given that assurance hopefully by the Assembly at that time as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sorry; can I just confirm that we're on forest management? Is that correct?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Yes, Mr. Bromley. We're on page 11-8, page 11-9 and page 11-10.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a question on the North Slave regional warehouse upgrade that's scheduled for 2011-2012. I see in the substantiation that there was some consideration to replacing the building, but it was deemed advisable to remediate it rather than replace it. The remediation costs were somewhat over a million dollars. The budget for the work being done is considerably less than that. I don't see any planning to deal with the rest. I'm just wondering what the department's plans are. I think we try now in our infrastructure plans to do things on a comprehensive basis and not leave projects hanging. If I'm reading this correctly, there's a substantial amount of work that needs to be done to bring this 30-year-old warehouse up to code and up to snuff. I'm just wondering what the plans are for the rest of the remediation costs for this building.

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

MR. BOHNET: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those are the costs that will bring it up to standard. When this building was looked at by Public Works and Services, the foundation and the core components of the building were still in very, very good shape. In fact, the building was one of those that was known to be overbuilt at the time, so with these particular renovations and upgrades this building will do us well for at least the next 10 years.

MR. BROMLEY: That sounds imminently reasonable to me. I guess perhaps the statement "the total remediation costs for the building was estimated over one million dollars" would more accurately read "the total replacement cost for this building." I would just ask the Minister if he would check that and confirm that. I'll leave it at that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. For confirmation, Mr. Bohnet. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we will confirm remediation versus replacement.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. We're on page 11-9, activity summary, forest management, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, \$1.403 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): We've concluded detail so we will go back to page 11-2 for the department summary. Environment and Natural Resources, department summary, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, \$1.653 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Is committee agreed that we have concluded consideration of Environment and Natural Resources?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, committee. Mr. Miltenberger, if I could get you to please thank your witness and, Sergeant-at-Arms, if I could get you to please escort him out, that would be great.

As agreed earlier, the next department on our list is the Department of Finance, which is in section three of the binder. Michael Miltenberger, do you have witnesses that you wish to bring into the Chamber?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Michael Miltenberger, please introduce your witness, for the record.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me Margaret Melhorn, deputy minister of Finance.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. We will proceed with the Department of Finance. Page 3-2 is the summary page so we will move to the next page, which is 3-4. Finance, activity summary, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, \$925,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): That concludes the detail. We will go back to the department summary, which is on page 3-2. Department of Finance, department summary. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if I could just have a little explanation of this fund, the \$925,000. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. We will go Ms. Melhorn.

MS. MELHORN: The \$925,000 is to allow for the investment in an upgrade new module for the SAM financial information system of the government that would allow for implementation of a module that would do procurement. It would facilitate government procurement and contracting.

MR. BROMLEY: When did we purchase the SAM system and how much was it?

MS. MELHORN: The SAM system was implemented in 2009. It was a project that had been going on for a number of years. The total budget for the implementation of the SAM system was in the order of \$20 million. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Are we anticipating any further expenditures other than just about a million dollars in this case?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With this new system we have taken on a commitment to maintain and upgrade, and in the IT world that's an ongoing commitment. While we're not expecting any, hopefully, yearly major changes, we do want to keep it up to speed with the changes in software and programming so that it continues to provide the service that it was intended to, but it is going to be an ongoing commitment. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: The Green Procurement Policy, I understand, is currently, I believe, either farmed out to each department or under Public Works and Services. But I think it's the hope, perhaps optimistically, the intent is to move that into the Department of Finance so that it could be done under one hat. I'm wondering, currently it's a rather hollow policy but should some teeth be provided in the Green Procurement Policy, would it fit under this module for implementation administration? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Ms. Melhorn.

MS. MELHORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The module is a tool that facilitates the procurement process. The policies and other guidelines that departments would be working with respect to procurement would be separate from that but obviously would have to be reflected in the way that the modules are configured. The Department of Finance is responsible for procurement policies in terms of contracting and the contracting regulations. The green procurement would require the establishment of a number of technical requirements that might be beyond the scope of the Department of Finance and might be better placed in specific departments that are more able to address those technical requirements. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Well, we've had discussions in this House where it was identified that the Green Procurement Policy might rightfully belong in the Department of Finance so that it would be applied and implemented. Whereas it's not now, it would be applied and implemented across the government. I am interested in what it would take to configure this module to be able to handle it. I recognize that

there must be other policies that this software is responding to and if we should move that policy into Finance, I hope that the potential for this to be useable to administer that policy would be part of this purchase. So I'd ask the Minister if he would consider that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We're buying a module, basically off the shelf and we're going to be able to tailor it to the requirements, our contracting requirements. So it will be able to reflect what the Green Procurement Policy will eventually end up being. It will be configured to accommodate the BIP requirements and those types of things. So, yes, we will have the capacity to have it tailored to the specific realities of our contracting world with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks to the Minister for that commitment. That sounds good to me.

I've raised the concern in the past about how much we're actually saving with these sorts of things and I'm hoping here that there will be clear savings. I will be interested in what the costs of these configurations are as well as the maintenance, so I will be watching this in the future, possibly. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. No question. Just a comment. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We appreciate the Member's comment and we, as well, will be looking to see whether there are any efficiencies here in terms of dollars. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on my list is Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to pick up where my colleague Mr. Bromley was asking questions on the contract management module. I would equate it to, you know, last year we bought a souped up Porsche, we got it home and we found out it's got no air conditioning. That's the kind of thing that really bothers me, when the government spends millions of dollars on new, state-of-the-art software system and SAM and it can't manage contracts that the government has. It's kind of ridiculous that a year later we want to spend another million dollars on that component, that piece of it.

I'm not sure, and Mr Bromley touched on it a little bit, but in the life of the last government we had many discussions, I remember, with the previous government on migrating the contract registry and the BIP monitoring all over to Finance. If we're going to spend a million dollars on a new contract

management module, wouldn't it make sense that we'd be having those discussions again? I'd like to know exactly where that discussion is at or if that's not part of the equation, then we're not really managing all the contracts government-wide if ITI still has the contract registry. These guys are spending a million dollars on a new contract management module for this SAM system. Again, we're not covering all of our bases here, Mr. Chairman, so maybe a comment on that would be great. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Minister Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Two specific points in response to the Member's question. This project has a life going back to 2003 when it was initially contemplated. When it was finally ready to go in 2009, the price was almost \$29 million and was scaled back to \$20 million to get us up and running with our stripped down economy model Chevrolet kind of system to allow us to do the basic business of government. Now, as we look at consolidating our contract and procurement services within government, this module will in fact assist us in doing the work to do that consolidation and is, in fact, underway. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: So maybe the Minister can commit that in fact the contract registry, BIP monitoring and the efforts that ITI are going to be migrated over to the Department of Finance and managed under this new \$1 million upgrade. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: We are working on that consolidated shared services model and we are bringing as many of the infrastructure resources together and the decision-making and the policies and procedures so we have something similar to those of us that have been around a long time and would remember the old government services kind of approach. The final configuration hasn't been decided on, but regardless of that, the assured services model, this module will be an integral part of that system and infrastructure. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: I'd hope that happens sooner rather than later. This is year three of four for the current government and that's something I think that we need to try to get concluded before the next government comes in.

The other thing, we're spending close to \$1 million on this upgrade and on the O and M costs we're spending \$125,000 a year. Maybe I missed the answer to Mr. Bromley's question, but is that for a staff person to manage the new module?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: No, that's for the ongoing licensing costs. What has been anticipated, though, is that there will be, because of the consolidation and change to SAM, the other

modules that we in fact will be able to save on the cost of one position, which is over about \$110,000, which will help offset the ongoing licensing fees and other costs. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Just one other question. When we purchased SAM, how come we didn't buy something that would incorporate contract management inside of SAM and why are we spending \$1 million a year later? We should have been ensured that SAM was going to cover off the needs of the government that we required. Obviously it didn't and we're spending \$1 million a year later, it doesn't make a lot of sense. So maybe we weren't shopping at the right store or with the right company. There were a lot of discussions around who we ended up doing business with and maybe there was another model out there, Mr. Chairman, that would have incorporated this and we wouldn't have had to spend another \$1 million. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I think you answered it with your Chevette response, but I'll go to the Minister again.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, keeping with the automobile analogies, the reality was that if we were prepared to pay the 28 or 29 million as opposed to the 20 million at the time, we could have had all those extra features incorporated. Given the pressures and the fiscal realities of the day a year or so ago, we scaled it back to do the most fundamental core services we had, recognizing that we would probably want to, as time and resources permitted, expand and put in the programs that we're talking about today to do the things as a government and as a Legislature that were not targeted, such as this consolidated shared services for procurement. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. We're on page 3-2, which is the departmental summary for the Department of Finance, infrastructure investment summary, total infrastructure investment summary, \$925,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Agreed. Is committee agreed that we have concluded the Department of Finance?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Okay, I'd like to thank Ms. Melhorn. If I can get the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the witness out. That was the department summary.

Alright, next on our agenda is Bill 8, the Social Work Profession Act. I'll now ask the Minister responsible for the bill, the honourable Minister Miltenberger, to introduce the bill. No, sorry, my bad. I will now ask the Minister responsible for the

bill, the Honourable Sandy Lee, Minister of Health and Social Services, to introduce the bill.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to introduce Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act. This bill will regulate the profession of social work in the NWT and ensure that only qualified individuals will be able to call themselves social workers. It was developed collaboratively with the NWT Regulation Subcommittee of the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada.

Social workers play a crucial role in the health and social services system and provide services to children, adults, families, groups, organizations and communities. This legislation is intended to protect the public by ensuring that social workers are qualified to practice, by including a complaint and discipline process that is fair and protects the rights of social workers. The major components of this legislation are registration licensing and complaints and disciplinary procedures.

Mr. Chairman, the registration model in the act is consistent with other NWT health profession legislation such as the Pharmacy Act. Because there are too few resident social workers in the NWT to enable the profession to be self-regulating, the GNWT will administer the licensing and registration of the profession. This model is supported by stakeholders. The new legislation will assign registration duties such as the maintenance of registers to the registrar and also provides an appeal mechanism for registration decisions. Appeals of decisions are made directly to the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories.

Two registration categories for social workers will be established under the act. Registered social workers will require a bachelor's degree in social work and licensed social workers will require a diploma in social work. Aurora College graduates of the Social Work Program will be eligible to apply as licensed social workers. A dual category system was considered the best option as the NWT continues to be challenged in recruiting health and social services professionals. Under this system, Aurora College graduates can be licensed. It provides the GNWT with the flexibility of developing and training a homegrown workforce and employers will still have the option of considering education and experience equivalencies when recruiting for a position.

Mr. Chairman, some of our northern social workers have worked for years as social workers and have accumulated a wealth of experience and knowledge but do not have minimum formal education requirements required to be licensed under the act. The proposed act contains a grandfathering provision allowing anyone employed as a social worker in the NWT for at least two years immediately prior to the act coming into force to

have the opportunity to apply for registration as a licensed social worker.

Mr. Chairman, there are many non-profit agencies, teachers, band councils, aboriginal leaders and elders that provide services that might be considered within the scope of practice of social work. The act will not prohibit those individuals from continuing to provide those services as the act protects the title of social worker rather than the scope of practice.

In order for social workers to maintain a standard level of competence, the proposed act includes a continuing competency provision. Every three years all registrants will be required to fulfill the continuing competency requirement as a means of ensuring that social workers maintain current skills, knowledge and abilities throughout their careers.

The conduct and discipline section of the proposed act is consistent with modern health profession legislation in the NWT and other provinces in the areas of complaints, investigation and the board of inquiry. The disciplinary process separates the investigative and adjudicative provisions to ensure procedural fairness.

The complaints officer will review a complaint and decide if it should be dismissed or if he should attempt to resolve it. The complaints officer will also have the option of appointing a facilitator to engage in alternative dispute resolution or to appoint an investigator to investigate the complaint or refer the complaint to a board of inquiry. The appointment of a deputy also gives the complaints officer the ability to initiate the complaints process if he or she has reasonable grounds to believe that a social worker may be engaging in unprofessional conduct.

The Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada established an NWT Regulation Subcommittee to assist the department in the development of this legislative initiative. I would like to thank Members of the subcommittee, Ms. Sandy Little, Mr. Les Harrison, Ms. Anne Gill, Mr. J.C. Catholique and Ms. Jette Finsborg, for all of their time and effort thus far and for committing to continue to work with the department in the future to develop the regulatory framework required to implement this act.

I would also like to acknowledge the nearly 80 stakeholders who participated in the regional workshops that helped lead to the development of key elements in the legislation. This collaborative effort has resulted in a modern piece of legislation that meets the needs of all stakeholders: social workers and the general public.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Sandy Little, secretary-treasurer for the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada, and the chair of the NWT Regulations Subcommittee, and also to thank Ms. Denise

Bowen, chair of the Health and Human Services Program with Aurora College, for voicing their support of the bill during the public review process.

Finally, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Social Programs for their review of this bill and for their comments. Questions posed demonstrated their interest and support of the legislation and their passion for ensuring the legislation protects the public while remaining fair to social workers.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Lee. I would now like to ask the chairperson for the Standing Committee on Social Programs, which reviewed this bill, to make comments. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Social Programs conducted its public review of Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act, on September 28, 2010. The committee thanks the Minister and her staff for presenting the bill.

The bill provides for regulation of social workers in the Northwest Territories. It sets out a system to qualify and enrol registered social workers and licensed social workers, the definitions of unprofessional conduct, a complaints mechanism, and a fair system to resolve them. These standards were designed to protect both the public and social workers.

The bill advances with strong support from the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada. The association was well represented at the committee's public hearing. A representative from Arctic College also spoke in favour of the bill.

Following the committee's review, a motion was carried to report Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act, to the Assembly as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the committee's opening comments on Bill 8. Individual members from the committee may have additional questions or comments as we proceed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. I'll now ask the Minister responsible for the bill if she would like to bring any witnesses into the House.

HON. SANDY LEE: Yes, I would, please. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, can I please get you to escort the witnesses into the Chamber?

Ms. Lee, could I please get you to introduce your witnesses for the record?

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right is Ms. Lisa Cardinal, director of policy and planning and evaluation for the Department of Health and Social Services. To my left is Mr. Mark Aitken, legislative counsel with the Department of Justice.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Ms. Lee. I'll now open the floor to general comments on Bill 8. General comments? Detail? Is committee agreed that we proceed with detail on Bill 8?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, committee. I'll defer the title and begin the clause-by-clause. Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Clause 1.

---Clauses 1 through 43 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that we have concluded detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that we have... Okay, Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act. Bill as a whole.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act, is now ready for third reading?

---Bill 8 as a whole approved for third reading

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): I'd like to thank the Minister and her witnesses. Ms. Lee.

HON. SANDY LEE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Sergeant-at-Arms, if I could please get you to escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

The next item on our agenda is Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act. Is committee agreed that we move on to Bill 9?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Now that we've agreed to consider Bill 9 I will now ask the Minister responsible for the bill, the Honourable Bob McLeod, the Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, to introduce the bill.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to introduce Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act. This bill addresses the proposed changes to the Tourism Act, specifically the removal of the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program.

The Tourism Deposit Assurance Program was established in the early 1990s in an effort to

increase consumer confidence in Northwest Territories tourism operators following the demise of two large lodges on Great Bear Lake. No other Canadian jurisdiction offers a program like the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program.

This bill is an important one because the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment believes that the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program has not accomplished what it was designed to do. It has not increased consumer confidence in our tourism industry and the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program ultimately drains valuable resources from programs designed to develop our tourism industry development. The industry is much better served by encouraging tourism operators to adopt payment practices that protect their clients, such as credit card payments.

The removal of the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program from the Tourism Act is consistent with direction we have received from industry partners such as Northwest Territories Tourism. In June 2010 the chair of the Northwest Territories Tourism advised Industry, Tourism and Investment that its board had passed a motion recommending that the department eliminate the program from its legislation.

Removing the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program from the Tourism Act is also consistent with the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure, which recommended that the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program be cancelled in March 2010.

Industry, Tourism and Investment and the Government of the Northwest Territories remains committed to providing a diversified economy that provides all communities and regions with opportunities and choices. It is our view that removing the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program from the Tourism Act and focusing our resources on programs and services that assist the development of our tourism industry will help us meet this important objective.

I want to thank the committee for its input into the review of the proposed changes to the Tourism Act. I would now be happy to answer any questions you might have about this issue.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I would now like to ask the chairperson for the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure, which reviewed this bill, to make comments. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act, revokes Section 13 and 14 of the Tourism Act that established the Tourism Deposit Assurance Program effective November 15, 2010.

The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure conducted a public

hearing on Bill 9 on September 27, 2010, in Yellowknife. The committee heard concerns and opinions from many outfitters as well as from representatives from NWT Tourism. The committee took everything it heard, both written and in person submissions, under advisement in its consideration of this bill. The committee also held a public clause-by-clause review of Bill 9 on October 13, 2010. Following the committee's review, a motion was carried to report Bill 9 to the Legislative Assembly as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the committee's opening comments on Bill 9. Individual members may have additional questions or comments as we proceed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. On that, I would ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he would like to bring some witnesses into the House. Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Yes, I would, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Is committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, committee. I will now ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Mr. McLeod, can I please get you to introduce your witnesses for the record?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right I have Doug Doan, assistant deputy minister with the department. On my left I have Mark Aitken, legal counsel.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. We'll now open the floor to general comments on Bill 9. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to this bill, I was probably the lone wolf in the wilderness on this one because I was yee-yawing back and forth. At the end of the day the original intent of the bill that was brought in in the early 1990s was in regard to the closure of two lodges on Great Bear Lake and some means of protection for the consumer. I think there's still that type of need in the Northwest Territories from what we're seeing with the big game outfitters in the area of caribou hunts and polar bears. I think that we have to be cognizant of the fact that we are unique in our tourism ventures and we have some unique challenges in the Northwest Territories such as isolation, transportation, logistical challenges getting people in and out of the lodges, and our distance from southern urban centres.

I just wanted to state that as a member of the committee I was the only one who sort of opposed the bill, but for the sake of progress I will not respond to the bill or vote on it. I want to put that on the public record, because I do have concerns of

not having it there to protect the consumer in an industry that basically has had to bring in legislation because of what happened in two lodges on Great Bear Lake. We are not immune to that today. We've talked to the tourism industry. We've talked to the lodge owners, and even they weren't all unanimously on side when it came to this issue before committee. Again, I'd like to leave it at that and just like to state for the record where I stand on this. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. That's more of a comment, but would the Minister like to respond?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Our tourism industry has indicated they have a clear preference for departmental resources to be used to support operators with workshops, training and product development. Also, the protection of client deposits is better done through the use of credit cards.

In our opinion, the Tourist Deposit Assurance Program was created to boost confidence in the tourism industry but in actuality we feel that the program has had the opposite effect, because it shows that the government does not have confidence in the NWT tourism industry because they're assuming that this industry will fail. In our view, that's why we feel it should be changed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Next on my list is Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to just comment briefly on this. I want to start off by thanking the NWT Tourism and the board. They were in favour of Bill 9 and the deletion of the Tourist Deposit Assurance Program.

Given what's happened to the barren-ground caribou outfitters in the Northwest Territories, I think the government's got some bigger issues on its plate that it's going to have to deal with. In the money that is being thrown at this assurance program, and it's over \$300,000, Mr. Chairman, that's money that could be better spent looking at programming and ways to keep what operators that we have left in some kind of existence until caribou numbers come back or until we can actually count the caribou correctly in a two or three-year period where we know exactly how many caribou are out there. I think that work is being done. It's going to continue to be done and, hopefully, the numbers aren't as bad as they say they are and the industry will rebound, because it is a multi-million industry here in the Northwest Territories. We have to find a way to get our operators through these rough times.

Again, I support the bill. Like I said, this is going to happen, Bill 9 is going to happen, but we need to come up with a plan to replace, with that money, replace some support and some help to the

outfitting industry here in the Northwest Territories, because they've been hit right between the eyes with the crash in the caribou numbers. We've got to do something about that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Once again, more of a comment, but I will go to Minister McLeod for a response.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the past few years we recognized that there was starting to be a shift in tourism products so we undertook some research to determine where the future interests would lie and it was indicating there was a preference towards ecotourism and adventure tourism. We instituted the Tourism Diversification and Marketing Program which provided funding so that existing operators could look at developing new products. For the Barren Ground outfitters and the polar bear outfitters, they indicated that they needed to focus more on the marketing and their own specific sectors, so the government provided sports hunter outfitter marketing assistance. It started out at \$150,000 a year, now this year we have \$300,000 for the caribou and \$300,000 for the polar bear. So that's how we're assisting them and we expect that for the future years there has been input into our business plan. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: I thank the Minister for that. Again, I think, given the fact that barren-ground caribou outfitting in the Northwest Territories is a multi-million dollar industry and provided a lot of spin-off business in our Territory -- hotels, taxis, restaurants, things like that -- I think the government... And I appreciate the efforts that the government has put into the Tourism Diversification Marketing Program that they've got but, Mr. Chairman, it falls short of what is really needed. I think what we need to do as a government is find a way to bridge that gap, whether it's a year, two years, three years, four years, who knows how long it's going to take for the caribou numbers to come back.

But one thing is for certain, Mr. Chairman, we had an industry last year and we don't have one now. We have to ensure that it has the ability, when those numbers come back, to thrive again and to get right back into doing what they were doing before the caribou numbers crashed.

Again, I think we have to try to bridge that gap and the pain that our barren-ground caribou outfitting industry is experiencing. What shape or form that takes is yet to be determined, but we have to start working on that, Mr. Chairman, otherwise when the caribou numbers do come back, we're not going to have an industry and that would be a shame.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As I said, we are spending money on sports hunt outfitter marketing programs for both the caribou and the polar bears. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Next on my list is Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do support Bill 9. I came to that support through the process that's been outlined and the participation of many. I want to express appreciation to those who did contribute in the process and the considerable input we had, especially from small businesses and entrepreneurs, many of whom are currently very much struggling now in the face of our low caribou populations.

I just want to point out or comment or observe that our local resident businesses have, on the whole, been extremely responsible and have not been, sort of, the source of the angst that has generated this bill, and I want to express appreciation to them for that leadership. I know they have various opinions on this bill and I've appreciated that input, as I've said.

I want to observe again that comments were made encouraging the Minister to find other ways to show his confidence in the industry, and the Minister has indicated that he will do that and assist them in carrying on good business practices. I think we would like to, in particular, again, support our local resident businesses and as long as we register exceptions to free trade agreements that, of course, cause us to lose the ability to prefer our local businesses, we'll be able to do that.

One question for the Minister: The Minister has mentioned a couple times that businesses can protect their clients through credit card payments. I'm sure many already use credit card payments, but I'm wondering if the Minister could say how that works and what the limitations are of using credit card payments and how that might protect their clients. I'd be interested in those perspectives. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mr. Doan.

MR. DOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The use of credit cards is practiced by many in the industry already and essentially through the use of an appropriate credit card, not every single credit card company offers this, but many of the credit card companies offer an insurance program so that in the event that your payment is made by credit card and the product or service for which you have paid was not made, you can make a claim on the credit card company and they will undertake an investigation and they will repay any deposits that have been paid for which a product or service was not provided. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are there any cases where outfitters have taken payments that credit cards would not be able to provide that protection? Thank you.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As was mentioned at hearings, at least one outfitter indicated that where deposits had been taken that would span several years, there would be the possibility of an issue there. But we have indicated that if they could file before November 1st, we will deal with all of the claims in one fashion or another. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for those remarks. I understand that and I guess I would just ask the Minister to consider a little research in this area and provide that research results to our businesses, our tourism operators, so they are operating with full information there. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: That will be our intention and we will do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have no other Members on my list. Is committee agreed that there are no further general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Is committee agreed that we proceed with the clause-by-clause review of Bill 9?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Okay. We will defer the title and go straight to the individual clauses. Clause 1.

---Clauses 1 through 5 inclusive approved

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Bill as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Does committee agree that Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act, is now ready for third reading?

---Bill 9 as a whole approved for third reading

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Abernethy): Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I would like to thank your witnesses. If I could please get the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort our witnesses from the Chamber.

What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: I move we report progress.

---Carried

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

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, Mr. Abernethy.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering

Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012, as well as Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act, and Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act, and would like to report progress and that Bills 8 and 9 are ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. A motion is on the floor. Do you have a seconder? The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

PRINCIPAL CLERK OF OPERATIONS (Ms. Bennett): Orders of the day for Wednesday, October 27, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. 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
 - Tabled Document 4-16(5), Executive Summary of the Report of the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project
 - Tabled Document 30-16(5), 2010 Review of Members' Compensation and Benefits
 - Tabled Document 38-16(5), Supplementary Health Benefits - What We Heard

- Tabled Document 62-16(5), Northern Voices, Northern Waters: NWT Water Stewardship Strategy
- Tabled Document 66-16(5), NWT Capital Estimates 2011-2012
- Tabled Document 75-16(5), Response to the Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project on the Federal and Territorial Governments' Interim Response to "Foundation for a Sustainable Northern Future"
- Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act
- Committee Report 3-16(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Child and Family Services Act
- Minister's Statement 65-16(5), Devolution Agreement-in-Principle, Impact on Land Claims and Protection of Aboriginal Rights

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 8, Social Work Profession Act
- Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Tourism Act

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, October 27, 2010, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:56 p.m.