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The Honourable David Krutko, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, January 21, 2004****Members Present**

Mr. Allen, Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Mr. Delorey, Honourable Charles Dent, Mrs. Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Mr. Hawkins, Honourable David Krutko, Ms. Lee, Honourable Michael McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Honourable Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Honourable Floyd Roland, Mr. Villeneuve, Mr. Yakeleya, Honourable Henry Zoe

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. David Krutko): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Roland.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 5-15(2): Budget Process Update**

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide an update on our budgetary process and some brief comments on our fiscal situation. Despite the fact that the NWT is one of the fastest-growing economies in Canada, the Government of the NWT is facing a growing gap between its expenditures and revenues. Resource development is placing large pressures on our expenditures. We need to provide infrastructure, we need to prepare the people of the NWT so they see a positive benefit from development, and we need to counter the less positive effects of development which can cause social disruption in our families and our communities.

At the same time, the Government of the Northwest Territories has to cope with critical issues in the areas of health care, education and social support. The demands of the expanding economy are competing with these needs for the government's limited financial resources.

Furthermore, the government is trying to meet these needs with inadequate federal funding arrangements. Changes imposed by the federal government in the past mean that our formula financing arrangements with Canada no longer meet their original goal of filling the gap between our expenditure needs and our ability to raise our own revenues. In the absence of resource revenues, the economic development that is putting such pressure on our expenditures generates little in the way of new revenues to allow us to cope with that pressure.

These are the circumstances that our fiscal strategy must address. Since we took office in December, we have reviewed our fiscal position and outlook. We have talked about our options and the measures we are prepared to take with respect to revenues, expenditures and borrowing. As the Premier stated yesterday, difficult choices will have to be made. He indicated that we need to take a hard look at our spending and also at our revenue options. How much money we have to spend, how much we are prepared to raise in new revenues, and how much debt are we prepared to take on, all set limits on activities and initiatives. The Premier stated that it is important that we work together to make changes; we want to make these changes with careful forethought and consideration. We have to work hard to achieve balance.

Fiscal strategies are based on considerable uncertainty over exactly how much money we will have, so we have to

make some assumptions, set some priorities, develop short, medium and long-term plans and then be ready to review and revise these plans as new information becomes available.

For example, we still do not know what our formula financing arrangements for 2004-2005 and beyond will look like. The previous Prime Minister made a commitment last February to find solutions to our long-term funding needs. While we are confident that this commitment will be met, the issue is still unresolved and presents a significant source of uncertainty in our planning. I will be approaching the federal Minister of Finance in order to try and resolve this critical issue.

Mr. Speaker, I will be presenting the Government of the Northwest Territories 2004-2005 budget when the Legislative Assembly meets in March. This budget will present our plan for the upcoming fiscal year and outline our strategy. Although we have begun to look at some medium and long-term plans, we need to start today to begin to build a sustainable future for the people of the NWT.

Given the relatively short timeframe, we are limited in the measures we can implement for 2004-2005. This budget, therefore, will be a stepping stone toward achieving our medium and longer-term goals. For 2005-2006 and beyond, we will have to develop longer-term plans. These plans may include changing the way we, as a government, do business so that we can implement the 15th Legislative Assembly's vision, priorities and plans in a fiscally responsible way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Zoe.

Minister's Statement 6-15(2): Tlicho Final Agreement And The Establishment Of New Community Governments

HON. HENRY ZOE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report to Members that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has been able to assist the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council in the development of new community governance structures which will be established as part of the Tlicho Final Agreement. Municipal and Community Affairs is committed to assisting and supporting Dogrib Treaty 11's elected leaders and appointed officials in preparing for the implementation of this important agreement.

Since the Tlicho people ratified the Tlicho Final Agreement, a strong partnership has developed between the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council and Municipal and Community Affairs. We are working to prepare the four Tlicho communities for implementation of their agreement.

The Dogrib Treaty 11 community government implementation team and my departmental officials are meeting regularly. They are planning to co-host a workshop this month for all the senior administrative officers and band managers. Community consultations and information sessions for all the Tlicho communities are currently underway and are being organized jointly with Dogrib Treaty 11 Council. As well, Mr. Speaker, a comprehensive training plan for the community government is being developed cooperatively between Municipal and Community Affairs' School of Community Government and Dogrib Treaty 11 Council.

There are a number of legal instruments that are required to affirm and implement the Tlicho Final Agreement, both at the national and territorial levels. Along with other government departments, we are working closely with Dogrib Treaty 11 to develop the draft Tlicho community government act, to be brought forward to this Assembly for consideration and passage soon. The purpose of this legislation is to establish the four community governments and outline their powers and responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, all of these actions establish some of the fundamental building blocks for implementation of the first self-government agreement in the Northwest Territories. I am pleased that we are working cooperatively with the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council in preparation for the implementation of the Tlicho Final Agreement by working to make the new Tlicho community governments a reality. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Minister's Statement 7-15(2): National Non-Smoking Week

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Weedless Wednesday during National Non-Smoking Week. I would like to make use of this opportunity to recognize the work that is being done so that our territory can eventually become a smoke-free society.

Mr. Speaker, there are numerous examples of people and communities working to a common goal of a smoke-free society:

- A growing number of NWT communities have now enacted progressive smoking bylaws that protect their residents against the health risks of secondhand smoke;
- Citizens, tobacco action groups and community health professionals have come together to help raise awareness of tobacco issues;
- Schools are teaching about tobacco addiction in their health curriculum;
- The 2nd annual Quit and Win contest, sponsored by the NWT/Nunavut branch of the Canadian Public Health Association, provides incentive for people to try quitting; and,
- through the groundbreaking action of the Workers' Compensation Board of the NWT and Nunavut, workplaces will soon be smoke free.

It is important to continue this work, Mr. Speaker, because recent statistics show we still have a long way to go. For example, almost half of NWT youth between the ages of

15 and 17 smoke and the average age when children start to smoke is 12 or 13.

If we are to reduce these alarmingly high rates of smoking in our youth, it is clear that we must take action to reach children before they start smoking. We must convince children to make the decision to stay smoke free. That is the age group that needs to hear our message the most. If we can create a smoke-free generation of youth today, Mr. Speaker, they will become tomorrow's smoke-free generation of adults.

With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services is working with Education, Culture and Employment on a communications strategy that targets children between the ages of eight and 14. The aim of this strategy is prevention: finding ways to encourage our children to remain smoke-free. The strategy will roll out over the next two years.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, students across the North are taking part in an initiative called Smoke Screening. Students from grades 6 to 12 are watching a dozen of the best anti-tobacco ads from around the world. Some are funny, others are shocking and still others are very sad. Students vote on the ad they like the best, and the most popular ad will be aired on local TV. This initiative is designed to get young people thinking and talking about what smoking does to their bodies.

Mr. Speaker, I met with Heather Crowe last week. As Members may know, Ms. Crowe is dying of cancer from secondhand smoke. Although she was never a smoker herself, she developed lung cancer because of other people smoking around her at her place of work.

Her dedication to the fight against tobacco is commendable. She has set a great example for the rest of us, and provides a powerful reminder of why we need to take action against smoking. It is estimated that secondhand smoke kills 3,600 Canadians every year. It is time to change that.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services is proposing tobacco legislation that will complement the Workers' Compensation Board's regulations banning smoking in the workplace, and to back up community, regional and territorial efforts to create a smoke-free society.

It is important the Members of this House support these efforts, Mr. Speaker. Our communities look to the leadership demonstrated in this Assembly to reinforce their grassroots actions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Zoe.

Minister's Statement 8-15(2): 2004 Arctic Winter Games

HON. HENRY ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to inform Members about our Northwest Territories Team for the 2004 Arctic Winter Games, which are being hosted by the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo in Fort McMurray, Alberta, from February 28 to March 6, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories has been an active participant in the Arctic Winter Games since their inception in 1970. These games are an important celebration of sport and culture for youth from the circumpolar region. We are once again proud to send a team to this event.

Team NWT will join athletes and cultural performers from Alaska, Yukon, northern Alberta, Nunavut, Greenland, Nunavik, the Russian provinces of Magadan and Yamal, and northern Scandinavia.

Mr. Speaker, Team NWT will consist of over 350 athletes, coaches, cultural performers and mission staff. Final selections for team members will take place at the territorial trials being held over the weekend of January 29 to February 1, 2004, in the communities of Fort Simpson, Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Smith, Rae-Edzo, Detah, Ndilo, Fort Resolution and Yellowknife. I want to pass on my congratulations to all the participants who have tried out for Team NWT. Whether you make the team or not, you are already a champion because you have demonstrated your commitment to active living and have tried your best.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my thanks to the Sport North Federation, the territorial sport organizations, regional coordinators and the many hardworking volunteers who are leaders in our sport system. Without their hard work and the thousands of hours of time they give, the Arctic Winter Games and many other sporting events would not take place.

The Arctic Winter Games are an important part of our sport system. Every two years, our youth look forward to the opportunity to share in friendly competitions and cultural exchanges and I am confident that our youth will once again benefit from this experience in Fort McMurray. Friendships will be formed and our young people will return with many lasting memories.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, I would like to wish Team NWT the best of luck at the 2004 Arctic Winter Games. I would like to reaffirm to them and to all young northern athletes how proud we are of their healthy and active lifestyle choices. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier, Mr. Handley.

Minister's Statement 9-15(2): Minister Absent From The House

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members that the Honourable Charles Dent will be leaving the House early today to attend the federal/provincial/territorial Ministers of Labour meeting in Banff. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Appointments To The Aurora College Board of Governors

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to use my Member's statement today to recognize the appointment of Mr. Jackson Lafferty and Dr. Yacub Adam to the Aurora College Board of Governors.

Mr. Lafferty is a constituent of mine. He's a member of the Dogrib Nation and has played a number of leadership roles in the Dogrib region. Mr. Lafferty has long had an interest in advancing the NWT post-secondary education system's ability to prepare people for new economic opportunities, something this government must pay strict attention to. I would like to wish both men well in their roles with the Aurora College Board of Governors.

While I'm on the topic of education, today all across Canada, people are writing the National Registered Nurses Exams. This includes a group of northern nursing students at Aurora College and I wanted to wish them all the best of luck with the exams and look forward to having them working for the health and well-being of all the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Member's Statement On Condolences On The Passing Of Delorme Family Members

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a quick statement today. I just want to express my sincere condolences and the condolences of the 15th Legislative Assembly to the Delorme family and Deninu Kue, who have lost three family members in the past three years. The last member that they lost was just over the last Christmas holidays. Mr. Speaker, I just want to let the family know, and their many friends and relatives, that we are aware of the loss that they're suffering and that our thoughts and our prayers go out to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Condolences to the family. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Member's Statement On Access To Justice And Legal Aid Concerns

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my riding of Yellowknife Centre has come forward to express that they have many concerns with the swiftness of access to justice through the legal aid system, whereby access to this justice seems to wear lead shoes. Mr. Speaker, reading past Hansards shows many questions have been put to the government, yet it also shows very few real responses.

Mr. Speaker, later today I will be bringing some of the concerns forward of the people of my riding. Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we're truly taking care of our people and later, during question period, I will be taking those questions directly to the Minister. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Member's Statement On Environmental Reviews Of Deh Cho Bridge And Miramar Con Mine

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act is a very powerful piece of federal legislation that was created a number of years ago. It sets up two fairly powerful boards that regulate the development of non-renewable resources here in the NWT. We're facing a couple of situations right now that I think are kind of unusual and I want to bring them to the attention of the legislature.

The first one, Mr. Speaker, regards the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, which is now considering a request to take the Deh Cho Bridge proposal to a full environmental hearing. This bridge is a much-needed part of the infrastructure for Yellowknife and the North Slave, Mr. Speaker, but this hearing, which has come up quite recently, could cause a considerable delay in this project.

What is really quite unusual about it is that it is the federal Department of Fisheries which I understand is proposing this move, but it is not on behalf of the fish in the Deh Cho river, Mr. Speaker, it's for economic reasons put forward by the NWT Chamber of Mines. I think it's a bit unusual that a federal department is advocating the interests of mining, but the territorial government has a major investment in this piece of infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and should be advocating for the interests of the people of the whole North Slave region and should be seeking to expedite this process.

The other situation that I find unusual, with regard to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, is the matter of the Con Mine abandonment and reclamation plan. Last summer, I and other MLAs asked the board for a more open, public process so we could see and perhaps have input into what was going on for shutting this mine down. We've heard nothing since then. While the mine, Mr. Speaker, has played a significant role in Yellowknife's development, its closure is also going to have a significant impact on the development and the environment of this city for a number of years to come. Here, too, is where our government, I believe, should be taking a strong position in advocating for the interests of the public.

During question period, I'm going to be asking Ministers for their comment on these situations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

Member's Statement On Tax Exemptions For NWT Residents

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last several weeks, I've raised several issues in relation to tax exemptions which may be applied to residents of the Northwest Territories which this government can use as a tool for economic development. There are a number of documents available to peruse that would lend to my comments, Mr. Speaker. My constituents of Inuvik Twin

Lakes have asked me to question why the government would not consider tax exemptions as its tool.

A report called, "Sorting Out the Issues: Tax Exemption – A Tool for Economic Development for First Nations," prepared by Dr. Fred Lessar, strongly urges the introduction of such a tax model as well as Bill C-48. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Lessar documents that if this were the case, the financial gain experienced by Canada through a reduction of the need for social services would fall our way. It would be a win-win for Canada and the indigenous people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, if the tax exempt policy was adopted for the Northwest Territories, we too should also experience a win-win for the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, my objective in pursuing this very important issue reflects the composition of the riding of Inuvik Twin Lakes in the socio-economic report on Inuvik Twin Lakes which I tabled in this Assembly. It indicates that many of our residents still rely on some form of social assistance, including indigenous Inuvik residents who occupy 225 public housing units.

Mr. Speaker, later today I will ask the Finance Minister some pertinent questions on whether there could be substantial savings to the NWT in providing programs and services, as well as improve upon the economic status of our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Member's Statement On Health Services Provided To Aboriginal Seniors

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to address an apparent inequity in our health care system; that being that our First Nations people -- particularly our First Nations seniors -- are not receiving the same level of service from our government that non-native seniors are receiving in the area of health care benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I have often said in this House that access to adequate health care is a fundamental right of our citizens. However, it appears that that may not be the case. Mr. Speaker, for example, an aboriginal senior who requires a prescription must have their prescription approved by the non-insured health care benefits or NIHB department of the federal government. The NIHB program is very restrictive about exactly what it will and will not cover. Mr. Speaker, if the NIHB program will not cover for a senior First Nations person, then the senior is left with no alternative but to pay for the prescription out of their own pocket or not get it filled.

Conversely, Mr. Speaker, if a registered Metis senior needs a prescription, they forward that prescription to the Metis program administered by our government. If that prescription is not covered, is not approved by the Metis benefits program, the Metis senior can then apply to the GNWT seniors health benefits program for payment of the prescription.

Mr. Speaker, the same procedures apply to non-aboriginal seniors. They simply have all of their prescriptions forwarded to the GNWT seniors benefits program for payment.

Mr. Speaker, the inequities lie in health care benefits provided to First Nations people. Unless they have a private health care plan, these people do not have another option other than NIHB or no recourse, period. Mr. Speaker, this does not only apply to seniors. The Metis benefits program follows the same formulary as NIHB. However, Metis clients are also eligible for extended health care benefits, or EHB, as it is referred to as well. So once a Metis client has applied for benefits under the Metis plan, they can then access the EHB plan for whatever the Metis plan won't pay for. Not so for First Nations clients. First Nations clients are not eligible for coverage under the EHB program that is administered by our government.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. First Nations clients are not eligible for coverage under the EHB program that is administered by our government. There is something inherently wrong here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I urge this government to do the right thing and afford aboriginal clients the same level of health care benefits that all other Northwest Territories residents enjoy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Member's Statement On Acknowledgement Of Contributions To Youth Sport Programs In The Sahtu

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to acknowledge the contributions that the people in my region have made to youth and to sports and what a positive difference they have made in our communities. Many people donate their valuable time and talents to children who need support and encouragement so that they can have the opportunity to excel in their sports.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the many coaches and athletes from Deline for reaching out on both regional and territorial levels. Also, I would like to acknowledge the athletes from Tulita who have competed with a lot of other children in the Dene Games. Just recently, Mr. Speaker, the communities of Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells increased their support to assist youth so they could compete at regional games like the ice hockey tournament last month. I join with those communities and applaud the hard work which goes into such events. I want to send my heartfelt thanks to the school of Colville Lake for sending their children to Tulita last November for the volleyball tournament.

Mr. Speaker, for our youth, hockey tournaments for regional games and competition at all levels are so important and this means that we have to acknowledge those who make it happen, either with or without government support. Sports are very important in the

communities; they help produce successful people like Mr. Roger Allen, Mr. Ernie Lennie and the late Mr. Floyd Kelley. Today I want to celebrate all northern athletes who put our territories on the map, both nationally and internationally. So my statement is to look out for our future northern athletes. Mr. Speaker, I do hope that as a government we can continue to support and promote sports within and outside of our schools and keep our athletes striving to attend competitions down south, to reap the rewards so that we can sponsor the next generation of great northern athletes.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I would like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment if he intends to work with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to create more athletic opportunities for our youth in the Sahtu. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Member's Statement On Income Support Concerns In Hay River

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since my constituency office reopened after the new year, we have had an extraordinary number of constituents contacting us regarding concerns with income support. I think all of us can attest to the fact that December is a higher-than-usual month for expenditures. First of all, it's the middle of winter. Utilities and many other costs are at the highest they will be throughout the year. It's also Christmastime and it's difficult for anyone not to overextend themselves at this time of giving and sharing with family and friends. It's no different for families on income support.

I have had numerous constituents report that their income support has been cut off for various reasons in January. Some of them received IBA payments in December which were clawed back in January. Some of them received gifts of cash from family to buy gifts for their children. Apparently, these are both treated as income under current policies and guidelines. I've heard concerns from landlords who haven't been paid their January rent because income support clients who are tenants are struggling to work out January payments due to a variety of reasons like the ones I've mentioned. Some clients have had family and friends visiting over the holidays who are then deemed to be living with them. Those visitors had income, thus affecting the eligibility criteria of the client.

If the clients aren't happy with decisions made by income support workers, they can appeal, but the response to an appeal can take up to 30 days. That is a very long time to be denied access to basic necessities. I think it's time to revisit the approach that we take to income support. We've heard a lot about productive choices, but the array of circumstances that can affect a person's life and ability to act on productive choices also needs to be taken into consideration. It can't be a purely numbers approach. People are complex and there are many different challenges which may need to be addressed to assist them in becoming able to independently support themselves and their families.

We need to take a holistic and long-range approach to the needs of income support clients instead of assessing

everyone and everything on a month-to-month basis. Without supplementary supports in place, dealing with the system can create stress actually working against the path to self-reliance. We need counsellors who can work with clients on issues such as access to job training, addictions counselling, money management and life skills. I'm not advocating for anyone abusing the social security safety net we have in place, but if we seriously want to see progress in people's lives, we need to deal not only with their basic need of food, shelter and clothing, but other needs that contribute to their dependency on the system.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You have unanimous consent to conclude your statement, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. We need well-trained and compassionate people acting on commonsense and compassionate policies and guidelines dealing with people in need in our communities. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Member's Statement On Parks Use Policy

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to raise an issue that my constituent has asked me to bring to the attention of the Minister of RWED. This is a recurring issue that I have raised with the previous Minister of RWED and something that the current Minister of RWED -- who is also an MLA for Yellowknife -- is very familiar with. It has to do with the department's policy or directive that the department has with the contractor that manages the territorial parks around the city which limits the time of overnight stays for any given family to a maximum of two weeks per year.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the rationale for this policy is to encourage and support the visitors from out of town that we receive every summer and I think the residents of Yellowknife are willing to do their part to accommodate our welcome visitors. What is frustrating for our residents is when -- and the Minister is well aware of this because we get these complaints every year and this year it's only January and I've already received a phone call, so I can just see the traffic coming -- these families who have maxed out their two weeks see the vacant camping spots sitting there, but they're not able to access them because they've maxed out, but there are no visitors.

What I would like to ask the Minister is to use a sense of reasonableness and fairness and to fine-tune this policy and to improve it so that perhaps we could have a tier system where visitors are given first priority and the residents who have not maxed out two weeks could have the next available spot and for the rest of the spots people could have a waiting list. Especially for the families with small children during the height of summer, these spaces are very important. Repeated requests to the Minister of RWED previously have not resulted in any action. Knowing that the Minister is very well aware of this issue

and knowing that he's a very reasonable and fair-minded person, I would like to call upon his wisdom to please take immediate action to revise and improve this policy because it may not be the thing that changes this world tomorrow, but it is very important for residents of Yellowknife who, for whatever reason, would like to stay closer to the city and especially make use of the park at Long Lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize my constituent, Ms. Karen Hamre, as well as another Karen, Major Karen Hoeft, in the gallery today.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize the well-known local artist and musician and broadcaster, journalist Mr. Paul Andrew.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Welcome to the House. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 11-15(2): Staff Morale At North Slave Correctional Facility

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are going to be directed at the Minister of Justice and they centre around the issue of staff morale at the Yellowknife Correctional Centre. It's something the Minister is aware of; I spoke with him before about this issue. I know yesterday, my colleague, the Member for Range Lake, had questioned the government action towards the arbitration decision that was handed down last week, and I echo her sentiments exactly, that I think the government should do the right thing. Whether or not that improves the morale at the Correctional Centre who knows, but that's something the government should take up, and take it up soon.

My question for the Minister today is in the past 18 months, have leaves of absence, sometimes referred to as stress leave, been on an increase over the previous period of 18 months? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 11-15(2): Staff Morale At North Slave Correctional Facility

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories does not record stress leave. Sick leave is provided to employees, but there is no requirement for employees to

disclose the reasons for their absence. This would be an unreasonable invasion of the employee's privacy. This is well established through labour relations law and it's not permitted under the collective agreement. So I can't answer the Member's question. FMBS has advised us that we're not able to collect that information, much less disclose it.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 11-15(2): Staff Morale At North Slave Correctional Facility

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary question to the Minister of Justice, and I can understand where the government is coming from with this, but I find it hard to believe that the raw data can't be provided. If it can't be provided for YCC, perhaps raw data from department to department. I find in today's day and age of PeopleSoft that the Minister and the government can't come up with some raw figures at the very least, and I question the Minister again whether or not I could get access to raw data, figures of extended periods of leave for the Department of Justice as compared to the other departments of this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 11-15(2): Staff Morale At North Slave Correctional Facility

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, in fact we could probably collect that kind of data, as long as it was for the department as a whole. The problem is that if we released it for one single unit in the department, like YCC, it would make the figures too small so that employees could likely be identified. I can tell you that we could collect that kind of data for the department and offer comparison data to other departments in the Northwest Territories for the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 11-15(2): Staff Morale At North Slave Correctional Facility

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for that, Mr. Minister. I'm wondering if the Department of Justice recognizes this as an area of great concern and perhaps the Minister can address that question. I know it's an area of concern. I've heard from a number of constituents and a number of individuals that it is a concern, and I'd like to hear from the Minister that it's a concern of this government: the instances of extended periods of leave at YCC in particular. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 11-15(2): Staff Morale At North Slave Correctional Facility

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't answer that question directly without in fact appearing to release information that I said I couldn't. Therefore, I will say that any time we hear concerns about morale among employees, it is an issue that we want to address. The Member has raised the issue with me. I listened carefully to Ms. Lee's statement yesterday, and I

think that as early as tomorrow FMB will likely deal with that situation. I hope that overall we will be able to deal with any issues of staff morale that we may have within the department, but we can't confirm that it's seen as an area of concern right now.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Hawkins.

Question 12-15(2): Access To Legal Aid For Family Law Matters

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Justice will have the pleasure of receiving my questions regarding my concerns with legal aid access when it comes to family law issues. Mr. Speaker, concerns have been brought forward to me by someone in my riding.

I've only recently learned that in fact if you are a person accused of a crime, you have the appointment of a lawyer immediately. However, Mr. Speaker, if you're a mother of two who is desperately struggling to put milk and butter on the table and attempting to get legal custody of your children and you need to make an application in order to get financial support, to request legal aid assistance you have to wait three to six months for your first appointment to start dealing with this tormented circumstance. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Justice is does the Minister believe, in his opinion, that a three to six-month waiting period is reasonable access to justice for a first appointment to discuss this family law issue with a lawyer?

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 12-15(2): Access To Legal Aid For Family Law Matters

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would think that in the best of all worlds the wait would be considerably less than three to six months. It would be better if it could be only a couple of weeks, but the fact is that we can't find enough lawyers in the Northwest Territories to practice family law who are willing to take on these cases. The rate of pay for the Northwest Territories for legal aid lawyers is the second highest in Canada; only Nunavut is higher. But there are very few lawyers who are interested in taking on family law cases, and because of that there has been a growing backlog. We have increased the staff lawyer component to try and deal with this, but it is still a problem area that we recognize.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Supplementary To Question 12-15(2): Access To Legal Aid For Family Law Matters

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your answer. Mr. Minister, my next question to you is what are you prepared to do in a reasonable sense to help assist with this access, so that people can access family law services much sooner? Is the Minister prepared today to reassure me that he will take steps so that all approved legal aid files will receive at least a first-base meeting within 30 days?

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 12-15(2): Access To Legal Aid For Family Law Matters

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish I could make that promise, but as Minister I'm not allowed to provide any direction directly to the Legal Services Board because it is an independent body. The limits are the appointment and revocation of appointments of the members of that board. That's the only action that the Minister can provide, other than providing funding. I can tell you that we have not cut our funding to legal aid at all in the recent past. As I said, we have tried to increase the staff lawyer component to deal with the backlog. I've talked to the federal Minister of Justice within the last week. He committed to me that he would continue to fight for the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the Yukon to receive funding that is not tied to per capita so that we will continue to receive a disproportionate amount of funding and that we would see no cuts. But it's a situation where we are doing what we can, given the financial resources that we have to work with, and especially since we don't have enough lawyers who are willing to practice family law in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Supplementary To Question 12-15(2): Access To Legal Aid For Family Law Matters

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the Minister for pointing out the independence of the board. The independent board is very important. Although it cannot be overlooked, the board is also accountable to the Minister. Mr. Minister, can I get your commitment today that you would make statistical information available to the Members of this Assembly regarding typical workload breakdown of legal aid files within the system from where they start as they enter, to where they get their first meetings, and when they come to a relative close, and if you could tie this together with other regions in comparison to the Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 12-15(2): Access To Legal Aid For Family Law Matters

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that I could provide that information. I will check with the Legal Services Board and see how much statistical data they can provide to us and how quickly, and we'll endeavor to distribute that to all Members of the Assembly as soon as I can get it.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 13-15(2): After School Youth Programs In The Sahtu

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my Member's statement, I have a question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment with regard to the future of our youth in the Sahtu region. I wanted to ask the Minister if he would enter into a discussion with the Minister of MACA to create opportunities for our youth, between education and MACA, for after-school programs to support our children and to get them off the streets and to give them an

opportunity to have a good, positive life and all the good things that go along with the Minister's statement?

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Return To Question 13-15(2): After School Youth Programs In The Sahtu

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to commit to work with my colleague on this issue. It may interest the honourable Member to know that as recently as yesterday, the staff of Education, Culture and Employment and Health and Social Services were meeting to discuss healthy living and active living activities. They have agreed that we will work together a bit more formally to try to pull together a plan, so that we can work within existing budgets to stimulate community-level activities particularly aimed at focusing on youth in the communities across the North. I would endeavor to also bring in our colleague, the Minister of Youth, to this group now and make sure that the four of us are working towards a plan that we can announce perhaps as early as this June.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 14-15(2): Training Required For Income Support Workers

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister what kind of training and credentials are possessed by and required by people who work in our communities as income support workers. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 14-15(2): Training Required For Income Support Workers

HON. CHARLES DENT: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I'm not entirely familiar with the educational requirements for those positions. I suspect that they may not have specific training requirements to begin with. I know that in the past we have approached community organizations, bands and so on, to offer the program, because it has been seen largely as a fairly simple project to fill in the blanks on a form to determine whether or not income support is available. So I suspect that there may be more training that's required, but I can't answer the question in terms of specific training that's required.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 14-15(2): Training Required For Income Support Workers

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that we nail that down and figure that out, because the people who come into income support offices do need a lot of assistance and are in a very vulnerable situation most of the time. I'd also like to ask the Minister what support services do these workers have at their disposal, and are they required to refer clients to those services in the communities, such as the ones I referred to in my Member's statement, so that

they might not just be back on income support forever, that they might get the kind of help that they need? What kind of services do they get referred to; income support clients? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 14-15(2): Training Required For Income Support Workers

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, having answered the question about the training required for income support workers, I think it's also important to say that the expectation is that the workers will take a case management approach. In other words, they're supposed to work with other resources in the community; for instance, the social worker with Health and Social Services who may make available some counselling services. The social worker may have access to psychological assistance if that's necessary, or other tools that may be available. We don't have the comprehensive program we used to. The Member will probably remember from the 13th Assembly, we had the life skills program called Investing in People. Unfortunately, that program was cost shared with the federal government and when the funding was ended by the federal government, this government didn't have enough money to carry on on its own. So we don't have that kind of comprehensive program, but individuals are still supposed to be able to access counselling that is necessary in order to help them improve their chances of being successful.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 14-15(2): Training Required For Income Support Workers

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also in keeping with the comment that I made in my Member's statement, I was quite shocked and appalled to have learned from income support clients who had received gifts of cash to buy gifts for their children over the Christmas holidays, that when they deposit that in their account and their bank statement is provided to the income support worker, that that was in fact also treated as income and clawed back. I just want to get it on the record from the Minister, is a cash gift at Christmas considered income to a low-income family for the purposes of assessing income support payments? Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 14-15(2): Training Required For Income Support Workers

HON. CHARLES DENT: Do I hear Scrooge? Mr. Speaker, one way to indicate to Members...The way the program works is kind of like a glass of water. Everybody needs this much water in their glass. If you start with half a glass, then the program will top it up, but all of the water in the glass is counted. So as you have resources, no matter where they come from, they are counted as part of what you bring to the table. The income support program is offered as a...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame, shame.

---Laughter

HON. CHARLES DENT: Enjoy your glass of water now. Income support is offered as a program of last resort, it's not a guaranteed income. It is a program that I'm prepared to discuss its administration with the committee and discuss how it should be examined and reviewed, and then we can maybe move from there. But in its current format, it is a program of last resort, and all of your resources, all of an individual's resources that they have, whether that comes from legal winnings or a cash gift, are counted as something in your pocket and all that is provided is then a top-up to get to what is absolutely needed to survive.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 14-15(2): Training Required For Income Support Workers

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also with respect to other sources such as IBA payments, I'd like to ask the Minister what is the status of the government's deliberations on determining whether income benefit agreement payments should be considered as income, or compensation or restitution for land and resources of the people that receive them? Is it income or is it compensation? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 14-15(2): Training Required For Income Support Workers

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Education, Culture and Employment has been advised by Justice that the IBAs are private contracts and we do not have access to them, so we are unable at this point to determine the answer to whether or not they are compensation or cash payments as a gift or whatever, income. I am prepared again to review the entire income support program, and would be happy to discuss that with the Standing Committee on Social Programs. But I am reluctant to make any one-off changes. I would like to take the opportunity to spend some time, work with the committee to review the program, and then if we are going to make changes, make them in a comprehensive manner.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Braden.

Question 15-15(2): Environmental Assessment Of The Deh Cho Bridge Project

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question this afternoon is for the Premier with respect to his position for the Deh Cho Bridge portfolio. In my statement, I outlined a situation where the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board is considering taking this project to a full environmental assessment. The GNWT is a major player in this project; the major player in this project, Mr. Speaker. What is the GNWT's position on the move to go to a full environmental assessment for this project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Premier Handley.

Return To Question 15-15(2): Environmental Assessment Of The Deh Cho Bridge Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Environmental Impact Review Board will be doing a full assessment, is my understanding of this project. Certainly, as northerners, we do take the protection of the environment very seriously, so as a government we are not going to try to intervene in a way to try to stop this process. In fact, we will do what we can to provide information that we -- and the bridge corporation are of the same mind -- provide good information that they have already collected to ensure that this is a good environmental review and that we all enter this project with the best information. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 15-15(2): Environmental Assessment Of The Deh Cho Bridge Project

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the Premier that we should never short-circuit the environment. The circumstances really seem to be unusual; that it is the Department of Fisheries that is advocating this on economic grounds. I have seen the Department of Fisheries' application to do this. It really seems to be unusual and unwarranted. I would ask, does the Premier agree that the reasons for the application going through really don't have much to do with the environment at all? Are they appropriate? Are they still appropriate or are they unusual or unwarranted? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Premier Handley.

Further Return To Question 15-15(2): Environmental Assessment Of The Deh Cho Bridge Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, sometimes it's very difficult to understand reasons why people would put forward an application for an environmental review. My understanding is that the concern was expressed by the NWT Chamber of Mines because of costs to the mining industry. That then triggered a letter from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, who forwarded it to the land and water board and then we were into the process. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to try to interpret the thinking by the Chamber of Mines, but certainly this has added an uncertainty and a potential increased cost for the bridge, if it's delayed as we go through an exercise to look at the cost to one sector of our economy. For example, if the interest rates were to rise in the next year while we are doing the review, that's going to be an added cost onto the bridge and, therefore, could potentially increase the cost to not only the mining sector but to all industries who are using the bridge for heavy traffic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 15-15(2): Environmental Assessment Of The Deh Cho Bridge Project

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel compelled to press my case here because the circumstances of going through with this review and the potential consequences are of some significance. What actions are we taking, Mr. Premier, to expedite the approval and construction of a bridge project? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Premier Handley.

Further Return To Question 15-15(2): Environmental Assessment Of The Deh Cho Bridge Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, both ourselves and the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation will do everything we can to provide information we have as quickly as we can to the environmental review board as this project is assessed.

In addition to that, I intend, as Minister responsible for the bridge, to meet with the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation and see whether or not there is some construction activity -- perhaps we could begin stockpiling material -- that would be allowed before we have the environmental review. I give that as an example. I don't know whether it would be allowed, but if there is a way of speeding up the review and the design, getting ready for construction, we intend to do that to make sure that the people in the Northwest Territories benefit from this project as quickly as possible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Delorey

Question 16-15(2): Health Coverage For Aboriginal Seniors

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Michael Miltenberger. Mr. Speaker, I hope that in my Member's statement I didn't confuse Members as to how our health benefit program is working in the Northwest Territories. When I started looking into it, it was certainly confusing to me. Maybe the Minister has an example like the water glass to make it simple for everybody here.

As I alluded to in my Member's statement, I don't believe that our government is doing everything it can to provide adequate health care coverage for aboriginal seniors who are covered under the non-insured health care benefits program of the federal government. Can the Minister please indicate if he is aware of the disparity that exists for aboriginal persons as far as their coverage under the NIHB program versus coverage offered to Metis and non-aboriginal seniors? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 16-15(2): Health Coverage For Aboriginal Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am aware that the system of supplementary health benefits that we have has been with us for some time and it is patchwork of programs such as the non-insured health benefits which, in itself, is another program we administer for the federal government that we have significant problems with, along with our colleagues in Nunavut. Through the review of supplementary health benefits and with the meetings with federal health Ministers, and most recently Minister Pettigrew, we once again raised the issue of the need to sit down and look at non-insured health benefits. There were meetings last week in Ottawa with officials meeting once again on health benefits and health concerns. Yes, I recognize the issues in that area and others, and that's one reason we are doing the review and we want to continue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 16-15(2): Health Coverage For Aboriginal Seniors

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Metis program of health benefits was instituted in 1997 to offer Metis people similar benefits to status persons, but it wasn't 100 per cent coverage. Since April of 2002, Metis persons have since been provided 100 per cent coverage under this program and it's administered through our government. Will the Minister please state in this House if there are any negotiations -- and he just mentioned the federal government -- underway to enable our government to provide the same level of health care coverage to status persons that is currently provided to Metis people? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 16-15(2): Health Coverage For Aboriginal Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sorry, I apologize, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Metis health benefits are the benefits provided under non-insured health benefits. The one big benefit that we do have in the Northwest Territories is we don't have the cumbersome federal bureaucracy and rules and payment process that is in place with non-insured health benefits. So we have ours administered through Blue Cross. We have an arrangement with them for the administration and processing. The Metis benefits mirror the non-insured health benefits.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 16-15(2): Health Coverage For Aboriginal Seniors

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's very confusing. I can see why it's so confusing for seniors when they are trying to see where their benefits come from. Is there any move on the government's part to bring in a program where all seniors or all people are treated equally under the health care plan? Right now, there are about four different ones that seniors especially are trying to find out where they fit into. Is there any move to try to bring everybody under the same umbrella? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 16-15(2): Health Coverage For Aboriginal Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I referenced earlier, the supplementary health benefits review that's underway, its sole intention is to try to rationalize and consolidate those services that we now provide where there are inconsistencies that developed in an uncoordinated and a patchwork manner. So this is to level the playing field. We must keep in mind that on the non-insured health benefits side, that is a federal program. It is tied to aboriginal First Nations people, Inuit people. It's a program that is very sensitive when it comes to making changes. We are working with the federal government and we will work with

the aboriginal governments to look at what we can do to improve the non-insured health benefits. On the territorial programs, we definitely want to move towards a more rationalized, consolidated system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 16-15(2): Health Coverage For Aboriginal Seniors

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just to put a little bit more perspective on this subject, if I understand this correctly, a non-aboriginal senior, for example, can move into the Northwest Territories after not having lived there ever before in their life, and after three months of residency, they qualify for full health care benefits under the GNWT seniors program. That seniors program covers everything from prescriptions to mobility aids right down to multivitamins and band aids. Conversely, an aboriginal senior who may have lived here all their life is not entitled to apply for GNWT seniors health care benefits. Their only option is to apply for NIHB, which does not cover near as much.

If that is correct, Mr. Speaker, does the Minister not think that it's time that we have a look at this and do something in the very near future? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 16-15(2): Health Coverage For Aboriginal Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, yes, if that was correct I would agree that we want to look at that very specific issue. I recognize that there are inconsistencies in the program, but once again, my information is that when it comes to seniors, benefits are intended to mirror the services provided by the non-insured health benefits. That was the baseline that we used. But I do recognize, as the Member has pointed out in his questions, that we do have problems in the system that is currently there and we intend to look into that and ways that we can rectify it for all northerners.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 7, oral questions. Ms. Lee.

Question 17-15(2): GNWT Parks Use Policy

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the Minister of RWED, further to my Member's statement earlier today. Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister whether or not he has had a chance to review this department's policy or directive to the contractor and whether or not he has considered changing this policy? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of RWED, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 17-15(2): GNWT Parks Use Policy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: I thank the Member for the very good question, Mr. Speaker. It's one I do recall putting to the former Minister of RWED myself. I am familiar with it, both in that capacity and in my new capacity. I have had a chance to review it. I should first state that this is nothing unique to the campground at Fred Henne Park. This is a regulation that applies to all territorial parks. But the particular pressure point has been the lack of capacity

here in Yellowknife. It is something that we're looking at. It is something that I am prepared to come back to committee and discuss. I think we all want to see something, a regulation that is flexible enough and allows us to make sure that tourists have a place to stay when they come to the city or to the NWT. We don't want to see tourists turned away because we don't have the space.

I think the long-term solution is not about the regulation, but it's about finding adequate RV parking in particular around the city of Yellowknife. I'm aware that that's something the City of Yellowknife has been discussing. I hope they continue to do that. I believe the Fred Henne Park is inadequate in this regard, at any rate.

But, yes, we need regulations that make sense and will accommodate tourists and yet still allow locals to enjoy our parks. So it's something that I'm prepared to sit down and discuss with committee Members. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary. Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 17-15(2): GNWT Parks Use Policy

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's answer. At the same time, I do believe this is a first test for the Minister. Often we have Members who cross the floor. They're very well aware of the issues that we bring up and I know that the Minister is very well aware of this issue. So far, he's answered in length without making any commitment at all.

---Laughter

I believe, Mr. Speaker, there is plenty of room for action that he could take immediately. I know he understands the need for extra space; this is not an unusual thing. But for right now, this summer, for many of our residents there is something that he can do to fix this and that is to make sure that any available spaces, after the visitors and all the residents who have not taken their two weeks have taken their lots...There should be no empty spaces that residents should not be allowed to use. So would the Minister please change that immediately? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of RWED, Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 17-15(2): GNWT Parks Use Policy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was doing pretty good by committing to come back to committee. I thought that in itself would reassure the Member, especially after the nice things she said about me in her Member's statement today.

---Laughter

However, I can see that's not going to get it done. We will have that discussion, I hope. I hope committee is prepared to sit down and come up with something that does make sense. I think the problem really is that during the week there are all kinds of vacancies at Fred Henne, typically. By the weekend it's very full. It's over full. The problem is that if we were to make a regulation that allowed people to stay during the week and ask them to leave on the weekend if it was full, you would be in a position where you would have to go around the campground and ask people to leave. I don't think that would be workable or fair.

If we allow local residents to take up those spots because no one is in them, what do you do when somebody shows up at 8:00 at night after a long trip up Highway No. 3 and is looking for a camping spot? You've got to make allowances that still let local people enjoy the campground while making sure we can accommodate tourists.

We have opened up additional spots this year at both Prelude and Reid Lakes. I know that may not reassure the Member. That may not take care of everybody's concerns, but we are looking for solutions. There are a number of possibilities we can discuss. It's possible at the peak times in the middle of summer we need to still keep these regulations, but we might look at relaxing them during the shoulder seasons when we're not as busy. I'm prepared to discuss a whole range of options with committee and see if we can't come up with something that would work right across the territory. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary. Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 17-15(2): GNWT Parks Use Policy

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that the Minister needs to bring this to committee for discussion. I do believe that the Minister is already aware that the previous Minister has been reviewing this policy for at least three years, at least three summers. The Minister already knows all of the issues pertaining to that policy. What I'm looking for from the Minister is, will he consider a tier system, a category system where priority is given to the visitors, but wherever there are vacancies the local people can take them and not have to drive by and look at empty spaces that they want overnight? I need a yes or no answer. He doesn't need to do any more studies on this. I don't think it's relevant to any other Members other than Yellowknife Members here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of RWED, Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 17-15(2): GNWT Parks Use Policy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you. We may like to think that it's only relevant to Yellowknife, but I know this is an issue in Hay River, as well. It's something that's been raised with the department. We have to come up with a solution that works across the territory. We don't want to see people drive by the park and look at vacancies and be told that they can't camp. We've got to be reasonable. There has to be some way to accommodate tourists and locals in the same regulation. I'm prepared to come up with a regulation that will work.

If the committee is not interested in that discussion, we can do this internally, but I think this is something that makes sense for all committee Members to have some input into. I am prepared to come up with something that makes sense and works and allows us to accommodate both tourists and locals and, as I've said, we can discuss a number of systems. I'd be interested in hearing more about the tiered approach that the Member has referred to, but I think there could also be a shoulder system developed that would alleviate some of the pressure. Really, the problem is in the heat of summer. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final Supplementary. Ms. Lee. Keep it short.

Supplementary To Question 17-15(2): GNWT Parks Use Policy

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that I cannot speak for the committee and I understand that our committee Members would like to see changes to regulations brought to them first. What I'm saying is that my experience has been that when a Minister says he wants to consult and review, that is just an excuse for inaction.

I'm telling you that allowing for more than two weeks' stay in shoulder seasons, between May and June when there is still snow on the ground or in August to September when all the kids are back in school, is no good to us. What I'm interested in knowing is what is his intention with regard to this policy or is he just using the age-old formula that every other Minister uses, which is that they would just study and review issues to death? I want to know his intentions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of RWED, Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 17-15(2): GNWT Parks Use Policy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you. Clearly, my intentions wouldn't be honourable if I was going to sit here and tell you that the shoulder season was mid-winter, but that's not what I'm going to do. I'm going to go back to the department, ask them to develop some regulations that would incorporate the shoulder season in the spring and fall when people are still camping at the park. But we've got to recognize that in the middle of summer, until we have the capacity to handle all the RV traffic that we see locally, there's going to have to be some compromise. I think the constituents that I spoke to in the last Assembly understood the rationale, but were looking for a more workable solution, something that was more accommodating and flexible. Nobody I spoke with thought that it made sense to clog up those sites with locals and ensure that tourists had nowhere to camp when they arrived.

So I certainly will commit to the Member that we're working internally to develop some regulations that make sense. I'm aware of the concerns. I have the same concerns as the Member and we're going to work to alleviate those. I will come back to committee with a proposal and hope to get support from committee and then we'll move forward quickly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Allen.

Question 18-15(2): NWT Tax Exemption Options

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I took a vested interest in listening to the Finance Minister's budget process update and feel that, with the number of problems he encounters in the revenue and expenditure section, I've made a few comments on how we should encourage the government to introduce tax exemptions to improve upon that kind of development for our residents of the Northwest Territories. So my question to the Minister is whether he is prepared to introduce new tax exemption mechanisms and, if so, how does he intend to implement this new initiative? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister responsible for FMBS, Finance, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 18-15(2): NWT Tax Exemption Options

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated, the government is going to have to look at the whole expenditure side, as well as the revenue side, to try to come up with a balance of how much debt we're going to carry and go forward from there. Mr. Speaker, there are some options that are out there that we can look at. Mr. Speaker, our problem right now is that we don't have enough revenues to deal with our fiscal situation. So we're going to have to look at how we can come up with revenues, and if Mr. Allen has some suggestions for areas that we can look at that would create some more revenues then we would gladly take that into consideration.

In reference to Bill C-48 that was dealt with by the federal government and responds to concerns raised by the industry in the resource sector. They have undertaken some initiatives and I'm not very familiar with that area, but we'd have to look at that. My immediate concern in preparing for our next step in bringing main estimates forward for this Assembly is to look at the level of expenditures versus our revenue side. As I stated in my Minister's statement, in fact we do have a problem and the gap is widening between the revenues we have and the expenditures.

So right now we haven't looked at any specific exemptions. We have looked at a number of other areas, but not any exemptions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary. Mr. Allen.

Supplementary To Question 18-15(2): NWT Tax Exemption Options

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I acknowledge the fact that we had a briefing on the statistics of the Northwest Territories and some of the costs that are related to that. It leaves no doubt that our communities, Mr. Speaker, are in a sad state of economic and social development today. Again, I would ask the Minister of Finance if he is willing and able to formulate tax policy that would stimulate that systemic change to the economic and social development of this territory. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 18-15(2): NWT Tax Exemption Options

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Definitely, I would be interested in looking at our tax policies and see how they could spur some further economic development, for example, or how they could impact on social wellbeing of residents of the Northwest Territories. But we must also understand that there's a cost to doing some of these things and because our revenue base isn't a very large one, those have an immediate impact on other programs and services. I'm willing to look at tax solutions out there that could lessen the impact to the residents of the Northwest Territories, but at the same time we must balance that off with what level of expenditures we're willing to make in other program areas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary. Mr. Allen.

Supplementary To Question 18-15(2): NWT Tax Exemption Options

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be tabling a couple of documents later this afternoon. I would make reference to the fact that we have the ability to introduce some tax exemptions that would help us facilitate social and economic growth in the Northwest Territories. Again, I would ask the Minister if he would elaborate for the benefit of the people of the Northwest Territories if he's willing to adopt new tax initiatives that would be part of the strategy to improve operational efficiencies in economies throughout the North? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 18-15(2): NWT Tax Exemption Options

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, I would be glad to sit down and look at the information provided. We are, as government, looking at a whole number of options to enhance our budget or look at creating and stimulating some development in the Northwest Territories, provided that we do not lose from our revenue base and impact other programs and services that we deliver as a government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Mr. Allen.

Supplementary To Question 18-15(2): NWT Tax Exemption Options

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect, I know the difficulty that the Finance Minister is faced with, considering our fiscal situation. But would he now assist in facilitating a number of tax reform meetings specific to Inuvik and perhaps if we could coordinate jointly a tax reform forum in Inuvik to get some further ideas? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 18-15(2): NWT Tax Exemption Options

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would gladly meet with Members of this House in their communities or in committees to discuss options that are available to us as government that could enhance the programs and services we have available or lessen the impact of the cost of living in the Northwest Territories. At the same time, we must look at the whole picture as a government and see what balance we can strike. I would gladly meet with the Member and discuss the initiatives he's discussed and see how we can move those along. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Question 19-15(2): Non-Resident Mining Industry Employees

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland. I know everybody has been hearing a little bit more back room grumbings about the growing inequities in the employment within the mining industry of aboriginals and northerners; that the mining industry is reaching a point

where they're just barely meeting their quota for northern employment. With the growing number of mines that are going to be opening in the future, I think this gap is going to keep growing. My question, Mr. Speaker, is that I've been hearing some concerns from some employees of these mining industries that some non-resident employees are taking advantage of our northern taxation policies. I know changes in these policies are also being hindered by the Government of Canada's taxation harmonization policy. That's why we're having a hard time recovering more dollars from non-resident employees and making it more fair and equitable for our northerners.

The issue I want to raise with the Minister is that I know that a lot of the non-resident employees of these mining companies are starting to take up residence just north of the NWT border in areas like Hay River, Enterprise and Fort Smith. That makes them qualify for these northern allowance benefits. Every two weeks there's a mass exodus going south after the shift changes. People are just taking addresses and filling them out on their application forms to the mines that are situated in these communities, which qualifies them for the northern benefit allowances.

I just want to ask the Minister what measures he is going to make to ensure that the northern allowance benefits are taken advantage of by northerners only, and not by southern employees who do not reside in the NWT on a full-time basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 19-15(2): Non-Resident Mining Industry Employees

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for that question. It's an area that has been a bit of an issue through a number of Assemblies from the day the payroll tax was put in place. Many northern businesses felt that it was an added cost to them. The government itself wanted to ensure that we tried to encourage employees who were working from other jurisdictions to live in the Northwest Territories so we could benefit in a number of ways by them taking up residence in the Northwest Territories, and also to encourage businesses to hire northern residents and put them into gainful employment.

There are things that we have done. It's admittedly in an area that has some issues. We have looked at a number of issues across the board around the payroll tax and how we're affected by harmonization of tax policies across the country, but it is an area that we see as one of the avenues to try to...If we can't have employees working at the mines living in the Northwest Territories, then we will keep this tax in place and look at enhancing it, possibly, as one of the ways to try to bring some money back to the North that we're not getting through royalties, for example, or other areas. There are a number of options, but in the area itself of payroll tax, it has its problems. It's something we need to continue to work out, but it is based on residency in the Northwest Territories. So if someone works for a mine or a company in the Northwest Territories and does take up residence in the Northwest Territories, they would qualify for that rebate, for the credit, depending on the income that they make. So if they've moved to the North and taken up residence here,

that benefits us in a number of ways. One, it increases our grant from Canada because we have a higher population but, as well, most of the money would stay in the North. If the Member is referring to the fact that people are taking up an address but not really living at it, that's something we need to follow up on and get more detail on. If the Member has some specific information he'd like to meet with me on, I'll gladly meet with him. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 19-15(2): Non-Resident Mining Industry Employees

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the payroll tax is something of an unknown for this government in making any real change in it because of this harmonization policy. What I'm getting at, Mr. Speaker, is I'm just wondering how the Minister intends on making some positive policy changes that would curb the practice of employees in the mine, like you would get 10 or 20 employees with the same address. They're all living in the NWT but they all have the same address. It basically just goes to show they've found a loophole in our taxation policies, and I'm just wondering how the Minister plans on addressing that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 19-15(2): Non-Resident Mining Industry Employees

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To address and do audits, it would come down to follow-up on that kind of information. If in fact there are a large number of people at one residence, it's something that would trigger an enquiry and is it in fact being used by a multiple number of people who fly in and use that address as a mailbox. That's something that has been raised in this Assembly. We don't have right now something that we can pull out besides more inspections or more audits on files.

The other side of it is if we are going to enhance that area, I would have to look at increasing staffing levels to ensure that we follow through on the submissions made to ensure that people are where they are; if they're actually living in the North or if they're using that and trying to gain benefit at that end. That would affect not only the payroll tax -- if they're using a northern address and qualify for NWT health care -- that would also impact on the cost of government. So it's something we have to look at and ensure that we're doing the best we can. I'll admit now we're not doing enough in that area, but that goes back down to the resources that we have as a Department of Finance to try to catch all of these things that are in place. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Braden.

Question 20-15(2): Abandonment And Restoration Of Miramar Con Mine

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is a follow-up to my statement. It's for the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell, and it's about the situation regarding the plans for the abandonment and reclamation of the Miramar Con Mine. Mr. Bell, along with myself and some other MLAs, as long

ago as last summer, had written to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board and asked for more public access to a review process for how the company was going to shut down this property. I haven't heard anything from the board since then, and I would like to stress again that the issue is access to the review plans for shutting down the mine. My question, Mr. Speaker, is what is the GNWT's stand on improving public access to the review of Miramar's abandonment and reclamation plan at Con Mine? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of RWED, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 20-15(2): Abandonment And Restoration Of Miramar Con Mine

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I should say that there are ongoing meetings. The working group continues to review the abandonment and restoration plan that was submitted by Miramar Con Mine, submitted on the basis of their existing federal water licence. We are a part of that working group. I think we have two seats at the table. There are folks from our environmental protection service at the table. They're looking at the obvious things that you'd suspect, they're looking at the demolition of service structure, historic tailings, contaminated soils, site monitoring, water management, and I believe they continue to meet at least once a month. The Member is right, that as regular Members we were concerned about what we perceived as lack of public process. There has always been the ability for the working group, under the terms of reference that were established, to call for any members of the public or interested citizens to participate in the process. That avenue has been there. It's my understanding now that the Water Board has scheduled a public meeting, I believe it's the end of April. They want to hear the concerns that the public may have. So I'm encouraged to see that, and I think that that will go a long way in assuring residents of the Northwest Territories that they will be able to have their say in how this A and R plan rolls out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 20-15(2): Abandonment And Restoration Of Miramar Con Mine

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm encouraged to hear that the board is taking some steps to open the process up. I guess I would hold any further comment until I get some more detail. A public meeting, if it is as the Minister has said, I think falls far short of what I would call adequate public access. I'd like to ask the Minister, for the representatives that we do have in this process -- and it is a closed door process, from my understanding of it -- is there any requirement for those representatives to report back to the Minister, and then consequently to the public? Do we have any access to those people's reports? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of RWED, Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 20-15(2): Abandonment And Restoration Of Miramar Con Mine

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I would say that I'm interested myself in more detail as to what the public meetings will comprise at the end of April, and I'll get that information and commit to provide that to

all Members. I think it's important that we understand exactly what the process is. The Member is certainly aware that there was an application made by the city for an environmental assessment. It was made to the Impact Review Board, not the Water Board. That decision just came down in January from the Impact Review Board, and they indicated there was no mechanism for a full environmental assessment because they are operating under the terms of the existing licence. I will endeavour to determine how information is coming back to the department. I do know that at this point the department seems satisfied that work is progressing in the manner and in the order that it should. So I will determine what the reporting is like internally and get back to the Member on what additional detail I can provide. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

Supplementary To Question 20-15(2): Abandonment And Restoration Of Miramar Con Mine

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the issue here is that while the Minister may be satisfied that our people are satisfied that everything is being done, the public doesn't know. We don't have access to this kind of information. To my understanding, the only information that has been released is a rather sketchy plan that was put out last spring of what the company plans to do; there is really not a lot of detail attached to it. So the public needs access to be satisfied that the plan is indeed a good one. That's what we're looking for, reassurance. Will the Minister undertake some proactive steps to urge the board to engage in as open a process as possible? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 20-15(2): Abandonment And Restoration Of Miramar Con Mine

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be sure, it is the board's process, we're not adverse to public involvement. In fact, I think we'd be happy to see as much involvement as is possible. I think the kinds of information the citizens need to and should be able to see will be made available at the public meeting. At least that is my hope through the public process in that regard, but I will find out the scope of the public meetings to happen at the end of April. I just now learned that they have been scheduled for April 28th and 29th. I will find out what kind of process will be undertaken at that time and what kinds of information will be made available to the public. The Member has hit on it and this is the board's process and we will provide input in that regard and are sitting at the table, but this federal board will make decisions about what type of information they are going to release. I will find out what we have access to. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The time for question period is over. Item 7, written questions. Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 1-15(2): Human Resource Issues At North Slave Correctional Facility

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my written questions today are for the Minister of Justice who has left us, but I will put them on record anyway.

1. Have exit interviews been granted for employees leaving the Yellowknife Correctional Centre over the past 17 months? If so, what percentage does this represent?
2. How do the instances of extended leaves of absences at the Yellowknife Correctional Centre compare with other sections of the Department of Justice?
3. Can the Minister provide the raw data on extended leave for the Department of Justice? How does this compare to other government departments?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ramsay, just a reminder, you are not allowed to mention the Members who are not in the House. Just for future knowledge, that's not allowed. Item 7, written questions. Mr. Allen.

Written Question 2-15(2): Smoking And GNWT Employees

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My written question is addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Would the Minister undertake a study on how many GNWT employees are users of tobacco products and, secondly, can he provide to the best of his knowledge, any costs related to GNWT employees who are diagnosed with respiratory problems or other medical conditions caused by smoking? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, petitions. Item 10, reports of standing and special committees. Item 11, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 12, tabling of documents. Mr. Allen.

ITEM 12: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 5-15(2): Income Support Issues: Inuvik Social Assistance Appeal Committee, May 21, 2003

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents I would like to table today. The first document is income support issues, Inuvik Social Assistance Appeal Committee dated May 21, 2003.

Tabled Document 6-15(2): Tax Exemption: A Tool For Economic Development For First Nations - Executive Summary

I would like to also table the Executive Summary, Sorting out the Issues, Tax Exemption: A Tool for Economic Development for First Nations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 12, tabling of documents. Mr. Roland.

Tabled Document 7-15(2): Interactivity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As required by Section 32.1(2) of the Financial Administration Act, I wish to table the following document entitled List of Interactivity Transfers for the Period April 1, 2003, to January 19, 2004. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 12, tabling of documents. Item 13, notices of motion. Item 14, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 15, motions. Item 16, first reading of bills. Item 17, second reading of bills. Item 18, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Item 19, report of Committee of the Whole. We don't have Committee of the Whole today. Item 20, third reading of bills.

At this time, I would like to recognize the Pages in the House. They are from the William McDonald School, Grade 8. I would like to thank you for your participation and the help that you have provided us with here. Thank you.

---Applause

Mr. Clerk, would you ascertain if the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Glenna Hansen, is prepared to enter the Chamber to prorogue the Second Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly.

ITEM 21: PROROGATION

COMMISSIONER HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, Premier Handley, Members of the 15th Legislative Assembly, as Commissioner, I would like to take this opportunity to personally salute the many young men and women who will compete next week for the right to represent their community and region and our territory at the Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Games in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

As all Members are aware, the Arctic Winter Games provides a powerful and positive showcase of NWT talent, culture, skills and athletics. They would not be possible without the ongoing commitment and support of parents, coaches, staff and volunteers who work year round to ensure their success. I would like to express my appreciation and best wishes to them all.

Prior to proroguing this Second Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly, I would like to advise you that the Third Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly will convene on Tuesday, March 16, 2004, at 1:30 p.m.

Until that time, I wish you Godspeed and travelling mercies.

As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I hereby prorogue the Second Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

---PROROGATION

The House prorogued at 3:15 p.m.

