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The Honourable David Krutko, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, May 31, 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): Colleagues, I would like to draw your attention to the visitors' gallery and recognize the Honourable Peter Lougheed, former Premier of Alberta from 1971 to 1985. Some of Mr. Lougheed's achievements are he's a member of Queen's Counsel, Honourary Chief of Thunderbird Cree Indians, Honourary Chief of the Blood Indians, and also Queen's Privy Council of Canada and companion of the Order of Canada. It's a real honour to have Mr. Lougheed with us today. Welcome to the House and welcome to the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

I would also like to recognize a former Speaker of the House, Mr. Tony Whitford. Welcome back. We've missed you.

---Applause

Also, Dene National Chief Noeline Villebrun is here. Welcome to the House.

---Applause

Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 32-15(3): World No Tobacco Day**

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is World No Tobacco Day. I would like to make use of this opportunity to recognize the work that is being done to create a smoke-free society in the NWT.

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

- A new campaign targeting school children is using a character named Butthead to encourage kids to commit to be smoke-free. This campaign has only been running for a few weeks and already about 1,340 kids have made the commitment;
- New health units have been developed that discuss the effects of smoking. They will be in schools in September;
- Almost all workplaces are now smoke-free through the action of the Workers' Compensation Board of the NWT and Nunavut;

- This winter, students across the North took part in an initiative called Smoke Screening. They watched some of the best anti-smoking ads from around the world and voted on their favourite. We will announce the winner later today, and put it on northern TV;
- The 2nd annual Quit and Win Contest, sponsored by the NWT/Nunavut branch of the Canadian Public Health Association, has encouraged hundreds of people to try quitting. This year's winner was Kenneth Hoddinott. I would also like to congratulate his buddy and wife, Cheryl Fountain, who also succeeded in quitting during the contest.

But even with all of this good work, it is clear that we will still have a long way to go. The average age when NWT children start to smoke is 12 or 13.

Mr. Speaker we need to reach those children before they become smokers. We will be taking that message to youth events around the territory this summer, and continuing into next year. We have a new anti-smoking video that will be used in schools, and kids from across the NWT are wearing "Don't be a Butthead" T-shirts that they received when they committed to be smoke-free. This is a light-hearted theme that has a very serious message. Cigarettes are killing us. It's estimated that second-hand smoke kills 3,600 Canadians every year. It's time to change that. Mr. Speaker, the department is proposing tobacco legislation that will back up community, regional and territorial efforts to create a smoke-free society. It will complement the new Workers' Compensation Board's regulations on environmental tobacco smoke in the workplace.

I look forward to working with the communities and the Members of this House to make these projects successful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister Roland.

Minister's Statement 33-15(3): Samuel Hearne Secondary School

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to outline the steps being taken by the Department of Public Works and Services with respect to the Samuel Hearne Secondary School in Inuvik.

First of all, let me state my appreciation for the combined efforts of those involved, which has resulted in getting students back to class.

Although the classroom portion of the school is back in operation, a great deal needs to be done. Much of the repair work is only temporary. More permanent solutions are required. The foyer and gymnasium remain unusable, and options are being considered to restore them. Considerable work is underway to address these issues.

Mr. Speaker, we have also turned our attention to examining the events that occurred and identifying the lessons that can be learned. A forensic analysis addressing structural and design issues was conducted immediately after the collapse of the roof and we are expecting that report very soon. Also for insurance purposes, an assessment of costs from both the roof and fire damage is underway.

Additionally, we will be conducting a review of the activities leading up to the event as well as the response to it, to identify any errors that were made and any changes that are needed in the policies and procedures of Public Works and Services. To ensure that this review is as thorough as possible, a qualified third party will be called in to conduct it. The department will also carry out a risk assessment of other buildings across the Territories to identify anywhere snow load may present a danger.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier in this House, it is imperative that we learn from this near tragedy and ensure that such events do not happen again. This was a very serious incident with only one injury and that was a result of the fire. But even one injury is one too many and we are taking concrete steps to ensure that all of our public buildings are safe and secure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Minister's Statement 34-15(3): Implementation Of The Protection Against Family Violence Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to provide an update to Members of the Legislative Assembly on the Department of Justice's work to implement the Protection Against Family Violence Act.

This act, passed during the 14th Legislative Assembly, provides for 24-hour access to emergency protection orders when there is an act, or threat of family violence. It also provides victims of family violence with long-term protection orders.

Anyone who has lived, or is living, in a family or intimate relationship with the accused will be able to apply for protection under this act. For example, this could include a spouse, former spouse, parent, grandparent or someone who has had a child with the offender.

I am committed to making the protections under this act available as quickly as possible and plan to have the act in force in early 2005. The Department of Justice is in the final stage of hiring a coordinator who will be dedicated to implementing this act.

The coordinator will work with an advisory committee formed by the department to assist with the implementation. This committee includes the RCMP, YWCA, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Native Women's Association and the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority.

Over the next six months, the Department of Justice will develop training material and assist in training members of the RCMP, justices of the peace, courts staff and other frontline service providers. The Department of Justice will also provide public education material and develop a system for monitoring and evaluating the Protection Against Family Violence Act.

This is an important piece of legislation that the Department of Justice wants to implement as quickly as possible. However, it must be done properly so that a system is in place to ensure these protections are available to all residents. This work is underway and I look forward to a timely and effective implementation of the Protection Against Family Violence Act.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. The Minister of RWED, Mr. Bell.

Minister's Statement 35-15(3): Waste Reduction And Recovery Advisory Committee

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to announce the members of the Waste Reduction and Recovery Advisory Committee. They are:

- Mr. Greg Rowe of Hay River Liquor Retailers & Tri R Recycling;
- Mr. Ron Courtoreille of the NWT Liquor Commission;
- Ms. Stephanie Sibbeston from Fort Simpson;
- Mr. Bob Weaver of Territorial Beverages Ltd.;
- Mr. Kevin O'Reilly of the NWT Association of Communities;
- Mr. Raymond W. Masse of the Inuvik Recycling Society;
- Mr. Jack Walker of Peterson and Auger Ltd.;
- Ms. Katherine Silcock of the City of Yellowknife; and,
- Mr. Joe Agrey of the NWT Motor Transportation Association.

Members will recall that the establishment of the advisory committee was identified in the new Waste Reduction and Recovery Act to provide advice on the establishment and operation of waste recovery programs delivered by this government.

I am confident this committee, with qualified representation from industry, business, municipalities and environmental organizations, will play a vital role in the establishment of our first proposed program, the beverage container recovery program.

The committee held its initial meeting in May and identified the need to develop a full listing of beverage container distributors and importers. The listing will help to ensure that all beverage distributors, manufacturers and importers are treated equally and fairly when the program is implemented later this year.

Mr. Speaker, this government remains committed to providing residents with the opportunity to recycle wastes that would otherwise be disposed in local landfills.

The success of any program, however, will depend on the participation and support of the residents of the Northwest Territories. The Waste Reduction and Recovery Advisory Committee will be instrumental in ensuring the necessary support and participation in this important endeavour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. The Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

Minister's Statement 36-15(3): The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation "From The Ground Up, Celebrating 30 Years"

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I inform this House of an important milestone that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has reached. On October 1st of this year, the corporation will celebrate its 30th anniversary. Thirty years ago, the goal of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation was to create innovative housing programs based on need and environment and make available the best possible standards of housing to all residents of the NWT. Thirty years later our goal is still the same and we have made significant strides in improving and supplying housing in the NWT.

Communities in the Northwest Territories have been visibly transformed over the last 30 years. New houses have replaced homes where families once lived in crowded conditions, seniors are enjoying uniquely designed seniors' complexes, and public housing units have been renovated to provide safe environments for singles and families.

In 1974 we offered seven programs. Today the Housing Corporation offers 16 diverse programs to meet the unique needs of all residents. The corporation in partnership with local housing organizations have developed and delivered many successful housing programs, enabling families, singles and seniors to have access to suitable, adequate and affordable housing.

Housing continues to be in high demand, especially in a growing and developing economy. This presents us with many challenges and to meet these challenges, the corporation will work closely with residents at the community level, Members of this House and the business community.

As the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation looks back over the past 30 years, it has reason to be proud of its record. As a result of its efforts, more people are living in better housing.

The corporation, however, is not resting on its laurels, but is continuing to move ahead. The corporation continues to foster emerging housing markets, strengthen its partnerships, and develop more housing opportunities.

The corporation and its partners will be celebrating accomplishments in various ways throughout the upcoming year. I look forward to visiting a number of

communities and personally recognizing the outstanding work done by corporation staff and local housing organizations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Metis' Access To Federal Programs And Services

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak about what I see as an unfair application of aboriginal rights by the Government of Canada as they related to the Metis people.

The failure of the federal government to recognize and provide a safe process to access programs and services to the Metis as an office to status Indians is unacceptable. It is even more unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of the Northwest Territories is forced to follow the federal policies and return it as a royalty for the federal programs to be delivered on their behalf. The Government of the Northwest Territories has taken many steps to address this issue. It has to walk many more miles. One example is the extension of the health benefits to Metis people that matches those available to status Indians and Inuit. This is a positive and proactive approach that recognizes Metis people. This approach needs to be applied to the student financial assistance program as it relates to the Metis people. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has extended the same access to core funding on student financial assistance for the Metis as enjoyed by the status Indians and Inuit. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the federal government does not treat student financial assistance to the Metis the same as goes to the status people on the income tax. This has the effect of making this acknowledgment of the Metis rights a largely symbolic gesture.

Student financial services program delivers a university/college entrance program on USEP on behalf of the federal government. As its name implies, USEP is a two-semester program that gives status Indians rights to attend and succeed in post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, to paraphrase the old Five Man Electrical Band song, long hair and Metis need not apply. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, I cannot fault the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for this, they are simply following the criteria of eligibility imposed by the federal government. However, this does not mean that there is not a problem that needs to be addressed. There is a gap between adult literacy basic education and entering post-secondary institutions. The USEP program addresses this for status Indians. What program is this for Metis programs? Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it is time to set up another parallel process like the Metis health benefits for the university/college entry program and offer it to Aurora College. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Member's Statement On Impacts Of Increasing Costs Of Fuel And Power

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, mahsi. (English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, we have recently seen a huge increase in the price we pay for fuel. Indications are that prices will continue to rise in the future. This situation is causing difficulties for people in the North no matter where they live. However, Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that the rise in fuel prices is causing additional hardships for certain residents of the Northwest Territories, but not for all. I am referring to those people who live in smaller communities where electrical power is supplied by diesel fuel generators. These people will soon be bearing an extra burden not shared by everyone. Not only will they have to pay more for gasoline and heating fuel, but they will also have to pay more for electricity too.

This situation is especially serious for elders and other people on a fixed income. Already, power rates in smaller communities are substantially higher than here in Yellowknife. In my riding of Nahendeh, people are paying anywhere between 340 to 820 percent more than people in Yellowknife pay for their electricity. The Northwest Territories is the only jurisdiction in Canada where residents are asked to pay different rates for their power. Everywhere else, people pay one rate whether they live in the North or South, urban or rural areas, in small communities or in large. They are not penalized for choosing to live in certain areas.

Mr. Speaker, I was to go on record today as supporting the single price zone for power rates in the Northwest Territories where everyone pays the same rates. We have to wonder when we look at the rest of the country and see that we are out of step with everyone else, especially we have to wonder when the approach we are taking affects our citizens so disproportionately. Something is very wrong, Mr. Speaker. We have to change the way we are doing business, otherwise we may soon have a crisis on our hands. Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister responsible, during question period, for some thought of what our government is planning to do. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Dedication Of Community Service Non-Government Organizations

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, throughout the Northwest Territories we have many organizations and volunteers who work tirelessly to improve the lives of others. As a government, we do what we can to support the needs of our people. Above and beyond that, non-government organizations, service groups and volunteers contribute work and results of immeasurable value. In Hay River this past Saturday night, we again saw a vivid demonstration of that dedication to communities. Each year, for the past 20 years, the Hay River Knights of Columbus have hosted a lobster fest. Hundreds of live lobsters from the East Coast are flown in, courtesy of Canadian North for the last leg of their trip from Edmonton to Hay River, and are prepared, boiled and cooked by volunteers. This year again, around

700 people attended. The Knights of Columbus have this down to a science. Everyone was served a delicious four course meal in 42 minutes serving time. This in itself is a remarkable feat. Over the past 20 years, the Knights of Columbus have not only provided a wonderful opportunity for people to get together for lobster, entertainment and dancing, they have, in doing so, been able to contribute approximately \$300,000 to youth programs in our communities. This year again, the students and staff volunteers of the Diamond Jenness Secondary School were able to showcase their talents as they delivered an outstanding song and dance ensemble called, "The History of Rock and Roll." Following that, dancing to the tune of a live band made sure that everyone worked off a little bit of that delicious meal.

I would like to recognize and thank all of the volunteers and corporate sponsors. There is one person, however, who has been there every year for all 20 consecutive years and, to my mind, is a key contributor to the success of this event. This person is my constituent and my honourable colleague from Hay River North, Mr. Paul Delorey.

---Applause

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, yourself and my colleagues in this House to recognize this as a testament to exemplary community service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Benefits Of Tourism

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I rise in the House to bring attention to Tourism Awareness Week which, because of the short sitting of this House, I will have to recognize today. That is from June 20th to 26th of this year. Organized by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada around the theme, "Tourism makes Canada Smile," it is aimed at raising the awareness of the tremendous economic and social benefits of a \$52 billion industry that keeps 1.6 million Canadians working, supports economic and community development, and generates significant tax revenues for all levels of government.

Tourism Week celebrates Canada's tourism industry and highlights the importance of this vital sector of the economy, our quality of life and our understanding and appreciation of other cultures. The positive economic impacts of tourism are pursued and enjoyed by Canadian communities large and small in all regions, from whale watching charters off the East Coast, to ski resorts in the West, to watching the northern lights in Canada's Arctic. The tourism industry creates employment, supports community and economic development and generates tax revenues for all levels of government. Tourism is big business in Canada and a key driver of our economic growth and prosperity.

But the benefits of tourism go far beyond the tangible return it generates year in and year out for the Canadian economy. Tourism also contributes in significant ways to the quality of life enjoyed by all Canadians. It not only provides a variety of employment opportunities, but supports a wealth of cultural experiences, historic

discovery and outdoor activities, whether we travel to them or enjoy them in our own backyards. Think of that. They are much a part of life in our local communities, but whose very existence is ensured and vitalized by our out-of-town visitors.

Canada's excellent tourism infrastructure, transportation, accommodations, attractions, facilities and services today enable us to access and visit more of our great country than ever before. When we do, we get to meet Canadians from other parts of the country and share their experiences. Exploring Canada gives us a greater sense of place that enhances our pride and elevates our spirit. Perhaps it is through this kind of sharing and exchange that tourism has its most enduring impact, encouraging greater knowledge and understanding among and between people. Globally, tourism contributes to the peaceful resolutions of differences.

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 can conclude your statement.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tourism gives Canada a lot to smile about. Tourism Week is a time to celebrate all that tourism does for us. Canada's tourism industry makes a significant contribution to Canada's economy, to a standard of living as a nation and to the quality of life of all Canadians who have much in our territory to be proud of and support in our tourism industry. During the week of June 20th to 26th, remember that tourism does make Canada smile. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Benefits Of A Mortgage Investment Corporation

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am certainly glad to see that the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation has made a fine statement in the context of housing demands in the Northwest Territories. I am going to preambule my Member's statement by reading a Minister's statement by saying, "Housing continues to be in high demand, especially in the growing and developing economy. This presents us with many challenges and to meet these challenges, the corporation will work closely with residents at the community level, Members of this House and the business community." And, second to that, "The corporation continues to foster emerging housing markets, strengthen its partnerships, and develop more housing opportunities."

Mr. Speaker, it seems like the Minister has some sort of intuition when it comes to housing, so I want to follow that through with my Member's statement by saying that my electoral district of Inuvik Twin Lakes consistently stresses they need to make progressive changes in our socioeconomic policies with emphasis not only in revising policy. In the context of the Minister's statement, one area we need to begin to develop is a mortgage investment corporation for the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the first step in trying to achieve a mortgage investment corporation is to seek legal advice as to whether an NWT mortgage investment corporation requires a charter of its own. It may only require a clear definition of its powers.

Mr. Speaker, we feel that a mortgage investment corporation with lending powers that will stimulate a fast approach to the construction of adequate and affordable priced housing. If a trend analysis methodology which will be used is an indicator, this will not only allow for more individuals to purchase homes, but also includes the development of a housing market and a positive benefit for the building sector as well.

Mr. Speaker, my study of housing across the circumpolar world touches Norway. The Norwegian State Housing Bank provides sole support to its policy about providing loans and grants. It provides purchase loans, personal loans and various grants. Loans and grants are primary...(inaudible)...through municipalities.

I know the NWT Housing Corporation has already provided this level of detail through its homeownership programs, but certainly from an economic investment perspective, it remains a costly subsidy. I may remind Members that it is a costly subsidy.

Further, Mr. Speaker, the MIC will also be an investment arm to provide professional staff housing under section 24, paragraphs (1)(f) of the NWT Act. This would provide for an economic initiative for other department staff who rent or buy directly from the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

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

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

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and fellow colleagues. Mr. Speaker, these are just a few positive steps this government should consider in the overall strategy to improve the programs in the system of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. It should take a script from the Norwegian State Housing Bank which administers housing allowances that allocate the families with children and retired people with low incomes and who endure hardships and other areas of economic ability to pay for, such as high power rates.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this helpful advice will be taken seriously by the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation which contributes to the government's overall strategic plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Member's Statement On GNWT Strategic Plan

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk today about the strategic plan of this government presented by the honourable Premier, Mr. Handley, on May 26th. In previous sessions, I presented the issue of legal aid as one of my highest priorities. I

repeatedly mentioned there are constituents of mine who have waited over six months to receive assistance. I believe that this period is too long to expect families in crisis to wait. I am pleased that the government agrees with my position. Mr. Handley announced that, during the presentation of the strategic plan, and I quote, "We will be seeking supplementary funding during the current session to open a separate legal aid clinic dedicated to family law." The government's position on legal aid, the steps that are being taken to lessen the waiting time to receive assistance, as well as their commitment for a fall implementation is, in my opinion, very commendable.

Mr. Speaker, I further would like to note that I will formally put this government on notice that for the next little while I will not be pounding my fist on the legislature's table, because I truly have seen positive action to deal with this crisis. So, Mr. Speaker, I will be off dealing with other burning bushes.

---Laughter

We will see what comes from there. Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I truly and humbly look forward to working with the Minister of Justice because he truly is a Minister who will work with regular Members on any legal aid progress.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Ooh.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, colleagues, for showing your support of that Minister, I am sure. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I just want to thank the government for taking the initiative of creating this legal aid clinic. I could truly believe that there will be a new functional legal aid clinic that would bring much needed program and progress for our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Maintenance Enforcement Concerns

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to address the situation that occurred recently to a single mom in Hay River, one that causes me a great deal of concern and raises many questions around maintenance enforcement. Mr. Speaker, the lady I refer to is a single mom with three children to support who has gone through the courts for some time for financial help. She is currently not receiving anything in the way of maintenance enforcement payments, as the father of the children is in arrears with maintenance enforcement.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, the sheriff's office commenced a seizure of some of the dad's goods in order to pay down some of the maintenance arrears. The mom was told that she should be provided with the proceeds from the sale of the goods. Here comes the kicker, Mr. Speaker. The goods were sold at auction. After all was said and done, the single mom with the three kids realized nothing by way of monies from the sale. Mr. Speaker, I was informed that it is standard practice for the sheriff's office to charge a fee for seizing the goods and for storage of such goods. This is why the single mom did not receive any of the money from the auction. Mr. Speaker, to my way of thinking, the sheriff is an employee of this government.

As such, any work he carries out in the performance of his duties should be just the cost of doing business. That should not be borne on the backs of single moms. Mr. Speaker, I would think that surely we, as a government, can come up with another solution to address single moms who are struggling to make ends meet. They should not be doubly burdened as a result of actions from this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Sport North Annual General Meeting

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend, about 60 dedicated sports volunteers from many communities gathered in Yellowknife for the annual meeting of the Sport North Federation and its partner organizations from various regions and sectors in the territory. They represent some 25 sporting organizations that bring the views and interests of thousands of northerners to the table, Mr. Speaker. These people range from youngsters just getting started in organized competitive sport, to elite athletes who could be carrying Canada's flag in the future world Olympics.

Sport North is also the body that organizes and manages the NWT's participation in the Arctic Winter Games. They raise funds for this through the generosity of many corporate sponsors and the proceeds of the Western Canadian Lottery, as the licensed agent on behalf of this government. It is important to recognize the partnership that our government has with the Sport North Federation, Mr. Speaker, and not only for the Arctic Winter Games, but many other programs and services.

The organization is a tremendous example of our volunteers. The world of sport and recreation here in the NWT would be nothing without the hundreds of deeply committed coaches, officials and workers who give freely of their days and weeks, Mr. Speaker, every year in the communities. This is a volunteer body that is an incredibly important constituency to us all. It is one that we could never afford to replace. I believe that we are putting these people and their volunteer commitment at risk, Mr. Speaker. A major concern to them is the revamping of the sport and recreation system through the proposed new Sport and Recreation Council.

I want to compliment the Premier, Mr. Speaker, who, having just taken on the duties of Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, appeared before the annual general meeting this weekend. I think he was the first Minister, let alone Premier, to do that in the last three or four years, and he's to be complimented. But he heard very clearly that the sport volunteers just don't understand the problem that the government is trying to fix with this new governing body. They believe the government is imposing an answer to a problem which has yet to be clearly defined and substantiated. They ask whether a new organization will impose new costs and how their role as volunteers will be affected with the delivery of sport programming across the North. Above all, Mr. Speaker, they seek a degree of recognition and respect that at least matches their dedication to sport and healthy living in the North. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Mental Health Addictions Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today on the way the mental health and addictions program is being rolled out in communities. Mr. Speaker, this is a program that I have supported and I believe it's a very good thing that the government has allocated new money and more money to put resources in this area. I believe, also, Mr. Speaker, that it is important that we do it in a way that meets the needs of our local communities and at the same time maximizes the local employment opportunities wherever possible.

Mr. Speaker, the information I have is that the GNWT contribution agreement that's been rolled out requires that the people who are hired for these positions have to have a minimum of Bachelor of Arts and Social Sciences with three years of relevant counselling experience or a diploma in Psychiatric Nursing with three years of relevant experience. Mr. Speaker, I totally appreciate and understand that we need to have people qualified for their jobs, whatever they may be, but we should also note that in this case these qualifications that the contribution agreement is asking for would most certainly exclude anybody who's in the community who might be interested in this job. Anybody who has these qualifications, I would submit to you, is already employed or, unless the new money being offered is very high, they're not going to be willing to transfer.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that whenever we roll out programs and put more resources we need to build capacity that goes with those resources. What I'm really concerned with is that there are currently no training programs in the department or within our school system that would be able to bring the people that we already have available who can qualify for this training program so they can be trained rather than setting up job requirements that we know to be either beyond, or we just don't have people to fill these jobs in communities. We have full employment or something close to full employment, and I can tell you that a psychiatric nurse with psychiatric training is hard to come by, even at Stanton Territorial Hospital.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would urge this government and the Minister of Health and Social Services to revisit the way in which he is introducing this program and rolling out this program because in the end, if there's no buy-in from the communities with respect to this program and they feel that they can't have their local people working on it, it is not going to result in success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Member's Statement On Congratulations To Nunakput Super Soccer Team

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to congratulate constituents in my Nunakput riding. Congratulations to the athletes who attended the Super

Soccer tournament here in Yellowknife, which was held from April 29th to May 4, 2004. Kim Deniger, a member of the RCMP, was the coach and took seven students with her. They are: Zane and Jonathan Kuneyuna, Anthony Alanak, Nathan Okheena, Nathan Pogotak, Logan Memogana, and Zackery Kunana.

Mr. Speaker, with this being their first time attending this tournament they did not win any of the games, but I'm proud to say they did receive an outstanding trophy. I would like to recognize their sponsor, who helped them raise \$10,000 for the expenses to join in this event. They are Devon, ConocoPhillips, First Air, Helen Kalvak Elihakvik School, the Hamlet of Holman, the Holman District Education Authority, Inuvialuit Development Corporation, the local church and the community volunteers who helped at bake sales.

Mr. Speaker, there are two students from Mangilaluk School in Tuktoyaktuk who I wish to acknowledge. They are Shaeli Pokiak and Chelsey Jacobson. They won in their division and went to the regional science fair in Inuvik where they were selected to be participants in the national science fair in St. John's, Newfoundland. Ms. Betty Elias, the Grade 6 teacher from Mangilaluk School, was the chaperone for female students who attended the science fair.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate these constituents from my Nunakput riding who graduated from Aurora College: Gloria Nasogaluak from Tuktoyaktuk and Donald Kuptana, Jr., who now resides in Inuvik, who graduated with a diploma from the recreational leaders program; Lilly Alanak from Holman and Vikki Gruben from Tuktoyaktuk, who graduated from the Holman community support worker program; and Marlene Wolki from Paulatuk, who received her certificate in office administration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Lack Of GNWT Support To Persons With Disabilities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I just want to reiterate some of the concerns I raised during last week's session. These concerns are with denying persons with developmental disabilities in Edmonton, Alberta, who were receiving care and are now not receiving financial support from this government. Mr. Speaker, this is NWT Disability Awareness Week 2004 with the theme being, "Remember to Include Everyone - We All Benefit." That being said, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that it seems that this government has not included everyone and that the nine clients and their families that we did not include are definitely not benefiting from some of the decisions and actions that have been unfolding over the past two months with respect to their well-being and proper care by this government.

Mr. Speaker, these clients are still in the same institution, as they refuse to be relocated and it worries me why this government can only state that they're pretty much on their own now that they refuse to relocate. I do not understand how this government can say that they will help by having on-call services available to these clients should they want to receive support from this government.

Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that these people have developmental disabilities, and a help line does not seem like a good alternative to what I would term as abandonment by the government and Department of Health and Social Services with regard to their proper care and support received by the institution which has stated that they will continue to care for these people with developmental disabilities regardless of GNWT funding arrangements which are being terminated because of unsubstantiated allegations and accusations which seem to be plaguing this House of late.

Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister of Health and Social Services more questions about this important issue later on today. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize our good friend and former Speaker of this House, Mr. Tony Whitford. I just wanted to let him know that it's good to see him here and I miss him very much, too. Not disrespecting the current incumbent from Kam Lake.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize Mr. Loughheed. I believe we all miss him. I've watched him as I was growing up and I admire him very much. I welcome him to the North. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize my partner, Cheryl; my support. I miss you and I love you.

---Laughter

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know Mr. Loughheed has left, but I'd also like to recognize him. And Mr. Whitford, a constituent of mine and former Speaker of the House; welcome, sir. Also, Mr. Alfred Moses who helped coordinate the Quit and Win Contest in the Inuvik region. Welcome, Alfred, to the Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to recognize my constituent assistant's parents. Although they're not constituents of mine, they hail from

Capreol, Ontario, and they're here in the Northwest Territories visiting my assistant. Their names are Gerry and Mary Lynn Sorel. Formally, I have to say that I'm not supposed to mention that Julie forgot to pick up them up at the airport, so nobody tell her I said that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

---Applause

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the executive director of the NWT Status of Women Council in the gallery today, Ms. Barbara Saunders.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to recognize a friend and former colleague of mine in the gallery, Mr. Gerry Cheezie, the manager of the housing projects in Ndilo.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Just for those people who haven't been recognized, I'd like to welcome you to the House. Welcome. Item 6, oral questions. Mr. Braden.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 175-15(3): Proposed Sport And Recreation Council

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Premier, Mr. Handley, as he has taken on, at least on an interim basis, the duties and responsibility for MACA. It follows on my Member's statement regarding the Sport North organization and the creation of the proposed sport and recreation council. I want to compliment the Premier for being there. He heard the message quite clearly and, I think, bluntly from this organization that as they want to participate in the improvement of the sport organization and they need to know what the circumstance is.

Could Mr. Handley, the Minister, articulate for us the issues and difficulties that are being addressed in the creation of this proposed new sport and recreation council? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 175-15(3): Proposed Sport And Recreation Council

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories would be proud of the achievements of a lot of our people, both in sports and recreation. We do have challenges though, as many Members have mentioned in this House, of having a fair distribution of opportunity for people, particularly from the small communities. So the one challenge that the proposed board would have would be to work to ensure that our

small communities and remote communities have fair opportunity to take advantage of the sports and recreation activities that are available to northerners.

Second, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that we have representation from all of the Territories on the board, that all the people, whether they're from small communities or large communities, from the North or the South, also have a chance to participate and be part of the operation and decision-making on sports and recreation.

The third area, Mr. Speaker, is on decision making. It's sometimes frustrating for people to have decisions made for them by organizations that they may not be represented on. So trying to find a way of more fair decision making for all people in the Northwest Territories, all communities, large and small, North and South, remote and large centres, is the third challenge.

Mr. Speaker, generally, those are the three challenges that are put out to the proposed board. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 175-15(3): Proposed Sport And Recreation Council

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the outline of those issues. The Premier mentioned that fair decision making is part of the role of governance, and I would be one of the first to agree that this is something we should all strive for. But I would remind the Premier of a message that came through, at least pretty clearly to me when I was listening to the discussion yesterday morning and in previous years from Sport North meetings, that there's a large body of sport volunteers that feel they have not been included in the decision making regarding the creation of this new sports council. Can the Premier advise of the kind of communications and dialogue that has gone on where things may have been missed with Sport North on this issue? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Two questions. Mr. Premier.

Further Return To Question 175-15(3): Proposed Sport And Recreation Council

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of sport organizations in the Northwest Territories. In fact, there are five main groups that are represented in the discussions and in the proposed board and those, as we know, include the Sport North board itself, the Aboriginal Sports Circle of the Western Arctic, the Beaufort-Delta Sahtu Recreation Association, the NWT Recreation and Parks Association, and the Mackenzie Recreation Association.

Mr. Speaker, as well, I may point out that the Sport North board does involve or include 27 territorial sports organizations in itself. So there has been a lot of involvement by most of the boards, if not all of them. Mr. Speaker, I know there have been some communication difficulties, I was told yesterday. Those are things we want to work to overcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 175-15(3): Proposed Sport And Recreation Council

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sport North Federation yesterday afternoon, after the presentation that the Premier gave, passed a resolution. It is a six-point resolution and it very clearly indicates that they still have yet to really come on side with this process. In fact, the first of their six recommendations is that MACA halt the current sport and recreation council process immediately. Would the Premier respond to this? Is the Premier prepared to respond to this today, even as the interim Minister? Is this something that he will ask the Minister? I take it that there will be a new Minister of MACA. Will that new Minister be directed to halt the process as the Sport North Federation has requested? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 175-15(3): Proposed Sport And Recreation Council

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to halt the process because this has been an ongoing consultation since October 2001, when Minister Allen at the time began the process. There have been a number of consultations that have been held. Some of them seem to not have reached the people that they should have. It's been a long consultation process. I'm not tied, as I said yesterday, to a June 18th date. That was thrown out as being the date for implementation of this. But I do want to continue to work toward coming up with a board that represents all the sports organizations and volunteers and people who work with our young people in sports and recreation.

Mr. Speaker, the other piece I need to find out is, yesterday I met with the Sport North board and its representation. I still want to find out from the other four partners where they stand on this and ensure that everybody has all of the information that is necessary before we move ahead with this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Question 176-15(3): Maintenance Enforcement Policies

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of the Department of Justice, the Honourable Charles Dent. It's to do with my Member's statement and the process used for maintenance enforcement. I'm not going to get into any specific case, but just for the policy surrounding maintenance enforcement, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister to explain to me what the role of the sheriff is. Is the sheriff actually an employee of this government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 176-15(3): Maintenance Enforcement Policies

HON. CHARLES DENT: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the sheriff is an employee of the government, yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 176-15(3): Maintenance Enforcement Policies

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as well, I'd like the Minister to inform the House of why there is a fee charged for when there are goods seized on behalf of a parent that is receiving maintenance enforcement, and in order to try and get some of that money the government or sheriff would move to seize some property. Why is there a fee charged for the seizure of that property? Is it a flat fee or is it based on how big the article is, what it's worth? How does that work? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 176-15(3): Maintenance Enforcement Policies

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I can answer all the detail of the question the Member has posed. However, it's not uncommon for this government and most governments to charge fees for services that they provide to the public. For instance, if you go in and want to register a document in court registries, there is a fee. If you want to get a driver's licence, there is a fee for that. When the public asks that a service be performed that isn't being provided to everybody, it isn't unusual that there would be a fee charged. My understanding is that that's the situation also with maintenance enforcement, that if a sheriff has to take some action there is a fee charged for it. It's not just in maintenance enforcement, it would be the same with serving papers and so on. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 176-15(3): Maintenance Enforcement Policies

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the other part of that question was is this fee charged as a flat fee, or is it based on a wide range of the articles being seized? The other question I had, Mr. Speaker, is if it is also common practice to have items that are seized stored somewhere and have storage fees accumulating on this item before it goes for sale. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 176-15(3): Maintenance Enforcement Policies

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't answer Mr. Delorey's question about whether or not it's a flat fee for every service that's performed. I would expect on most occasions it is a flat fee per service, but I can't say that with certainty. I would be happy to investigate and get back to him on that.

On the other case, if an article is seized and stored somewhere, then, yes, it is common for charges to be levied for that storage, particularly if a third party is responsible for the storage. For instance, if a car is seized for non-payment of some bill and there's a judgment received, if that car has to be stored at the property of the company, that towed the car then, as well as the fees owing, whoever owned the car, if they wanted it back, would have to pay the storage fees.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary To Question 176-15(3): Maintenance Enforcement Policies

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the part that gives me great concern when we're adding fees to articles is I don't know whether there's any study done as to what articles are worthwhile seizing if there's going to be a fee charged to it and then a daily rental or storage fee if it's going to be there for two months. I would expect that with the amount of government property there is everywhere across the Territories, there must be a place that we can store this without accumulating daily fees. Why are we even bothering charging it if it's not going to bring in any money for who it's intended to benefit? Is that consideration given to use government properties in the communities rather than having it somewhere where there's a daily fee attached to it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 176-15(3): Maintenance Enforcement Policies

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would agree with Mr. Delorey that we should try and minimize any expenses in these sorts of situations and maximize the payments that would be going to affected individuals. I will certainly look into whether or not we can, in the future at least, find a way to use government properties for storage and I'll report back to the Member what my findings are. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 177-15(3): Metis Access To Aboriginal College Entrance Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. As I stated in my Member's statement, the Metis people aren't eligible for university and college entry programs. I realize the department is only delivering programs as directed by the federal government's policies, however, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment tell me whether the department has ever considered extending the university and college entry programs to Metis people? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 177-15(3): Metis Access To Aboriginal College Entrance Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the Member that on more than one occasion during the 13th Assembly when I was Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, I sent letters to the federal government and asked the Ministers to reconsider their position on the university and college entrance program, which is offered only for treaty people. I have always been rebuffed in those approaches. I haven't tried it again since becoming Minister, but I am prepared to immediately write to the federal government and again see if they will reconsider their position.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 177-15(3): Metis Access To Aboriginal College Entrance Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister. There are several constituents in the Sahtu region who have applied for programs and been turned down. What type of interim solutions can we provide to some of my constituents in the Sahtu region with regard to continuing on with their education and training for the upcoming opportunities that they see in the Sahtu? This government tells the people in the Sahtu that there is some way we can look at that issue in the interim. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 177-15(3): Metis Access To Aboriginal College Entrance Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to reinforce what the Member said in his statement. This is a federal program and we deliver it in the Northwest Territories only for the convenience of our residents to make sure that it's easier for people to get it, rather than having to write to someone farther away to get it. We don't set the terms and conditions. What the residents of the Sahtu will have is access to the same programs that residents have across the Northwest Territories, which in general are very supportive of education and training. If the Member has some specific issues, I would certainly welcome an opportunity to meet with him and see whether or not there are some programs that would meet this individual's needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 177-15(3): Metis Access To Aboriginal College Entrance Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I will take you up on your offer to meet at a later date. As we know, sometimes we send information out to the federal government and some days it takes very long. Like the devolution issue. It takes a long time to get some answers from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, the present student financial assistance program will provide assistance for 20 semesters of university. Would the Minister consider allowing Metis people to attend the university and college interest program through Aurora College under the overall eligibility? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 177-15(3): Metis Access To Aboriginal College Entrance Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to take a look at the terms and conditions under which the program is offered. As I said, it's a federal program. The federal government pays for the entire cost of the program and, therefore, they set the rules and conditions of who qualifies for it. We may not have the flexibility to allow for that, even if somebody was prepared to pay. But I can't say that for sure, so I'll look into it and get back to the Member.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 177-15(3): Metis Access To Aboriginal College Entrance Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister. I guess I would ask him if he would consider looking at some of the policies that he alluded to that may help the Metis people access other programs. Right now you have to go into low income support or to the ARDA programs and they get bounced around. So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask if the Minister could look at his programs again and look at some of the other programs within his department that would help alleviate some of this frustration that the Metis people are facing today in terms of getting their higher education and being a productive force for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 177-15(3): Metis Access To Aboriginal College Entrance Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's in all our interests to make sure anybody who is capable of getting a higher education in the Northwest Territories is given a hand to get that education. So the department is constantly reviewing the programs that are offered and looking at ways to improve them. I would say that as part of our regular reviews we will continue to do that and make sure our programs are offered in the best way possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 178-15(3): Students Suspended From School

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week in a Member's statement I raised the issue of constituents of mine who have children who have been suspended from the public school system who are now at home with very little opportunity for education in the community. I didn't have a chance to follow up with questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, so I'd like to do that today. My question for the Minister is what education opportunities are available for these children who cannot be accommodated in the public school system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 178-15(3): Students Suspended From School

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, each individual situation is going to require a unique solution, so it is difficult to answer it in a general way. There are in every instance monies available for dealing with children who have special needs given to the divisional education councils, which in turn funds the district education authorities to provide the services. So the legislation in the Northwest Territories requires that the councils provide an appropriate level of education for all students, and that may take the provision of an individual's support in a classroom, or it may take some

discussion within the community of a different approach, which could involve any number of different facilities or situations. So I can't answer specifically that something is available. The best opportunity would be to see as much as possible the education provided within the school so that everybody is provided with an opportunity to attend school. Sometimes that isn't always possible, but that is the first choice. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 178-15(3): Students Suspended From School

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that everyone is pretty aware that there is not enough funding that goes to the education authorities to deal with special needs. With the number of students who require that sort of attention, I think those resources are already spread very, very thin. So to say that the funding is there, might be somewhat...Well, it doesn't solve my problems. I have more than one student in Hay River right now who is not able to attend the regular school system, and I don't blame the teachers or the principal for suspending these children if it is disruptive to the education of the other children. However, the Minister made a reference in his comments to the statutory or mandatory obligation of this government to provide an education to every child. That being said, if there aren't enough funds for special needs, would it be possible for students or schools to make application on behalf of students for additional special funding because the special needs funding in the programs now is not sufficient? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 178-15(3): Students Suspended From School

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since 1999-2000 to this year, the amount of funding that has been provided to divisional educational councils to fund programs for children with special needs has gone from just over \$6 million to over \$16 million. So there has been a pretty dramatic growth in the amount of funding in the past four years. It has more than doubled. That I think indicates that there has been some commitment on the part of this legislature to provide funds, and I guess what we are going to have to find out in the next little while is whether or not that increase has been adequate. If it isn't, as the Member is suggesting, then as a legislature we are going to be challenged to try and deal with that. I would think though that with the kind of growth that we've seen in the last four years in special needs funding, that the money should be there, and we are going to have to try and work with the DEC's and DEAs to find out how they are responding, and see if there aren't ways in which we can help them to make sure that the funding is being used properly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 178-15(3): Students Suspended From School

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister if there are any, outside of the mainstream, classroom support available

for students with behaviour problems any place else in the Territories. Specifically, are there alternative education opportunities for children in Yellowknife who have behavioural problems, which preclude them from participating in a mainstream classroom in the public schools? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 178-15(3): Students Suspended From School

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure. I guess it depends on the nature of the behavioural problems. I suppose, for instance, that a territorial treatment centre might be a facility that could be used for situations like that. But again, without knowing the specifics of the behaviour issues, it's hard to know. It may help the Member to know that I have advised the DEC Chairs that by this fall I will issue a directive that will stipulate what is acceptable use for the funds that are provided to deal with special needs. I am not certain that the school support funding has been spent appropriately in the past, and I am planning to issue a directive by this fall, which will stipulate just what services are acceptable for inclusion under that \$16 million that I've been talking about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 178-15(3): Students Suspended From School

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Minister then is in terms of my response to my constituents who have children under the age of 16 who are not able to attend school because they have been suspended for long periods of time. Would it be appropriate to tell those constituents that this government recognizes its obligation to educate these students, and that there will be either some financing or opportunity made available to them just to realize an education? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 178-15(3): Students Suspended From School

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure that the Member can trace it exactly the way that she did, but I would agree with her that this government does recognize its obligation to provide an education to children. I think that what I have been saying is that we believe we are providing the funds to the DEC, and through them to the DEA. If there is a problem, that needs to be addressed at the local level, and the department may need to work with the DEC and the DEA to make sure that the solution is found. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

Question 179-15(3): Mortgage Investment Corporation

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to remain consistent with my Member's statement. I am

going to ask the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation if the NWT Housing Corporation is still actively involved in the development of a mortgage investment corporation as part of Cabinet's overall strategy for the 15th Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 179-15(3): Mortgage Investment Corporation

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our current programs are already providing the mortgage and lending requirements for the people of the North, and we are quite satisfied our programs are working. We are not looking at setting up an arm's length organization at this time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Allen.

Supplementary To Question 179-15(3): Mortgage Investment Corporation

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then would the Minister kindly advise this House if \$18.3 million in new program monies will be made available to the developers and other people in pursuit of housing? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 179-15(3): Mortgage Investment Corporation

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Housing Corporation currently provides lending and corporate assistance through an allowance under the NWT Housing Corporation Act. We provide personal loan guarantees, corporate loan guarantees, and in some cases construction of bridge financing. Our lending ceiling on that pot is at \$30 million. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Allen.

Supplementary To Question 179-15(3): Mortgage Investment Corporation

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recognizing then if there is that level of expenditure by this government on new housing developments, can I ask the Minister why is it that affordable rental housing program monies was reprofiled to the independent housing program? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 179-15(3): Mortgage Investment Corporation

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our affordable housing program receives \$7.5 million, 1.1 percent of the government's budget of \$320 million, which was announced some time ago. This program was started in 2002-2003, and our investment under this program is geared towards the independent housing program, or the IHP, and also our public housing units. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Allen.

Supplementary To Question 179-15(3): Mortgage Investment Corporation

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are certain legal instruments that are required under the covenants of any agreement. I won't go into any detail, but I just want to ask the Minister if he feels that a MIC is more applicable to the economic reforms than a social policy reform? So if he can make comment to that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 179-15(3): Mortgage Investment Corporation

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have not had the opportunity to do an evaluation on a MIC or the housing programs and compare which is more applicable. Right now we have programs that are geared towards social housing, we have programs that are geared towards home ownership, we have programs that are geared towards lending and providing mortgages. All these programs are very important. We are not putting any priority on any one given area. So I believe we will continue to provide those programs, and then make them available to all the residents in the NWT. Thank you.

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

Question 180-15(3): Treatment Of Persons With Developmental Disabilities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. As I was just talking about earlier in my Member's statement, I just wanted to go back to the Honourable Michael Miltenberger's statement in last week's session on the treatment of the clients with developmental disabilities. I feel that when the honourable Member stated that is not our role to get involved in disagreements in the internal wranglings and differences between institutions and the Alberta government, and whatever other agencies are in Alberta, I believe that statement is not in compliance with the government policy. I think it is our role, Mr. Speaker, to be directly involved with any wranglings or differences between any institution which this government pays \$1 million plus per year in ensuring that NWT clients are well taken care of, whether they are in Alberta or any other jurisdiction. Mr. Speaker, I just want to make reference to a letter I also received from the Minister, which states that several program audits are in various phases of completion, and we are awaiting final reports to base any decisions on the relocation of our clients. I just wanted to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services if the Office of the Public Guardian's report, which is dated April 20, 2004, prior to the letter of May 7th that was sent to me, whether this report has been taken into consideration when the decision to remove the clients was being made? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 180-15(3): Treatment Of Persons With Developmental Disabilities

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a government we do have an obligation to ensure that the services that we purchase, that the clients that we place in other jurisdictions are adequately cared for within that jurisdiction, that their safety and well being is protected, and we've taken steps to do that. When we considered the decisions we made, we looked at all the information that was there available. We have had staff down there for a number of weeks, we have been working with the Alberta government, the Public Guardian's Office, and when the decision was made it was based on all the information that I had before me at the time, including all the reports from the various parties. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 180-15(3): Treatment Of Persons With Developmental Disabilities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to go back to the letter. There is another point in the letter that basically the Minister stated that no further action is planned until the various allegations on APYS have been thoroughly investigated. I just want to ask the Minister if there are any other reports with regard to the allegations and whether they have been completed. In particular, a report from the Alberta Association of Rehab Centres, and if that report is available if I can receive a copy, because the only one that I got is the Office of the Public Guardian's, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 180-15(3): Treatment Of Persons With Developmental Disabilities

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to share with the Members on a confidential basis the reports that we have. I am respecting the client confidentiality, and I would be happy to set up an opportunity to do that. There is an extensive stack, and I would be happy to do that, or at the very least I could share a relatively detailed summary that we also have available that outlines the various issues, the compliance questions, the service issues, and the monetary fiscal questions that have been raised. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 180-15(3): Treatment Of Persons With Developmental Disabilities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure whether all the facts in the case of the nine clients in Alberta have all been analyzed and are really known at this point, because we are having a lot of different stories coming out of the APYS version, and the Office of the Public Guardian in regard to their report, which probably gives APYS a pretty good grade in their standards and proper care of these clients. I was just wondering if any weight was given to the Office of the Public Guardian's report in the Minister's decision to ask and request the relocation of our NWT clients. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 180-15(3): Treatment Of Persons With Developmental Disabilities

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my opinion we gave appropriate consideration to all the people involved in all of the organizations and institutions involved in this particular issue, and it has been a relatively fluid situation and some things have possibly been overtaken by events. But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, Nunavut, as I indicated, pulled their clients in March, the Alberta government as well pulled their clients. Our obligation is to ensure that the safety and service that we were buying, and the safety of our clients was ensured, and we've taken steps to do that, but we did give due consideration to the very many pieces of documentation provided by the various players. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 180-15(3): Treatment Of Persons With Developmental Disabilities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for clarification for the House, I know that the Nunavut government did pull their clients, and that these clients are being relocated to an institution which this government had previously pulled all the clients out of before they all went to APYS. I just want to make a note on this Office of the Public Guardian's professional's comments in one of the final summaries of his report where it says information represented by professionals involved with the agency and individuals represented by the Office of the Public Guardian do not support a conclusion that these clients were at imminent risk. In fact, they clearly identify that these individuals have made substantial progress since moving to these programs. This does not suggest that there are not areas of practice training procedures or processes that could not be improved, it would suggest instead that there are strengths in the agency programming and practices that have benefited clients and need to be considered. I just want to ask the Minister if he did consider any of these professional opinions with regard to the well being and the improvement of the lives of our persons with developmental disabilities in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 180-15(3): Treatment Of Persons With Developmental Disabilities

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we did consider that. We also considered the fact that there is a host of other significant other related information tied into compliance and monetary issues, as well as some program issues. We recognize that clearly there was strong support for the program by clients, and that some of the professionals involved in the day-to-day work with clients spoke highly of the programming work that was being done there. But the reality for us, Mr. Speaker, is that there are other issues and variables that have significant bearing as well on the situation, which were significant determinants in the final decision that was made. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 181-15(3): Rising Fuel Prices And Power Rates

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, as well as the Premier. In the face of rapidly rising fuel prices, does the government have any plans to alleviate the unfair and disproportionate burden being placed on NWT residents who live in smaller communities where electricity is supplied by diesel generators? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 181-15(3): Rising Fuel Prices And Power Rates

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we are monitoring what is happening with fuel prices. I might also mention, Mr. Speaker, that throughout the North in the communities with diesel powered generators, we do have a power stabilization program in place that ensures that customers are not subject to the rise and fall of prices on a continual basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 181-15(3): Rising Fuel Prices And Power Rates

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the government is recognizing that rising fuel prices will affect elders on fixed incomes more than other people. Does the government have plans to introduce power subsidies for the elders, like existing fuel subsidies with regard to power rate prices? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Premier, Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 181-15(3): Rising Fuel Prices And Power Rates

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, my information now is that the stabilization funds that we have in the Power Corporation have adequate flexibility to be able to accommodate for the higher prices for the time being, so we don't have to pass it off to customers. Mr. Speaker, at some point, when the maximum stabilization funds are reached, then we may have to go for what's called a rate rider to increase power. At that point, then we would have to look at issues like the Member is referring to, but it's not a decision the Power Corporation would make itself. It would take this to the Public Utilities Board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 181-15(3): Rising Fuel Prices And Power Rates

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, given that the NWT is the only jurisdiction in Canada that does not have a single pricing policy for electricity and given that the current situation with rising fuel prices is making inadequacies inherent in our policies painfully apparent, does the government have plans to get in step with the rest of

Canada and charge all of its citizens the same price for electricity?

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier, Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 181-15(3): Rising Fuel Prices And Power Rates

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, no, at this point in time we do not have plans to move to a one-rate system. That's something we may, in this assembly, want to look at. I am not sure. There are no definite plans to do it. In the longer term though, we would certainly want to consider trying to achieve that goal. Mr. Speaker, I should also point out that we do, at this time, set the prices in all of the diesel communities based on the Yellowknife price or cost of power per kilowatt for the first 700 kilowatts for all residents. That is enough to run all but larger homes, so I would hope that residents would also be careful with the consumption in their houses if they find they are going over 700. But for the first 700, it should be and will be the same as the Yellowknife rates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 181-15(3): Rising Fuel Prices And Power Rates

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just with regard to equalizing how communities are paying for power, three years ago when it was a problem to supply electricity to Yellowknife due to low water levels, all the people in the NWT were asked to subsidize people in the capital by paying higher rates. Today when there is a problem supply of electricity in smaller communities due to rising fuel prices, as in this case, will the government be asking the people in Yellowknife to repay the favour by charging them higher rates to offset the hardships faced by smaller communities? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Premier.

Further Return To Question 181-15(3): Rising Fuel Prices And Power Rates

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, all of the rates for the first 700 kilowatts are subsidized back to the Yellowknife price. So if we find that the prices are going up in the diesel-generated power communities, then it will be the government who will be subsidizing through our power subsidy program, not Yellowknife, but the government will be subsidizing all those communities to bring them back to the Yellowknife prices. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 182-15(3): Supplementary Health Benefits For Seniors

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Health and Social Services with regard to the coverage for drug benefits for seniors. Mr. Speaker, recently there was a change in insurance companies. I believe it went from Sunlife to Alberta Blue Cross, I am not sure exactly. The new insurer is Alberta Blue Cross. In the process of changing this insurance coverage, many seniors are finding that their pharmaceutical products that used to be covered under

the old benefits are no longer covered under the new one. Part of it is just transitional problems where the pharmacies have not been given the new list that are eligible for insurance coverage that were available under the old one. I want to make sure that this is not a change in the coverage, but just a transitional hiccup. I would like to ask the Minister whether or not there have been any changes to coverage for seniors in pharmaceutical products. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 182-15(3): Supplementary Health Benefits For Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this was an administrative change to hopefully improve how the system was administered, but there was no change to the drugs or the type of pharmaceuticals covered. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 182-15(3): Supplementary Health Benefits For Seniors

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good to know, because I have some who are watching who wanted to know what is happening here. It's good to know there has not been a reduction in coverage of pharmaceutical products. If there is no change in policies, it appears that it really is resulting from lack of complete communication between their insurance coverage office and the pharmacies around the NWT who usually just give pharmaceutical products to seniors without taking any cash from them, so there is no need to do paperwork on the part of the seniors. Can I ask the Minister to make sure that all the pharmacies in the NWT are informed comprehensively about the list of drugs that are covered? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 182-15(3): Supplementary Health Benefits For Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that all affected seniors were given a direct mail-out as were all pharmacies, but I will commit here today to ensure that the information has gotten to its destination and ensure that the information of how the changes are to be implemented are in the areas where they are supposed to be. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Ms. Lee.

Question 183-15(3): Mental Health Addictions Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a new question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. It has to do with my Member's statement earlier today with regard to the new program that the government has to put more mental health and addictions workers in communities. As I indicated earlier, the qualifications being asked under the contribution agreements are such that it really is sure to exclude most local people from taking on these positions. This raises two questions. One

is not being able to provide employment opportunities that are available, but secondly these are important positions that really should have community attachment and this would have a potential for alienating some of the community people. So I would like to know from the Minister what is the rationale behind this sort of requirement? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 183-15(3): Mental Health Addictions Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as was pointed out a number of years ago now, the whole area of alcohol and drug addictions and mental health was an area that was not evolving as it should, that it suffered to a certain extent from being neglected. The attempt here is to come up with a strategy and plan that would properly compensate individuals and get some new positions put in when it comes to mental health, to standardize qualifications and to bring the participants into working with the authorities and their other colleagues and have an integrated service delivery model. The intent of the mental health area, which is highly specialized, was to come up with a standard of qualifications and criteria for work that would be reflective of what the expectations were in dealing with a whole host of very significant issues in the mental health area in the communities, working with the community wellness workers and the social workers, as well as doctors and nurses and other professionals. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 183-15(3): Mental Health Addictions Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that the answer that the Minister has provided is a very good "let's stay in the box" answer as we were warned against in our Circle of Northern Leaders meeting in Hay River. Mr. Speaker, I must state clearly for the record that I do support this program. My questions are in terms of how they are being implemented. Second of all, I do also agree that in all these positions, we need to have people who are properly trained. I am not questioning any of that. It is irresponsible of the government to roll out these programs and require these job requirements when they know, with certainty, that there will not be people in communities who can do this job. I believe getting out of the box is making sure these programs are available in our educational settings or somewhere so that people can be trained for those positions. Why hasn't there been any thought given to that sort of an option? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 183-15(3): Mental Health Addictions Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, part of this process, which was supposed to be a good news story, was to recognize it. In many cases, there were incumbents in positions and incumbents who had been practising for years, incumbents with an often wide array of different training, education and skills. We want to recognize that. If my

memory serves me correctly, I made a commitment in this House last week that the intent is not to lay people off. We would have a grandfathering or arrangement here, as well as doing past learning assessments on incumbents. We are in the process with the community wellness workers, as well as the mental health workers, to look at those assessments and ensure that the incumbents are given the opportunity to upgrade and that their service, experience, their northern background and community experience is recognized in this mix. So, Mr. Speaker, there has been an intent to recognize that we have to be careful how we view this, and it makes no sense to bring in or try to find people from the South when the key to delivering these programs is going to have trained northerners to do that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 183-15(3): Mental Health Addictions Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister brings up a few valid points. I guess if some of these positions are going to be grandfathered, there are no further issues with respect to those incumbents who could benefit from that. But as the Minister indicated, those people who are under community wellness worker training, that's one of the examples where it's working. My point is there is no training available to implement this program currently in place, and the suggestion being proposed by authorities that are responsible for implementing this is if you had someone who could do this job but doesn't meet the qualifications, bring us a proposal. My point is that that is a backwards way of doing it. I think the government should have looked into who is available out there, how many positions are we looking for, and how do we fill the gap? So I would like to ask the Minister if he has done any studies. What has the department done to look at what the needs are and what are the current incumbency rates and how does the department propose to fill the gaps? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 183-15(3): Mental Health Addictions Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have developed a job description. It has been classified both in terms of the criteria for the qualifications, as well as the pay. We've also recognized that there is work to be done at the community level we've attempted to tie in to the broader strategy. We know that there are incumbents. We've been working through the authorities, and in a majority of areas this program was rolled out successfully. There is still work to be done and we are committed to working with the authorities and communities to ensure that we do that in a careful way of recognizing that there are people with communities in those positions who have provided a very valuable service all these years. It's not a type of service that you can just arbitrarily do away with. It should be recognized for what it is, which is a very valuable asset. We are going to work with the authorities to set up the trade. We've managed to develop the criteria for the community wellness workers' training. There is training in other jurisdictions and other post-secondary institutions for the mental health side, and we are going to work to see what we can provide in the North. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 183-15(3): Mental Health Addictions Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's long answer without the information I was asking for. Mr. Speaker, I need to know from the Minister if he could provide me, inside or outside of this House, information as to how many mental health and addictions workers are going to be hired under this program. How many of the incumbents would need extra training and what specific training proposals are being considered to bring in the new people? Mr. Speaker, I will remind the Minister that we approved the budget already in March. It's high time that the department has a plan in place to implement this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services, supplementary plus one more.

Further Return To Question 183-15(3): Mental Health Addictions Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to provide the Member, through the Social Programs committee, with all the information we have as it pertains to the alcohol and drug and mental health strategy, all the information she has requested both as it applies to the community wellness workers and the mental health workers. As well, I would be happy to extend the offer for a briefing to the committee to discuss the situation and any other concerns that they may have resulting from the review of what has been implemented to date, which is now in year two. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, relies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Handley.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 46-15(3): Government Of The Northwest Territories Annual Report On The Affirmative Action Policy, March 31, 2004

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled the Government of the Northwest Territories Annual Report on the Affirmative Action Policy.

Tabled Document 47-15(3): Ministerial Travel Report, January - March 2004 And Home Travel Report, January - March 2004

I would also like to table, Mr. Speaker, the document entitled Ministerial Travel Report, January to March 2004 and Home Travel Report, January to March 2004. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Hawkins.

Tabled Document 48-15(3): Members' Conduct Guidelines

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to table, for the record, the Members' Conduct Guidelines for the assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 13, tabling of documents. Ms. Lee.

Tabled Document 49-15(3): CBC Special Report Transcript - Friday, May 28, 2004

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a document to table. It's the transcript of CBC's special report on Friday, May 28, 2004, and it's with regard to sobriety in leadership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabled Document 50-15(3): Report Of The Chief Electoral Officer On The Administration Of The 2003 General Election

MR. SPEAKER: Item 13, tabling of documents. Pursuant to section 164 of the Elections Act, I wish to table the report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the administration of the 2003 general election of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

Tabled Document 51-15(3): Northwest Territories Information And Privacy Commissioner, Annual Report, 2002-2003

Pursuant to section 68 of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, I wish to table the 2002-2003 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, dated May 31, 2004.

Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 16, motions. Mr. Allen.

ITEM 16: MOTIONS

Motion 8-15(3): Pursuit Of Provincehood For The Northwest Territories, Defeated

MR. ALLEN: WHEREAS discussions on devolution and constitutional reform have been ongoing for several years with little or no change resulting;

AND WHEREAS the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada continues to have authority and control over many aspects of the Northwest Territories and the operations of the Government of the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS the Northwest Territories deserves a seat at the Confederation table on an equal basis with provincial governments;

AND WHEREAS there is an urgent need for the Northwest Territories to gain control over its resources and a share of the associated revenues;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that the Premier immediately signal to the people of the Northwest Territories, to this assembly and to the Prime Minister his intent to pursue provincehood for the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHER, that the Premier begin immediately to seek the support of provincial Premiers for the Northwest Territories to become a province;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Premier report back to this Assembly on his progress during the fall session. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Allen.

MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to speak to the motion that I put forward. Mr. Speaker, the bill of intent is an alternative to devolution. The Premier has clearly advocated to the northern leaders and in his travels, and I want to state some of his replies to a number of questions back in the early part of the session. I am just going to paraphrase a number of statements he made. He is clear about...(inaudible)... "We are looking for arrangements similar to what the provinces have where the people of the North are responsible for the land, the resources of the North and we have a fair resource revenue sharing agreement."

He points out also that how negotiations are split between the Department of Northern Affairs who is handling the devolution of powers and the Department of Finance, which is looking after the royalty issue. This is a fatal flaw in the view of Handley who insists that the territory is not interested in seeing more responsibilities and costs without an agreement for resource revenue sharing. In finality, he says this has been going on far too long, let's get on with it.

Mr. Speaker, my riding of Inuvik Twin Lakes, as I stated in my reply to opening address, in which I stated very emphatically they want political transformation and it's discouraging to them the time it takes the Government of Canada to make a commitment to devolution and resource revenue sharing.

I want to point out that this motion states that people want political transformation and this is one method of achieving it. The procedural format is fairly standard, Mr. Speaker. What is important in the context of this statement is that it is time to get ownership of the lands and resources and control as a Premier. There was a statement several months ago that it takes 30 to 50 years to assume ownership, but that was 100 years ago, Mr. Speaker. In today's high tech era, it shouldn't take that long with the way information flows back and forth. I think it's incumbent upon ourselves as legislators in the Northwest Territories to really emphasize the need to gain ownership, otherwise we are going to be like the other two territories where they will take out the minerals, have a tremendous amount of resource revenue and at the end of the day, which could be 30 to 50 years after the lands are depleted of their wealth, we will assume the liabilities. I think that has occurred in the past with Giant Mine and perhaps this year with Con Mine. There are a number of other gold mines that are laying dormant that have environmental issues relating to them that extend not only into the Territories, but other provinces as well.

So we need to look in the context of this motion at our place in Canada that goes beyond resource and revenue sharing, but also addresses our sovereignty issue. I don't think we are any different from Quebec. Quebec has often called for referendums to secede from Canada. I don't

think we want to go that far, but we certainly want to have the public interest of Canadians to support our ongoing initiative to try to work through to provincehood.

We also need to address the essential points, Mr. Speaker, in the sense that we need to plant a seed. Currently we sit under the federal statute. Let me cross-reference a number of issues in terms of our Legislative Assembly. The two major differences between the legislative powers of the territories and that of the powers of provincehood are the powers of the provinces to amend their constitution and control the management and sale of public lands.

The Constitution of 1982 grants each province the power to amend its own constitution. The constitution of the Northwest Territories is the Northwest Territories Act, which is a federal statute. Therefore, only the Prime Minister of Canada has the right to amend the constitution of the Northwest Territories.

That's why it's important, Mr. Speaker, in trying to redress our constitutional issue that we ask the Premier to take this and work with the federal government and also the Premiers to see if we can garner support for the Northwest Territories. Hopefully the Yukon and Nunavut will embrace such an undertaking and initiative.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, other addendums are in effect as well, and each province has the sale and management of public lands. Those lands in the Territories remain Crown, which is federal land. Aboriginal governments who settle land claims are also large land owners. Unlike a province, the three territories do not have the power to deal with the lands within their boundaries. That's a key issue, Mr. Speaker. If we are going to promote and work with industry and we talk about partnerships with aboriginal governments, I don't think we have the constitutional framework to do that. I think it really translates into a meaningless way in how we govern ourselves. We don't want to deal in the past tense, Mr. Speaker.

We want to deal with the future, what the future of the Territories evolves into. That's important. We need to realize that as long as we remain under a federal statute, we have no methodology to develop a way we can generate revenues outside of what is given to this government through federal/territorial transfers. I sympathize with the Minister of Finance who goes down to Ottawa and other major cities across Canada and tries to negotiate a fair financial arrangement and yet come back with approximately \$3.5 million to enhance our ever-growing budget demands.

I see us working more closely with aboriginal governments and also being beneficiaries of land claim agreements, and the study of the way the process works and the transfers between the federal government and the aboriginal governments indicate strongly to me that much of the transfers circumvent the Government of the Northwest Territories. I think that's not fair to the NWT as we often have to administer the funds through to aboriginal governments. When we do come up with critical management problems, we have nowhere to turn and we are not in a position to try to cost-share any of the program service and deliveries that we are obligated to.

So I certainly want to encourage Members of this assembly to look very closely at how we function as a

government. The future of this government is again at the beck and call of federal statute of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on the devolution of programs and services. So under the financial arrangements, we have to deal with Finance Canada, which isn't willing to deal with the territorial government outside of what is normally given to us under transfers.

We are hearing Members of this House talk to problems of their constituents not accessing that level of service or being under funded. I believe this strongly gives us the suggestion that we need to support the motion and work through the process that is laid out under the federal jurisdiction. I want to assure the Members that we need to clearly look at where we stand in the Canadian Constitution and give our Premier and our Ministers the capability of sitting down face to face and having some powers. The systematic approach we want to take is going to be cost-beneficial to the Northwest Territories, not only to ourselves but to the residents.

I see it as a long-term plan, but today we need to begin to plant the seed, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the Premier that certainly from the riding of Inuvik Twin Lakes and hopefully the rest of the Members will join in in supporting our government to assume some of those powers beyond just turning over responsibility to our constituents which, at the end of the day, will be confronted with huge fiscal deficits and having to mitigate future cost controls in terms of how we provide that level of service.

Again, I wanted to speak briefly. I had spoken briefly to the level of intent to the Constitution Act of 1982 and laid out some format of how we should proceed with it, giving the Premier the mandate to move out on this very large, but very important initiative on behalf of at least my riding, as the mover. I will speak again at the conclusion of the debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess I am sad about this motion. Mr. Allen asked me to consider seconding the motion. Mr. Speaker, I heard that in order to get to the Promised Land, we have to negotiate our way out of the bushes. So I look at this as an opportunity with the Northwest Territories being the promised land because of the potential wealth that we have in the Northwest Territories and the amount of wealth that the federal government takes from the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a unique position. There are unique circumstances in the Northwest Territories. The way it's structured right now, it seems that it may not be a good place to have provincehood. However, we have the means and the dynamics in the North. There are many changes happening in Canada, where some of the provinces look favourably upon the North in terms of having some unique approaches to looking at provincehood.

Devolution is a big issue for the Sahtu. I did some canvassing in the Sahtu region and they basically said that it would be a good idea to look at some of the options of provincehood. Maybe it would have benefits for us, maybe not. It may work against it. At least have a dream, and Mr. Allen has agreed to planting the seeds for our people in terms of growing up with the big boys in the Confederation of Canada. Right now, we are a territory

and there is some perception that we are at arm's length of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, an administrative arm of the federal government. In some other areas, it shows we have come into some maturity as a territory and could be looked at as a province. That will take some support from this government and some other governments here across Canada.

I guess I am supporting the motion so that we can have a seat at the Confederation table. We are more than a territory and it's about time we started looking at having some discussions with our people in the Northwest Territories in terms of having the Northwest Territories become a unique province in the Confederation of Canada. This is gaining control of resources and administering our resources and looking at the revenues that could stay in the Northwest Territories. I would like to keep all the resources, but I understand a huge load of it goes to Ottawa. They have some instances where they distribute the money back to the Northwest Territories.

However, through my six months of being in the House here, it seems we are not getting anything. The needs of the North are so big that we are barely scraping the bottom. We have lots of needs in the North such as housing, health, education. We need to have more power to give more benefits to the people. I think unless we go to Canada and send a message to our people that it's high time that the Northwest Territories takes a meaningful look at all the options, have some meaningful meetings in the Northwest Territories and in the regions and look at the big picture in terms of having this territory come to fruition in terms of the unique provincehood style.

These are my points in supporting the motion that Mr. Allen put forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a short comment on my position on this motion. I have supported the introduction of this motion in this House because I do believe it is a topic worthy of discussion and my honourable colleague from Inuvik Twin Lakes has been working diligently to advance this item. I thought it was a good idea to have it out here and to get feedback from the Members and to get our position known to the people and parties outside of this assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I will not be supporting this motion as it is written in terms of what it is asking. I believe firmly and I am sure that we, as a territory, will evolve into a province. I think we can make very good arguments that the discussions we are having on land claim settlements and self-government negotiations, resource revenue sharing negotiations and negotiations on devolution are all different segments that are leading us to that end result. It may have different names, it may be a different process, but I believe we are taking steps to garner more province-like responsibilities and control from Ottawa and that eventually we will get there.

I think though the reason I am not able to support this motion is my sense is that there is lack of consensus in the Territories about whether or not this is one we would like to put on our territorial agenda. We do have a lot of very heavy items on our territorial agenda and I am not prepared at the moment to ask the Premier and this legislature to push this item to the forefront.

Secondly, I must tell you that I have not heard a lot of interest among the people of Range Lake -- maybe it will change after today and I will get a slew of phone calls from everybody demanding provincehood -- in my conversations with my constituents as this being on the top of the agenda.

A third reason is it's quite functional and practical. That is, I do not believe we have enough population in this territory to be able to function as a province yet. I am not sure if we are looking for a territory of 200,000 people or something. I don't know what is the magic number that would warrant provincehood, but there is a need for a critical mass of population size. One of the prime aspects of provincehood is there has to be an adequate tax base for that government to function on its own resources. I understand with our resource revenues and such, that we may be able to do that, but I don't believe, given the population that we have now, that there will be enough of a tax base for us to warrant that.

I do believe all the issues that are being brought up by Mr. Allen and the seconder of the motion, Mr. Yakeleya, are very valid and those are questions we debate and contend with on a daily basis. I do believe that we are heading toward provincehood or something very much like it. But at this time I will not be supporting the motion to ask the Premier to put this on the forefront of his agenda. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Premier.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the mover and the seconder for providing an opportunity to debate this important point. With that said, Members of Cabinet will be voting against this motion and we take this position for a number of quite practical reasons.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, keeping with the spirit of intent of settled land claims and self-government agreements, as well as ongoing negotiations, the GNWT has chosen to work in partnership with aboriginal leaders to pursue expanded jurisdiction over land, water and resources in the Northwest Territories through devolution negotiations. We've worked hard to achieve consensus with our partners at the table and the recent signing of the devolution framework agreement is a signal of some significant progress being made in our negotiations. We believe that the current devolution negotiations provide the best opportunity for gaining greater control over land and resources in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, historical precedence demonstrates that attaining provincehood does not guarantee control over land resources or resource revenues. Manitoba became a province in 1870 and they didn't get control over their land resources until the 1930s. Saskatchewan and Manitoba were created in 1905. They didn't get control over land and resources until the 1930s, well after they were established. So going to provincehood doesn't automatically give you control over land resources and resource revenue.

Second, there is significant fiscal uncertainty in pursuing the provincehood option. As a province, we would be subject to existing equalization payments. Equalization payments are based not on population, but on revenue-raising capacity and do not take into account the cost of providing government services and programs. The

formula financing arrangements, as much as we don't like it and find weakness with it, does consider the higher cost of providing programs and services in the Northwest Territories and it provides an expenditure base that gives us more money on a per capita basis than we would likely receive through equalization. It gives us considerably more, probably three times as much as we would get if we were to become a province that would be on equalization.

Then, Mr. Speaker, as well, attaining provincial status for the Northwest Territories would require an amendment to the Canadian Constitution. Under the amending formula set out in the Constitution Act of 1982, this would require the consent of Parliament and Senate, as well as two-thirds of the provinces that together have at least 50 percent of the population of all of the provinces. Securing the consent that would likely be necessary to create a new province of the Northwest Territories would probably prove to be impossible.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons, Cabinet doesn't feel that this is the time to change courses and give up our working partnership with aboriginal governments and go on our own and start lobbying for provincehood. It doesn't give us what some people may think it would give us and, secondly, and most important in my view, is that we have set a course with the aboriginal governments and we want to continue to work that way until it's proven that seeking devolution and resource revenue sharing as a territory just is not getting us where we want to be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll be speaking in favour of the motion. I think what my honourable colleague, Mr. Allen, brought forward is an ambitious idea that probably has been dreamt about for many years, since the origin of the Northwest Territories, which goes back several hundreds of years. Mr. Speaker, I truly believe nothing ventured, nothing gained. I think this is an opportunity to fully get this discussion on the table. It may not be realized by Canada through fruition, yet if we don't ask the question they can't say no. So by moving forward with this motion, at least we can deal with the question openly and honestly.

So this is truly, as I see it, the first step towards us taking control, taking management of our territory, versus a bureaucracy or a department managing the Northwest Territories for us. Mr. Speaker, some may say the impacts of us stepping forward as a province would be detrimental. I have to say from my position of being very new to the concept of us stepping forward to become a province, I can't give you all the answers here today. What I can say is there are provinces out there like Newfoundland. Newfoundland moved forward, they created an Atlantic Accord, they can have control and work with other organizations over their resources. There are other organizations...Mr. Speaker, I'm having difficulty. If you could...

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate Mr. Allen and Mr. Yakeleya bringing this topic to the floor of this assembly. I think they've done a service for us in the 15th Assembly at this fairly early stage. There are some points that I would like to make, but I should preface first of all by saying that as much as I see this as a necessary

and a fascinating part of our work here, I will not be speaking in favour of this particular motion. But I'm certainly interested in the topic and I'd like to address some parts of that.

Mr. Allen in his motion really hit the nail on the head when he indicated that we're just not getting anywhere in the devolution talks. In the 14th Assembly I was a Member here just starting out and I was very encouraged at the time to hear then Northern Affairs Minister Robert Nault say that we're going to engage in a process that would see a meaningful relationship through the aboriginal governments, as well as the territorial and federal government, to share in the wealth that we have in our resources. But equally, and, I think, more importantly, to share in the management and the pace and style of how resources are going to be developed.

Well, that was four years ago, a few million dollars out of the federal government's pocket and a substantial sum out of ours, too, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know that we really have any more on the table for a devolution deal other than I think a framework document that was released late last year. Not much traffic, Mr. Speaker, toward some kind of a program and progress for the Northwest Territories.

So this is a point that I've been looking at and wondering, that is not the only time that we've been sandbagged on this particular agenda. I guess I'm very resigned, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that the federal government has now essentially found a way on about a four or five-year cycle to keep knocking the devolution agenda off the table. We're not going to get anywhere with Ottawa. I really have very little faith in it. We need to find a way, Mr. Speaker, of breaking that cycle of ignorance and avoidance on the part of Ottawa. Somehow I would really like to find a way to get a message into the highest political levels and policy levels -- not just to the government of the day, but all the political parties of Canada who make these kind of decisions -- that it really is time to end this colonialist approach to managing the part of Canada that's above the 60th parallel. It really is time to get away from what I call the benevolent tyranny of the Northern Affairs shop that is very good at sandbagging and keeping us off balance.

---Applause

Hear, hear. Now, the Premier indicated one of the barriers that's against us is in the 1982 deal that says two-thirds of the provinces representing half of the population of Canada have to approve of anything that would look like provincial-like powers for a territory. That in itself is going to be very, very difficult. I guess I see the Northwest Territories of the future, Mr. Speaker, as a place that has somehow achieved the balance and the accords between a public government in this institution and those of the self-governments that the First Nations want to achieve and, indeed, are making significant progress. I also see, Mr. Speaker, an equal place at this table of this federation or alliance, whatever it's going to be, for the communities, for the larger communities that aren't covered or captured in the self-government and land claim areas. That's part of what we're going to look like in the long-term future, Mr. Speaker, from my point of view.

Then we have to look at what this relationship is going to be like with Ottawa. I see it as one that is going to be more autonomous than we have now. It is one, though, that we have somehow wriggled out from under the rock

that Northern Affairs is keeping us under, and we have much more direct-line relationships with the departments in Ottawa. In other words, if we want to do something with our highways or our airports here, we don't have to see if the Minister of Northern Affairs will hold our hand and walk across the block to visit the Minister of Transportation for Canada. That's what's holding us back now. Then these two Ministers can say, well, it's your job, no, it's your job. They pat us on the head and send us home again. Nothing happens. We have to get around this, what I call, barrier that the Northern Affairs program has created and wants to continue for the Northwest Territories.

So I see a special relationship, not a provincial-type relationship. I think the Premier again has outlined some of the big hurdles that we would have to overcome there. Because of our size as a population and economic area, I think it would be in our best interests to maintain a particularly different relationship with Ottawa from the point of view of our financing, our assistance. But if we don't pursue or continue to press for something like that, we're never going to succeed, we're never going to really reach the levels of autonomy and self-destiny that we should be going for.

Right now, we have a big safety net there. The Government of Canada isn't going to let us fail, really. But with the environment that we have now we are not going to be able to succeed. I think that is what we should be trying to do.

I would concur, Mr. Speaker, with I think a couple of comments that have already been made here that this is such a big idea, it is a worthwhile idea, but it is one that needs to be tested very thoroughly with our other partners, with the bigger, broader population of the Northwest Territories. I guess this is principally why I cannot support this motion at this time. It is really something that I would like to see an assembly coming in with a very strong mandate from the electorate, from the leadership of the First Nations and communities, that says yes, go, get this done. Because without that kind of strong signal, we are not going to have a very strong support to take to Ottawa and to the rest of the country for the kind of support we're going to need.

I hope that this discussion can continue and will continue outside of this assembly. I hope that maybe we'll hear some of this kind of discussion at the First Nations assemblies that happen every summer, and around municipal tables and those kinds of places. That is really where the support and idea to get behind this will grow. Perhaps, just perhaps, we can see something placed in front of the entire electorate of the NWT in the way of a referendum. Perhaps even in time for the election of the 16th Assembly in another three and a half years or so. That may be one way of putting this question out there and seeing what the appetite is and getting a sense of the strength and the way we should be approaching this.

Again, I would like to compliment Mr. Allen and Mr. Yakeleya for bringing this forward. I hope it's not the last of this kind of discussion that we have here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. To the motion here is that my constituents didn't indicate any interest in supporting a motion like this and for me I'm

not going to be supporting this motion. There are a couple things that are kind of leading me in this direction that are contrary right now to the aim of the claimant groups in my Nahendeh riding. As well, I believe that we are also asking the wrong question with this motion. It's kind of like what has been happening back home with the change of village to hamlet status. People are saying let's do this change, but the proper information is not available for the people to make an informed decision. I believe something of this nature is well worth reviewing. People should know about it and must know about it, because what's going to happen is we're going to have to waste a lot of time and resources and energy from our government to pursue this, much like a simple thing like the name change that happened at the last Assembly which used up lots of resources and money and it really didn't get anywhere.

I don't want to use the resources that our government has pursuing this right now because, as I said, I believe that we asked the wrong question. Perhaps we should be asking if there is a better way to facilitate how our government has relations with the federal government. In that respect, it's 2004 right now and, yes, we have people in Ottawa who are still suffering from what I like to call colonial hang over. We're still subjects of the Crown and they're still treating us that way. Yes, it's time to change that.

Some of the ways are to look at that relationship. We're technically a department of the Department of Indian and Northern Development and that has to change. That's something that our government should be charged with.

I believe that this motion is not going to address that adequately. With that, I'd like to thank Mr. Speaker for the opportunity to speak to this motion. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly happy that this issue has hit the floor of the House and I want to thank Mr. Allen and Mr. Yakeleya for bringing it forward. It's amazing to me when as soon as this topic came up how Members are defending the system that we have with Ottawa right now. For four years I've been hearing about how terrible the arrangement that we have with Ottawa right now as to bettering our financial position and being able to have some control over our resources. Now that we're bringing up a situation where there's the possibility or notion that we should press the federal government to get provincehood to address those very issues, now we're saying how great the situation that we have with Ottawa is and how much better off we are than we would be if we had provincehood.

I am more confused by that than I am afraid of this motion that's before the House. The exact reasons that are being given for not pursuing this are the exact reasons why I think I should support it now. I mean, when the Premier says that one of the biggest obstacles that we would face is that two-thirds of the provinces would have to agree before we could do anything with this, tells me that there must be something good in it if they would ever oppose it. That's an argument that totally defeats the argument of not pursuing it.

For me to think that we have chosen a path to deal with Ottawa through a devolution process rather than going through provincehood, when we first started talking about devolution that I was involved four years ago I thought it

was exactly for that, to get provincehood or very close to provincehood. It would give us a better deal. It would give us more power to go and talk to Ottawa and a better share of our resources.

Yes, I understand that we're a very small province and we may not get a better share of our resources. That's a negotiated deal. Every province has done that. As a matter of fact, the provinces all want to reopen that door with Ottawa and talk about their share of resources that they have. Newfoundland and all the provinces as far as I know; none of them are happy except for maybe Alberta with the deal they have with Ottawa. But they want to reopen those negotiations. I don't think that is something that we have to shy away from.

I think it's a very interesting circumstance and a very good topic for discussion. I don't think that passing this motion here is going to guarantee us provincehood, not by any stretch of the imagination. But I do believe that there's nothing wrong with going and pursuing it with Ottawa. I don't think, for one thing, our Premier is respected to the extent that he should be when he goes to Ottawa. I don't think that our Premier is even recognized as a Premier. He's recognized as a Government House Leader still. That argument can be made, but we hear it called a Government House Leader a lot yet.

I'll tell you, I am not happy with the arrangement that we have with Ottawa right now when we answer everything to one Minister: the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. That's totally ludicrous. If we're going to take our place in the Dominion of Canada, I think we should be a province. If it takes us 100 years to get something out of being a province, we'll have started the process. If we don't start the process we may never get it. We'll continue to be lead with our hand out all the time getting a little bit here, a little bit there, with absolutely no jurisdiction to do anything, no power to do anything.

I really welcome this debate and I'm going to support this motion because I think it is a very good topic to go to Ottawa with and I think it's a good thing to pursue for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To follow up with my colleague from Hay River's remarks. I'd like to, as well, thank Mr. Allen and Mr. Yakeleya for putting this important motion forward today so we can at least have some discussion on it on the floor of this Assembly. I know the Premier in his remarks and Mr. Braden in his remarks later on, the more you listen to those two gentlemen speak the more you look at this motion and say there are a lot of good reasons in there why we should support this motion. I'd like to thank those two gentlemen for their comments.

The Premier also talked about obstacles. I've spoken about this before in this House, that I do believe the biggest obstacle for development in the Northwest Territories is DIAND itself. I know other Members here have talked about the colonial attitude Ottawa has to the Northwest Territories, and I think that has to change. I don't know whether the Premier wants to deliver that message; by the sounds of it he doesn't want to deliver that message. But things have to change, Mr. Speaker.

Over the past 17 years we haven't gotten anywhere -- anywhere -- with devolution, or resource revenue sharing. We're standing here today talking about the same things we were talking about 17 years ago, 10 years ago, five years ago. It's the same thing, nothing has changed. As well, I've mentioned on the floor of this House the fact that there's been a Liberal government in place in Ottawa the past 11 years. I know they may laugh, but we haven't gotten anywhere with the Liberal Government in Ottawa. Nowhere. You want to talk about waste? The Liberal Government felt so kindly about Mr. Peterson's job at \$750,000 a year that they had to give him \$1 million a year to work on this file with the Northwest Territories. Every government department has a devolution specialist, devolution advisor. You want to talk about waste? There's the waste. Let's get some coordination here. If we are going to talk about devolution and resource revenue sharing, let's do like we're doing with the pipeline group. Let's try to bring everything together. Let's try to coordinate something. I think this government falls down in its coordination for devolution and resource revenue sharing.

Sure, we're not going to be a province any time soon, but I think unless we start talking about it -- and that's what we're doing today and that's why I'm going to support this motion -- I don't think we get anywhere. I think we stand still and we don't move forward. I think having a motion like this...Again, Mr. Allen and Mr. Yakeleya put it here for us to debate and I think it's a healthy debate and one we should have. I do support it because I think we have to send a message to Ottawa. We've been just spinning our tires the last 17 years and not getting anywhere. I'm glad to see this is here and it has my support. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the Motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I seek unanimous consent to finish my comments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Hawkins, are you seeking unanimous consent to speak a second time to the motion?

MR. HAWKINS: I don't need to? Okay.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you seeking unanimous consent to speak a second time to the motion?

MR. HAWKINS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to speak a second time to the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to speak a second time to the motion. Are there any nays? There are none. You have unanimous consent.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank all of my honourable colleagues in this House of consensus government to allow me to finish my earlier comments. Mr. Speaker, I again will continue to speak in favour of this motion. I haven't changed while I sat down here and thought about it some more. I just want to be quick in respecting the opportunity to speak the second time to finish my statements.

Mr. Speaker, I really believe this territory, if we become a province, won't be affected by equalization because other provinces still receive equalization formulas and, therefore, we will still financially be able to be in a position

that we are in today. The point I'm making is I don't think we'll be worse off.

Mr. Speaker, the concern sometimes is about population. Well, I don't know if that discussion came up during confederation about PEI's population. They are a very low populous province and nowadays, when you have provinces like Ontario and Quebec, you have them with gigantic populations and you still have very small provinces with populations. Therefore, if population was a basic necessity to the argument, they would be taking provincehood maybe from other provinces out there. I don't think population is a good argument. I don't think it's truly the key.

In my heart I've seen, in my short experience on this world, I've seen us do land claims in other provinces. Could that happen if we were a province? Absolutely. I think we could move forward on that. In my opinion, we just need to get that question out there and force them to either decide: are you going to allow us to be a province or not? If they choose not, well, let's find a new argument to try to convince them another way.

The reality is, I can appreciate the courage of the question and I think we have to ask ourselves why this question hasn't been put forward sooner. I think we need to see what their answer is now. It reminds me of the case of someone not asking a question because they're afraid they're going to say no. If I proceeded my whole life that way, you know, some of us would probably never ask any questions.

I think we need to step forward and stop hiding behind those little excuses. They may be the right answers, those excuses. They may be the facts that are presented for us, but I want to see them in writing and I want to hear Ottawa say that to me.

Some days I often think about the discussion of Quebec. They always talk about how distinct the society is. Today if we proceed forward with this motion this will truly outline the fact that the Northwest Territories is a distinct society. How many provinces have 11 official languages? Not a single one of them. We have only New Brunswick to credit with two official languages. We are a distinct society here in the Northwest Territories. It's time we pull our chair up to the provincial table and sit as an equal, not as somebody at the little kids' table on the side with the other two territories. I'd like to see us on an equal footing with the rest of Canada.

I'd also like to reaffirm, I'd like to see our Premier's voice echoed across Canada like the rest of the Premiers. I believe my Premier needs the strength from this assembly to reaffirm that we support him and we'd like his voice heard. So I want to see that opportunity happen.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on, but really at the end of the day I really see the way this assembly is being held back is that we're almost like an adolescent with a trust fund. We have all these resources and opportunities and I truly see us as a have-territory, as has been echoed by our very prestigious Premier of saying we are a have-place. Until we can unlock that trust fund, until we can open the doors of that reality, the question has to be asked and maybe that day we can face and stare Ottawa down and say we dare you to blink. So today, let's move forward. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, thank you, honourable colleagues.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Those abstaining? The motion is defeated.

---Defeated

Item 16, motions. Mr. Pokiak.

Motion 9-15(3): Appointment Of The Equal Pay Commissioner, Carried

MR POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS amendments to the Northwest Territories Public Service Act received assent on June 13, 2003;

AND WHEREAS section 40.2. (1) of the amended Public Service Act provides that the Commissioner, on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly, shall appoint an Equal Pay Commissioner to exercise the powers and perform the duties set out in this act;

AND WHEREAS the Board of Management was tasked with recruiting an Equal Pay Commissioner and has recommended an individual to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Assembly is prepared to make a recommendation;

NOW WHEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that Ms. Nitya Iyer be appointed as the Equal Pay Commissioner, in accordance with the Northwest Territories Public Service Act, by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories as recommended by the Legislative Assembly;

AND FURTHER, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of appointment to the Commissioner.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is being called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried unanimously.

---Carried

At this time, I would like to take a 10-minute break before we carry on with motions.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Item 16, motions. Mr. Yakeleya.

Motion 10-15(3): Revocation Of Appointment To The Executive Council, Carried

MR. YAKELEYA: WHEREAS pursuant to section 61(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, the Legislative Assembly recommends to the Commissioner the appointment of Members of the Executive Council;

AND WHEREAS pursuant to section 61(2) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, the

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

AND WHEREAS the assembly, pursuant to these powers has chosen the Honourable Henry Zoe to sit as a Member of the Executive Council;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that this assembly formally revoke the pleasure of the assembly from the appointment of the Honourable Henry Zoe as a Member of the Executive Council;

AND FURTHER, that this assembly recommend that a new Member be chosen to be a Member of the Executive Council.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. To the motion. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of this motion. Mr. Speaker, I do it with a heavy heart because I am well aware of the personal suffering involved here of our colleague, Mr. Zoe, and his family, his friends, his constituents and his leadership. Mr. Speaker, no matter the outcome of this motion, it is my sincere wish that Mr. Zoe would take necessary decisions and take personal actions to grow positively from this and to achieve personal healing.

For me, Mr. Speaker, my decision on this motion is totally based on the interest of the public that I feel I am here to serve and in my desire and sense of duty to meet the obligations of the people who have put me in this place.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to make a long statement. This is difficult for all of us. I just wanted to make it clear where I stand on this motion. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you for the interest of the public, because there are questions being asked about what happened. On the basis of what I know from the conversation with the Premier and the briefings he has given to us outside of this House and the answers to the questions that were brought before this House, I do believe there have been actions on the part of Minister Zoe that have brought disrepute and damages to the integrity and the standard of this assembly that the people have the right to expect from us.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister has engaged in public intoxication, improper conduct towards women, and also abuse of his office in his dealings he said many times, "Do you know who I am? I am a Minister of Cabinet."

Fourth, I do believe he was engaged in discrimination in an identifiable group, of people which we know as racism.

Mr. Speaker, I do understand that the question "Isn't his apology enough?" being asked a lot. Mr. Speaker, I understand that we are not perfect. We all have our shortcomings and we do do things wrong from time to time. But in this case, this is not a personal matter. This is about our public duty to the public and we are held to a higher standard.

I understand MLAs' positions cannot be taken away by anybody else other than the people who have selected him and that's fine. The Premier has exercised his prerogative to remove the portfolios from Mr. Zoe, and he has done that because that's within his power to do so. The only thing that I can do here to show that I cannot

accept the conduct of the Minister is to say that Mr. Zoe has lost my confidence that was based on my vote to select him to Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I want to state once again that this is not easy for me or anyone else, but I do believe that it is important in the world that we live in and the level of cynicism there is for politicians and the practice and values we preach in this House, which is zero tolerance against abuse of alcohol or zero tolerance against violence against women. I cannot in my heart say that's okay and I will give him another chance, because what will another chance mean?

So, Mr. Speaker, it is the complete and total privilege for one of us to be chosen, not only as a Member of this House by the people, but to have a seat on Cabinet is a complete privilege. It could be taken away at any time. It is a trust that people give us. We have a fiduciary duty for that office and when we miss that, it's not to say that you are a bad person, it's just that we do not have confidence in you anymore as a Minister and we do not have confidence in you to represent us and be the face of this government. It's not the end of the world. As someone said, I do wish Mr. Zoe well. I know it's been very hard. I know he will do the right thing and to move on and get a positive outcome out of this and he will try to find it. I would like to ask for a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I would just like to ask the Members if you could focus your replies to the question at hand and keep it in the context of the motion that is in front of you and don't drift off into hearsay, but keep our discussions to the motion. To the motion. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, regret that we have to be deliberating the confidence that the House has in Mr. Zoe. There is a motion on the floor, Mr. Speaker. I am going to go on record that I will not be supporting the motion. I have a few reasons that I will be speaking against this motion.

In this great country of ours, we have a due process of law. There are certain allegations being made and to my mind, Mr. Speaker, they are unsubstantiated. I believe that the punishment that's been talked about so far, which is the removal of the portfolios, is adequate for now. I believe there should be no further action with regard to Mr. Zoe until it's fully investigated. In the public eye, the feedback I have been getting, Mr. Speaker, is this happened and the House has decided to do this and it appears to be satisfactory to the people I have been talking with. Mr. Zoe has satisfactorily pleaded in my mind that, yes, he has done this and he will be seeking to correct his behaviour with respect to what has happened in the past. That has happened to many leaders in our North and they have strived and overcome difficulties and became better for it. What had to happen first is they had to have some personal trials and tribulations and then in this case, the whole of the North is watching him. Not just the North, Mr. Speaker, the whole of Canada is aware of what's been happening here in the past week or so.

Just with that, Mr. Speaker, that's where I stand today. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have given a considerable amount of thought to this issue, as Members have stated here. It's a difficult one to deal with. It could be so easy to ignore this whole circumstance and not say anything. However, over the weekend, I have had some discussions with my constituents. I have had some calls and e-mails. I have really done some soul searching on this issue. Again, I say it's difficult because it forces us to do a number of things. First if all, it forces us to look internally at our own conduct, look at the circle of friends that we associate with, places we go to and what type of person we are and what type of character we present.

I guess the hardest thing for me is to stand up here and be judge and jury of one of my peers, one of my colleagues. However, when you enter this forum and this level of politics, there is no other place to go for somebody to pass judgment. That judgment has to be made by ourselves.

I want to be clear that I am not condoning or defending Mr. Zoe's actions, but I believe everyone makes mistakes and they can learn by their mistakes. In this case, Mr. Zoe has taken ownership of those actions. He has publicly apologized. He has publicly stood up and asked for forgiveness, and he has also stated that he will take necessary action to turn his life around. That doesn't seem to be enough for many people in this House. Many of us come from similar backgrounds. Many of us come from small communities. Many of us went through the hostel life like Mr. Zoe. All of us have worked hard to get an education. We get a college education and like everyone here, we want to develop a better life for our children and our families. Mr. Zoe was also fortunate to be elected as Minister for the 15th Assembly. However, he also had to move to a larger centre and deal with bigger issues and take on a huge responsibility that comes with being a Minister, the stress level and a real sharp learning curve.

My observation of this whole issue has been that Mr. Zoe, right from the outset of this issue coming forward, has done everything that we've asked him to. We've asked him to come forward and admit that he's made a mistake. We've asked him to apologize. He's done all those things. He's also accepted responsibility for everything that happened. While I support the Premier and Cabinet in terms of their decision to remove Mr. Zoe's portfolio until we can decide what Mr. Zoe's future is going to be, I don't support this motion of non-confidence. I have watched Mr. Zoe. He has worked hard to be a good Minister. He's dedicated. He's sincere. Those qualities can't be ignored. In this House, to all of us, we have programs, we have support systems for people who have drug problems, alcohol problems, family problems, stress, but I don't see that kicking in and working in this case. In fact, I have to ask the question when do those programs kick in, when you hit rock bottom or when you make a mistake?

I am going on five years as a Member of this House and I have never seen those programs come forward to assist anybody that I know of anyway. I am not familiar with anybody who has taken advantage of them. Why do we have them? Is it just window dressing? I am not sure. It's not working in this case.

I believe given the opportunity, Mr. Zoe can clean up problems in his life, some of the things that are affecting his conduct, and he can come back to be a very

productive and responsible Minister given the chance. He's also a leader in his own constituency and in the Dogrib nation, and he also has a lot to offer, which we may not see. I am totally convinced if we pass a vote of non-confidence here today that we will be ending Mr. Zoe's career in the public eye.

I kind of wonder why we are not supporting him, why we asked him to do a number of things, and he's done it, and I kind of ask myself, and people have asked me whether he did the right thing by coming forward and being open and being honest and admit that he had done something wrong. Would he have been better off to hire a lawyer and surround himself by advisors, dig in his heels and deny everything that's happened? I don't know. Maybe that's the way to go in this modern day society, is not to admit to anything. I am just wondering what kind of message we are sending out there. I think everybody across the Territories knows by now, it has been in the media what happened with Mr. Zoe at the Legion. I have also heard it on the national news. So it is right across Canada. Some people have decided that we should make an example of Mr. Zoe, and I agree, but I think we should make an example and make it a positive one.

We have to allow people to deal with their personal issues, and come back and take their rightful place in society. I am going to admit -- I'll be honest -- I don't know all the details of what happened that night at the Legion, and I may never know, but I do know that the Legion has publicly stated that they accept his apology. I do know that the elders of the Dogrib nation and the leaders have already stated that they will work with Mr. Zoe in trying to develop a path for him to come and recover, and heal. I do know that his family is standing beside him, and I also believe, and I am sure that all the people that he has offended and embarrassed will also find it in their hearts to forgive him once he has turned his lifestyle around.

Mr. Speaker, this vote is about non-confidence. I can't say I've lost confidence in Mr. Zoe, but I can say Mr. Zoe needs some professional assistance. He needs the help of those people, those elders.

I know he has already paid a huge price. This is one lesson he will never forget. So I want all of us -- and I mean all of us in this House -- to give him a second chance to become healthy, and to prove to us that he is still a worthy candidate to be a Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Speaker, voting yes would have been so simple for me to just agree that we've lost confidence. The difficult choice was to stand up and say that I'm willing to put faith in a fellow colleague, and one that's made a serious mistake, but give him a second chance. That was a whole lot harder, and a whole lot more challenging. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to reiterate some of the comments my colleagues were speaking about in regard to Mr. Zoe's actions, and the fact that he did accept the criticism from his peers in the taking away of his portfolios. I think that stands in itself that's enough to discredit Mr. Zoe of what he has done or what he may have not done. I think with his public apology and his promise for restitution and seeking his own healing, that Mr. Zoe is going in the right direction. I have to agree with Mr. McLeod's comments that the

motion is a non-confidence motion, which I myself have not lost in Mr. Zoe yet. I realize that it is our civic duty, it does require Members to be diligent and responsive to public scrutiny or public opinion. I think Mr. Zoe has taken this task very seriously and honestly, and tackled it head on with his responsiveness to all the scrutiny that has been coming about each day. I believe that we all have to uphold zero tolerance with respect to many issues in regard to being a Member in the actions and the opinions that we make in public. I also believe that we should take zero tolerance with regard to any unsubstantiated comments or hearsay as truth as Members, also.

Because I don't support the motion does not mean that I condone Mr. Zoe's actions or comments in the fact that if he violated another person or not, but just to say that as an aboriginal northerner I believe that it is my duty to say that we are faced with the racist comments, actions and just racism in general every day as aboriginal northerners, and I don't think that any of them should be tolerated no matter who these racist connotations are directed towards or to be taken lightly by any Member of the Legislative Assembly. But I have to say that knowing Mr. Zoe for a number of years, that I also think that he has done an exceptional job as a Minister of the Legislative Assembly, and a Member of the Executive Council to date. One such incident shouldn't wholly discredit and make Mr. Zoe feel probably very low and very shamed about what he did. I think that would be punishment enough, Mr. Speaker, and for that matter I am not in support of this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am the seconder to this motion, and obviously I will be supporting this motion. I was hoping that we would avoid a long protracted debate on this subject here in the House today, but it has been spoken to by a number of Members so I feel that I need to speak to it as well. To me this is quite a simple issue. This is not complex. This is not personal, this is business. The people of the Northwest Territories have asked us as elected leaders to provide them with sober leadership. That is a reasonable request on the part of the people of the Northwest Territories. We have not delivered that in this instance. It is just that simple for me. That is a very reasonable expectation of the people we represent, that we would do so in a way that at least we would be sober. So I am dismayed by some of the comments I have heard here today by other Members. The comments about racism, insinuating that if it was somebody other than an aboriginal person who had done this, that we wouldn't have any reaction to it. That is preposterous, and I do not accept that. There is no racism involved here.

MR. SPEAKER: Mrs. Groenewegen, could you speak to the motion, not insinuate what somebody said or what not. To the motion.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to police Mr. Zoe's conduct as a Member, to follow him around and see what he is going to do. Yes, there are programs, people need to avail themselves of those programs. But if they don't want to, it is not my job to ensure that they do. To suggest, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Zoe's political career will be ended by sitting on this side of the House is something else that I reject. What do all of us do here in representation of our constituents if this is not an honourable task to perform on behalf of our

constituents? So I will be supporting the motion, Mr. Speaker, and, like I said, it is not personal, it is delivering a minimum standard of conduct for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have known Mr. Zoe for a while. We served together in the 12th Assembly. Shortly after the election I met with Mr. Zoe, we went for a coffee and talked about our aspirations. He told me at that time that he wanted to be on Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, I told him that things have changed, and that attitudes towards alcohol use had changed significantly, that there was no longer any tolerance for alcohol abuse by Cabinet Members. I told him that I expected to hear from him that he understood that things had changed, and that he could live with these new rules. He told me that day, Mr. Speaker, that he would. I made it clear, Mr. Speaker, what my position would be if he showed that he had a problem with alcohol.

Last week Mr. Zoe admitted that he does have a problem with alcohol. Some people have talked about other things here, but I want to leave it limited to the one issue that Mr. Zoe has talked about. He did admit that he had a problem with alcohol, and that he made unacceptable comments about people from Newfoundland while under the influence of alcohol. So, Mr. Speaker, I warned Mr. Zoe early on what my position would be, and I was clear that he only had one chance in order to prove himself. So I had hoped that we would not get to the situation that we are in today, but, Mr. Speaker, since it has come to pass as a result of a situation that I have warned Mr. Zoe about, I feel that I must support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try and keep my comments very brief and to the motion. This is a very unfortunate incident that has taken place, but to me it is also a very simple issue that we are dealing with. I look across the Territories and I see every one of us in this House as role models to the Northwest Territories, and especially our youth. I see school policies being set down that are very firm with no second chances involved. You get caught drinking when you are on business and representing a school, and you are suspended. You pay for the crime that you have supposedly committed, and you are dealt with that way. I look at this as nothing personal, strictly a business thing, and I look at any Member across there or here, faced with the same set of circumstances, my values, my principles and what I believe in, and what I think that our job is here in representing the constituents that we do, I would make the same decision that I am making here today. That is I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, as well, had to do a lot of soul searching over this issue, and I thought it would be important for me to speak at least for the record, in all fairness. Therefore, when I vote either way, at least Mr. Zoe would have heard my thoughts.

This has truly been a struggle, as I can't imagine it hasn't been for most Members here. Some are pretty cut and

dry, and others it really takes quite a challenge to deal with.

I will first clearly say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I like Mr. Zoe personally. I think Mr. Zoe is a pretty darn nice man, I think he has worked hard at the Assembly, and this question here has caused a lot of grief in the sense of trying to make a decision over this. But as far as things are going, Mr. Zoe's actions have spoken louder than words, I guess. I really appreciate him going and grabbing hold of the reins of the treatment, but my constituents have asked me to proceed forward, and it is causing me a lot of difficulty, but this job came with a lot of stress in a sense that we had to be prepared to make tough choices; some that we don't even agree with, and some that will bother us for a while. I do respect Mr. Zoe as a person, but unfortunately it has caused me some serious concern in the sense that this has truly been a struggle. So I will have to vote in favour of the motion, and I hope he can respect that and understand maybe someday why I chose that method.

My constituents have come forward to me, they have stopped me on the street, they've told me what they think, they've told me how they feel. One of the biggest outlining factors is that they would like to see, be it fair or not, that there was zero tolerance taken. Is that fair? Maybe in this particular case that may not be fair. We talked about things not being proven, and you know what, I want them to be cleared up. Maybe this isn't the assembly to be doing them in, but unfortunately we are confronted with this decision today. I stress it is with a heavy heart that we have to talk about this. I wish we could have dealt with this and be absolutely clear on every single page on what we are doing, but still we are proceeding without being 100 percent clear. So I must stress that in that respect I am left with little choice.

Do we give Mr. Zoe another chance? Today I would really like to, I really do, and I mean that. It is not easy standing here saying that; I would really like to. I hope we have an opportunity amongst all Members to give Mr. Zoe a fair second chance. I have quite clearly said that at any time if he wishes to call upon me to talk or whatever is needed, I will be there, and I mean that. It took a lot of thought.

Will this divide us? I really hope it doesn't. I know this decision is going to have some ripple effects. Let's be honest; you can't throw a pebble in a pond without creating a ripple, and this is one big pebble. It is going to be one of those situations that we are all going to have to find mutual respect amongst each other and realize that we are here to perform a task. There is nothing more I can truly add. I don't want to get into the nature of the comments. I don't think that is important today. I think what is important today is me at least speaking my views on why I will proceed. It has hurt some of the constituents in my constituency, and I will proceed forward with the utmost respect in this House because I will continue to respect Mr. Zoe as a Member of the Assembly, and he will see that. But unfortunately at this time Executive Council is not where my constituents feel where I can support him in at this time, and I just wanted to be honest and forthright in this assembly. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as many have said, it would be easy to sit and

vote on it when the call for a vote came up. This is something that I go back to before we elected Members to the Executive Council. It is about your word, Mr. Speaker. It is about when we first meet each other around this table, some of us may know a little bit about each other, especially those who have been in this arena before. Others, we come here and all we know is a name or somebody else telling us about an individual. When we cast that vote we hope to have the opportunity to speak to the individual, and try to find out a little bit more about them before we decide if that individual would be a good Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I will say publicly that alcoholism is a bad thing in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Zoe has come clean in saying that he has a problem. Mr. Speaker, it was a concern for a number of Members of this Assembly before it came to this situation. Members had asked Mr. Zoe about his situation and if it would impact on his ability to do his job. Members took his word that it would not interfere. Knowing the situation we are in, he's gone a long way to address some of the initial concerns that have come forward, and that is tough to do. Mr. Speaker, some of us in this arena have walked through that door ourselves in the past, and have seen the destructive effects it can have. It is unfortunate that we have to have this here, but nobody else can do this except for us, as Mr. McLeod says. It is difficult, but we are the ones who police ourselves. In this assembly, in this arena, all we get to come in with and go out with in a sense of integrity is who you are. When you say something, is your word valid? Are you good for what you say? A lot of this is built around that. If Members cannot trust a Minister when he's responding to questions or information being provided and always second guessing and wondering if that is true, that does a lot of damage for our system and the way we operate.

I have only known Mr. Zoe for a short time and again it's one of those things, when you are in the Northwest Territories, it's a small place. You have baggage you have to deal with and you respond to those when questions are put forward to you. Unfortunately, in this situation when the question was put forward, the answer was it's not going to be a problem. Well, six months into it, it is a problem. Mr. Speaker, I can speak from experience because I have walked through that door of having to admit I had a problem and had to just about lose it all to finally wake up and say it is a problem. I can't fix it by tinkering. I have got to fix it by making life choices.

This motion, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, is one of those events in a person's life where you could hit rock bottom. I hope Mr. Zoe will come out of this and get that help he said he would get. But when I operate, I have to operate upfront. When I meet with individuals, I tell them this is the way I operate.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that is before us, I would have to support. Your word is your word. Let your yes be your yes, and your no be your no. It can't be a maybe, not in this arena. So I am sad to say this in this situation, but I will be supporting this motion. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, as well, think I owe the people of the Northwest Territories and my colleague, Mr. Zoe, the

respect of him hearing my comments as to where I stand on the situation.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an easy situation, as has been said by many of my colleagues, for any of us. Whether you vote yes or no, it's still very difficult because we are talking about an individual's life, his personal life, his family life, his professional life. We are talking about a circumstance where other people were involved and other people were affected, some more acutely than others.

Mr. Speaker, when I had what I thought were all the facts, I had to seriously contemplate this situation. I had hoped we wouldn't come to this point, but more simply the situation to me is this. With the information that we have, I believe our colleague's, Mr. Zoe, conduct, his words and his actions have placed him in an untenable situation in terms of remaining on Cabinet.

Given all the situations we deal with as a territory, our issues of zero tolerance and the way this situation has unfolded in stages, Mr. Speaker, this is going to have a divisive effect. We are the place of last resort for MLAs. We are the arbiters of the fate of ourselves. This could have taken other routes with the police or other situations, but this is a political situation that has come to pass before us. Now we are called upon as MLAs, as legislators, to pass judgment on one of our own in terms of whether they should remain on Executive Council or not. It is not something I have looked forward to. I would have loved to have made it through this assembly with smooth sailing. Such is not to be.

So today I stand before this House, before you, Mr. Speaker, and before the people of the Northwest Territories for my seat mate, Mr. Zoe, to say that I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. I will allow the mover of the motion to have the last comment. Mr. Zoe.

HON. HENRY. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am here on the prerogative of the House. This unfortunate incident has caused me a lot of difficulty, as you know by what happened all last week. I did make a commitment when I was first elected that I would do the best of my abilities to uphold office of Cabinet, and also to do the best I could in terms of the portfolio that was assigned to me. I indicated at that time, it didn't matter which department I was given.

To my colleagues here, I appreciate Mr. McLeod. He doesn't know the circumstances of what has happened, but I did, as Mr. McLeod indicated, apologize to the House. It's unfortunate that some Members of this House feel more than what I have done. I have indicated that I am going to be doing self-help in terms of healing myself. I made a commitment to that. I have done that by going away this weekend. For some Members, that's not enough; it's way beyond that.

Last week a number of Members said in the House, when they were questioning the Premier with regard to my conduct and my portfolio that I have, I think every one of them indicated that I have done a good job as a Minister for the last six months or since my appointment. I realize that this whole situation has gone way beyond the control of some of us. I am at the privy of you and if that's the wish of the assembly, it's unfortunate it had to go that far, but by doing everything that the Members have asked of

me, I have made a commitment. It seems as though it's not enough for them for me to sit on this side of the House.

It's unfortunate, but as some have said, I will be strong and look after myself. I was hoping that with the Members' consideration and feeling of their heart, it doesn't seem as though some will go that route. So with that, Mr. Speaker, obviously I will be voting against the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya, as the mover of the motion, I allow you the last statement. To the motion.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Members of the House, since the incident, I have given some thought to it, prayed on it. There are some people who have thought about it, but I had to go inside my heart. Even last night I was talking to Tony. I said what do I do and what way should we go about dealing with this issue. I talked to the Sahtu leadership on Friday and talked to them over the weekend and today. I asked about this motion. It is really painful to move it. The Sahtu leadership told me that I would make the right decision, but also gave me some flexibility in terms of continuing on with an election. You know where we stand with regard to our leadership and with regard to alcoholism. We need to set examples for our children and set examples for our future. As leaders, we make sacrifices, daily sacrifices. I know in this House, being here six months, the amount of sacrifices that we make to our families and children on a daily basis are big. As public leaders, we give up our rights in life and take responsibilities. Some people talk about the fishbowl. I understand about the fishbowl now. People say things to you and take it out of context. Our leaders from the past were strong leaders and things were dealt with.

I was reminded of the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. When I was in leadership and issues like this came up, I wanted to thank Mr. Zoe because he really questioned my beliefs and values. What good can come out of this? We need to set an example to the people of the Northwest Territories. I have done a lot of work and am still doing work. It's a daily thing that I have to practice, and I thank God for giving guidance for where I am today. I had to make a huge sacrifice. At the time, I didn't see it. I have to thank a lot of people, old people, who helped me on this path and journey. Setting an example is key for us in this arena here. We have little ones who look up to us and we have older people who do, as well.

Today, we, as northern leaders, our leadership is called into question in the House here. How do we define our leadership? The motion here is we hold high regard to the integrity of holding office here. No matter what we do, there are different interpretations of how we are going to deal with this issue. At the end of the day, we have to look at the big picture and what's good for the Northwest Territories overall. What is the best that we can do?

Mr. Speaker, it's with a heavy heart that I talk about this issue. I support Mr. Zoe in terms of him or anybody else in the Northwest Territories going for treatment. It's a long, tough journey. Sometimes you want to know if this journey is really worth it. I stand here today and say yes, it's worth it, but I have lost many good people in my life and it hurts. It's emotional. In leadership, we have to stand on solid

ground and we have trust with our people and we have to gain that respect. Mr. Speaker, living in a fishbowl sometimes is not the best thing, but that's my choice and my responsibility. That's where I put myself. I have no regrets being in this House here with my honourable colleagues and with all the issues we have to work on.

It's tough, Mr. Speaker, and it's with kindness and love that I move this motion. It's not to hurt anybody, but to see what good can come out of this, Mr. Speaker. I want to say thank you to Mr. Zoe and what you have done the last few days. We talked to you, Mr. Zoe, and I was there at one time with my own people. I had to look at this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say in terms of supporting this motion, and I say this in all sincerity, it's the principles that we are dealing with here as a government and as people, to lead the people in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is being called. There will be a recorded vote, as requested by Ms. Lee. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

Recorded Vote

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Braden, Mr. Allen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Handley, Mr. Dent, Mr. Bell, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Delorey, Ms. Lee.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Zoe, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Villeneuve, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining to the motion, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Pokiak.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried with 13 in favour, four against and one abstention.

---Carried

Item 17, first reading of bills. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 17: FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 7: An Act To Amend The Legal Profession Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 7 has had first reading. Item 17, first reading of bills. Mr. Dent.

Bill 8: Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2004

CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, the Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2004, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 8 has had first reading. Item 17, first reading of bills. Mr. Roland.

Bill 9: Write-off Of Assets And Debts Act, 2004

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Bill 9, Write-off of Assets and Debts Act, 2004, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 9 has had first reading. Item 17, first reading of bills. Mr. Roland.

Bill 10: Forgiveness Of Debts Act, 2004-2005

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2004-2005, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 10 has had first reading. Item 17, first reading of bills. Mr. Roland.

Bill 11: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 1, 2004-2005

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Bill 11, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 1, 2004-2005, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 11 has had first reading. Item 17, first reading of bills. Mr. Dent.

Bill 12: An Act To Amend The Education Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Education Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 12 has had first reading. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Mr. Roland.

ITEM 18: SECOND READING OF BILLS

Bill 11: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 1, 2004-2005

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Bill 11, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 1, 2004-2005, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker this bill makes supplementary appropriations for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2004-05 fiscal year. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is being called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 11 has had second reading and accordingly the bill stands referred to Committee of the Whole. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 5, Tlicho Community Government Act; Committee Report 4-15(3), Report on the Review of Bill 5: Tlicho Community Government Act; and Bill 11, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 1, 2004-2005, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 19: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I call Committee of the Whole to order. The Speaker has listed the things that are before us today for Committee of the Whole. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Madam Chair, I wish to report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Is that a motion, you move to report progress?

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Yes, it is.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. The motion is in order. It's not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 20, report of Committee of the Whole. Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report progress and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there a seconder for the motion? Mr. Ramsay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 21, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 21: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Caucus at the rise of the House today.

Orders of the day for Tuesday, June 1, 2004, 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act
 - Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2004
 - Bill 9, Write-off of Assets and Debts Act, 2004-2005
 - Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2004-2005

- Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Education Act

19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 5, Tlicho Community Government Act

- Committee Report 4-15(3), Report on the Review of Bill 5, Tlicho Community Government Act

- Bill 11, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 1, 2004-2005

20. Report of Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, June 1, 2004, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

