



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Session**

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**15<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

## **HANSARD**

**Thursday, October 14, 2004**

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**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Box 1320  
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Tel: (867) 669-2200 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784  
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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Thursday, October 14, 2004****Members Present**

Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Honourable Paul 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, Mr. Zoe

**ITEM 1: PRAYER**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Orders of the day, item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance, Honourable Mr. Roland.

**Minister's Statement 49-15(3): Fiscal Update**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to provide an update on the government's fiscal situation.

The budget I presented in this House in March laid out a fiscal plan that would allow us to achieve the goals of NWT residents while achieving fiscal sustainability. The budget did not make dramatic changes. We wanted an opportunity to consult with northerners before finalizing our plans for the term of the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly. As Premier Handley noted in his sessional statement yesterday, this House has consulted with NWT residents to help us set an overall vision and goals for the government and people of the Northwest Territories. Our vision focuses on self-reliance and shared responsibility.

However, we need to be able to reconcile our goals with our fiscal resources. One of the priorities of the budget was establishing fiscal sustainability. This involved a combination of revenue increases, expenditure reallocations, and achieving a better fiscal deal from Canada. Without these, the GNWT will not have the resources to support our most important goals and priorities. Achieving long-term fiscal sustainability is vital to achieving our vision.

The public accounts for the 2003-04 fiscal year, which I tabled yesterday, show an operating deficit of \$65 million, \$13 million less than was projected in the March budget.

Mr. Speaker, we are now halfway through the current fiscal year and I am pleased to report that we are on track to meet our fiscal targets.

First, the Legislative Assembly approved three revenue initiatives earlier this year. These will generate an estimated \$10 million in 2004-05.

Second, the 2004-05 budget included \$15 million in expenditure reallocations and identified the need for a further \$40 million in spending reallocations in future years. These reallocations will be a source of funding for priority programs and forced growth.

Third, we believe we have made significant progress in our funding arrangements with Canada.

As the Premier has noted, last month's First Ministers' meeting on health care was a very positive one from the North's perspective. We received good news with respect

to funding, both for specific health care and under our formula financing arrangements. On the health side, the GNWT will have about \$10 million a year extra to improve access and to help with our high medical travel costs. On the formula financing side, there is a strong indication that we may receive some of the financial relief that we have sought for so long from the federal government. The federal government has put proposals on the table for both the federal/provincial equalization program and for federal/territorial formula financing. The formula proposal means additional funding for the territories, but it also involves some significant changes to the way our funding has been determined for the last 20 years.

The Premier will be meeting with his territorial colleagues and the Prime Minister later this month to discuss how the federal proposal will work and what exactly it means to us in new funding.

In addition, what our formula will look like after 2005-2006 may largely depend on the results of the work of an independent commission, the details of which will not be discussed until the next First Ministers' meeting on October 26<sup>th</sup>. As a result, we need to be cautious when we forecast our long-term fiscal situation. This uncertainty means that we cannot become complacent or lose our focus on fiscal responsibility.

Once we have a clear picture of our fiscal position, we can decide how to best use our resources. A key priority should be financing our capital investments. Over the last few years, our fiscal situation has limited what we could afford to invest in capital infrastructure and this has resulted in a significant shortfall and must be addressed. To do this, it is not enough just to balance the government's operating budget. We must generate an operating surplus to provide the cash to at least partially finance our capital investments.

The government also has to make a large \$300 million cash payment to the federal government in 2006-07 to reimburse Canada for an overpayment on our corporate income tax entitlements in 2002. This repayment must be provided for in our cash planning.

For these reasons, we must be cautious in how we proceed in our fiscal planning for the next few years. As decision-makers, we owe it to the residents of the Northwest Territories to ensure that government is operating efficiently and that our programs are achieving acceptable results for the money we are spending on them. We intend to continue with the budget plan to identify areas for redirecting our spending from lower to higher-priority areas. The measures required to achieve this have been developed through a rigorous planning and prioritization process and we see no reason to alter them at this time.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, the fiscal position of the Government of the Northwest Territories is brighter than the picture I described last March.

---Applause

We have made substantive progress on the revenue side, both with own-source revenues and transfers, and we have also made progress on the expenditure side. By the time the 2005-06 budget is presented next February, I will provide a more detailed fiscal picture, one that shows how we can achieve our vision and long-term fiscal sustainability. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Transportation, Mr. McLeod.

#### **Minister's Statement 50-15(3): NWT Fire Service Merit Awards Program**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, October 4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> was National Fire Prevention Week, so this is a fitting time to announce the recipients of this year's Northwest Territories Fire Service Merit Awards program.

In 2002, our government established the Fire Service Merit Awards, a new program to recognize the contribution of individual firefighters and fire departments in the Northwest Territories.

This year, the department once again sought nominations to recognize the special contribution of individual firefighters. Individual nominations are assessed by a panel of local and territorial fire service officials, against a set of established criteria. These nominations have now been reviewed and I am pleased to announce the 2004 winners.

The individual Fire Service Merit Award recipients for 2004 are: Dustin Smith of the Fort Smith Fire Department, and Duane Debastien of the Inuvik Fire Department.

Mr. Smith has also been chosen as the recipient of the 2004 Territorial Fire Service Merit Award.

The department also received nominations for the Community Fire Service Merit Award. This award is presented to recognize the efforts of one outstanding fire department and the entire community in improving the local fire protection system.

The assessment process to determine the community merit award winner has now been completed and I am pleased to announce that the 2004 Community Fire Service Merit Award goes to the Town of Fort Smith fire division.

Mr. Speaker, ceremonies to recognize the winners will be held in their home communities in the near future. I would ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to please join me in congratulating the two recipients of the individual wards and the Town of Fort Smith. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The Chair will recognize the honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

#### **Motion To Move Minister's Statement 49-15(3) Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Minister's Statement 49-15(3) be moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Question.

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

---Carried

Minister's Statement 49-15(3) will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

#### **ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

##### **Member's Statement On Human Resource And Morale Concerns At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues, for the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak about an issue that just does not seem to want to go away. The issue I'm referring to is the North Slave Correctional Centre. Whether it's an inmate or an employee phoning me, it seems that issues surrounding the facility and its operation continue to pile up.

I'll start firstly with staff morale at the centre. It is taking a continued pounding, even though last spring we had hoped that a change of scenery to a new building would help the state of mind of the employees. Employee issues centre around such items as safety, security, fair hiring practices, and the government dragging its heels on the retroactive monies due and payable to many of the staff at the centre. I find it very interesting that last spring when I was questioning the Minister of Justice about concerns that were raised to me about staff morale and human resource concerns, he did not want to admit that there were some serious concerns at that centre. Just recently, a full internal human resource review began at the centre. Perhaps now the Minister will admit changes have to be made. I'm very concerned about what this review will say and how recommendations flowing from it will be acted upon. If history repeats itself, I will be waiting a very, very long time to see anything from the Minister or his department on this review.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Shame, shame.

**MR. RAMSAY:** As many of you will recall, I had asked numerous questions about a health services audit that was conducted at the centre months ago. The reason the audit was initiated was the fact that I had received a petition signed by over 100 inmates at the centre about some very grave concerns they had about the way health services were being delivered at the North Slave Correctional Centre. To this day, I still have not received even a watered-down version or any other version of what

that audit said, even though I've asked numerous times for it. What changes have been made -- and I would like to know this, too, and I'll ask questions at the appropriate time -- to address the concerns that were outlined in that audit, and where is the watered-down version from the department that I was looking for?

Mr. Speaker, I certainly will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Mr. Ramsay. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Member's Statement On Amendments To Impaired Driving Legislation**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak in support of the anti-drinking and driving campaign launched by the Minister of Transportation on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

---Applause

The campaign is aimed at making the public aware of the changes to the rules and consequences of drinking and driving in the Northwest Territories. Approved amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act will come into force on December 1, 2004. These changes are a substantive improvement to the act, providing enforcement officers with another tool to get drivers who insist on getting behind the wheel, after consuming alcohol, off our streets.

Households across the NWT received a pamphlet in the mail alerting them to the tough, new administrative rules. Drivers caught for the first time with blood alcohol levels between .05 and .08 will automatically have their licence suspended for 24 hours. The consequences of subsequent offences are progressively more severe. These changes mean that the legislation finally has some teeth, and drivers under the influence of alcohol will not be tolerated on our streets and highways.

I applaud the work of the many individuals who worked over a period of years to bring about the amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act. I also congratulate the Minister, Mr. McLeod, and his staff for a great job with the advertising campaign alerting northerners to the changes. It is an unnecessary tragedy that over 75,000 Canadians are affected by drinking and driving directly each year, and it is, quite frankly, unacceptable that statistically per capita we are worse off in the North. It gives me great pleasure that, as legislators, we are finally doing something about this problem. The amendments to the act establish the NWT as a Canadian leader in the use of legislation to deter impaired driving. Mr. Speaker, this is something we can all be very proud of. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

**Member's Statement On Ministers' Visits To Nunakput**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I would like to say that after the swearing in of the 15<sup>th</sup>

Assembly, I indicated to the Premier that I would show no more emotions. However, with the situation ongoing in Tuktoyaktuk, I became emotional yesterday. I would like to thank my colleagues for the moment of silent prayer. Thank you to my colleague, Mr. Dave Ramsay, for concluding my Member's statement.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday my colleague from Nahendeh talked about the tour he conducted with the Ministers. I, too, at this time would like to thank Premier Joe Handley, Ministers Roland, Bell, Krutko, McLeod, Dent and Miltenberger for touring the riding of Nunakput in June and August, respectively. During the tour, there were many common themes raised for these meetings. Issues were raised for education, health, social services, municipal services, policing services, transportation, and global warming; for example, erosion. Mr. Speaker, many of these issues raised by my constituents will be brought up during the life of the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

Members may remember that Prime Minister Paul Martin and Ethel Blondin-Andrew visited our beautiful community of Tuktoyaktuk and, although the visit was brief, the mayor and council and myself briefly highlighted some of the issues, such as the all-weather road between Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik and the erosion problem. Although the Tuktoyaktuk-Inuvik highway is not the responsibility of the GNWT, I will continue to pursue this matter with the Minister of Transportation, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, once again, thank you to the Premier and the Ministers for taking the time from their busy schedules to visit my riding of Nunakput. There is a lot of work ahead during the next three years and I will continue to pursue and accomplish some or all of the issues raised by my constituents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

**Member's Statement On North Slave Correctional Centre Concerns**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, further to the statement by the Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay, I'd like to also speak about the Department of Justice and its human resources management, the morale of the department, the corrections division, and the North Slave Correctional Centre, in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I understand very clearly that the internal management of a government department or division should not be a topic of discussion in the Assembly as a normal course of business. I know that this is something that the Minister feels very strongly about, too. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I have an obligation as a Member of the Assembly and to the constituents that I serve to see that things they tell me and the information they give me in confidence are given full consideration. Upon such reflections and deliberation of the information I have become privy to, I feel that it is in the interest of the public that we bring this into the public so that we can discuss it and address some of the concerns that are being raised. I can assure you that I will do this in a way that is respectful of the individuals involved.

Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that people are very, very hesitant to talk about what's going on, but they feel compelled to because they feel that it's in the public interest to do so. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I know personally many of the senior managers in the department and I'm sure that they're working very hard in their jobs with very good intentions. But I feel compelled to raise the red flag at this juncture so that I can motivate them to evaluate themselves more deliberately and see what they're doing well and what they're not doing well and how things can be improved.

In fact, I have always been a strong believer and a supporter of the work being done by the corrections division, especially the community corrections because I used to work there and I believe in the cause. But I need to tell them that the calls of concerns are becoming increasingly more frequent and more disconcerting.

Mr. Speaker, at one point in the last Assembly, it seemed like there was a direct line to my office from the Stanton hospital. Such were the calls and letters that I was receiving from many of the concerned employees there. It turned out that many of their concerns were very legitimate and needed to be taken care of. I can tell you that the similar drum beat is growing at an increasing rate from the corrections division and the North Slave Correctional Centre of the Department of Justice.

I don't think what I'm saying here is coming as a surprise, Mr. Speaker, because the Minister has already initiated an internal review, except that we're not clear at this point what the scope and terms of reference are and I will be pursuing this further at the question period later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

#### **Member's Statement On Shortage Of Affordable Housing**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, one of the major elements of our society and our economy today, in terms of things that are not working very well for us, continues to be the shortages, and in some areas, some sectors, Mr. Speaker, a crises in social and affordable housing across the Northwest Territories. This applies to small communities and, of course, here in Yellowknife we're on a sustained situation with this difficulty.

Our Housing Corporation tells us that there are across the Territories some 3,000 families in core need of a safe, affordable place to live. Mr. Speaker, this situation continues to erode the quality and stability of life for thousands of our residents. Affordable housing is one of the most common topics that comes up when I speak with constituents and residents of Yellowknife.

There's almost universal agreement that affordability is connected to many family, economic and social issues and is perhaps best illustrated by the never-ending waiting list for transitional housing managed by the YWCA here in Yellowknife and for the waiting list in social housing with the housing authorities across the NWT.

Higher rental and apartment construction has raised the supply of rental units and helped increase availability, and the important role of the private sector should be acknowledged. I've tried to do this whenever I can, Mr. Speaker; to acknowledge the investment that continues to be made, at least here in Yellowknife, in the housing stock we have. Information that I have suggests that we'll see about 120 new rentals under construction in the city this year, adding to about 1,600 that we already have. In normal circumstances, this would improve not only availability, but affordability. But increased construction costs and pressure from a very lively economy are continuing to put upward pressure on the cost of housing, and electricity and heating costs are going to hit hard this year.

As the private sector continues to invest, at least in Yellowknife, other communities are not so fortunate. Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat a message that has often been said in this House and that has had considerable success in other jurisdictions. The message is that government should continue to strive to put incentives and opportunities in place for the private sector to continue to do what they do best. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

#### **Member's Statement On Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my constituents and I continue to be very concerned about the plan to reduce the number of police officers working at the Fort Simpson RCMP detachment. I first raised this issue in the House in May of this year. At that time, the elimination of one of the staff positions in question was only proposed. Since then, the plan has been implemented and we now have one less police officer in the Nahendeh riding. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, even though the change has been made, we still have not received a full and comprehensive explanation from the RCMP as to why the staff complement had to be reduced. We have only been told that the RCMP made the decision based on crime statistics and other indicators.

Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by the Minister of Justice that the arrangement we have with the RCMP is essentially a fee-for-service and that it is the sole responsibility of the RCMP to allocate their resources, including personnel, as they think best. Be that as it may, at the same time, I believe my constituents have the right to know why particularly important decisions have been made; decisions that will affect their safety and well-being. We have only been told that the decision may be reversed at some time in the future if conditions change.

But, Mr. Speaker, we need to know why this decision was made in the first place. We need to know precisely what factors were considered when making the decision so we can determine what must change in order to have the position refilled. Already, we are seeing a sizable increase in industrial resource development in my region. Preliminary work has begun on the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline. These developments will have significant impacts on all communities and people. Now is the time to be expanding police services, not cutting them back.



Not only have we lost the position, but it is a senior position, a corporal that we have lost. This raises additional questions about the capacity of the detachment to function adequately given that it is manned with junior officers with little or no northern experience. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** I would like to thank my honourable colleagues for allowing me to conclude my statement.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that in April of this year, the total complement of RCMP officers in the NWT was increased by 7.5. To have the number of officers in the Nahendeh riding decrease at the same time presupposes a significant decline in the need for the police services. We must assume a significant increase in the need elsewhere. Yet, Mr. Speaker, we have been given no indication or assurance that this is indeed the case. I believe my constituents deserve a full and proper explanation. I will continue to seek one.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

#### **Member's Statement On Access To FAS/E Treatment**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to use this opportunity, through my Member's statement, to bring forward a concern that has been bothering some constituents of mine. Mr. Speaker, I can't name the person because this person happens to be a youth, but a family has called me on numerous occasions over the past year. It concerns their dealings with the Department of Health and Social Services about getting their child into treatment.

Mr. Speaker, we have a young northerner here who has FAE. This person is seriously at risk. It is time that something gets done. This family has been trying to deal with this situation for many years. They have been trying to work with the department. Mr. Speaker, these people, the parents that I am talking about, are good people. They are really trying, but, unfortunately, they are at the end of their ropes. They don't know what to do. They have been going to the department. Now they are getting new workers and new assessments. The parents are just begging, "Send our child out for treatment!" Their child has been in Bosco Homes, so there is a history of the child receiving treatment in the past. This child needs treatment now.

Some day, this child will no longer be a youth. The Minister responsible for this situation, who used to be a former social worker, will understand the importance of early treatment and intervention. We may never be able to reverse the effects of FAE. However, we can mitigate the future problems by doing something now. So how long are we going to wait for this terrible situation? Do we need another assessment? Because we already know the history of this person. I don't think it is beyond relative, straightforward thinking to say let's do something

finally. This family needs a commitment. The concern is how much longer are we going to wait.

The Department of Health and Social Services is continually hot-potatoing this issue around. Is it a question of they don't want to spend the money? Do they not want to derive a bit of time for this young person? Because the issue here is, if they don't provide services, well, I can guarantee you today the Department of Justice will be providing services for this young adult in the future through three square meals a day and programming. So if we don't help them on this side of the government, I can guarantee you today we will be on the other side of the government. Mr. Speaker, I am just going to close my Member's statement by basically saying we are failing our kids, so we should darn well fail ourselves. Thank you.

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

#### **Member's Statement On Spiritual Gathering At The Lockhart River**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this summer, I was blessed with the opportunity to attend a spiritual gathering east of Reliance on Great Slave Lake near the mouth of the Lockhart River, along with many other constituents of Tu Nedhe. Also, we were lucky to have a visit by our Premier during this spiritual gathering. The spiritual significance of this river is not only very important to the spiritual well-being of the residents of Tu Nedhe, but it also allows residents of Tu Nedhe and surrounding areas to come together to share oral history and prayer along with many evenings of laughter and drum dancing.

Mr. Speaker, during the gathering, there were scheduled flights, about 15 minutes long, to a place called the Lady of the Falls where people go to pray, make offerings, and ask the old lady of the falls for help in any aspects of their lives that they wish. Although the plans for everyone who made the day trip to the falls were to be returned safe and sound back to the main camp, there was one group of 27 people who had the unfortunate but enlightening experience of spending the night out at the falls on August 11, 2004, because of cancellations of the return flights due to heavy smoke in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I was one of these people who had this opportunity to camp out without tents, blankets or food. With 19 of these people stranded, being elders, we had a formidable task of erecting two spruce bough shelters using one small hatchet which, luckily, someone had left behind from a previous visit, and also keeping the elders warm throughout the night. Mr. Speaker, with sound minds and good cooperation and high spirits, the shelters were erected in a timely manner before dark and in a fashion only experienced northern hunters and trappers could appreciate, not to mention the vast amount of blueberries and traditional tea we had available for consumption.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to say that everyone returned safely to the main camp the following morning thanks to people like Eddy Lafferty, Jerry Sanderson, Paul Boucher, my brother Gord, and many other individuals who stayed up all night to keep the three fires going, and others like Skinny-man and Archie Smith, who kept everyone's spirits up with their good humour. Everyone seemed to be quite content about the whole ordeal and opted to not express

any negative feelings about the whole incident upon return.

This was also reinforced by the silver lining of this whole experience...I ask the Members if I can continue my statement.

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

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Members. This decision was also reinforced by the silver lining of the whole experience that Chief Catholique offered later in the evening in that the oral history of the Lady of the Falls says that if you go to seek help from the Lady of the Falls, then your prayers will be better received and answered if only one spends the night at the falls, which many visitors heed that advice to this day. With that, Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that my prayers were answered by having the Lady of the Falls, along with some of the assistance of the Lutselk'e band manager, Irvin Norn, in keeping my two children, Robyn and Andre, aged 8 and 11, fed and safe for the 20 hours that they had to spend alone in camp. So I say thank you and God bless to everyone that had to spend the night out on that day and it has allowed me to realize that birthday gifts do sometimes come in the most unexpected packages. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Condolences On The Passing of Joanne Nazon**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, friends. At this time, I would like to send condolences to the Nazon family in Tsiigehtchic on the passing of Joanne Nazon, who was a well-respected elder who was well into her 90s and would have been 91 next week. Joanne left behind a large family. Regards to the Ross family and the Nazon family. At this time, I would like to send condolences to Richard, Peter, Ross and family, Margaret Nazon, the McDonald family, and Louise Lennie and family.

More importantly, I would like to send condolences out to the people of Tsiigehtchic. This is a great loss to the people of the Mackenzie Delta. Joanne was well respected to everybody who knew her. She had a smile on her face every time you met her. She lit up a room every time she came to a meeting or a feast or just to visit the different communities. People like Joanne are one of a kind. It is most important that we cherish the lives of those people who go on to a better place. More importantly, we celebrate the lives of these people who have lived well into their 90s who raised not only one family, but in this case she raised two families. Her family, her children, her grandchildren and all her great-grandchildren can look back to their grandmother knowing that she did her job. She lived a long life. She shared with everyone around her and also for everyone who knew her.

More importantly, she had left us all with something that we can cherish for the rest of our lives by just knowing her. With that, I would like to send condolences to the

family, the people of Tsiigehtchic, and more importantly to the people of Mackenzie Delta. I would like to take this time to celebrate the life of Joanne Nazon. The funeral is later today, at 3:00. Again, I would like to send my condolences to the family and, more importantly, to the community of Tsiigehtchic. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 3, Member's statements. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

#### **ITEM 4: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

##### **Committee Report 7-15(3): Review Of The Information And Privacy Commissioner's Annual Report 2002-2003**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to offer the report on the review of the Information and Privacy Commissioner's Annual Report 2002-2003.

#### **Background**

The NWT's Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act -- ATIPP -- came into force on December 31, 1996. The purpose of the act is to make public bodies more accountable and to protect personal privacy by giving the public a right of access, with limited exceptions, to records held by the GNWT and related public bodies, and by preventing the unauthorized collection, use or disclosure of personal information by the GNWT and related public bodies. The act also gives individuals the right to see and make corrections to information about themselves.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, and is required under section 68 of the act to prepare and submit an annual report. Ms. Elaine Keenan-Bengts was reappointed as the NWT's Information and Privacy Commissioner on July 1, 2000, for a five-year term.

Several amendments to the act came into force April 1, 2004, including new powers for the Commissioner to investigate and make recommendations on privacy complaints. Many of these amendments were made in response to recommendations the Commissioner made in previous annual reports.

#### **General Comments**

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight held a public meeting with Ms. Keenan-Bengts on August 23, 2004, to review her 2002-2003 annual report.

The committee was pleased to hear from the Commissioner that in her view most government agencies and ATIPP coordinators do understand the act, and are applying it well. However, the Commissioner identified some specific exceptions, which did concern Members. One was a failure by RWED to release information on its legal costs in a court action. The committee would urge the government to be more open in such cases, in order to avoid, as the Commissioner suggested in her report, fostering "an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust." Another was an apparent breach of personal privacy when an employee's medical information was disclosed to her

supervisor. The committee would encourage the Department of Health and Social Services and the health boards to work with the Commissioner in order to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities in protecting private information.

### **The Commissioner's Recommendations**

#### **Access To Information And Privacy Legislation For Municipal Governments**

As in her past four reports, the Commissioner recommends that municipal governments be brought under territorial access to information and privacy legislation, either by including them under the act as public bodies, or by passing new legislation specific to them. The Commissioner points out that municipal authorities gather and maintain significant information about individuals, and that there are possibilities of integrated information systems and data sharing between the GNWT and municipal governments.

The previous government recommended against bringing municipalities under the act based on consultations with municipal representatives who were concerned with the impact the legislation would have on day-to-day operations and ongoing administrative costs.

The committee considers access to information and protection of privacy standards to be an essential part of an open and transparent government. Members acknowledge the challenges of developing and implementing such legislation for municipal governments, but do not consider them to be insurmountable.

In order to implement its own legislation, the GNWT had to make a significant investment in training, and developing policies, procedures and proper records management systems. Much of this work is ongoing. Municipal governments have far fewer human and financial resources to work with. In the absence of GNWT assistance in the form of funding and access to records management specialists, it would be unfair to expect municipal governments to implement and administer new information and privacy legislation. The GNWT, therefore, needs to work with municipal governments to assess the resources required to implement and administer such legislation, and to develop a reasonable implementation plan. In the meantime, the GNWT should continue to be prepared to assist any municipal governments who ask for help in designing their own guidelines for managing records and information.

The committee recommends that the government work with the NWT Association of Communities to assess the resources required for municipal governments to be able to comply with access to information and protection of privacy legislation, and to develop an implementation plan for such legislation.

#### **Made-In-The-NWT Privacy Legislation For The Private Sector**

The Commissioner recommends, as in previous reports, that the NWT enact its own "made-in-the-North" privacy legislation to regulate how the private sector collects, uses or discloses personal information.

NWT businesses are already regulated by the federal Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act -- PIPEDA -- which came into full force on January 1, 2004. However, the Commissioner has raised concerns that this act will not provide an adequate regulatory framework for the NWT. In particular, she is concerned that the federal Privacy Commissioner will likely have the resources to deal with only broad national issues, and not the smaller local issues that are likely to affect NWT residents.

The position of the previous government was that it would be premature to consider NWT legislation at this time, and that the issue should be re-examined following the mandatory review of Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act by the House of Commons, which is scheduled for 2006.

Although the committee believes the Commissioner's concerns are legitimate, it agrees with the government's position that it would be premature to develop our own legislation at this time. The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act is new and its effectiveness in the NWT has not yet been tested. In the meantime, government should concentrate its efforts on ensuring its own house is in order and that staff understand and are applying the privacy provisions of ATIPP appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, the committee recommends that the government monitor the effectiveness of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act in the NWT, and prepare its own report with recommendations on whether the NWT needs its own legislation following the 2006 review of Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act by the House of Commons.

#### **Devolution And Self-Government Negotiations**

The Commissioner recommends that access to information and protection of privacy issues be kept at the top of the agenda in devolution and aboriginal self-government negotiations to ensure accountability and protection of personal information by new governments. The committee supports this recommendation, as it is important that emerging governments are aware of these issues.

#### **Private Contractors**

The GNWT contracts out some of its functions to private industry, which could involve a business handling personal information on behalf of government. For example, motor vehicles registrations were, at one time, administered by a private contractor. The Commissioner is concerned that private businesses may not be required to follow the same information and privacy laws that would apply if the GNWT were doing the work itself. She recommends that this should be addressed by including clauses in outsourcing contracts to require compliance with the act.

The committee recommends that the government investigate whether its contracts currently include clauses requiring compliance with ATIPP and, if not, that the government add such clauses to any outsourcing contracts where a business would be creating records that would otherwise be government

records or handling personal information on behalf of the government.

#### **Awareness And Understanding Of The Act**

The Commissioner recommends that government prepare an updated directory of the ATIPP coordinators for departments and public bodies, and make it easily accessible to the public. It is the committee's understanding that the government has already addressed this recommendation.

The Commissioner also recommends government continue to support and encourage ongoing training for ATIPP coordinators, and ensure that all employees are aware of their basic responsibilities under the act. The committee supports this recommendation.

#### **Conclusion**

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight would like to thank the Commissioner, Ms. Elaine Keenan-Bengts, for presenting her report at the committee's public hearing.

The committee requests the Executive Council to table a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days, in accordance with Rule 93(5) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the report of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight on the review of the report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for 2002-2003.

#### **Motion To Receive Committee Report 7-15(3) And Move To Committee Of The Whole, Carried**

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for North Slave, that Committee Report 7-15(3) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Question.

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

---Carried

Committee Report 7-15(3) will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

#### **Committee Report 8-15(3): Report On The Review Of The Languages Commissioner's Annual Report 2003-2004**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to take a moment to thank the honourable Member for Nahendeh; apparently there were two reports to read in and he gave me the longer of the two.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the review of the Languages Commissioner's Annual Report 2003-2004.

#### **Review Of The Languages Commissioner's Annual Report 2003-2004**

##### **History**

The Official Languages Act was passed by the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories in 1984. The act guarantees equal status for the use of Canada's two official languages for members of the public using government programs and services. The act also officially recognized the aboriginal languages spoken in the Northwest Territories.

In 1990 amendments to the act gave greater status to northern aboriginal languages and recognized the need to protect aboriginal culture through the promotion of the use of aboriginal languages. The 1990 amendments also included the creation of the position of the Languages Commissioner to be appointed by the Legislative Assembly for a term of four years.

##### **Review Of The Official Languages Act**

Section 29(1) of the act required a review of the Official Languages Act following December 31, 2000. A special joint committee was established in November of 2000 to examine the effectiveness of the current legislation to protect both Canada's official languages and the aboriginal languages of the Northwest Territories. The Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act -- SCOL -- presented its final report, *One Land, Many Voices*, to the Legislative Assembly in March 2003. It contained 64 recommendations, which were adopted by Committee of the Whole, including several recommendations to amend the act. As a result of the committee's recommendations, Bill 31, passed in October 2003, introduced five major changes to the act.

The changes are:

1. First, Inuinnaqtun, Inuvialuktun, North Slave and South Slavey are now identified as official languages. Prior to this change, these languages were not recognized separately in the act. Only Slavey and Inuktitut were identified.
2. The establishment of an Official Languages Board, an Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board, and a Minister responsible for the Official Languages Act will allow the Languages Commissioner to focus on the ombudsman-like role of that office. The role of promoting languages will now be the responsibility of the Minister and the new boards.
3. A new Official Languages Board will be established with membership from each of the Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey and South Slavey language communities. Members will be nominated by each of these language communities and appointed by the Commissioner on recommendation of the Minister for appointment. The purpose of this board will be to review the rights and status of each of the official languages and their use in the administration and delivery of services by government institutions. It may also evaluate the

provisions of this act. This board will advise the Minister.

4. A new Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board will also be established with representation from all of the official languages except for French and English. Members will be nominated by the respective language communities and appointed by the Commissioner on recommendation of the Minister. This board will review programs of the communities and the government to promote and add a new spark to aboriginal languages. They will also review the effectiveness of this act and advise the Minister on these matters.
5. And finally, the amendments passed last fall set out the responsibilities of the Minister responsible for the Official Languages. The responsibilities of the Minister are to:
  - a) consider the recommendations from the both the Official Languages Board and the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board;
  - b) oversee the development of policies and regulations necessary to implement this act and evaluate them;
  - c) promote official languages communication in schools and post-secondary institutions and in adult education and literacy training programs; and,
  - d) produce reports on the activities of the two language boards.

#### **Languages Commissioner**

According to section 20(1) of the act, the duties of the Languages Commissioner are:

...to take all actions and measures within the authority of the Languages Commissioner with a view to ensuring recognition of the rights, status and privileges of each of the official languages and compliance with the spirit and intent of the act in the administration of the affairs of government institutions, including any of their activities relating to the advancement of the aboriginal languages in the Territories.

The Commissioner has the authority to investigate any complaints made to the office or may initiate an investigation if it is warranted. The Commissioner may also issue opinions on complaints and make recommendations to institutions as deemed necessary. If, after a reasonable amount of time, the Commissioner's recommendations have not been acted upon by the institution, the Commissioner may make a report to the Legislative Assembly.

The Commissioner is also required to submit an annual report to the Legislative Assembly. Ms. Fobbie Tatti was appointed to the position of Languages Commissioner in July of 2000 and her term expired in July of 2004. Ms. Shannon Gullberg is currently serving as the Acting Languages Commissioner, pending recruitment of a new Commissioner.

#### **Annual Report 2003-2004**

Ms. Tatti submitted her annual report for the year 2003-2004, which was tabled in the House on June 2, 2004. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight met to review the report on June 24, 2004. The committee would like to thank Ms. Tatti and her staff for presenting the report.

#### **Recommendations**

The Languages Commissioner made three recommendations in her annual report. The recommendations are listed below, along with the committee's responses.

##### **Recommendation No. 1**

It is recommended that the current members of the OLC Advisory Board continue their role on the two new advisory boards as identified by the recommendations of the Special Committee on the Review of Languages.

The committee strongly supports the Languages Commissioner's recommendation and wrote to the Minister of Official Languages asking him to give special consideration to former advisory board members when appointing people to the Official Languages Board and the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board. The Minister replied that he has asked for nominations from all the language communities, and that he would consider the committee's suggestion in the event that a language community nominates more than one person for one board.

##### **Recommendation No. 2**

Archiving artifacts must be done with their history, explanation and the language in which it was developed. It is strongly recommended by the Official Languages Commissioner that the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre role be increased and that they be given the financial resources to be able to perform the important task of archiving living artifacts.

The standing committee encourages the new Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board to review this recommendation.

##### **Recommendation No. 3**

It is recommended by the Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories that the \$100,000 be restored to the Legislative Assembly language funding.

The standing committee understands that while \$100,000 was taken out of the Language Commissioner's budget in 2003-2004 as part of the government-wide cost reduction exercise, the money was reinstated into the base in 2004-2005.

However, because the Language Commissioner's promotional responsibilities have been transferred to the Minister and the new boards effective July 2004, the Language Commissioner's budget was reduced by \$156,000 for 2004-2005. One hundred thousand dollars of this was transferred to the Department of Education,

Culture and Employment for the new boards, and \$56,000 was returned to the consolidated revenue fund.

### Review Of Languages Complaints

The standing committee was disappointed to see that the Languages Commissioner's 2003-2004 annual report still contained very little information about the nature of languages complaints both from prior and present years.

While the Languages Commissioner explained that information about complaints is confidential, the standing committee still thought that general information regarding the type of language involved in complaints, the location of complainants and the process used to mediate said complaints could be provided to them.

As the previous standing committee of the 14th Assembly reported in their review of the Language's Commissioner Annual Report, 2001-2002, "without information with which to better understand the concerns being raised by the public, the standing committee is at a loss to assess the actions of the Commissioner."

The committee has since received additional information from the Languages Commissioner on the complaints submitted to the office in 2003-2004.

### Appendices

In addition to the recommendations outlined above, the Languages Commissioner provided responses to the recommendations contained within the Final Report of the Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act (Appendix 1).

The Languages Commissioner also provided a legal opinion to the office of the Languages Commissioner on how the amendments to the Official Languages Act may change the office of the Languages Commissioner (Appendix 3).

The committee would like to comment on two of the issues that were raised in these sections of the report.

### Official Languages Board And The Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board

The committee engaged in considerable discussion regarding the rationale for the creation of the two new boards, and intends to address its concerns with the Minister responsible for Official Languages in the near future.

### Languages Commissioner Replacement

The committee recommends that the replacement for the Languages Commissioner should be able to speak at least one of the official languages.

### Additional Information

Following its public hearings on the report, the committee asked for and received the following information from the Languages Commissioner:

- a copy of the Navajo language research project report;
- information on other research projects;
- additional information on travel by the Languages Commissioner and staff.

The committee also asked for and received more detailed information on the expenses of the office of the Languages Commissioner from the office of the Clerk.

### Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight would like to thank the Languages Commissioner and her staff for the 2003-2004 annual report.

---Applause

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that concludes the report of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight on the review of the Languages Commissioners Annual Report 2003-2004.

### Motion To Receive And Adopt Committee Report 8-15(3), Carried

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Committee Report 8-15(3) be received and adopted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Question

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

---Carried

Committee Report 8-15(3) has been received and adopted. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

### ITEM 5: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Further Return To Question 211-15(3): Court Worker Position In Fort Simpson

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a return to oral question asked by Mr. Menicoche on October 13, 2004, regarding the court worker position in Fort Simpson.

Mr. Speaker, the Legal Services Board of the Northwest Territories has indicated that the court worker position in Fort Simpson will be filled before the end of this fiscal year. Since April of this year, a court worker has been sent in to Fort Simpson once a month for two days to provide assistance to clients wishing to apply for legal aid, and to cover every second Justice of the Peace Court.

A notice is posted at the court worker office advising anyone with questions to call one of the other court workers for assistance. Also, a court worker travels to Fort Simpson to attend Territorial Court sittings.

Mr. Speaker, the Legal Services Board has been actively trying to fill positions across the Northwest Territories on a priority basis. Since April of this year, they have run six competitions to fill positions, including court workers positions in Inuvik and Fort Good Hope, and three family law lawyer positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

#### **ITEM 6: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this time to recognize two visitors in the gallery: Mr. Mark Wilson and Mr. Brett Scarf. I believe they are both here to support their children who are acting as Pages today. They were able to find time today to come by and watch their children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I saw earlier Mr. Dave Legros who is my constituent. I don't know if he is still there, but if he is I would like to welcome him to the House. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, oral questions.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

#### **ITEM 7: ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Question 214-15(3): Access To FAS/FAE Treatment**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services and it is going to be quite a frank question. When will this family receive the services needed for this child? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

##### **Return To Question 214-15(3): Access To FAS/FAE Treatment**

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to talk to the Member about this particular situation outside the public confines of this House and share with him the latest briefing note I have, which just came across my desk here in the last few minutes. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** No further questions, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

##### **Question 215-15(6): Addressing Concerns At North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister of Justice a number of questions today

with regard to staff morale and other issues at the North Slave Correctional Centre. The first question I would like to ask the Minister is what steps since last spring when this situation was first outlined to the Minister, has he or his deputy taken to address the staff morale issue at North Slave Correctional Centre? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

##### **Return To Question 215-15(3): Addressing Concerns At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was some expectation that with the staffing of the new correctional centre, there would be some extra time required by people and that has come to pass. Staff training and staff workload during the transition to the new centre has disrupted routines and caused some problems. We are still working through that. At the beginning of this month, an additional 12 officers have started the training program and at the end of five weeks from the start of their training, they will be moving into full-time positions within the centre. We think that will do a lot to deal with some of the workload issues that have arisen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

##### **Supplementary To Question 215-15(3): Addressing Concerns At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your response. I will go back to the explanation that the Minister gave, which is fine and good, but the problems in staff morale existed well before the changeover to the new facility. His response didn't really answer the question. What steps have been taken to address the issue of staff morale and also the issue of fair hiring practices at the North Slave Correctional Centre? I don't think his response answered the question. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

##### **Further Return To Question 215-15(3): Addressing Concerns At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Previously, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ramsay didn't ask a question about fair hiring practices, so I will answer that one first. I am satisfied that the hiring practices undertaken by members of the Department of Justice follow the government standard as set out by corporate human resources and by FMBS. Staffing is a process that is well supervised. The process is set out in the Collective Agreement and it is followed specifically as set out in the Collective Agreement. One of the reasons we've had to use so much overtime in the past while, is when the competition was held just prior to the opening of the new facility, the intent was to have the staff come on stream before the move to the new facility, but because of appeals on staffing there was a four-month delay before the positions were filled. So we have to follow the process, as set out under the Collective Agreement. I am satisfied that we are doing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

**Supplementary To Question 215-15(3): Addressing Concerns At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, if the Minister is satisfied that fair hiring practices are underway at the North Slave Correctional Centre, I wonder why a full-scale internal human resource review is being conducted by one of our senior HR people with FMBS. Maybe he could suggest why that's happening and maybe stand up and admit there are some serious concerns out there in terms of human resource management. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 215-15(3): Addressing Concerns At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when allegations are made that there is a problem, then it's quite normal to look into them. I wouldn't call it a full-scale review. I have never called it a review. We've asked corporate human resources in the Executive to provide assistance to examine the staffing processes and to make sure that the proper procedures are being followed and to make recommendations where change is needed and identify the strengths where we have those strengths. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

**Supplementary To Question 215-15(3): Addressing Concerns At North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will get back to the amount of overtime to employees at the North Slave Correctional Centre. For the period of one year, up until May 31, 2004, that amount was \$216,395. Between June 1, 2004, and September 30, 2004, that amount was \$243,913. Could the Minister explain why it is that his department, who knew for three years that they were moving into a new facility, wasn't staffed up to the level that it had to be and didn't take the measures that were necessary to not have to pay this amount of overtime? It's ridiculous to think that in a four-month period we paid more than we did in an entire year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 215-15(3): Addressing Concerns At North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated previously, corrections did try to staff up for the move. Unfortunately, the process, as it works in government, is sometimes time consuming to fill positions and they were not able to fill those positions prior to the move. That alone led to an increase in the use of overtime, as well as the increased numbers in staffing at the facility. The intention would have been to run another competition sooner had we been able to fill the positions, but because of the length of time the first one took, we've gotten behind. Why wasn't staffing done earlier? Because FMB didn't agree that the department

should have the money in advance of having the facility open.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh!

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** It's not a situation where the money was available. It was a situation where we didn't have the money, so it couldn't be done in advance.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

**Question 216-15(3): Review Of Human Resources At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are also to the Minister of Justice with regard to my Member's statement earlier today. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that the huge rate of vacancies at the Correctional Centre and the high amount of money that's being paid for overtime is just one of the issues I am hearing that are contributing to a morale problem there that is affecting the operation of the centre.

I should also say that I am not speaking on the basis of one or two people who are talking about this; I have heard from many different people from different sectors in the community who have knowledge, interest or concerns about the facility. So my question, Mr. Speaker, is with regard to the review. What exactly is this review and what is the Minister trying to get at with this review? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

**Return To Question 216-15(3): Review Of Human Resources At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The review is one that was requested by the department. They approached corporate human resources and asked if they could get some assistance to do an internal review. So it's our staff along with one representative from corporate human resources assisting them to make sure they're examining our human resources policies and practices, as said, to identify strengths and weaknesses and to make recommendations to build on our strengths and if they find weaknesses, to recommend where we might make changes within to address those weaknesses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

**Supplementary To Question 216-15(3): Review Of Human Resources At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am trying to be very sensitive because this involves human resources, individuals and staff and such and I don't want to name any names, but I must say the Minister is very good at skirting the issue either. He is speaking about finding out about strengths and weaknesses and doing a review. Could the Minister indicate what is the question he is trying to get an answer to? What is the problem he is aware of that gave rise to looking into this? Why did the staff of the department come to him and say there needed to be a review? What is the question? Thank you.



**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 216-15(3): Review Of Human Resources At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Mr. Speaker, what drove this in large part were questions by Mr. Ramsay and others about what was happening out there, and there were suggestions in those questions that there was a problem with the staffing. I have not said that I believe there is such a problem, but whenever an allegation is made about there being a problem, then it behooves the government and the department to look into that. The department is following through on those concerns. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

**Supplementary To Question 216-15(3): Review Of Human Resources At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the information I have is in the last year there has been at least a 20 percent vacancy at the facility. There are 50 correctional officers who work at the facility and there have been up to 12 positions vacant. What is going on in there is much like I was hearing from the hospital. Correctional officers are refusing to answer calls on weekends because they don't want to have to go in to go to work. That sort of thing causes a lot of problems and there might be a lot of things behind that that the Minister has to address. Would the Minister table in this House a terms of reference for this review or any instruction that his team is working under? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 216-15(3): Review Of Human Resources At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Lee talked about 12 vacancies. The only time we had 12 vacancies was almost a year ago, November 2003. At the end of September, there were seven vacancies and, as I said, we had 12 officers start training on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October. So I think that the issue of vacancies is one that is being dealt with. We've increased the numbers of positions with the staffing of the North Slave Correctional Centre. It takes a bigger staff complement to run that facility than it did the old facility. So I would argue that the movement is in the right direction. We are filling the positions.

In terms of the terms of reference, I have to review the direction that was taken here. I will have to talk to the deputy minister about what sorts of discussions he's had with corporate human resources and how the team has been instructed. In terms of whether or not I can table a terms of reference, I will have to look into that and I will get back to the Member very quickly on that issue. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 216-15(3): Review Of Human Resources At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe a House motion to table that terms of reference could give him extra ammunition. He is correct in saying vacancies were between 10 to 12 and it's going down to eight and seven, but I don't think the Minister is really appreciating the extent of the problem and that's what I was trying to say in my Member's statement. The voice is growing stronger and stronger. One of the concerns I am hearing is the people who should be interviewed for this review are hesitant about speaking out. What is the Minister doing to ensure the staff involved, who should be interviewed in order for this review to be well done and fairly done, know that it is safe and it is okay to be involved in this process? There is that much caution and alarm among the employees, from my understanding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 216-15(3): Review Of Human Resources At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to also say that I know there are a lot of happy workers at the North Slave Correctional Centre. It's not as if the entire staff are unhappy. The times have changed and the change in approach has added to the issue of contentment with the workplace. Not all of the staff are pleased with the change in direction and the change in the way the facility deals with inmates. That has caused some concerns among some of the staff. However, a large number of the staff welcome the change and are satisfied with the terms of their employment there.

Now I want to make sure that everybody knows that there are no implications for retribution if they speak to the people involved in reviewing human resources practices at the facility. I will say that publicly and on the record. This is an internal review. It's not something where we are looking to hang people out to dry. This is something being done entirely within the department to help the department identify strengths and deal with weaknesses where they are found. Therefore, it isn't a situation where people should be concerned about addressing issues if they have them. We are just looking to make sure that we are doing things right now and, if not, that we find a way to do things better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Question 217-15(3): Income Support For Persons With Permanent Disabilities**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on the Income Support program in relation to persons with permanent disabilities. Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, persons with permanent disabilities receive an enhanced benefit through the Income Support program for their permanent disability. I just wanted to ask the Minister if he and his department have taken into consideration any available option of creating a program that is separate from an alternative to

the Income Support program for people with permanent handicaps in the NWT, so it would not be considered as an enhanced benefit in the Income Support program? I have a really hard time with a person with a permanent disability receiving something that's supposed to be enhanced. Can the Minister give me some clarification on that? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

**Return To Question 217-15(3): Income Support For Persons With Permanent Disabilities**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The intent is to recognize that some people face different challenges. In order to accommodate that, the benefits can't be the same for everybody. That's why the program has been set up as it is. Most jurisdictions in Canada provide some kind of additional benefit for people with challenges or disabilities, so we have taken the same sort of approach. All of our programs are provided under the wings of the Income Support program. All of our programs provide support to people. For instance, the Seniors' Fuel Subsidy is an Income Support program. Student Financial Assistance is an Income Support program. That's where all of our programs where we provide assistance to individuals are housed. I am not sure how we can separate part of it because we are convinced that the best way to administer programs that provide support to individuals is to house them in one area, so that we have the same people dealing with the same sorts of issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Supplementary To Question 217-15(3): Income Support For Persons With Permanent Disabilities**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know they are all under the Income Support program and under the one department, but many people with these permanent disabilities are in households with other people who are under different Income Assistance programs. In a revision in July 8, 2002, in the eligibility requirements of the Income Support program, it states for the purposes of clarity if either the head of the household or spouse and family is disqualified for any valid reason under the regulations and policies of the Income Assistance program, the disqualifications extend to the family. So if we have disabled people in that family who are receiving income assistance, their disqualifications are carried through because of a family member who has been disqualified from income assistance under a different program. So I don't think it's really fair that anybody with a disabled family member with a permanent disability be dinged twice for them making some ends meet over the year and making a bit of money to help their disabled family members. All of a sudden, Income Support is cutting off all family members from Income Support throughout the whole program for anybody in the family. I would like some clarification on why the revision was made to the eligibility requirement in the program regulations. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 217-15(3): Income Support For Persons With Permanent Disabilities**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member sounds like he might be talking about a specific situation. Perhaps it would be best if we could get to the bottom of this by meeting and reviewing the circumstances around that situation. I'd be happy to commit to doing that with the Member if he would like to meet with me outside so we can discuss this specific file or family.

In terms of the program, the Member is right; it is set up so it recognizes the income that comes into the household. That's done in order to live with the philosophy that we all must first rely on our families before we start to look to government for support. It supports the government's objective of independent people in the Northwest Territories. There are always reasons to take a look at individual circumstances, so, again, I would be prepared to meet with the Member and see if there are some extenuating circumstances involved in the issue he's looking at right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Supplementary To Question 217-15(3): Income Support For Persons With Permanent Disabilities**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to meet with the Minister to discuss some of the clients that have brought this matter to my attention.

Just on another note, Mr. Speaker, with regard to some of the applicant responsibilities in reference to their permanent handicap. In our Income Support program, the disability allowance is classified as an enhanced benefit. Our clients must meet -- and it states very clearly -- all of the following criteria to qualify for this allowance of \$300 a month. There are eight bullets in those criteria. In the Alberta program, which is the Assured Income to the Severely Handicapped program, in the applicant's responsibilities to the eligibility requirements there are only four bullets. Basically, on the disability and enhanced benefit of the Income Support, the first bullet states that the client must have a severe disability that substantially limits their ability to earn a living.

Mr. Speaker, I think that criteria right there speaks for itself. I don't think that people with severe disabilities or handicaps should have to go through the other six or seven bullets that really don't have any real significance to the whole program. This government is supposedly trying to create an atmosphere of independent living and sustainability. Maybe the Minister could just elaborate on why there is such a big list of eligibility criteria for persons with severe handicaps. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 217-15(3): Income Support For Persons With Permanent Disabilities**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to review that listing of criteria and take a look at those bullets and see if they remain appropriate. I think it's important to remember that our basic Income Support program provides better support to individuals than does the Alberta program. So AISH

doesn't come near what we provide in the basic program, let alone what we offer in the enhanced program. I would be happy, though, to review those criteria. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. One short, final supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Supplementary To Question 217-15(3): Income Support For Persons With Permanent Disabilities**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just on that last point. It's good that the Minister stated that our program offers a little bit more monetary value to the clients, I guess, but basically there is no assurance that clients are going to receive this disability benefit every month based on the regulations and policies set out in the Income Support program. In the Alberta model, it's assured income. Regardless of other family members' incomes, it states that if you are severely handicapped...

**MR. SPEAKER:** Do you have a question, Mr. Villeneuve?

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** ...(inaudible)...benefit. I'm just wondering why this government is any different. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 217-15(3): Income Support For Persons With Permanent Disabilities**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will review the Alberta program and our program and I believe that our program is substantially better, but if it's found wanting I'll certainly respond back to the Member and take a look at what we can do to address any inequities. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

**Question 218-15(3): Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. My question is for the Minister of Justice. Given that the total complement of RCMP officers in the NWT was increased in April of this year, and given that the total complement of RCMP officers at the Fort Simpson detachment was decreased at the same time, can the Minister of Justice determine why there has been such a significant relative decrease in the need for police services in the Nahendeh riding? I'll just rephrase that. Can the Minister of Justice determine why there has been such a significant decrease for the need of police services in the Nahendeh riding while there's an overall increase in the NWT? Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister of Justice, the Honourable Charles Dent.

**Return To Question 218-15(3): Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Member is aware, the RCMP determines the need for staffing and where their staff are located. I have discussed the issue with the chief superintendent. He's assured me that based on the coverage in the

Northwest Territories, they have about 177 members in the Northwest Territories, plus support staff; so a total complement of about 200. They've taken a look at what the needs are based on crime across the Northwest Territories, and he has assured me that their decisions about where staff are located are based entirely on need and that the Nahendeh region has a substantially lower crime rate than many other regions. Because of that and because of the staffing levels -- they only have the 177 members to work with -- they've had to choose where to put them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

**Supplementary To Question 218-15(3): Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the RCMP have determined that the need for police officers in the Nahendeh riding has decreased, and given that the number of police officers working in the NWT has increased, can the Minister determine precisely where in the NWT has there been such a significant increase in the need for police services? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 218-15(3): Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been a real growth, particularly in the southern part of the Northwest Territories, in the drug trade which has caused a need for greater resources in this region. We've seen a number of larger drug busts in Hay River, Yellowknife, and along the highway recently. That's certainly lead to some of the concerns. Further north, in the Delta, because of the oil and gas activity, there's been an increase, too, in crime. That's led to some of the changes. The ruling that we could no longer have single-person detachments has also caused us to have to increase staff over the past two years because we could no longer have detachments with just one member or leave detachments with one member when a member went on holidays or had to leave to attend court. What that has caused the RCMP to do is increase staffing in some areas so that they have people available to travel to communities when one of the officers is going to be away. So, for instance, somebody based in Inuvik now goes to Sachs Harbour or Paulatuk when one of the officers there is going to be away on holidays or on training. Before we would have had to remove the other officer that was in Paulatuk because you couldn't leave one officer alone.

So a lot of the increase has gone to make sure that we can continue with staffing in the smaller communities and to provide increased services to those communities without any staff at all. For instance, there has been a pretty significant increase in the number of visits this year to communities like Sachs Harbour that don't have resident RCMP at all, because the RCMP has been able to increase their staff in the Inuvik region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

**Supplementary To Question 218-15(3): Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I thank the Minister for his response. So far, the only explanation that we have received for reducing the police services in the Fort Simpson detachment is that it was made based on crime statistics and other indicators. Given that this decision will affect the safety and wellbeing of everyone in my riding, can the Minister of Justice determine precisely what factors or indicators were considered in making the decision so that we in the Nahendeh riding can determine what must happen in order to have the position returned to us or even, indeed, maintain our present staffing level? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 218-15(3): Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would argue that this is a good thing. I don't think that Mr. Menicoche would want to see the statistics change so that his region needed another RCMP officer. What I have heard from the RCMP is that based on what they see in the Nahendeh region, there is less need for policing than there is in other regions. That, Mr. Speaker, is good news. It means that there is not as high a crime rate there. In terms of the other factors, I am not sure what other factors they may have used. I can certainly ask the RCMP to outline those to me and I will forward that on to Mr. Menicoche as soon as I have that information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Your final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

**Supplementary To Question 218-15(3): Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago we had a public meeting with the RCMP. One of the officers did indicate that they hate to be proved wrong or proved right. I, too, hate to risk the lives or risk a major incident that will threaten the safety and wellbeing of our constituents that they were wrong in doing this. I believe it was a wrong decision, I maintain that, just for the mere fact that some of the changes in the community affect the outlying smaller communities like Wrigley, Jean Marie and Nahanni Butte. One of them was the government liberalizing the alcohol rationing system in Fort Simpson. People are accessing more booze, and they are bringing it to the communities and in Fort Simpson itself. As well, of course, increased development that is already happening; there are drifters in the community disrupting the balance that is there right now. I would just like to ask, will the government and the Minister indicate our displeasure and lobby for us to maintain our existing staffing levels in that Fort Simpson RCMP detachment? Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 218-15(3): Reduction Of RCMP Services In Nahendeh**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the RCMP review their staffing needs across the

Northwest Territories on a regular basis. About three or four years ago, they did a study that showed that across the Northwest Territories they needed an extra 27 members. At this point, this government has not come up yet with enough money to fill those 27 positions. I will certainly be working with my colleagues to try and finish that up in the next budget so that we can achieve that. I would expect that shortly after we have done that, since it has been a number of years, that the RCMP will again embark on a study or review of what their needs are across the Territories. Certainly, with the filing of the pipeline application, I expect that they will have some concerns about policing along the route of the pipeline. I would expect that they will then be coming forward to this government with a request to deal with what may be a shortage of personnel at that time. At that point, it will be up to us to try and respond. That is the process. We will continue to work with them to try and make sure that the public safety needs across the North are adequately met. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Question 219-15(3): Community Court Circuit Schedule Reduction**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice. I don't remember exactly when it was, but in this House, the issue has already been raised with respect to the court circuit schedule to the communities, whereby a judge and court party goes into the communities and hears the cases that are before the courts there. Not so long ago, this schedule and services were seriously reduced. The number of days in the community and the frequency of visits to the communities were reduced. I would like to know if the Minister has been tracking this, following this, finding out information like how many cases are having to be put over to the next time the court party is back. I still think it is a problem. I would like to know if he is aware of that problem. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Minister of Justice, the Honourable Mr. Dent.

**Return To Question 219-15(3): Community Court Circuit Schedule Reduction**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I was aware of the concern. It was addressed to the House earlier. I met with the chief judge to discuss a number of issues. This was one of the issues that we discussed. The chief judge assured me that this change would not impact on the delivery of justice and that the court circuit would be adequate. I know that it is an issue that is watched regularly. I have recently, within the last few weeks, been in receipt of e-mails discussing the numbers of cases in different communities. In fact, the suggestion is that this has not caused a problem. So it is being tracked. It is being watched. Yes, I am kept up to date on that watch. It does not, at this point, appear to have caused any problems in the delivery of justice. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Supplementary To Question 219-15(3): Community Court Circuit Schedule Reduction**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sometimes there is a delay or an interval of up to six weeks or longer in some communities between the time that a person could theoretically be charged with an offence and when they would have a chance to have a preliminary examination of that charge in the courts. Mr. Speaker, the Minister himself referred to the increase in things such as drug busts, activity in drug trade, certainly very publicized situations with vandalism in some of the communities like Fort Smith and other places. It would seem that, in fact, the number of cases coming before the courts would be more. We have heard from Mr. Menicoche today that there is a court worker issue, as well, to prepare for these cases to be heard. I do not believe that it is sufficient. The new chief justice is the one who put this schedule into place. The Minister says he is satisfied, but I am not satisfied. I would like to have evidence of the number of cases that are being put over because of this lack of resources being dedicated to our court services. I would like to have that information presented here in the House. Is the Minister prepared to do that?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 219-15(3): Community Court Circuit Schedule Reduction**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to contact the courts and see what sorts of information we can put together. I can't promise it for tomorrow, but I could let the Member know within the next 24 hours how long it will take us to put the information together that we can get. I would be pleased to present that information.

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

**Question 220-15(3): Procedures for Accessing Court Translation Services**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Honourable Mr. Charles Dent, the Minister of Justice. In small communities, we have court workers and interpreters. Sometimes these probation officers are used as interpreters at court proceedings. I would like to ask the Minister where are the procedures in terms of allowing these probation workers, court workers to assist clients that have to go to court who have to use an aboriginal language as a means to participate in court proceedings for translating services? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

**Return To Question 220-15(3): Procedures for Accessing Court Translation Services**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize if I am not answering the right question. I was having difficulty hearing the Member in his question. I believe it's important to note that everybody is entitled to have a case heard in court in their language and if they need to have

an interpreter, one must be provided by the courts. So the judge is the one who has to be satisfied that the quality of the interpretation is good, and it's up to the person who needs interpreting to make sure that that need is communicated to the court. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Supplementary To Question 220-15(3): Procedures for Accessing Court Translation Services**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The honourable Minister answered part of the question. I would like to ask the Minister also is there any specific policies within the Department of Justice that allows a probation officer, in case some of their communities don't have court workers or trained interpreters in the legal system, in the region to assist clients in the court setting to help them in the proceedings? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 220-15(3): Procedures for Accessing Court Translation Services**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to honestly say I don't know whether that's possible. It would seem a reasonable approach if that person was available and if they could provide the service to the courts, but they may have other job-related duties. I'll have to look into that and get back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Supplementary To Question 220-15(3): Procedures for Accessing Court Translation Services**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Mr. Minister. In some cases because of the technicalities of the legal translation into Slavey languages it's really important that we have good trained interpreters or translators to do the work on behalf of our people. I'd like to ask the Minister if he would commit to looking into the use of probation officers who work in the field who could help clients in court proceedings where sometimes we don't have any services in the small communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 220-15(3): Procedures for Accessing Court Translation Services**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my previous answer, I'll look into that and I will get back to the Member on the issue.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Supplementary To Question 220-15(3): Procedures for Accessing Court Translation Services**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to ask the Minister of Justice if he would consider looking at alternatives for the communities where sometimes it is not possible to have, in terms of the costing and in terms of the travel, different alternatives to

having translation provided in our communities and that he would look at having that done in the communities where a little bit of training could take place for our local interpreters to take and train just in case things don't work out with the workers that come into our communities to do court proceedings? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 220-15(3): Procedures for Accessing Court Translation Services**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could talk to the Minister of Education about this.

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The Department of Justice used to offer a Legal Interpreters Program. In 1995 the program was ended and Aurora College took over offering the certification program. The program was set at one year and part of it included legal interpretation and health interpretation to help make sure that interpreters and translators could deal with the increasingly complex world today that we live in. Unfortunately, over the years the enrollment in that program has declined to such an extent that the college can no longer offer it because they've had nobody enrolling in the program. I can certainly discuss with the college perhaps looking at offering the program in one or two regions every once in a while to see whether or not there is some interest, but at this point it's been a real problem because we haven't been able to find the interest among people to take the courses in order to offer it. But I will certainly make sure that I have that discussion with the college about rotational delivery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

**Question 221-15(3): Private Sector Investment In Housing Development**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation and it's a follow through. First question, it's a follow through to an area that I know the Minister has himself favoured in another life of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and it's about affordability and availability of housing, especially on a rental side. Mr. Speaker, while the private sector and their investment is the ideal way to address this issue, we are seeing here in Yellowknife continuing upward pressure on rents and availability; and in a report that I heard on the news last week, Inuvik is even in more dire straits here. My point here, Mr. Speaker, is that while housing is a multi-level responsibility of federal, territorial, provincial and municipal governments, what are we doing as the NWT government and the NWT Housing Corporation to alleviate this problem and to provide incentives to the private sector to do what they do best, which is to build and develop? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, the Honourable Mr. Krutko.

**Return To Question 221-15(3): Private Sector Investment In Housing Development**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regard to the one for housing, we did a needs survey which identified that we do have a major problem especially when it comes to affordability of housing, but most importantly the investment to increase the amount of housing in the Northwest Territories. In Yellowknife we see a lot of development happening where the private sector has stepped in. They have taken a lot of slack off in regard to ensuring that they have a thriving industry in regard to the retail industry in providing housing for the residents of the larger sectors. What we also see is that in a lot of the smaller isolated communities there is no investment, and that is where we are having a real problem in regard to delivering this program. We do have programs by way of the Loan Guarantee Program to assist the private sector to get into that market. That's something that I have been doing over the summer is meeting with people through the different development corporations, the different housing authorities, to get them more involved in the business of building housing.

As a corporation we can't do it alone, we need the private sector. So that is something we are working on. We do have programs available to assist in that area so that we are working with the private sector, but more importantly through our Loan Guarantee Program we have been working with a lot of major companies. Again, a lot of these corporations will not take the risk in the smaller communities because they know they cannot get these loan guarantees or they don't have a big enough client base to take on that investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

**Supplementary To Question 221-15(3): Private Sector Investment In Housing Development**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Loan Guarantee Program I am familiar with and I know there has been some uptake and it is a good program. But what else can government do? I suggest that there are a number of other areas in conjunction with working with other levels of government, including our partners in municipalities, to provide incentives and tax breaks and things like this. Our corporation could be a major stimulator or catalyst for this kind of thing. I would like to ask the Minister, is the Housing Corporation considering going into other areas to help stimulate private sector investment? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Krutko.

**Further Return To Question 221-15(3): Private Sector Investment In Housing Development**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a corporation, we are developing our 10-year plan. We are looking at different initiatives. We all know that we are seeing a major decline in the amount of money we get through CMHC, so we are looking at new initiatives. One of the different initiatives we are looking at is selling off a bunch of our assets to make our units more operational. Right now, we are paying a large amount of our dollars on the operational side, in regards to the water, the sewer, the electricity. The utilities are very high in a lot of our communities. We have to find ways of bringing

down that cost so we could put more money into building more economically-efficient units. We are looking at multi-units to be able to do that, where you have one mechanical system. You don't have all of these independent housing units which are costing us a lot of money. In order to do that, we have to be able to find ways of streamlining how we do our business but also get into the area of making it more economically affordable, and also on the operational side that we don't spend one-third of our money.

I will use an example. In Tulita we are spending almost \$400,000 a year just on power. That is a large expense that is being expended. We have to find ways of streamlining our dollars, but being more competitive and also finding ways of being more economically sufficient in the way we deliver our programs, especially on the operational side. We are looking at that. We are looking at building more multiplex units, six or eight-plex units, and also ensuring that it is a more affordable way of developing housing. We also need a bigger client base that have these individual units constructed. We are looking at that. It is part of our 10-year plan.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

**Supplementary To Question 221-15(3): Private Sector Investment In Housing Development**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take it from the Minister's answer that there is a considerable focus going on in the Housing Corporation for social renewing and modernizing our social housing inventory. I certainly support that. I restated or refined my question to look at the market communities, Mr. Speaker, where we already have a private sector base of developers and builders. But, for whatever reason, just in keeping up with demand, therefore, affordability and availability is very difficult. Is the corporation looking at all at anything beyond loan guarantees to the private sector to stimulate more construction in market communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Krutko.

**Further Return To Question 221-15(3): Private Sector Investment In Housing Development**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are doing exactly what the Member is stating. We are working with the private sector through loan guarantees. They are building units here in the city of Yellowknife. In regards to that market, we presently have loan guarantees with companies here in the city of Yellowknife which basically are in the retail business. We are open to that business with any other corporation that is out there. There is that program that is there to stimulate that segment of the economy through these loan guarantees.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Final supplementary, Mr. Braden.

**Supplementary To Question 221-15(3): Private Sector Investment In Housing Development**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you. I think I have my answer there. The areas that I believe our corporation has not explored and that I would like to see some more action on,

more investigation on, Mr. Speaker, are things like tax breaks to developers who create housing for lower and middle income people, and modest grants. I am not talking about something that is going to be a market disrupter, but I would like to see modest grants to developers for that area. Work with tax-based municipalities in order to help them afford some tax incentives for people, investors, to develop this kind of thing. That is where I believe we have room to grow. Be more innovative and be more aggressive. I will ask as my final question, what is the appetite of our Housing Corporation to continue these other innovations in incentives to builders? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Krutko.

**Further Return To Question 221-15(3): Private Sector Investment In Housing Development**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now a lot of programs that we do deliver are programs that we administer on behalf of the CMHC. A lot of the direction we do get is federal programs. We just administer it on behalf of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I have had a meeting with the federal Minister of Housing. We did discuss looking at the whole mandate of the corporation and look at restructuring it, as we heard in regards to the address by the Prime Minister and also from the Governor General in the Speech from the Throne. Basically, it was clear that housing is an issue that we have to look at nationally. It doesn't only affect us here in the Northwest Territories, but we also have to be able to look at ways that we deliver housing by looking at a unique system that works for the Northwest Territories. Right now, the direction I was given as the Minister is to look at the mandate of the corporation and streamline the corporation so that we are focusing more on affordability of housing in the Northwest Territories, but also ensuring that we have the resources to continue to meet the demand that is out there.

Like I stated, right now, we have 2,300 units in the Northwest Territories. We realize that, from the information we are getting, we are going to need another 3,000 in the next period of time. At the rate we are going, we are not going to get there. We have to be unique with regard to how we deal with that, but more importantly, we have to work within the confines of the dollars that we do get from the federal government. Thank you.

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

**Question 222-15(3): Senior Management Turnover At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few more questions in regard to the North Slave Correctional Centre. I would like to go back to what the Minister was saying in terms of his being satisfied with the staffing levels at the North Slave Correctional Centre. I would like to ask him how he maintains his satisfaction level when, in the last four years, his department has gone through no less than three wardens, five deputy wardens, three deputy wardens of programs, and three deputy wardens of administration? How is that satisfaction? What is the Minister's definition of satisfied? Has he or his department got any long-term senior management plan for that facility? Perhaps stabilizing these key positions would be a good start. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. There are probably two or three questions there. Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

**Return To Question 222-15(3): Senior Management Turnover At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Mr. Speaker, I heard way more than two. I am not sure I can remember them all, in fact. We were talking about staffing and vacancies earlier. I pointed out that the number of vacancies has reduced over the past year and is going down very quickly because of the numbers of new trainees who started on October 4<sup>th</sup>. The Member has pointed out that there have been some changes. We have had a lot of changes related to people working in new positions and learning more about their jobs. There is ongoing training. The training programs are being set up to be online training programs so that all of the staff can participate in them. They can study at their own speed and move forward to take advantage of opportunities. There has been a lot of use of secondment in order to take advantage of knowledge from people from other jurisdictions, for instance. We have had people on secondment from Corrections Canada so that we...

---Laughter

Excuse me. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. We have taken advantage of people's knowledge from Corrections Canada by bringing them into the system. I am aware of a number of other changes that have been made in order to further opportunities for people for personal growth so that they can apply successfully on senior positions as they open up. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Time for question period has expired, but, Mr. Ramsay, I will allow you a supplementary question.

**Supplementary To Question 222-15(3): Senior Management Turnover At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of my four questions, the last one was, if the department had a long-term senior management plan in place for that facility, and by the sounds of it, it is a revolving door, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear in the Minister's response whether or not they indeed had a plan to try to get some stability in these key positions. By the sounds of it, they are moving people in and out at will. I think that is part of the problem that is currently at play at the North Slave Correctional Centre. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 222-15(3): Senior Management Turnover At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we have been trying to take advantage secondments to learn from other people. Yes, we have continuous training going on. We have people who work within the Department of Justice to help the staff in all of our facilities develop their skills so that they are better managers. Yes,

we are working with staff to try and improve the jobs that they do. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

**Supplementary To Question 222-15(3): Senior Management Turnover At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I go back to something else the Minister said. That is in regards to people speaking out. The Minister said that they wouldn't be hung out to dry. In my experience, Mr. Speaker, these people have had a bull's eye squarely put on their back. I don't think that is fair. I wanted to ask the Minister why he said this would happen, when, in fact, through my experience, it happens. People that speak out are painted with a bull's eye squarely on their back and they are left to fend for themselves in that type of environment. It is not fair, Mr. Speaker. I just want the Minister to clarify what he meant that they wouldn't be hung out to dry. In some instances, they definitely are. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 222-15(3): Senior Management Turnover At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Mr. Speaker, that is pure speculation on the Member's part, that that would happen here. I don't believe that it would. I don't think that the department or the administration now is interested in doing that. I think the interest is genuinely there to make sure that we are doing procedures properly and to identify areas if we are not so that we can strengthen the good and replace the bad. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

**Supplementary To Question 222-15(3): Senior Management Turnover At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some more questions, and perhaps tomorrow I will ask these questions, but the last question I have for the Minister today is I just wanted to know how this experiment of going from a security type of institutional setting that typifies a correctional facility to this healing and holistic type of programming is going. What success has been seen to date? If I could, Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to ask how including federal inmates that are housed in the North Slave Correctional Centre impacts this healing and holistic approach and how they are dealt with with the federal inmates as well? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

**Further Return To Question 222-15(3): Senior Management Turnover At The North Slave Correctional Centre**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My learned colleague on the other side has certainly found a way to get in 23 questions when you are only supposed to have four. I will answer those last two, though. In regards to including the federal inmates within the population, it is important to remember that the institution is not maximum



security. So the types of individuals who would be considered for placement there by Corrections Canada are going to be consistent with the type of individual that we have in the population generally right now. We certainly take a look at people. If somebody is not suitable to the population, they don't have to stay within our population. They could find themselves transferred to an institution down south very quickly if they turn out to be not suitable. I have been aware of a number of times that that has happened just in the months that I have been Minister. I know that that sort of issue is watched very carefully. In terms of whether or not this experiment has turned out to be a success, that is like asking, after we expand schooling to include kindergarten, whether or not it is a success after six months. You can't say that. It is way too early to give that sort of answer. This will take a number of years to prove whether or not it was the right thing to do. What we do know is that the old standard of throwing them into jail and throwing away the key wasn't working. It wasn't accomplishing anything. It wasn't helping people to stop from coming back. Jail was just a revolving door. They got out, they came back. There was nothing that we could point to that was helping people to become ready to participate in society. We are hoping that this experiment will work, but it will be some time before you can point to empirical evidence to show it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 8, written questions. Honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

#### ITEM 8: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

##### Written Question 34-15(3): Fort Good Hope Water Treatment Plant

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of MACA regarding the water treatment plant in Fort Good Hope.

At the Sahtu elders' gathering in Deline on August 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> of this year, several of Fort Good Hope's elders wanted to know about the quality of the water at the Fort Good Hope treatment plant.

1. How often is the water "tested" for quality purposes?
2. What types of maintenance are done on the treatment plant and how often?
3. Are there other water treatment plants in the Northwest Territories similar to Fort Good Hope's?
4. Will the department meet with the Fort Good Hope elders to talk about the results of the report once completed?

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents.

#### ITEM 13: TABELING OF DOCUMENTS

##### Tabled Document 64-15(3): Pension Administration Report - Retiring Allowances Act And Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, At March 31, 2004

In accordance with section 21 of the Retiring Allowances Act, and section 11.1 of the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, I hereby table the Pension Administration Report - Retiring Allowances Act and Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, at March 31, 2004.

Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, 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. Before us today for Committee of the Whole we have Minister's statement 48-15(3), Sessional Statement, from the Premier, and Minister's Statement 49-15(3), Fiscal Update, presented by Minister Roland. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** I move for a break.

---Laughter

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I will ask again, what is the wish of the committee with respect to these two Ministers' statements?

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** We wish to consider the Sessional Statement, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Is the committee agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Okay. We will take a break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I will call Committee of the Whole to order, and the first item we have today is Minister's Statement 48-15(3), Sessional Statement, that was presented by Premier Handley. Are there any general comments? We're going to ask Premier Handley to respond to any comments and questions from where he's sitting in the Chamber and I would ask the Members if there are any general comments. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Certainly I'm really pleased to see some of the updates and some of the achievements of our visions that we had when we began the Assembly, that we developed in January and February; in particular with regard to the challenging needs of our health and social services needs of all the communities and our whole territory. There was also some progress on addressing our formula financing needs. In particular, I think one of the best things that we've achieved so far to date, of course, is balancing our budget for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. That was quite an

achievement in itself and that's one of the things that the constituents that I represent certainly were looking for when they asked me to represent them as MLA for the Nahendeh riding.

That being said, a lot of the constituents have been saying housing is indeed a priority for all the residents and communities, not only in my riding, but throughout the NWT as a whole. My opinion on that is that it doesn't seem that the government is making it as high a priority as everything else. Some of our achievements to date could make room for making housing more of a priority. I believe over the last three or four years we say housing is a priority, Madam Chair, but our budget continually seems to decline in the housing area. I'd like to bring that to the forefront and say if housing is such a priority for our government, then let's actually do something about it. I know that we're trying to address that the best that we can now, but some of the things we're going to need even I don't like saying, but we need a huge capital injection just to get some sustainable baseline for housing.

I'd just like to know what the government's plan for housing in the next year or few years is in terms of making it an actual priority for our government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Handley.

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Member's comments and we have been working hard to achieve our strategy that we collectively set out. I also must say that I'm satisfied with the progress we've made in a number of areas. I agree that housing continues to probably be the single biggest and most widespread problem. There are very few communities without issues around housing.

I just want to make a few comments and then I'd like to, Madam Chair, ask the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation to provide more detail on what we may be doing. We have, as you know, as we've said in this House, tried the non-subsidized or unsubsidized housing project which, I think, worked with considerable success. I know Mr. Krutko has met with the federal Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation along with our MP, Minister of Northern Development. He has also looked at some potential projects that we could undertake with those who are providing temporary accommodation for pipeline workers, assuming that the pipeline goes ahead.

In terms of capital injection, yes, we probably do need a capital injection in housing, but at the same time we also need to continue to work toward having people become more self-reliant, more responsible for the care and maintenance of their own homes, so they have that sense of pride. That will continue to be a theme that our government will carry out, as well as trying to meet the capital needs that are necessary.

Madam Chair, I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation if he would like to elaborate on this further. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Krutko.

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. I've had several meetings with key stakeholders in this. I have met with the Minister responsible for Housing, Mr. Fontana. I've met with Ethel Blondin-Andrew, who is now the Secretary of State responsible for Northern Development. I also had a meeting with Bill Erasmus with AFN. They also are looking at housing being one of the critical issues, especially for First Nation communities across Canada.

It is high on the agenda across the nation and I think by building these working relationships through reorganizing and realizing our challenges are different in the North, I think we do need a major influx of program dollars. CMHC backed out of the whole area of social housing a number of years ago and now we're feeling the effects of that. In the last two years we've had a decline in the amount of money we get for social housing from CMHC. I think because of that, we have to be motivated into finding new ways of continuing to deliver programs and continuing at a faster pace.

I've also been meeting with people in the different sectors with regard to people in the manufacturing sectors and also with our market housing. Regarding market housing, as far as I've seen it, we have put 22 units in place. They're still not occupied yet. Again, there are 66 beds in seven communities that weren't there before. We have to try these different initiatives of trying to meet the many restraints we have, especially in smaller communities. The investment has dropped off, but I think we have to work with other organizations.

We have a major project on our doorstep with regard to the pipeline. We're looking at 300-man camps that are going to be constructed up and down the valley for the construction of this pipeline. I think working with industry, making them aware that we have to have a legacy that when these projects happen that at the end of the day we're not left without anything. One of the things I've been working on with the different companies is looking at the pre-design, preconstruction of these units that are going to come to the Northwest Territories and design them in such a way that they're able to configure them so they can be converted from industrial trailers into usable residential units. That's another way that we can look at not only saving costs for ourselves, but making these units affordable to people in communities that can use them right after these projects are over. That we don't have these massive camps which get trucked in, put on a barge, taken up to the project, used for three years and then demobilized, put back on the barge, sent back south and that's the end of it. I think we have to be unique in how we look at housing. So we are looking at it in different areas.

But I think as Members of the Legislative Assembly and ourselves, we do have to look outside the box. We're always restricted to CMHC standards. We have to follow their rules. They tell us what programs to deliver, but I think we have a unique opportunity here now with looking at the mandate of the corporation. We should be tabling here shortly phase two with regard to our needs surveys. We need to look at the seniors, single people and disabled people, how they fit in this picture and come forward with our 10-year plan and see where we go in the next 10 years. We want to work with Members in the House to find ways to get us out of this hiccup. We have to do something drastic to find the money to build almost 3,000 units just to meet the demand that's there right now.

We have had the private sector come on board, assisting us in different areas, but again, we have to find new ways of building these partnerships with the federal government, with AFN through the aboriginal funding programs they have, ourselves as government and people in the private sector. So those are some of the things that we are looking at to try and move ahead. But definitely having an influx of resources in this area will definitely help, because there are some communities where we've seen a little bit of decline with regard to the needs surveys and seeing that we have made some gains in that area. In other areas we have not seen the change. The numbers are still constant. We have to start trying to find ways of being open-minded to realize that we may need to try something different. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. With five seconds on the clock, Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Premier and the Minister for their kind response and I think above all, if anything, I'd just like to say to the government let's highlight this, let's move it up on our agenda. Let's take more of an active approach on addressing our needs.

In my riding alone, I think there's one particular community that really skews it. It's actually Fort Liard. Just for that place alone to get all their houses back up to snuff, be it for whatever reason that their houses have been left by the wayside and it hasn't really been addressed. I always tell people Fort Liard is always left out in the cold just because on the geographic map, they actually are in the corner and people forget about them, but I'm not. I was just talking with some of the housing experts. We're looking at almost \$750,000 for that community alone just to get things back up to square one and address those needs. The Premier himself said in his statement, healthy people need healthy homes. It's one of the basic necessities in life.

With that, I'd just like to encourage the government to continue. Every time we do sessional statements or produce updates on our vision for this Assembly, we keep moving housing higher and higher to the forefront. I'm proud of the Minister, too, for speaking with the federal Ministers, because I was never very comfortable with CMHC. I think it was over a 10-year period they were going to decline our social programming dollars down to nothing. I still think that we do have a case in saying it's premature. In fact, we're not even self-sufficient. I'll just conclude with that, Madam Chair. Mahsi cho.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I have on the list Mr. Braden and Mr. Yakeleya for general comments. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The sessional statement was a very extensive checklist of the initiatives that this Assembly has undertaken. Also, I think it covered a fair number of ongoing programs and projects that carry through from previous assemblies. I guess in this particular message, Madam Chair, I didn't see any pronouncements or announcements of anything substantively new. Perhaps my expectations were maybe a little out of line in that respect, but it is an opportunity for the government to signal some new things that may be taking place out there or that are in the offing. It's the kind of thing that I would encourage the Premier and the Cabinet to undertake, especially at the start of a session,

as something that gives us a fresh platform and projects a strong and positive and proactive government at work in contrast to, I guess, as I say, Madam Chair, sort of a checklist or a review of essentially what we already know is underway.

Something that is becoming more and more evident in our government and in the kinds of decisions and initiatives that we can undertake is that we have less and less discretion as a territorial government to make strong, forward-looking, innovative moves. The kind of thing that I'm looking at -- and I'll just give one example, Madam Chair -- would be in the field of advanced educational research. I think that there is a great potential in the North, a great need and a great potential to really advance the areas of science and technology. I would really like to see the NWT, I think as our partners or sister territories of Nunavut and Yukon are going to be doing, jumping on board national and international programs to advance sciences. We have so little discretion in our capital planning. We have so little capacity within our civil service. There is so little capacity at the level of industry to undertake this kind of forward-looking initiative, because we're working so hard at keeping up with the essentials and the forced needs that we find ourselves dealing with because of all the economic activity that's going on.

In the last Assembly, Madam Chair, the phrase was coined, "we're going broke looking after all this prosperity" and it's true. In the last few weeks we've gone through business plans. We'll see more of that in the coming months as the budget process opens up. We've got so little room here to grow this Northwest Territories. I'd like to say from my point of view, I'm becoming more frustrated with the lack of discretion, the lack of opportunity that I see here in this Legislature, as an Assembly, as committee members, as Cabinet, for us to really say this particular project is a good idea, let's use the sciences one. But do we have the capacity or the room to do anything with it? No, not at all. It's because we have such more pressing needs looking after the housing, as we just talked about, the transportation, the water and sewer infrastructure, those kinds of things.

I reflect on what seems to be a growing list of things that are out there on maybe a stage or they're in a regulatory format or perhaps we're talking about an interim plan to do something. There's so much going on that's out of the control of the Northwest Territories, but it impacts us so heavily that we're in a bottleneck. We're in a kind of limbo stage here and I just wanted to try and illustrate this from my point of view, Madam Chair, as something that is one of the dynamics that we're playing with right now. We don't know if a pipeline is going to go ahead, but, by golly, we better make tens of millions of dollars of investment in training alone to be ready for something that we don't really know is there. Hydro developments; wonderful legacies of both the mining and oil and gas industries that we just don't know if we should do it yet because we're not there yet.

The devolution arrangements that we've talked about in the last couple of days; maybe it's going to be really hard because there are land claims and self-government agreements to get in place first and maybe we should do an interim agreement.

Without going on and on and on, Madam Chair, I wanted to illustrate that we're in a situation right now as a government where it's difficult to do more than manage on

a month-by-month or maybe a year-by-year basis. It's hard for this government to look that much further out because so many of these major, major projects are outside of our control. I won't say they're outside of our influence, we can certainly influence things, but it's a delicate time right now and kind of a frustrating time from my position here as an MLA.

To be a bit more specific on a couple of things that were mentioned in the Premier's sessional statement. We have so many forums and avenues for consultation and I really do want to strive to enhance, to grow, to strengthen, to build on the consensus style of government that we have right now. As a matter of fact, maybe Ottawa could be looking at what we're doing because they are learning with the minority situation they have down there, I think they are learning a little bit about how to try to achieve consensus and keep the place going. But we have the Intergovernmental Forum that was created about four years ago, the Aboriginal Summit not long after that. This spring we created, along with the municipalities and the aboriginal organizations, the Circle of Northern Leaders. So we have an abundance, and perhaps an over abundance, of various consultative and governance and decision-making agencies and avenues. I certainly don't want to say that I am against these, but to what level do we stop creating all these forums and actually start using them and engaging them in our work and unity that is so critical and so important to us in the next few months and years, Madam Chair, if we are going to really achieve a future for the Northwest Territories that is inclusive and is consensus building, and yet that allows so much diversity to co-exist? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. I didn't hear any questions there. Those, too, were general comments. I have next on the list Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Probably more or less a few minutes of comments in regard to the sessional statement by the Premier. More of what I am looking at is the vision for our people in the communities, where do they see this government going in five, 10, 15 years, and there are so many things that he highlighted in his sessional statement that I look forward to seeing happen within the lifetime of this government. I'm a little more concerned about the devolution and resource revenue sharing in terms of how it is going to affect the small communities and the self-government agreements and other agreements in our region. One issue that's really pressing is the housing in our region and to try and change that in this day and age with the conditions we live in in the community. But I think this government really needs to put a lot of money into housing issues. The houses need to be looked at, and any way that the Minister can look at putting these houses and fixing them up and getting them into the communities needs to be explored more.

The other one, Madam Chair, is the health issues in my region. Today I had the opportunity to go to the health clinic and the good doctor said all systems are a go for me. So I'm glad, because in Yellowknife you have a really good health system here. I was in Tulita, in the Sahtu, last week. Our health system is not as good as Yellowknife. You have to wait a long time for nurses and doctors and to receive some care there with specific things. Here it is really good. So I hope that one day the communities can move closer to see the types of services

that I received today in Yellowknife. This government needs to really invest a lot into the health care system and into the regions.

So I guess, Madam Chair, I was looking at this sessional statement and, like Mr. Braden says, it's like a report card and it's a good report card. I applaud the Ministers and Mr. Premier for doing good work with us in tough times, but I think we are stepping up a notch. We had a good meeting in Ottawa with the First Ministers and we got a good deal. I think that should happen with education, health and other issues that the Northwest Territories needs to take notice. I think we are on our way there. So I guess what I am hoping to see is that something that the people back in the communities can say yes, we're doing good, this government is doing good.

There's some hope with the pipeline and we're taking steps in that direction to see some benefits go into the communities and into the North. I hope that there are steps taken that decisions now will be made by our people. Sometimes we do things for our people up at this level here, and sometimes we need to give that responsibility to them to make their own decisions. The Premier mentioned that in his statement, that there is flexibility in terms of being open to how decisions are made and one region doesn't necessarily mean it hasn't been done in other regions. So I think that's the thing that the regions are looking for.

I just wanted to make those few comments, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Any further general comments on Premier Handley's sessional statement? Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, feel like it was a good sessional statement, but I'd like to keep in mind that there are a lot of hard issues being pressed here with this government. Some of the ideas that came to mind in his statement were regarding the resource revenue sharing. I think it's very important, Madam Chair, that we continue to really get something done from the federal government in this regard. It is very important for us to continue pursuing that matter. My comments are going to be general in regard to some of the items that came out in his statement.

With regard to housing needs, it's good to hear the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation talk about working with industry but, at the same time, if we continue to wait for them to come down here until a pipeline is built, that won't address the needs of the shortage of housing in the Territories. So we have to work in line with that also.

With regard to MACA and the new deal, I don't know how it will affect non-tax-based communities, but we have to be careful with that also. In the smaller communities, it is very hard to generate revenue.

Another item that caught my eye was with regard to the highway strategy. It's good you have \$158 million over five years, but again it's geared towards existing highways. I think somewhere down the road, like I have said in other forums, the Tuk-Inuvik highway can play a really big part with regard to the pipeline.

Regarding self-government, it's very important we continue pushing on with the aboriginal groups because they do have final agreements in place. They are just pursuing what's in the agreements they have. It's important we go through with that. These are just general comments, Madam Chair, that I thought I would bring forward. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Are there any further general comments? Mr. Handley.

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to respond to some of the comments that have been made. First of all, I would like to say that I really appreciate the advice and the recommendations, the criticisms and so on, that Members raise in this forum. I know a lot of what we have, for example, in a sessional statement may seem like a report card or may seem like old news. We have to keep in mind, at least from my perspective, that we know because we sit in committees and we talk about many of these things, but often the public is not included and may not be familiar. So when we put together a sessional statement, I try to do it in a way that is aimed at the public, so they will also hear the report card we are putting forward. I must say that in my experience people do appreciate that. In my constituency meetings, they often raise questions about some of these statements that we make. So I hope you will bear with me if it seems to be a bit old news, because I do that intentionally because it's important to the public to hear what we are doing.

We are in a year in our final quarter before we do the budget and I have always viewed the budget session as the time we would introduce a lot of new initiatives, and this would be the period where we would be reporting on what we have been doing with the appropriations that were voted the previous spring. With advice, I am certainly ready to look at how we can do it differently.

When we put together our strategy as a result of consultations, we did really zero in on very practical kinds of goals. We said good fiscal management was our first strategy, the second one was healthy, well-educated people in our communities, and the third was on well-governed communities. Those are the three strategies that our government has focussed on, because I do certainly agree with Mr. Yakeleya's statement that we need to make a difference to the people out in the communities and the people who have pretty basic needs. I hear you loud and clear on the housing issue, that that is something we have to pay attention to.

While we do rely, to a large extent, on the federal government for our finances and for assistance on housing, I hope that as a government we can do more with our own resources. A practical example to me is in travelling around the communities I have seen a lot of facilities that are underutilized, and yet we have a housing shortage. What is stopping us? We can always find reasons why we shouldn't make those available for people to live in, but if they are not being utilized well for the purpose they are presently assigned, then let's use them for housing if they are appropriate at all. Some of them may not be appropriate, but there are things we can do ourselves here. I appreciate any advice that you have on how we may be able to do things like that that are more creative.

I can think of the seniors' facility in Tuk as a good example. When I was there, there was something like nine units sitting empty for years, yet we have a housing problem in Tuk. Let's be creative.

I have been watching a house in Yellowknife that is managed by one of our boards that has been empty since early last spring. A family moved out of it because they took a job somewhere else and it's owned by one of the boards. It's been sitting empty. I have no idea why. It's a house in a nice part of the city, but for some reason it just sits empty. I think there is more we can do ourselves, too. We should look at our own programs and see how we can make better use of the facilities that we have.

On the idea of research and becoming more innovative, I am 100 percent in support of us being able to do that. Last night I had a constituency meeting and one of the constituents who came to the meeting was a medical doctor who came to say he has never seen it better. We had almost a full number of doctors and nurses in the city and it's the first time he's seen it. Things are going really well. He was particularly interested in some of the funding we got from the federal government and saying is there a way for us to take some of the money that is made available for aboriginal health and some possibly that's made available to us and establish a centre of excellence in the Northwest Territories where we would have more northern home-grown research on issues that affect our people. I think it's a great idea and I offered to work with him and bring it up to the Minister of Health and I have done that already. I look forward to doing that kind of thing. I think there is some room with the money the federal government is putting forward and the attention they are paying to aboriginal issues. Whether it's diabetes, addictions, child care, there are a whole bunch of areas we could be doing northern research on. There is no end to those areas that we could be doing more research on. There is aboriginal traditional healing. We have done very little yet, but there is a lot of belief and reliance on aboriginal healing and medicines in the North. There are lots of areas. I want to challenge ourselves to do more there.

There are other areas, also. The Minister of Education just reminded me that 2006-07 is International Polar Year and he's had some discussions with Dr. Fraser, the president of the University of Alberta, about how we can work more closely with the University of Alberta. I have met with Dr. Fraser myself over the last few years and he is very keen on how we can bring university services more to the North, that they are not just places where students go to attend university, but they could also do research in the North. So while we need to deal with the practical issues, there are also opportunities for us to be doing more on leading-edge research.

There is also work being done by the deputy ministers of the three territories about a university of the North. Those are things I hope we can report back to you on and say we have made progress on them.

We do seem to have a lot of forums for consultation, I agree with Mr. Braden. At some point, we may have to collapse some of them or work them together, but I think they have been excellent vehicles to help us get a message to Ottawa and nationally. I don't begrudge at all the time I spend in meetings or the time I spend trying to build that consensus. As Mr. Braden said, we can probably set a good example for the federal government

on how you have to work together in a consensus government and that it can be made to work, because I think we are showing a lot of good success.

I'm very satisfied with the Prime Minister's interest on the North, and the Northwest Territories in particular. I am very appreciative of his receptiveness to issues that we put forward. I am particularly interested in his offer to work with us and with aboriginal organizations, aboriginal governments, to develop a vision for the North, a broad strategy of where we are going. I think that can help to answer the question that Mr. Yakeleya raised of what is the vision, where are we going to be 10, 20, 50 years from now. Where are we heading as a territory? Those can be good discussions and we have made an offer to the Prime Minister and we are ready to participate, to have people sit down with his representatives and begin that exercise of building that vision.

There are some practical things that we have to do, and I appreciate Mr. Pokiak's comments. Resource revenue sharing, I agree, is the most important thing that we have to achieve. We cannot have big, mega projects continue to take resources out of here without a reasonable amount being available for us today, but also being available for future generations. I would like to have some discussion sometime on, for example, a heritage fund. We should be putting money away. We know that non-renewable resources will run out some day and we need to begin now to plan for the future on that. So I'm intrigued by those kinds of projects.

Sometimes we are limited today, but hopefully it will improve. A good example is on the highway money. There is \$158 million being spent. As Mr. Pokiak said, it is largely on existing highway systems, but again it's federal money, it's meant to respond to economic activity. I hope to take those kinds of things and build them out into projects that can result in a good highway from Inuvik to Tuk as development happens. A lot of what we want to do is dependent on the pipeline, it's dependent on some more resource development happening; mining, as well. But I think there are lots of opportunities.

I will just close by saying I do appreciate Members' comments on the sessional statement, rather than just giving it and then folding it up and never seeing it again. So I do appreciate the discussion this afternoon. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Any further general comments? If not, I believe that concludes our discussion on that statement. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Madam Chair, I move that we report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The motion is in order, it's not debatable. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you. I will now rise and report progress.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Could I have the 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 has been considering Minister's Statement 48-15(3) and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Is there a seconder? Mr. Krutko.

**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 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Accountability and Oversight committee tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. and a meeting of the Board of Management tomorrow at 2:30 p.m.

Orders of the day for Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. 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
  - Motion 15-15(3), Appointment of a Deputy Director of Human Rights
17. First Reading of Bills
  - Bill 13, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2004-2005
  - Bill 14, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2003-2004
18. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Minister's Statement 48-15(3), Sessional Statement
- Minister's Statement 49-15(3), Fiscal Update
- 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

20. Report of Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, October 15, 2004, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:55 p.m.





