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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 11, 2005****Members Present**

Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Honourable Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Mr. Hawkins, Honourable David Krutko, Ms. Lee, Honourable Michael McLeod, Mr. 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): Good morning, colleagues.

Point Of Order

Before we proceed to orders of the day, I must advise the House on a point of order that came to the Chair's attention late yesterday. Under the item petitions, Mrs. Groenewegen presented a package of a number of letters that do not meet the requirements of a petition under our rules, but which could, nevertheless, be tabled under item 14, tabling of documents. Therefore, Petition 2-15(3) is hereby withdrawn by order of the Speaker. Thank you for your attention.

Item 2, orders of the day, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 75-15(3): Royal Assent For Tlicho Land Claims And Self-Government Act**

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was with great pleasure I received news from Ottawa yesterday that Bill C-14, the Tlicho Land Claims and Self-Government Act, had received third and final reading in the Senate and was given Royal Assent.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, this bill is the result of over a decade of hard work by negotiators, chiefs, elders and the Tlicho people. It represents the vision held by Chief Monfwi at the signing of Treaty 11 in 1921 and sets a new standard for land claims and self-government agreements in Canada.

Yesterday's announcement was an historic one for the Tlicho. I understand that more than 70 Tlicho people witnessed yesterday's event and celebrated almost immediately, with a rousing tea dance on Parliament Hill.

Bill C-14 will now come into force at a date set by a federal Order in Council after consultation with the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council and our government.

When it does, 39,000 square kilometres of land -- the largest single block of land owned by First Nations in Canada -- will be under the rightful control of the Tlicho people. As well, the Tlicho people will take the next step toward self-determination, towards building a future that ensures their culture, their language and their communities will continue to grow and prosper in the years to come.

The passage of Bill C-14 sends a message across the country that governments are committed to establishing a new relationship with aboriginal governments based on mutual respect and recognition.

It provides certainty for all levels of government and industry with respect to lands, resources, governance and jurisdiction and paves the way to a strong economic future for the Tlicho region, the Northwest Territories and all Canadians.

It also illustrates what we can accomplish when we work together. The Tlicho agreement is the product of a comprehensive and collaborate negotiation process between the Tlicho, Canada and the Northwest Territories.

I am honoured to have been part of this process. I was proud to represent the Members of this Legislative Assembly in speaking in support of this bill in Ottawa.

But, Mr. Speaker, our job in this Legislative Assembly is not done. I am hopeful in the coming days we will complete the final piece of the legislative puzzle necessary to ratify the Tlicho agreement by passing the Tlicho Community Services Agency Act.

Before I end, I want to acknowledge again the hard work and dedication of the Tlicho, the GNWT and federal negotiating teams. I would like to recognize and thank our Member of Parliament, the Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew, and our Senator, Nick Sibbeston, for their unwavering support for the passage of Bill C-14.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating the Tlicho people on this historic accomplishment. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Minister's Statement 76-15(3): 2005 Aboriginal Achievement Award Recipients

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, every year the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation recognizes excellence and leadership in our country's aboriginal community by awarding National Achievement Awards.

Today, I am honoured to recognize and congratulate three residents of our territory who have been chosen to receive this prestigious award in 2005.

First, Ms. Bertha Allen of Inuvik, who is being honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

---Applause

In her former roles as the president of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the founding president of the NWT Native Women's Association and the president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, Bertha has been a trailblazer in the struggle for aboriginal and political equality for northern women.

Ms. Allen has been, and continues to be, a strong advocate for education and training, and was a key influence in the establishment and success of the NWT training centres in Yellowknife and Inuvik. She has also worked tirelessly to improve health and social services for the North through her participation on many boards and agencies including the GNWT's Council of Grandmothers in 2001.

Second, Mr. Andy Carpenter, Sr. of Sachs Harbour will be recognized for his outstanding contributions to the environment.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, Andy Carpenter has devoted his life to the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife by all peoples. As head of the Sachs Harbour Hunters' and Trappers' Committee in the 1970s, he spearheaded an agreement that limited oil and gas activities on Banks Island to winter months when impacts would be minimized. This agreement remains a fundamental component of territorial land use regulations to this day.

Mr. Carpenter is also a founding chair of the Inuvialuit Game Council, past vice-chair of the Wildlife Management Advisory Council and was instrumental in establishing the International Polar Bear Management Agreement between Alaska and Canada. He was at the forefront of work to establish Ivvavik National Park -- Canada's First National park to be legislated by a land claim settlement -- and remains a driving force in conservation and management of wildlife in the Northwest Territories.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Sharon Firth, originally from Aklavik...

---Applause

...will be recognized for her extraordinary achievement in sport.

Together with her twin sister, Shirley, and other members of the highly acclaimed Territorial Experimental Ski Training Program, Ms. Firth took the cross-country skiing world by storm beginning in the 1970s. She attended her first Olympic games in Sapporo, Japan, in 1972. Not only was she among the first NWT residents to compete in an Olympics, she was part of the first Canadian women's cross-country ski teams ever to participate in the games.

In total, Ms. Firth competed successfully in a total of four Olympics and is the only North American woman in her sport to compete in three consecutive world championships. In 1985, she was the first Canadian to compete in all eight events of the Great American Ski Race and the first to win the overall title. She was inducted into Canada's Skiing Hall of Fame in 1990.

Today, Sharon Firth is a respected youth program advisor for the Government of the Northwest Territories. This role is fitting given how much she has inspired youth across our territory and Canada for more than two decades. She

is a highly regarded role model, which she puts to practice by delivering motivational speeches to schools throughout the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals, Ms. Bertha Allen, Mr. Andy Carpenter and Ms. Sharon Firth, along with other recipients of this year's National aboriginal Achievement Awards, will be honoured at a gala awards ceremony in Saskatoon on March 31st of this year.

On behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories, today I offer my heartfelt congratulations to them for receiving this national distinction, and express to them the pride we share in having them as ambassadors for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. I am sure that all Members will join you in sending those congratulations. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Minister's Statement 77-15(3): Healthy Choices And Ski Program

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to provide Members with an update on an initiative being undertaken to address our government's commitment to support healthy lifestyle choices as outlined in the GNWT Strategic Plan - Self-Reliant People, Communities and Northwest Territories, A Shared Responsibility.

Tomorrow, February 12, 2005, is Northwest Territories Ski Day. As part of the celebrations, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is pleased to announce that through the Pan Territorial Sport Strategy, a new Ski Promotions Program has been developed in cooperation with the Northwest Territories ski division and the Northwest Territories Recreation and Parks Association.

This program will provide financial contributions to a number of new and existing local clubs to promote cross-country skiing. The department is also working with its partners to have each of these contributions matched by corporation donations and local cash or services in kind.

Mr. Speaker, cross-country skiing is a sport with a rich legacy in the North. It is a sport that can be easily adapted as a physical activity option for all ages and one that is easy to choose as part of a physically active lifestyle.

It is also a sport that provides northerners with an opportunity to reach beyond our borders and represent the Northwest Territories on the national and international stage.

In the recent past this has included role models like Sharon Firth who will be honoured for her sport and youth role model contributions at the National aboriginal Achievement Awards in Saskatoon on March 31st.

Today it is skiers and biathletes like Sharon Daitch, Mike Argue and Elle Mawdsley who recently competed at the World University Games in Innsbruck, Austria; and Lindsey Bolivar and Brendan Green who will compete for Canada at the Junior/Youth World Championships in Sweden this March.

The development of cross-country ski programs will also enable communities to support the development of new trails and thereby provide assistance to other sport and physical activity programs like hiking, biking and biathlon, that also use these trails.

In the near future, I will be announcing details on the projects being funded, as well as the process that other communities can use to apply for support under this program.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is one of a number of programs that social program departments are working on to address our commitment to provide NWT residents with greater opportunity to choose a healthy lifestyle.

In the next few weeks, my social program colleagues and I will be providing you with additional information on how we are incorporating this goal into various aspects of our departmental plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Minister's Statement 78-15(3): Minister Absent From The House

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members that the Honourable Charles Dent will be absent from the House today to attend the signing of the Early Learning Childcare Agreement for federal/provincial/territorial Ministers of Social Services in Vancouver. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 2, Ministers' statement. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the goals we set for ourselves at the beginning of the 15th Assembly was youth, parents and adults who see wellness as a preferred alternative and who make healthy and productive lifestyle choices for themselves and their families. We regularly hear our Health and Social Services Minister and now our MACA Minister, lecturing to all the smokers and the drinkers and the couch potatoes of the Northwest Territories to change their unhealthy ways.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, it is so difficult for the people of Nahanni Butte and for me to understand why this government has not put a higher priority on building a gymnasium for Nahanni Butte. Despite all the announcements in the budget yesterday about capital investments and infrastructure, there's no mention of it. Kids in larger centres take gymnasiums and hockey rinks and swimming pools for granted. In fact, the budget speaks to some communities getting new schools and second gymnasiums, and there's none of that in Nahanni Butte, Mr. Speaker.

In a small place like Nahanni Butte that doesn't have much for recreation facilities, it is easy for people,

especially youth, to get bored and slip into the couch potato lifestyle. That's when a lot of the unhealthy habits Minister Miltenberger warns us about get started. You can't expect kids to be shooting baskets or kicking a soccer ball around outside at a playfield at 40 below. They need an indoor place for their sports and games. Exercise and social activities aren't just a nice thing to be able to do. They are critical for children's physical, emotional and social development, and get them into a healthy lifestyle that hopefully they will keep throughout their lives.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister's answers to my questions last fall weren't very encouraging. But with the recent announcement of the municipal rural infrastructure fund, I believe this government now has the means to build a gym in Nahanni Butte, long before 2017; 2017, Mr. Speaker. A little boy or girl starting kindergarten this fall still won't get to play in a community gym until Grade 12. We can do better than that. At the appropriate time I will have questions for the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Medical Travel Policy On Escorts

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My statement today has to do with patients and escorts travelling outside of their home communities for medical treatment; and in particular with regard to communications between the airlines and the travel agencies.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, in the last two months I ran into constituents, both at the Inuvik and Yellowknife airports, who were returning home after receiving medical treatment at the Stanton Territorial Hospital. On the first occasion, Mr. Speaker, an elderly 86-year-old woman with an escort arrived in Inuvik, and must have travelled from her home community late that afternoon. She found out on her arrival at Inuvik that she was on standby to return to her community. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, the escort had an appointment at the Inuvik hospital that afternoon. Eventually, they had to overnight in Inuvik over the weekend, mainly because there are no scheduled airline trips to Tuktoyaktuk over the weekend, Mr. Speaker.

On the second occasion, Mr. Speaker, another patient arrived from the Stanton Territorial Hospital in Inuvik. This patient was clearly in pain because he had just had an operation the night before. Once again, on the arrival in Inuvik, he found that he was on standby to return to Tuk. I assisted the patient by calling the travel department at the Inuvik General Hospital. Their response at that time was to wait at the airport. Let me say again, Mr. Speaker, the patient was in pain. Mr. Speaker, this is about a four-hour wait at the airport.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, once again I was travelling to Tuk, and on my return there were a number of patients waiting at the airport to return to Tuk. Eventually, Mr. Speaker, the plane was cancelled that evening. I was told the next morning by some of the patients that they were denied supper at the hospital because they shut down at 6:00 p.m. Fortunately some of the patients had money to get their own food at the restaurant.

Mr. Speaker, should there not be better communication between the travel agencies of the hospitals and the airlines prior to the patients being released from the hospitals? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Member's Statement On Lack Of Support For The Secondary Diamond Industry

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak today about diamonds. I don't feel satisfied that this government has given the residents of the Northwest Territories and the Members of this Assembly all the answers to what went wrong with the Sirius factory; why the Leviev Group was denied access to rough diamonds to run this factory. This government is losing millions of dollars on this plant. Where does the blame lie?

This distasteful story raises a number of very fundamental issues. Who takes responsibility for the development of our economy? Is it the 19 of us duly-elected Members of this House or is it the diamond producers? If this government is going to accept the fact that the mining companies get the last word, maybe we should just close up shop and throw them the keys.

I want to assure every person here that I will continue to fight for the independence and the integrity of the decisions and the will of this Legislature and this government. What we have here is a huge disconnect between what the producers are saying and what the government is saying and if you throw in the proponent, the Leviev Group, somewhere in the middle of all of this is the truth. What is the truth? What really happened here? Why was the government asleep at the switch while the deal with the Leviev Group went of the rails, Mr. Speaker?

If the government knew -- and I think they had a very good idea -- why didn't they step in? Where is our obligation to protect the secondary industry and mitigate our losses? I was shocked to learn yesterday during the Finance Minister's budget address that the secondary industry and the potential economic growth that that would bring to the Territories was nowhere to be found in his budget address, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Boo.

MR. RAMSAY: No, the producers are in there, but he's not in there, it's not in there. He mentioned all producers by name, but did not mention the secondary industry. I hope this omission does not indicate the government's overall view of our secondary diamond industry.

Mr. Speaker, today, later on the order papers, I will have questions for the Minister of Finance with regard to this issue. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Support For The Dene K'onia Facility In Hay River

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I will use my Member's statement to reiterate my full support for the staff members of Dene K'onia who travelled all the way from Hay River yesterday just for the day, to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the government's proposed expenditure reductions; specifically in the Department of Justice on youth rehabilitation and reintegration.

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents in Tu Nedhe -- mind you, not by choice -- rely heavily on the services that have been provided by the youth centre in Hay River. They count on these services, not just for their children's sake but also for their own peace of mind and the satisfaction of knowing that their children are being treated in a manner that is consistent with their Dene culture and values. These families know that the people who are working to rehabilitate and reintegrate their kids into society are from the same community as they are and have experienced similar circumstances in their lives, but have now dedicated their own lives to helping their own people.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the government has stated over and over again that the rehabilitation and reintegration programs for the youth available in the Dene K'onia centre will be mirrored in Yellowknife and that they may also have more programs available in the near future, Mr. Speaker.

To me, it is not just about what is available to the youth, Mr. Speaker. It is about who will be available to the youth and who will be delivering these programs.

Mr. Speaker, this is a critical piece of the picture that must have been smudged when the Department of Justice was reassessing its organizational portrait of efficiency and effectiveness. This new vision of effective and efficient youth justice in the Northwest Territories that the government is proposing, just doesn't say any of that to me, not to my constituents, not to the staff of Dene K'onia, not to the residents of the NWT and especially not to the youth of the Dene K'onia facility in Hay River.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will be urging this government to revisit and hopefully reassess the justice cost-cutting measures being proposed and come up with a plan that is acceptable, fair and fundamentally effective to ensure that the youth are being treated by the best means we have at our disposal, which, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, is the staff of the Dene K'onia centre in Hay River. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Congratulations To Tlicho People On Passage Of Federal Land Claim Act

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the Premier and everyone in this House in sending out my own very warm words of congratulations to the leaders and the people of Tlicho in obtaining Royal Assent to the document that would see their vision of a self-government become a reality, in short order.

Mr. Speaker, it's hard to believe that it's been 13 years since the Dene Métis Comprehensive Agreement was not able to be ratified. But, like most success stories, the Tlicho people were able to rise like a phoenix from the ashes and, with unrelenting efforts on the part of everyone involved, they were able to achieve their dream yesterday. I must say also, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have been a part of the works that we do in the House to go through the passages of lots of legislative and policy documents that would enable this to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I must say no one knows how to celebrate with as much pizzazz and gusto as do the Tlicho people. There is nothing like a spontaneous breaking out into a tea dance, circling, locked in arms, ever so joyously to the emotional chanting and the beat of Dene drumming in the halls of power in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, we have witnessed the power and impact of Dogrib political mobilization close to home, but now the whole country had a chance to get a real taste of it. I believe it was a singular act that stated loud and clear that they are here, that they are powerful, that they are very proud, that they have a right, and they have a right claim and they secured that yesterday. I was very proud to see that on national news and I want to send them very warm congratulations and to say also that Dogribs are Yellowknife's best friends. There are many people, many Dogribs living in my area and in this city, and they add greatly to our economy and to every part of our life. I wish the Tlicho people well. I look forward to seeing how that government will work hard to serve every one of the Dogrib people well in the weeks, years and months to come. 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 Readiness For A Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

MR. BRADEN: Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with a great deal of interest, and I think a number of people across the Northwest Territories did this morning, to the CBC Radio interview with Randy Henderson and Anna Maria Tremonte and the former Justice Thomas Berger when they visited the question: Is the NWT ready now for the Mackenzie Valley pipeline? Is now the right time for the Mackenzie pipeline?

The survey, over the course of 40 minutes of phone-in air time, was obviously not scientific or all-encompassing, but it gave a very fascinating snapshot of where the mood may be today. The result of that short radio survey, Mr. Speaker, was, it seemed to me, a resounding no, the Northwest Territories is not ready. The principal concerns raised were on the social impact front.

You know, we are never really ready to undertake big, significant, life-changing events. I look back and ask myself was I really ever ready to get married? Well, you know, that was a big step, but 27 years later, I have, I believe, a very successful marriage. Was I able to run for politics? No, not really. What was it that helped us as families or communities do these things? It's trust, Mr. Speaker. Unless there is trust amongst us, our families and our colleagues, our workmates, our partners, that we

won't fail each other, we won't let each other down, we won't abandon and betray each other, and then we will be able to do amazing things.

Today, Mr. Speaker, it seems that that level of trust is not there with this Mackenzie Valley pipeline. It's sad to see that, but we are engaged in so many processes to look for that, to seek it, to find it, to affirm it. I believe we can get there, but let's not take for granted that we are ready for this pipeline, because I believe we are not and we heard that this morning on the CBC. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Issues And Concerns

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to speak about something different than what I had planned to speak about. I, too, listened with interest as the phone-in show proceeded on CBC Radio this morning. As a matter of fact, I took the opportunity to call in and offer my opinion as well. I believe that my opinion on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline has been very consistent and I have been saying the same things as many Members of this House have been saying. We had a theme day devoted to this topic and each of us spoke very passionately about some of the issues around the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

The question posed was are we ready for a Mackenzie Valley pipeline. My answer to that question was I wish we were, but the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of outstanding issues. They were outstanding in 1977 when Thomas Berger concluded his findings after his extensive consultation with the communities. The areas that he identified, many of which today, unfortunately, are still outstanding. So there's a lot of excitement about the numbers and about the benefits and some of the things that we could realize in the North as a result of a pipeline.

When we talk about thousands of jobs or millions of dollars and trillions of cubic feet of product, it all sounds really exciting, but the bottom line of it is that there's nothing in it for the Northwest Territories and for our people on a sustainable basis for generations to come. Then, no, it's not worth it. Mr. Speaker, it is our job, I realize, as a government, to get the attention of the people who are involved in this, and I believe that we have been trying to do that and we will continue to try to do that. But, as of today, the issue of royalty sharing with aboriginal public governments has not been addressed. The issue of the environment and protected areas has not been addressed. The issue of the settling of land claims along the pipeline route has not been addressed.

It would do well, I think, for industry and business, who are poised to benefit from this, to join forces with northerners to help us ensure that we do get ready in time to benefit from this. It would do well for them to be our partners in this.

Mr. Speaker, just in closing I'd like to say that the constituents and the businesses of my riding are poised to benefit from this, but we have a very big job ahead of us

as a government to ensure that the benefits are there for northerners, because I'll say again that the non-renewable resources of the lands of the NWT are not there for the taking at any cost and I'll have questions for the Premier on this. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Member's Statement On Congratulations To The Tlicho People

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to say congratulations to the Tlicho people. As a former negotiator of the Sahtu land claims, I understand the hard work that goes into putting together an historical agreement such as the Tlicho deal and the aspirations of the people. I was thinking about it this morning, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the people who passed away during the negotiations, and the hard work they put into helping their people. Some of them have given their life to this deal here. I heard it this morning, I heard about the tea dancing and I felt something inside me that made me feel proud that people have really moved a long way since the '60s and the '70s, and the Dogrib, the Tlicho, are showing us and other groups in the Northwest Territories.

I'm really pleased to hear Mr. Handley congratulate them and I join Mr. Handley in his congratulations, and the work that the MP is doing in Ottawa and also our Senators and also to Grand Chief Rabesca for holding the vision together along with the other leaders in the Tlicho communities and the elders who are our guiding force in putting this deal together. We go back to our elders time after time to ask what kind of direction are we doing this, is this okay, and they always reassure us that it's going to be okay. So I wanted to say a heartfelt congratulations to all the Tlicho people and I think they are also the Sahtu's best friends, along with the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Congratulations To The Tlicho People

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rise today to do a small, simple statement, which will send my congratulations to the Tlicho people on their act being passed by the Senate. Yesterday I received a phone call just minutes after the Opposition Party, the Conservatives, had put forward a strong motion and an unusual motion by saying well, the people are here, they've made such a long trek down to Ottawa and this is the peoples' bill, so let's do it today. I got this phone call from Ottawa and you could hear the cheering and the tea dancing in the Parliament Building. It was a fantastic opportunity to hear good government at work. So I went to Mr. Zoe right away to make sure he knew, and the first thing Mr. Zoe said to me is am I pulling his leg. I told him that I heard it was going to be signed in a couple of minutes by the Governor General, and Mr. Zoe again looked at me and said you're just joking. So it was a fantastic moment to

hear people on my cell phone. I showed Mr. Zoe my cell phone and you could hear how exciting it was that the people down there were dancing.

So I just want to say this is a good day for the Northwest Territories. It was certainly a good day for the Government of Canada to work for the people of Canada. I want to just extend my congratulations to all the people of the North in seeing the good work that's being done. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Zoe.

Member's Statement On Concerns With Market Housing Initiative

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under the market housing initiative that we heard the Minister of Finance speak of yesterday, there's supposed to be six housing units going to Rae-Edzo. We also know, Mr. Speaker, from the budget speech, that there will be a new three-person public health unit set up for the Tlicho region effective April 1, 2005. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, there are no places for any of these public health unit staff to stay, never mind any other new teachers, health care workers or government employees. I am not even sure the six units will be enough to meet this year's demand, but at least it's a start.

You can imagine my frustration, Mr. Speaker, when I find out that the NWT Housing Corporation has not even talked to Municipal and Community Affairs or even the Hamlet of Rae-Edzo on obtaining the necessary land to put these units on. As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, the land acquisition issue should have been dealt with prior to now, so that a tender on a housing package could be issued for an April closing.

Mr. Speaker, I am getting questions from my constituents on the status of these units and will be asking them of the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Zoe.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 362-15(3): Market Housing Initiative In Rae-Edzo

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I spoke about the fact that the NWT Housing Corporation has not yet dealt with the land acquisition for the six housing units that are going into Rae-Edzo for the second year of the market housing initiative. Community leaders are concerned, Mr. Speaker, and rightly so, that if last year's performance is any indication, it may be early winter by the time the Housing Corporation manages to get those units ready for occupancy. Can the Minister tell me when the corporation will acquire the necessary land for these units? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 362-15(3): Market Housing Initiative In Rae-Edzo

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the approval of land in Rae-Edzo, we are presently in the process with MACA to develop and forward an application, but we are also in discussions with a private businessperson to see if there's a possibility of expanding this to just, say, 12 units. So we are in discussions with a private entrepreneur to look at the possibility of getting the private sector involved in this project so we can try to get more units into Rae-Edzo. Like you've mentioned, there is definitely going to be a demand for more units and it's good to hear that the Tlicho agreement has passed because you are definitely going to need a major role building capacity to deliver your claim and also to deliver programs and services. So, again, we are in the process of working with MACA, but we are also in discussion with someone in the private sector to joint venture on the possibility of expanding this program from six units to, say, 12 or even 20. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Supplementary, Mr. Zoe.

Supplementary To Question 362-15(3): Market Housing Initiative In Rae-Edzo

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell me his timeline for those discussions that he just mentioned? How soon would they be concluded? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Krutko.

Further Return To Question 362-15(3): Market Housing Initiative In Rae-Edzo

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, probably one of the most crucial timelines we have to pass is get this budget through the House because the money is in the budget. So we have to get that approval in order to make that expenditure, but also we are in the process of talking to MACA and also talking to the private sector to develop this program. So once I get some timelines I will be sharing that with yourself, as a Member, to keep you involved in where we're going. But, as it sits right now, it's all based on the approval of the budget.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 363-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Readiness

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier today and it's in follow-up to my Member's statement with respect to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. Mr. Speaker, numerous people commented this morning. I was one of the ones who commented. I understand the Premier heard my comments on there. I have concerns; I think I've raised those concerns fairly consistently. I hope they are not interpreted to mean to anyone that I don't support the

Mackenzie Valley pipeline and I hope that in my constituency no ill will would be felt towards my constituency for that, because I believe that they are legitimate questions that need to be answered. So I'm going to pose the question to the Premier this morning. Is the Northwest Territories ready for a Mackenzie Valley pipeline? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 363-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Readiness

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, no, we are not ready today for the pipeline. We've got a lot of work to do over the next 18 months/two years, however long. We've got a lot to do. I think it's incumbent on all of us here and leaders outside of this Chamber, municipal leaders, aboriginal leaders, federal government, for all of us to work together to get ready. We have a short time frame. We need to get ready but, to answer the question, I would agree we are not ready today. At the same time, if someone had asked the Tlicho if they were ready to sign their agreement six months ago, they would have said no, we are not ready, but they were ready yesterday. They got there and we will get there with the pipeline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 363-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Readiness

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A fairly direct question then to the Premier with respect to one of the things on one front for sure we are not ready for, and that is on this government and the northern governments being in a position to share in the immense royalty revenues that will be generated for the federal government. We are not in a position to share in those. If, when it comes time to start constructing a Mackenzie Valley pipeline and there is still no royalty sharing agreement in place, should the pipeline proceed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Premier.

Further Return To Question 363-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Readiness

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, our government has always been clear with the federal government that we must have a resource revenue sharing agreement in place before the pipeline is completed. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, on December 14th when we signed the framework for the Northern Strategy, committed publicly to make substantial progress in the near future on resource revenue sharing and devolution. He committed to having an agreement-in-principle done and signed this spring and I want to hold him to that. He committed to finishing off the negotiations on devolution and resource revenue sharing by 2006. I am going to hold him to that. He did say to me - and this is fair -- that he's just one party. The federal government is one party, we are one party, the aboriginal leaders are one party, so it's not all in his hands. Mr.

Speaker, we all have to work together here if we are going to benefit from this opportunity that is in front of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 363-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Readiness

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the Premier is on exactly the same page as I am and I think many northerners are. No long-term sustainable benefits, no revenue sharing, no pipeline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

I would like to ask the Premier if he concurs that that is what he is saying clearly and succinctly and we are committed to work very hard between now and when it comes into place because we do support it, so let there be no misunderstanding about that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 363-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Readiness

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear on that all along and I will say it again: We cannot tolerate having zero royalties stay with this government and stay with northern people. We have to have an agreement and we have to have an agreement before the pipeline proceeds. That's the bottom line for our government and we haven't changed our position. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 364-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to follow up on my Member's statement to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. In this sitting of the Assembly, I told people of Nahanni Butte I am either going to have a good news story for you or a bad news story. The way it looks, it looks like a bad news story. There is no indication of a gymnasium for Nahanni Butte. That is absolutely to say that next year we will have something for you. I would like to ask the Minister of MACA when or where can we look at this infrastructure for Nahanni Butte, Mr. Speaker? Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 364-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish I could have some good news. Unfortunately, the budget is before us and we have yet to approve it before we will really know how much we have to put towards infrastructure. There have been a number

of announcements over the last while, including the Finance Minister's announcement yesterday, to put more money towards capital projects in the communities, both in non-tax-based and tax-based. However, that has yet to be approved. Although the federal Minister has announced how the money will be allocated by jurisdictions across Canada for the gas tax, we still haven't signed an agreement as to the actual breakout of how the money will be distributed. We have not had the opportunity to sit down with the NWT Association of Communities to discuss how that will be divvied up amongst the communities in the Northwest Territories. We've just recently signed the MRIF. So there is still a lot of work before we can actually announce where the money will be spent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 364-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am well aware of some of the limitations that the Minister is faced with, but if anything can be classified as green infrastructure, it would be the gymnasium in Nahanni Butte, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. MENICOCHÉ: So I would like to ask the Minister if he could look at that and use that definition when bartering with his colleagues, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister consider it as green infrastructure? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 364-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been very difficult in the last many years to put recreational infrastructure in the communities and put it through the capital planning process and have it compete against water treatment plants and sewer lagoons. This year we have some new monies and we have a considerable amount compared to what we had for capital projects and infrastructure.

We certainly support recreational infrastructure being put back on the radar screen. It's something we want to work towards as social Ministers to improve the quality of lives. So capital infrastructure, gymnasiums are all something we are considering. We are looking at the criteria and standards. We want to reach out to all communities, the larger centres and the smaller communities including Nahanni Butte, Enterprise and Kakisa, those who don't actually have gymnasiums. We would like to be able to address those issues and whatever else is coming forward as infrastructure deficiencies. So we will be working on all those things over the next while, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 364-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister announced earlier today about the ski program being a high priority. That's something Nahanni Butte has been doing for a long time and we would like some other choices, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

My question for the Minister, Mr. Speaker, is the gymnasium a high priority for this government today? Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 364-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, active living has been a priority for this government for some time and we've increased the pressures on ourselves to commit more and more to stimulate that whole area. We have been focussing on the smaller communities. We have put in a multi-purpose hall in the community of Nahanni Butte. We have also been working with the community to put up a youth centre. So it's not as if we have been ignoring the community. At this point, with our current standards and criteria, the community doesn't have a population for a gymnasium. We want to be able to review that and move it forward as a priority and start looking at what we can do for these small communities in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 364-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am surprised the Minister brings up population as one of the mitigating factors in determining which communities get a gymnasium. We all know that's not true today. I would like the Minister to stand away from that argument and say as an identifying need this community doesn't have this facility. In our budget, we are talking about second schools and second gymnasiums in the larger centres. I think before they get theirs, Mr. Speaker, that communities without should get those facilities and I would like the Minister to commit to that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 364-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The community of Nahanni Butte has certainly made their views known. I have received a petition. I have received letters from practically every student and every youth from that community. It's been in the media. We have heard it from the honourable Member for Nahendeh on several occasions now. We've gotten the message. We've heard it from other small communities that there has to be a new focus on recreational facilities and we intend to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 365-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Development

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier, continuing along the theme of resource development and the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. Mr. Speaker, I was really pleased to hear the Premier say that there is a realization that no, we are not ready for this project and that we have come, or at least he and his Cabinet have come close to defining some of the terms we need to see in place. That was at least specific to the pipeline that a resource revenue sharing deal must be in place before we will endorse the start of this pipeline. That is an admirable position to be in. Mr. Speaker, if we are to see this happen, we have a lot of work to do amongst ourselves. I spoke about the need for trust at all levels to be able to achieve this. What kind of measures, Mr. Speaker, is this government taking to engender and foster the trust that we need to get on with this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 365-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Development

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work ahead of us in the next 18 months or so to get ready for the pipeline. I am confident that we will be there. I want to clarify it's not just about money either. We have got environmental issues that have to be sorted out. We have training issues. We have social issues, but we have to work together to achieve that. Mr. Speaker, the issue of trust is a good question because we have to work with each other, all of us in government at all levels, NGOs, everybody, towards achieving what's best for our people, and this pipeline presents a great opportunity.

I hope that people will work hard toward that objective and not try to stall it. In trust, we, first of all, have the Northern Strategy that we have been working on. I trust the Prime Minister when he gives me his word and he made the announcement with us on December 14th. I trust the Minister of DIAND when he comes here next month and possibly the month after, and our MP. So we built that relationship, and until they show me they shouldn't be trusted, I trust them.

I have been meeting with the Aboriginal Summit and with regional aboriginal leaders. Our most recent meeting was a little over a week ago. We had some good discussions and we will continue to have those discussions, but when I say something at the meeting and when they say something, then we have to approach it from the point that we are all being genuine in our statements back and forth to each other.

Mr. Speaker, those have been the two main areas, but we have to work with the other non-government organizations and with training institutions and be confident that they are going to work with us. That's how we become self-reliant people in the Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 365-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Development

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's remarks are, of course, appropriate and encouraging, but I think there are things we need to do to move this along. The social agencies have been the ones who have been really at the plate trying to bring our attention to their concerns. What are we going to do to assist them in their drastically underfunded and under-resourced capacity to really be a player? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 365-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Development

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For starters, 70 percent of our budget of roughly \$1 billion is for social programs. I don't have a breakdown of how much of that goes to the agencies and what their priorities are and how they are going to go about achieving it. I would sure like to share that with them, as much as we have time to do it. I am sure the Ministers of the social programs will be able to give us a lot of detail, as we get into the department estimates, of where that 70 percent of the money is going. We've said yes and the Minister of Finance say it goes to social programs and community-level programs. Let's work together to get some real tangible results that make a difference to people. That's a big chunk of money. Are we going to get enough for each of the agencies that they will say don't give us anymore, we have enough? I don't know if we can afford that. We are dedicating a huge chunk of our budget, but it may never be quite enough for everybody. But we will make sure that we are working with the communities, municipal and band governments, the best way to get the best return for the dollars we are spending. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 365-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Development

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, the social agencies, the frontline agencies, continue to make the point to me as recently as yesterday with the budget that we are terribly under-prepared at the community level to cope with the consequences of a pipeline. This is where, I believe, we can really do something to help promote and engender the trust and preparedness at the community level. Will this government be prepared to come to their aid and do something soon?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 365-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Development

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think you will find that we are coming to the aid of the communities and the social agencies in a big way. Seventy percent of \$1 billion is a lot of money. How does that money get allocated? How is it spent? Those are things that have to be worked out with communities, with the NGOs, the social agencies. My appeal to all of the agencies and programs that work in this is we have to work together on it. We can't sit back and criticize each

other and say we aren't going to do anything because we haven't got enough money. We have to take the resources we have and move it as far as we can. I will continue that struggle with Ottawa. I think the Finance Minister and myself have been very successful in the last few months of getting more money for us. We have the \$40 million that is there that we will receive sometime next year that the Finance Minister mentioned yesterday. Money is there, but money isn't everything. There has to be the willingness to work together and I appeal to all of the agencies to work with us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Question 366-15(3): Unsuccessful Purchase Of Diamond Plant

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Finance. I will pick up where my statement left off. I would like to ask some questions today on where the disconnect is between the producers, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Leviev Group. All I see, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the government is going to be on the hook for millions of dollars and we don't really have any answers, Mr. Speaker. I know there have been media reports indicating that the Leviev Group didn't meet the commercial criteria for one of our producers and was also asking for too much from the other producer, Mr. Speaker. I wonder what the Finance Minister might be able to tell us about why they didn't meet the commercial criteria, what he knows about the criteria, that supposedly the world's largest diamond manufacturer didn't meet this criteria. I find that really hard to believe, Mr. Speaker. I would like the Finance Minister to try to answer those questions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 366-15(3): Unsuccessful Purchase Of Diamond Plant

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I laid out the events that led up to where we are today, I pointed out that with the system that is in place, we, as a government, are involved at the front end and once we designate a potential company as a northern manufacturer, conditional on supply of rough agreements being put in place, our ability to enter into or be part of those discussions is severely limited. The discussion process for a supply of rough is between the potential northern manufacturer and the mining industry. We have agreed, Mr. Speaker, that as a government we will have to review our position and how we strengthen our position going forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 366-15(3): Unsuccessful Purchase Of Diamond Plant

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I find it really difficult to imagine how the world's largest diamond manufacturer could not meet the standards set out by one of our northern producers. Nobody seems to know what the Leviev Group was asking or what BHP was willing to give up. Nobody really knows. BHP says one thing, Leviev says another, and the Finance Minister can't say anything.

Where are these diamonds coming from? They are coming out of our territory here. I think we have an obligation to try to get to the bottom of this. We are losing millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. We don't know what we are doing. I would like to ask the Finance Minister who is responsible from this government or who was supposed to be working with the receiver to ensure that a deal was done? This government knew long ago that the deal was going to go off the tracks. Why wasn't anything done long ago? Why are we losing millions of dollars? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 366-15(3): Unsuccessful Purchase Of Diamond Plant

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the process, as it unfolded, we started this with two operations being affected. One is back on the road and is a healthy operation. The other one is once again back into the realm of trying to find another opportunity for sale. We were hoping to bring that to a closure before Christmas. So once we realized things were not moving along, in December we started making contacts through the receiver to try to see what was going on and encourage a speedy resolution to what was happening. In the first week of January, with the information available to me, as Minister of Finance and responsible for the FMB, I had directed that a letter go out to state that our position is that there needs to be a resolution in the very near future or we would have to look at other options. We followed through with that and that is why we, once again, find ourselves in a position working with the receiver to try to find another company.

Yes, there are problems with some of our early socioeconomic agreements. We do have companies putting their side of it out in the media. From our side of it, we have to be very careful because we entered into a process with a receiver that has some consequences to it if we decide to put everything out there in the public realm. We have to do this in a way that works with our lawyers, to ensure that we continue to watch ourselves as a government and that we don't put more money out and get into difficulties on the legal side of things. We need to be careful on that side of it. Once we get more information and do a thorough analysis of things, we will have that debate as to how we, as a government, go forward and strengthen our position to ensure that we get the best for residents in the Northwest Territories.

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

Supplementary To Question 366-15(3): Unsuccessful Purchase Of Diamond Plant

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments the Finance Minister has and I do look forward to working with him going forward. However, the government knew there were no negotiations going on. We had a potential purchaser. I would like to question why even have a tender process if, at the end of the day, the diamond mining companies here in the Northwest Territories are going to dictate who they are going to do business with? Why would we even go through a process like that? We should have saved ourselves the

subsequent embarrassment and not even go through that process if, at the end of the day, we are going to take the diamond mining company's word on who they are going to sell diamonds to. What are we talking about here? I find it really hard to believe that we are here today, we are on the hook for millions of dollars and nobody really wants to take responsibility for it. I find that difficult to believe. I would like to ask the Finance Minister today, when do we think we are going to let the public know and the Members on this side of the House know what exactly that Sirius plant and the government's inability to get a deal done with the Leviev Group and the producers is going to cost the taxpayers here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 366-15(3): Unsuccessful Purchase Of Diamond Plant

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process, as it would unfold, is to sell the facility as a going operation so that it remains in business. Once we have that done and a final working of the numbers between that settlement and what it has cost us, we will be coming back, as the rules of this House apply, and make it known to Members and the public what it cost us. It will have to come through a supplementary appropriation as we go forward. It will come back to this House and it will be public as to the actual losses, once we have the deal concluded. We are hopeful we can still get a deal as a going concern, but as time goes on, we will have to decide if we have to go the other road and say it is no longer in the best interest for us to try to make something like this happen. We are hopeful that we can still get it sold as a going concern. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 366-15(3): Unsuccessful Purchase Of Diamond Plant

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my underlying theme here is the Government of the Northwest Territories did not have to look at losing millions of dollars. I wonder if the Finance Minister today could make a commitment to try to find out exactly what went wrong with this deal and why the Government of the Northwest Territories is going to be on the hook for millions of dollars in this deal.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 366-15(3): Unsuccessful Purchase Of Diamond Plant

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as this has unfolded, and I have committed to Members in this House, we will go back and look at what has occurred and where we strengthen our position as the Government of the Northwest Territories. For me, and this government, the 15th Assembly, it's difficult to go back to when the original agreements were put in place, to what caused the government-of-the-day to decide that was the best agreement that could be put in place and the MOU that followed. Unfortunately, as will the next government, they will have to live with some of our decisions we make today. Now we have to go back -- and that's why I said the timing is good for us -- so we can go back now, look at

these agreements and see what we need to do to strengthen our position as a government to make sure that we, as residents of the Northwest Territories, benefit from the development of non-renewable resources within our territory. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 367-15(3): Medical Services In Colville Lake

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger, and it is regarding the medical services in the Sahtu, especially for the people in Colville Lake. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the government's support in terms of assisting with the set-up of the Sahtu Health Board Authority in our region. However, in the meantime, the people of Colville Lake are worried about the health services they are receiving today. There was a doctor's visit scheduled for Colville Lake; however, there were mechanical problems and the doctor couldn't get into Colville Lake. So they are very concerned that this kind of situation will continue and they won't be able to see a doctor for a while. Can the Minister assure the people of Colville Lake that no matter what, a doctor will come into Colville Lake and see them? Otherwise, it will be another six months or so before a doctor gets into Colville Lake. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 367-15(3): Medical Services In Colville Lake

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand that arrangements are being made to reschedule the visit that, unfortunately, had to be cancelled for a number of reasons, as the Member indicated. So, yes, we will take the steps necessary to ensure that they don't have to wait six months to see a doctor. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 367-15(3): Medical Services In Colville Lake

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister. The people in Colville Lake will appreciate hearing that, no matter what, the doctor will be coming into Colville Lake to see them. Could the Minister give the House an update on the medical services that will hopefully be improved for Colville Lake, in terms of the medical equipment and supplies that they are lacking for services that they could be receiving? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 367-15(3): Medical Services In Colville Lake

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there have been inventories done of all the community health centres in terms of the needs they have for medical equipment, and there has been

money identified in the budget to help address those needs. In addition, I would point out that there is also money in the budget for a public health unit to be established in the Sahtu, as well, which should give greater access to public health care which is currently available only through the Inuvik office. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 367-15(3): Medical Services In Colville Lake

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year the people in Colville Lake had an outbreak of TB, and they were very thankful that, in an emergency such as that, we had a lot of attention from the Department of Health and Social Services in terms of having staff come into the community. Now that the scare is gone, the staff have left Colville Lake and they want to see if there's a possibility of having regular visits by the nursing station in Fort Good Hope on a more regular basis. They are coming into Colville; however, they are making a quick turnaround in three or four hours and then they're back into the community of Fort Good Hope or Norman Wells. So they want to know if the medical staff can stay at least a day or so longer in Colville. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 367-15(3): Medical Services In Colville Lake

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a scheduling issue and there's capacity within the Sahtu region to look at that. We have staff there who are looking at that delivery, as well as we have some staff in Inuvik. The Member raises a point that is a scheduling issue. There is some capacity, so that will have to be investigated. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 367-15(3): Medical Services In Colville Lake

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could I ask the Minister if he would commit to ensuring that medical health services can or will be staying at least one day in Colville Lake? Not three or four hours, but at least assure us they can stay overnight to ensure that the people are receiving medical services like the rest of the communities in the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 367-15(3): Medical Services In Colville Lake

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will be making sure that the staff in Sahtu and Inuvik are aware of the very clear request from Colville Lake through the Member, and we'll look at what's possible when they're doing their scheduling to see how they could best accommodate that request. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 368-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as always, there is no shortage of big issues to talk about here but, this being a Friday, I would like to join in on the actions of the Member for Nahendeh...

---Applause

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

MS. LEE: ...and fight for the children of Nahanni Butte. Mr. Speaker, we should all be ashamed...

AN HON. MEMBER: Ashamed.

MS. LEE: ...that there is no indoor gymnasium in any community in our territory, Mr. Speaker. What is our criteria? There should be no community with no gym, and that's the case with Nahanni Butte. What are the children of Nahanni Butte supposed to do in the thick of the winter months? Mr. Speaker, apparently in the North you have to go to jail to get a good gym.

---Laughter

AN HON. MEMBER: Ooh! .

MS. LEE: A young offenders centre in Yellowknife has a gym, Mr. Speaker. We've spent millions on saving the secondary diamond industry that we're talking about, and offices in Yellowknife spend millions renovating. What do the children of Nahanni Butte think when they look at the Legislative Assembly and say we have no place to play soccer, and look at these MLAs? Mr. Speaker, I would like to know the government standard. Couldn't there be a rule that says every community should have a school, hospital, and an indoor gym?

AN HON. MEMBER: Hey, a hospital.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 368-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many of our communities in the North are very young compared to other jurisdictions. A lot of our communities are not even 60 years in existence, and we are struggling to meet the infrastructure requirements. We have just recently done an assessment of all our communities across the Territories. We recognize that there are a lot of infrastructure needs and we're not meeting them, especially in the small communities. It's good to hear that a representative from a tax-based-municipality would encourage us to spend more money in the smaller communities.

---Applause

We are looking at it and we agree; there should be some standards. However, infrastructure has a cost, a price tag on it. We are looking at our standards and criteria and guidelines that we're using. We would like to put

recreation infrastructure back on the radar screen and into the communities, and we are intending to work on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 368-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MS. LEE: Let me correct the hospital, to read health centre; sorry. Mr. Speaker, let me be really serious. I can see the planning process, but my understanding is that there is no gymnasium planned for Nahanni Butte until 2017. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that is taking planning a little far there. That is 12 years from now. That's not acceptable. There has to be a better way to plan this. Mr. Speaker, I remind the Minister when he was on this side of the floor, he talked non-stop about the need...

AN HON. MEMBER: Ooh!

MS. LEE: ...and the lack of representation of youth from small communities in big sporting games. Now he has all the power in the world. He's a Minister of sport.

---Applause

He's the Minister of MACA. It's about time that he put his money where his mouth is and build a gym next year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 368-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member gives me more credit than I actually have in terms of authority and power. Mr. Speaker, we can't just come out and start to just one-off and pick out one facility for one community. We have to start looking at our plan. We have, in our budget, that we're going to be voting on during the session, indicated that we need \$1 million to do some planning. We need some consultation work, we have to start putting it in order. We also have to work on how the MRIF money is going to flow out to the different communities. We have to start developing and designing criteria. We have already set up a number of meetings with the NWT Association of Communities to do that. We still have to sign an agreement on the gas tax for the \$37.5 million for infrastructure, so there is a lot of work. I can't just stand up in this House and decide what projects will go where, and I refuse to do that. My method of dealing with the communities is to consult with them, have their input and then we will decide where the money will be served best. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 368-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that there is a lot of gap for him to close between getting up here and making a commitment to a gym willy-nilly and to plan something like this 17 years later. I think there is a lot of room there for him to close. Mr. Speaker, I'm not talking

about federal funding and all the other stuff, but doing with what you have. We are talking \$1 million. The Minister of Health and Social Services is talking about healthy living, active living, kids having a place. What are they supposed to do in the wintertime? I think this is more than just the recreational...

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame.

MS. LEE: ...it's a necessity and we are talking about some \$46 million dollar surplus.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MS. LEE: Is there not room for a \$1 million gym for one community that has no indoor facilities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 368-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly I can appreciate the Member's concern for the small communities. We have a number of communities that need gyms. The price tag on a gym is \$1.5 million to \$2 million. If we start adding the number of communities, which are Nahanni Butte, Enterprise, Kakisa, Detah and Gameti, we are looking at over \$10 million if we start factoring in all the communities that we need.

We would like to be able to address their needs in recreation in the next little while. We have some money, we have some flexibility now that we didn't have for many years, but at the same time we have a huge infrastructure deficit. Over the next 10 years we were anticipating probably around \$400 million infrastructure requirement needs. So we have to really plan out and make sure our dollars are put where it would be best. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 368-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister has the need to lump this project with every other capital project need and I think that is where the mistake is, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about a very few communities in the Territories with no indoor facility, and even I know, as a Member from the largest city in the Territories, that an indoor gym is more than an indoor gym in communities. That is where they have tea dances and they have their meetings and it's where the communities gather. So I am saying don't lump them up with the big places like Wha Ti and Gameti in this context. We are talking about a community with no indoor gym, no indoor facility, and there should be an exception for that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 368-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly will consider that. We are

considering it. We are not lumping in Nahanni Butte with bigger centres. Kakisa, in fact, is smaller than Nahanni Butte, and they don't have a gym. So we have to consider that and it's not as if we are totally ignoring the communities. Most of the communities...Every community, in fact, has a multi-purpose hall that can be substituted for a gymnasium. It's not the requirements to meet standards of a gym, but we also have been investing in new centres in communities, so a gymnasium is something that has been put on the agenda. We are considering it. I appreciate the Member's recommendation. We will certainly consider it seriously. Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: And Detah.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Question 369-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to ask questions about RWED and their commitment to Expo, but I think I'm going to jump on the bandwagon about this lack of gymnasium in Nahanni Butte.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Fort Simpson and I know these communities very well. I can tell you personally from my own experience of growing there as a young lad we could either go to the gymnasium to play floor hockey or kick soccer balls, or we could be out on the streets breaking windows doing nasty things. So my question to the Minister is what is his priority for our children out there? Is it gymnasiums, having fun and good education out there, or is it being nasty on the streets? What is his priority from his department?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 369-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard to accommodate some of the needs of our youth. We have been doing a lot of planning. We have been able to convince our Cabinet, our Financial Management Board, that we need more dollars in terms of infrastructure and where we are looking at some flexibility so that some of this money can be used towards recreation. We've also been establishing a program called the Community Initiatives Program, where there is \$1 million there that communities have been tapping into for baseball diamonds, youth centres and soccer fields, so that they are not out there breaking windows, as the Member suggested.

Our priority is for active living. We have formed a Social Ministers' Committee that deals with this issue. We have announced the ski program that we are enhancing, we've also targeted to have NWT games that are focused solely on youth and youth that cannot participate or have not been able to participate in some of the other initiatives that are out there, like the Arctic Winter Games, Canada Games or National Aboriginal Indigenous Games. So

there are a number of things that we have embarked on and are working towards in the last little while as new initiatives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Supplementary To Question 369-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for talking about process. Mr. Speaker, I think this Minister can make the policy commitment today. Now, he said earlier about he won't stand up here in the House and help direct these things, but I think he can. Being in charge of MACA, he can say our policy initiative will be to put gymnasiums in these communities. We talked about \$1.5 million out of his words. Well, the government can stand by and watch the diamond producers and the diamond cutters waste territorial dollars, between them arguing over who is responsible who is going to give diamonds. So we can watch \$3 million or \$4 million dollars go to waste over procedures and policies and process, but we can't make a policy decision that would keep our kids off the street. Will the Minister address this problem through a policy, because our youth today are going to be our adults with problems tomorrow. So will he address this through a policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return to Question 369-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree that our youth today will be adults of tomorrow. I will look at our process, our standards and criteria that we use as a guideline, and we will be moving forward with a plan to address infrastructure in the smaller communities and put more emphasis on the recreation. We are hearing it from the Members on the other side and we certainly take it as direction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

Supplementary To Question 369-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could almost see like a candle of light starting there. There wasn't a flashlight or a big beam, but I could feel the warmth of light. You are lighting the path in the right direction. Mr. Speaker, we are getting a whole whack of dollars for infrastructure money. I don't have to talk about how much; this is the right Minister to talk to though. Will he use his power to create a policy that helps some of those infrastructure dollars to address this problem? Mr. Speaker, I want to hear him take control of his department and take control of this problem. Will he help the youth? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 369-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been focused on the youth in terms of our initiatives over the last while; we will continue to do so.

I certainly will heed to the direction provided by the Members over the recreation facility issue in the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 369-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am hearing the warmth from that cold Minister over there on the books; finally. It's good to see that, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, these directives can be done today. I want to hear this Minister say today he's got the power that we will work to make this initiative within this capital budget, within the next five years, we can do this. Show some leadership, Mr. Speaker, because that little gymnasium is the heart of a community. It's a community centre, it's for gathering places like tea dances; my colleague over here just said it is the heart of the community. Will the Minister seriously agree to look into this problem today and see if we can adjust it within our five-year capital plan, so that the people of Nahanni who are without a gymnasium can have that problem solved? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 369-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it has always been in our plans to have consultation with all communities to see what their needs are. Our process allows for that. We want to be able to hear from all of the communities before I commit to taking one program, one project in our 20-year needs and moving it forward. We would like to review all the projects that are out there and then make a decision based on fairness and need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Question 370-15(3): Conditions For Pipeline Development

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to talk about the pipeline discussions that went on this morning on CBC Radio. I found it very interesting this morning when people were calling in, and I think the majority of the callers were in favour of the pipeline. On the one hand, in the Finance Minister's statement yesterday, he indicated that the government is in support of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. I think that's working in the right direction. On the other hand, the problem we are having, Mr. Speaker, is we are still talking about resource revenue sharing. On one hand, the government supports the program of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and on the other hand, you say unless we get the resource revenue sharing agreement in place, the government will not approve this. What direction are you showing the people of the Northwest Territories? In my region, the Inuvialuit are progressive people and they are looking forward to developments like this. Can the Premier indicate whether we are in support of it or not? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 370-15(3): Conditions For Pipeline Development

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, we support the pipeline. We need the pipeline, I believe, to have a strong economy. But our support is not unconditional. There are conditions on it in the same way with the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in, the Sahtu, everybody is negotiating benefit and access agreements and we support them in doing that. I know their support is not unconditional. They are not going to say come and take the oil and gas, we don't need any agreements, we don't need any more benefits. Our position is the same as theirs. We have conditions on environment, conditions in terms of social issues, conditions on the financial side. We do not want to see, over the next 20 years, \$50 to \$70 billion in government revenues from development go south and we are left there with a few short-term benefits. So, yes, we have conditions on it and I believe they are achievable and I am confident that our Prime Minister is determined to be fair with us on this issue. I am not at all even thinking that the pipeline will be stopped because of resource revenue sharing, because I believe strongly that we can achieve that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Pokiak.

Supplementary To Question 370-15(3): Conditions For Pipeline Development

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now, there is a joint review panel doing an assessment of the documents provided by Imperial Oil. There is a process going on right now, Mr. Speaker. NEB is doing their own review of the socioeconomics of the program. Are we moving too fast to say yes or no? Can we just let the joint review panel do their work, the NEB do their work, at the same time we, as government, can sit down and iron out socioeconomic agreements without resource revenue sharing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 370-15(3): Conditions For Pipeline Development

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, there is a lot of work to be done over the next 18 months or two years by one of the review committees, on socioeconomic benefits, environmental or technical issues, before a recommendation is made to the federal government to approve or not approve this pipeline. We have a lot of work to do. I think a lot of this work has to happen at the same time. We don't want to slow down the pipeline. The gas is needed in the South. We need the revenues. We need the economic activity. We don't want industry to turn somewhere else, to Alaska, as an alternative, and leave us sitting here with nothing happening. So we have to move ahead at the same time.

We are actively negotiating the resource revenue sharing and devolution as a requirement. We are negotiating the socioeconomic agreement. The regional governments, aboriginal governments, are negotiating their benefit and access agreements and the pipeline company is going through the environmental and technical review stages.

So all of that happens at the same time. At the same time, we also have to look at social impacts and maybe do some adjustments of our programs. We have to look at training. So we have a very, very busy 18 months to two years here. I don't think we can solve one problem and then the next one and then the next one, otherwise we will still be talking 30 years from now. We have to roll up our sleeves and work on all these fronts at the same time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 371-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of MACA. I would just like to quote from the Finance Minister's budget speech. His last line, Mr. Speaker, states: "It is up to the leaders of the Northwest Territories to light the path and lead the way." Lead the way!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Lead the way!

MR. MENICOCHÉ: For me, what that means, Mr. Speaker, is if we identify a need, we must address it. Here is a need that needs addressing. I would like the Minister to address it and tell me what he's going to do about fulfilling this need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 371-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am assuming the need he's talking about is the gymnasium in Nahanni Butte.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of need across the board. We have to recognize that there is still considerable demand for investment in our water and sewer programs. We have had, in the last while, guidelines set with the federal government as to how we are going to deal with water, how we are going to deal with waste water. We have to make sure we can invest in those things. Some of the dollars that are flowing forward from the federal government come with criteria attached to where we can spend them. We have some flexibility in our budget for building a baseline for communities to decide where they want to invest in the communities. I want to be able to hear from the communities. I want to be able to have some consultation before I decide, and that will light the way for us to move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 371-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard today about the Tlicho having a reason to tea dance and what I would like to do is give Nahanni a place to tea dance, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell me what options they are looking at to develop a gymnasium for Nahanni Butte in the near future? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 371-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we are currently, and will be over the next while, having discussions with the communities as to their needs. We want them to be able to bring those forward. We want to be able to have a good discussion around that. We still have a commitment that I have made and our department has been honouring; to deal with the NWT Association of Communities, to deal with LGANT, the Local Governors Association of the Northwest Territories, and consider their input. We recognize there is a need in the small communities for recreation infrastructure. There is recreation infrastructure in larger and medium-sized communities. There are infrastructure needs in the tax-based communities also. We need to be able to accommodate all those things.

I am not in a position to commit, as the Member is asking, to stand up here and say yes, we are going to do this. I don't think it would be fair to all the other communities. We want to be able to consider all the priorities in terms of communities. We want to be able to hear from them. We have made a commitment as part of the new deal that communities will be able to decide where they want to go. Right now, it has been difficult because of our limited budget, but we have now created a base and will be looking at deciding how we will spend that money in the next while. I need the opportunity to have more discussion on it. I am not in a position right now to commit to one project. Once that is all decided, we will certainly share it with all the Members here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The time for question period has expired, however, I will allow you a supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 371-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, that's the tone of a letter the Minister wrote to the principal in Nahanni Butte; that the department is not in a position to support the development of a gymnasium through their capital budgeting process in the immediate future, and that's very disheartening, Mr. Speaker. Have a heart, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Have a heart!

MR. MENICOCHÉ: That's what I would like to say for the people and the youth of Nahanni Butte. Will the Minister look at changing his mind and address these needs in the immediate future? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 371-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to reassure the Member that I do have a heart.

---Laughter

I also want to point out that the letter that was drafted to the community of Nahanni Butte was drafted before we had approval for additional dollars to put towards our capital plan. So now that circumstances have changed, we have to look at our criteria and we have to be able to consult with the community. So I would like to request that the Members bear with us until we develop a plan of how we are going to expend that money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 371-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Well, I am very pleased to hear that the Minister has a heart, Mr. Speaker. In all seriousness, that's what I would like to see. The plan for a gymnasium in Nahanni Butte is so far off in the future, it's just unrealistic because the need for the gymnasium is for today, Mr. Speaker. I would like to get the Minister's commitment that he will work hard and try to get a facility for that particular community in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 371-15(3): Gymnasium Needed In Nahanni Butte

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member has asked if I would work hard. I think we work hard every day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I will take the request to consider the recreational facilities in the small communities. It's an issue that has generated a lot of discussion over the last while and it has been something that has been put on the back burner for a considerable amount of time as our budget for capital has been reduced. Over the next while, we may have an opportunity to do something about it. We would like to be able to have a good, thorough discussion over it. I will commit to making sure that Nahanni Butte, Gameti, Enterprise, Kakisa and Detah and all these communities are all part of the discussion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Time for question period has expired. Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to go back to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to go back to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are there any nays? There are no nays, Mr. Krutko. Return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. Krutko.

REVERT TO ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a former constituent of mine, Ms. Winnie Blake from Tsiigehtchic, who now lives in southern Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, written questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 69-15(3): Consumption Of Alcohol

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Finance. Can the Minister provide the following information:

1. What is the total annual consumption of alcoholic beverages in the Northwest Territories?
2. What is the total annual consumption of alcohol beverages in the Sahtu region?
3. What are the total revenues of alcoholic beverages in the Sahtu and the Northwest Territories?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 7, written questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Written Question 70-15(3): Teacher Education Program Graduates

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My written question is for the Premier of the Northwest Territories.

1. How many northern Teacher Education Program students have completed education programs since the Premier's office made the commitment to hire all students who have successfully completed the Teacher Education Program?
2. Of the graduates, how many are currently employed as teachers in the North?
3. Further, will the Premier please explain, in detail, what the incentives are that he referred to in the Unedited Hansard, pages 2604 to 2605, on February 10, 2005, to encourage education authorities to hire northern graduates?
4. What does the Premier mean when he commented on increasing these incentives to address this problem?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, replies to the budget address. Item 11, petitions. Before we go into the next item on the order paper, the Chair is going to call a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: I'll call the House back to order. Orders of the day, item 12, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 12: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee Report 9-15(3): Standing Committee On Accountability And Oversight Report On The Review Of The Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, I'd like to read the report of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight. First I will introduce the members of the committee, which are chair, Kevin Menicoche; myself, Robert Hawkins, deputy chair; Bill Braden, Great Slave; Jane Groenewegen; Sandy Lee; Calvin Pokiak; David Ramsay; Robert Villeneuve; Norman Yakeleya; and the new Member, Robert McLeod.

Our staff are Doug Schauerte, Colette Langlois and Darha Phillipot.

Introduction

Mr. Speaker, the standing committees of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories met from January 10 to 21, 2005, to review the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates for each of the departments of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The mandate of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight includes the overview of the draft main estimates for the departments of the Executive, the Ministry of aboriginal Affairs, the Financial Management Board Secretariat and Finance.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has also offered opinions and recommendations on issues brought forward by the Standing Committee on Social Programs and the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development that are deemed to be of government-wide importance.

Government-Wide Issues

Northern Strategy

On December 14, 2004, Prime Minister Paul Martin, together with the Premiers of the three northern territories, announced a framework for the first-ever jointly developed Northern Strategy. The announcement included a commitment for an additional \$120 million of federal funding to be divided equally among the three territories.

During the review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight had an opportunity to speak with the Premier about the Northern Strategy initiative and the GNWT's plans for implementation. The Premier advised that over the coming months consultation will take place with NWT leaders, stakeholders, and the Caucus of the Legislative Assembly to confirm pan-territorial and NWT-specific priorities, so as to ensure the final Northern Strategy reflects the views of the people of the NWT.

Members are pleased with the announcement of the Northern Strategy initiative and the corresponding \$40 million allocation of new federal funding for the NWT. Given the importance of the NWT's economic activities to

the national economy, Members are of the opinion that it is time for the Prime Minister to honour his personal commitment that the North receive tangible, positive net benefit from further development of the North's resources. Members point out that NWT economic growth between 1999 and 2003 was 46.2 percent compared to an overall average of only 12.7 percent nationwide during the same period.

When compared to the other territories, the NWT's economic performance is also exceptional. The NWT experienced 10.6 percent real GDP growth in 2003 while the overall growth rate for Canada was at 1.7 percent. Over the same period, the GDP for Nunavut and the Yukon was 1.5 percent and 0.2 percent respectively. Estimates for 2004 follow similar trends. Given that the high level of economic activity in the NWT far exceeds that of the other two territories, Members are concerned that the specific needs of the NWT will not be met by a strategy intended to address issues of concern to the North as a whole. Members are of the opinion that the Northern Strategy will not meet the needs of the NWT unless the unique economic situation in the NWT is recognized.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories take an extremely aggressive and clearly defined stance in negotiations with the federal government to ensure that the federal government acknowledges the particular opportunities and needs that result from the Northwest Territories' strong economy.

Fiscal Responsibility Policy

The GNWT endeavours to maintain a workable fiscal framework that balances cash needs against manageable debt. In so doing, the Department of Finance struggles with the cap set by the federal government on the GNWT's allowable borrowing limit, or, what has been termed "the debt wall." The borrowing limit for the GNWT is arbitrarily set at \$300 million by Order in Council of the federal cabinet.

During the review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight noted that revenue forecasts have improved significantly as a result of a number of developments over the last six months, including improvements to the NWT's Formula Financing Agreement, and additional federal funding in the areas of health care, the Northern Strategy, and infrastructure. The new infusion of federal dollars, coupled with government spending reductions, means that there is now no immediate fear of hitting the debt wall. Nonetheless, Members were pleased to hear that the government has proactively moved forward with a new fiscal responsibility policy.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight offers strong support for the government's efforts to advance the new fiscal responsibility policy. The committee is of the opinion that it is a positive step to move away from the arbitrarily established debt limit set by the federal government and to establish a conservative, easily understood policy that ties debt limits to economic indicators such as the NWT's GDP. Not only is this consistent with practices in other jurisdictions, but moreover it places responsibility on the GNWT to be

accountable for its own debt management. Members are extremely pleased that the new fiscal responsibility policy, should the federal government support it, will enable additional borrowing leverage for the GNWT to make critical capital investments in the coming years.

Territorial Power Subsidy Program

The Territorial Power Subsidy Program, also known as the TPSP, assists residential and commercial customers in high cost communities by paying the difference between the Yellowknife power rate and the local rate up to a maximum number of kilowatt hours per month.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight was pleased to note that the government has been looking at changes to the TPSP and that the Financial Management Board has decided to compensate for rate riders in the program. This is intended to alleviate the burden of rising fuel costs in communities dependent upon diesel-generated power.

For 2005-2006 the TPSP is estimated at \$8.307 million, a zero percent increase from the 2004-2005 Main Estimates. According to the Minister, this takes into account the estimated \$650,000 increase associated with the decision to absorb rate riders in the Territorial Power Subsidy Program.

Some members of the standing committee were concerned that this may be an overly optimistic projection. The subsidy has increased by nearly \$3 million since the 2001-2002 fiscal year, when the subsidy program cost \$5.419 million. Although world oil prices are down from the record highs witnessed last fall, there is no consensus among experts that they will remain at current lower levels. As long as oil prices remain high and power consumption continues to climb, Members do not foresee a stabilization of the program and are concerned that the government will come back for funding by way of supplementary appropriations.

Some Members were also perplexed at why the government would step in now with this short-term measure when the entire field of GNWT social subsidies and supports, such as the TPSP is just one of 17 across seven departments, is currently under review.

Members representing communities that are not included in the TPSP, such as Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith, Rae-Edzo and Fort Resolution, also asked whether their communities will also be spared when anticipated rate riders come into effect for their power systems sometime in the spring of 2005. The committee urges the government to clarify that its rate rider rescue program will be universally applied to all power customers across the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, my colleague, Mr. Menicoche, will finish the committee report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Public Service Growth

During the review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

noted that the public service has grown by 20.3 percent since 1999.

Members are of the opinion that growth of this kind is something to be monitored very carefully. Not only is the number of positions increasing, upcoming Collective Agreement negotiations may also lead to increased costs. The concern is that the GNWT has finite resources; the more resources allocated to salaries and benefits and other administrative costs, the less available for programs and services.

Members have noted that the plan to divide the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development includes a total of 17 new full-time positions. The committee is in support of the plan, but cautions that public service growth cannot go unchecked. If there is growth in one area, there will need to be reductions in another. As the committee has suggested previously, there are a number of areas where the committee feels duplication could be eliminated; for instance, the proposed consolidation of GNWT human resources.

Changes To Accounting And Capital Planning Process

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight agrees with the position brought forward by the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development that it is time for the GNWT to review some of its business practices. One example is the inability to carry money forward from one fiscal year to the next, which can lead to imprudent spending at year end. If each department had greater control over its own expenditures and revenues, it would perhaps lead to greater responsibility in spending and reduce or eliminate the supplementary funding process.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight also shares the concern with the lack of consistent budget process amongst departments. For example, FMBS has a zero-based budgeting practice, while other departments do not and MACA's capital plan is presented differently in the main estimates. The concern is that an overly complicated process makes it difficult for Members of the general public to determine how the government is spending their money. Members of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight would appreciate the opportunity to have more discussions with the Minister with regard to this matter.

Finally, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight would like to see changes to the corporate capital planning process to address the inadequate representation of the interests of less developed and less populated communities, a process that has the potential to lead to cost overruns on large projects, and the lack of regional representation on the Capital Review Committee.

Youth Employment, Apprenticeship And Training On The Job Programs

Members of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, in concert with the Standing Committee on Social Programs, are disappointed that the Youth Employment Program, which provided subsidies to employers to hire young people to give them work experience, has been reduced by \$480,000 over what was available in 2004-05. This means there is only

\$300,000 left to subsidize employers willing to give youth work experience.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight was pleased to see that the Training on the Job and Apprenticeship Training on the Job were both spared cuts through this latest round of government belt tightening. It should be noted that these two programs are different in that they actually ensure that a person has marketable skills in a trade or occupation upon completion of a training program. This program provides a subsidy to employers, to hire trainees or apprentices, and recognizes there is a cost to training skilled employees.

With the increased need for trades people and other skilled employees as a result of increased activity in the non-renewable resource sector, the committee cannot condone or support the erosion of training programs for northerners that can lead to long-term meaningful employment.

Western Arctic Leadership Program

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight supports core funding from the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment for the Western Arctic Leadership Program. The majority of committee members believe the program has the potential to provide a valuable outlet for promising students to reach beyond the opportunities available to them by grade extensions in our smaller communities.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment undertake a comprehensive review of the Western Arctic Leadership Program to assess the value of the program.

And further, that the results of the review be presented to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight prior to the committee review of the 2006-09 Business Plans.

Market Housing Initiative

Problems with the market housing initiative were brought forward to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight by the Standing Committee on Social Programs. Members of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight are of the opinion that the market housing initiative has not met its intent. Until such time that the committee sees information to convince them otherwise, Members are unwilling to support the program. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight will be monitoring the program closely and may have further comments or recommendations, should the government decide to proceed with the second phase.

NWT Courts Building In Yellowknife

Issues surrounding the proposed NWT courts building in Yellowknife were brought forward to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight by the Standing Committee on Social Programs. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight supports the position of their counterparts. They too recommend the Department of Justice come up with a solid communication plan, and business case on the need for a

new courthouse, so that interested persons can get the information to make the same informed decisions that MLAs are being asked to.

Court Registries In Hay River And Inuvik

During the review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight was made aware by the Standing Committee on Social Programs, of the planned closures of the court registries in Hay River and Inuvik.

Members supported the recommendation that was made by the Standing Committee on Social Programs that both registries remain open. The major reason to recommend the Inuvik and Hay River registries remain open had to do with administration of justice in the regions. While it cannot be argued that it would be cheaper to consolidate all justice activities in Yellowknife, Members are prepared to accept that in some cases, there is a cost to getting justice closer to the people.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight also shares the concern that the construction of a new courts facility in Yellowknife could lead to consideration of consolidating court registries in Yellowknife sometime in the future. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight would oppose any such move.

Remand Unit At The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre

The closure of the remand unit at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre was brought to the attention of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight. Committee members, like their counterparts in the Standing Committee on Social Programs, have difficulty in accepting the department's rationale and anticipated cost-savings associated with the closure of the remand unit.

During the review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight supported the recommendation made by the Social Programs committee to the department that the funding for the operation of the remand unit at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre in the amount of \$400,000 be reinstated. Unfortunately the Financial Management Board has refused to reconsider its position and the remand unit remains targeted for closure.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs approached the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight with their concern that the issue of FASD may not have the profile within the government's business plans and main estimates that its devastating effects on the North demand.

Committee members point out that there is good work going on in departments of Health and Social Services, Education Culture and Employment, Justice, and elsewhere across government and in the non-governmental sector. A significant portion of our budget is spent dealing with the long-term effects of alcohol abuse as it relates to FASD.

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight would like to see a coordinated approach to an increased profile of FASD in the next business planning cycle.

Motion To Receive Committee Report 9-15(3) And Move Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the introductory remarks of the report of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight. Therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Committee Report 9-15(3) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. There is a motion on the floor. The motion in order, it is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee Report 9-15(3) is moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 9-15(3) moved into Committee of the Whole for Monday, February 14, 2005. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The Member is seeking unanimous to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 9-15(3) moved into Committee of the Whole for Monday, February 14, 2005. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee Report 9-15(3) will be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday, February 14, 2005.

Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Committee Report 10-15(3): Standing Committee On Governance And Economic Development Report On The Review Of The Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide the House with the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development report on the review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates.

Introduction

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development -- GED -- met from January 13 to January 18, 2005, to review the 2005 - 2006 Draft Main Estimates. The GED envelope includes the departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Environment and Natural Resources, Public Works and Services, Municipal and Community Affairs and Transportation.

General Comments

Streamlining Programs And Cost Savings

As a result of the restructuring of the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, 17 additional positions will be created in the departments of Investment, Tourism and Industry and Environment and Natural Resources. This will mean an ongoing cost to the public of over \$2 million. The committee strongly urges the government to find further cost savings to balance this increase.

The committee believes the government has made a reasonable attempt so far to reduce its expenditures; however, Members have identified several more areas throughout this report where services could be combined to achieve further savings. These further changes would have the added benefit of improving service to the public by streamlining programs and locating them within one department.

Changes To Accounting And Capital Planning Process

The committee strongly believes it is time for the GNWT to review some of its business practices for practicality, transparency and accountability.

Currently, the Financial Administration Act requires funds to be spent in the year in which they are appropriated. If the departments do not spend them, the funds lapse. This inability to accrue funding leads some departments to questionable spending at year end. These funds could better be diverted into a reserve for initiatives like the Arctic Winter Games or serve as an emergency fund for extraordinary circumstances such as high forest fire seasons. Moreover, departments need to have more control over their own revenue sources. For instance, the Department of Transportation could turn revenues from driver licence fees into initiatives like paved roads, instead of profits disappearing into the consolidated revenue fund. If each department had greater control over their own expenditures and revenues, perhaps this would allow greater responsibility in spending and reduce or eliminate the supplementary funding process.

However, the committee still expects departments to account for expenditures and revenue in a transparent and accountable manner. Further to this point, the committee has some issues with respect to the way departments currently account for their expenditures. Each department can describe expenditures in their main estimates differently. For example, FMBS has a zero-based budgeting practice; other Departments do not. MACA's capital plan is split between two places in the budget; other Departments are not. The committee is concerned that this complicated process may make it difficult for members of the general public to review the main estimates and determine how the government is spending their money. The committee would like to see a plain language approach to government accounting and would appreciate the opportunity to have more discussions with the Minister with regard to this matter.

Finally, the committee again would like to see changes to the corporate capital planning process. The committee would also like to reiterate its concerns with the CCP, which it provided in its report on the draft 2004-2005 Main Estimates:

1. The prioritization process, which includes the protection of people and protection of assets, unfairly penalizes less developed and less populated communities.
2. Cost overruns on large projects, a lack of adherence to maximum construction costs in some cases and major increases to the scope of existing projects have the potential to impact funding and timelines for other projects. Members are concerned there may be an incentive for contractors to purposely bid low if

they are led to believe by past practices that overruns will be approved later.

3. The membership of the Capital Review Committee is made up entirely of deputy ministers. Regional representation on the Capital Review Committee is non-existent.

Motion To Receive Committee Report 10-15(3) And Moved Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the introductory remarks for GED. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that Committee Report 10-15(3) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee Report 10-15(3) is received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 10-15(3) moved into Committee of the Whole for Monday, February 14, 2005. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to move Committee Report 10-15(3) into Committee of the Whole for Monday, February 14th. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee Report 10-15(3) will be moved into Committee of the Whole for Monday, February 14, 2005. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Committee Report 11-15(3): Standing Committee On Social Programs Report On The Review Of The Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Programs. The comments specific to departments will be provided as the departments come up for debate in Committee of the Whole.

Motion To Receive Committee Report 11-15(3) And Moved Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

Therefore, I would like to move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Committee Report 11-15(3) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for Consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee Report 11-15(3) will be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Committee Report 11-15(3) moved into Committee of the Whole for Monday, February 14, 2005. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs Lee. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to move Committee Report 11-15(3) into Committee of the Whole for Monday, February 14th. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Committee Report 11-15(3) will be moved into Committee of the Whole for Monday, February 14, 2005. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

ITEM 14: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 98-15(3): Package Of Letters In Support Of A Gymnasium For Nahanni Butte

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand here 10 letters from the students and principal of Nahanni Butte school requesting a school gymnasium that I would like to table.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 14, tabling of documents. Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Tabled Document 99-15(3): Letter From Minister Of MACA To The Principal Of Charles Yohin School In Nahanni Butte Re Gymnasium

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a letter from the Minister of MACA to the principal stating he's not in a position to develop the school gymnasium in the capital budgeting process in the near future.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 17: MOTIONS

Motion 25-15(3): Appointment Of Chief Electoral Officer, Carried

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Constitution Act provides that every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of Members of the House of Commons or a Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS eligible residents of the Northwest Territories have the right to exercise their democratic right of franchise;

AND WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly has ensured that all residents have the ability to exercise their constitutional right of franchise by enacting the Elections Act;

AND WHEREAS the Elections Act provides for the appointment of a Chief Electoral Officer who has the responsibility to exercise general direction and supervision over the administrative conduct of an election and enforce, on the part of all election officers, fairness, impartiality and compliance with the act;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that this Legislative Assembly, by virtue of section 3 of the Elections Act, recommends to the Commissioner the appointment of Glen McLean as Chief Electoral Officer for the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHER that this appointment shall be in effect until June 30, 2008.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

---Applause

Members, I notice that Mr. McLean is in the gallery today. Congratulations, Mr. McLean, on your appointment.

---Applause

Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 18: FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 22: An Act To Amend The Education Act, No. 2

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Education Act, No. 2, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. A motion is on the floor. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 20 has had first reading. Item 18, first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Bill 21: An Act To Amend The Public Service Act

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. A motion is on the floor. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 21 has had first reading. Colleagues, I have a correction. On the first bill that was introduced by Mr. Handley, I said it was Bill 20. I should have said Bill 22 has had first reading. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 23, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 23: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I will call Committee of the Whole to order. There are four bills before committee today. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Madam Chair, the committee wishes to consider Appropriation Act, 2005-2006.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Then we will proceed with general comments for Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006. Mr. Braden, general comments.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yesterday afternoon I was able to, in my Member's statement, give a quick sense of where I felt this budget will take us and, after a day's reflection and a good night's sleep on it, I can certainly say that I feel better as an MLA in this Assembly this year or today looking forward, than I did a year ago.

The fiscal picture has become much more certain for us and, to our credit and our benefit, we are able to see the vast majority of our programs maintained. We are able to see finally, after years and years of being choked back, Madam Chair, our capital investment and infrastructure program finally starting to come back to levels that would give us the chance to not only maintain and restore what we have, but maybe even do a few extra things. So we are in a much more stable and positive-looking position here.

The Minister and his people, Cabinet, deserve the acknowledgment and congratulations on this. They have, through my satisfaction through our committee work, kept us advised and informed of which way we wanted to take this government. So I have very little room to argue or criticize, Madam Chair. I have much more cause to be complimentary of where we are so far.

This does not entirely leave us off the hook. I use the collective word, Madam Chair, because as we go forward with this, we all need to recognize we have responsibility and accountability in how we manage and steward our resources.

As I said yesterday, the area that causes me the greatest discomfort is that our overall fiscal future is not ours to determine. In fact, where we have for years duked it out with the Department of Finance and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs on what our fortunes are to be, now we have the creation of an expert panel on provincial-territorial equalization, if I have the term generally right, which is going to be a new bureaucratic administrative creature, Madam Chair, with a host of new people at it who I don't know how familiar they're going to be with our situation. I'm concerned, Madam Chair, that this panel has yet to be formally constituted and put to work. There's an expectation that by the end of this year we will have some decisions and criteria worked out. I want to be hopeful and optimistic that this is all going to happen, but we have seen these processes and deadlines come and go without really delivering. I would raise again this is where my

caution is, where my concern is. So for the next fiscal year we will still not have the really well-defined, clear parameters of what our financial situation is to be. I do look forward to a positive outcome but, in the meantime, we still have a degree of instability, Madam Chair.

When I was listening to Mr. Roland's address I was keeping a bit of a score card and I think I have something like 12 points that came up for me on the good side of this budget, about seven or eight that were not so good, and a couple of wait-and-see items. I guess in the spirit of our discussion right now, Madam Chair, general comments, I would give you what to me are the highlights here and the things that I'm very pleased to see us take into the coming year.

We have the second highest employment rate in Canada in the Northwest Territories. We are going to be in our, is it fourth or fifth year, Mr. Premier or Mr. Finance Minister; our fourth or fifth year of double digit economic growth in the Northwest Territories. It's the fifth year, I hear. That's a remarkable record.

We have a fiscal policy approach, Madam Chair, that I'm especially supportive of because it will hopefully, with the collaboration of the folks in the Finance department in Ottawa, be able to free us from this outdated, outmoded, arbitrary debt wall that we operate in so much fear of. We are going to see a much more progressive way of planning our debt, looking at our borrowing. It's going to be, I think, very easy to manage. It will be easy to use. It will be easy to understand. This is one of the things that I think is a bit of a breakthrough for us. There's a lot of stuff that goes on with financing and with government that is impenetrable. It is really hard for people to grasp. This is a program that I think will be easy to understand.

The level of community government, devolution, if you will, is really healthy, especially on the infrastructure and dollar point of view. This is something that was on my list of objectives as a candidate and MLA, and I'm really pleased to see that we're going to be rolling this agenda out to improve and increase and expand governance at the community level.

The completion of the Rae to Yellowknife highway will happen next year, thank goodness; and here I think we have to acknowledge that Ottawa has come to the fore, realizing what our situation is and helped us accelerate this program.

The split of RWED is something that I think will, in the long run, serve us better.

Madam Chair, there are no new taxes or tax initiatives undertaken in this budget and I'm hopeful that for the rest of the term of this Assembly we will not need to undertake any other tax initiatives. We did a lot of work on that last year in this Assembly. I think it was good work, but I'm hopeful that we'll not have to go back to that again.

Madam Chair, as I said, the wait-and-see agenda has been outlined already with the panel that will decide our future for formula financing. I think we also have to put a watch on the agreement-in-principle on resource revenue sharing. The Premier has been very consistent in saying his expectation, his belief, his trust is in the Prime Minister to deliver on the agreement-in-principle by this spring with a final agreement by next year.

So that, Madam Chair, would cover my opening comments on this budget. I look forward to engaging in the line-by-line detail discussion of each department over the next few weeks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Roland, would you be wishing to respond to Mr. Braden's general comments? Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I either can do it individually or after Members are done their general comments. I'm open to either way. I think I can respond to Mr. Braden's one comment at this point.

First of all, just to say thanks for the support on a lot of the initiatives. We've worked hard as Members of the 15th Assembly to put this budget together. There were some difficult decisions that had to be made on moving forward with this, trying to bring some balance to our expenditure requirements as well as increasing our revenues. I really believe this budget puts us on a footing going forward that is much better than we've seen in the past. As well, we're moving out and reaching out into the communities to start helping them with their difficulties on the infrastructure side.

As the Member pointed out, we're estimating another banner year in the Northwest Territories when it looks at our economic growth. We're looking at the area of 10 percent for this year we're in. Tying it to the previous four years, yes, we've done very well in the Northwest Territories. But we also recognize that there are still many difficulties being felt out there by residents of the North in communities. We do have the second highest employment rate, but at the same time when you look at the difference in the North between our larger and smaller communities, we still have a fair bit of work to do and we recognize that.

As well, I'd like to thank Members for their support around the fiscal responsibility policy. That is something that I think is another area that we're showing that we as legislators for the Northwest Territories and the Government of the Northwest Territories are moving on into another area, and are more able to take care of our own fiscal picture instead of relying on the federal government setting out some mandatory limits for us. It will make this government and future governments accountable to those who elect them, as well as a Cabinet to the Members of the House.

When we look at the work that's ongoing with the equalization panel that is looking at equalization for the provinces as well as formula financing for the territories, that is an area that we, as well, are anxious about to see what details begin to flow, and we are waiting for the opportunity to once again plug in with our views of how it is worked or not worked and what should be in a formula. Should we be moving along in that area or should we be sticking to formula financing as we know it? Those are things we will have to deal with in a short time coming up. I think in that area, because it impacts all of the provinces and territories, we will see movement on that. It's in the best interest of the country to get on and bring that to conclusion in the timeline that's been set out. We're looking at 10 months. It does leave us with some apprehension as to what may be the future for our fiscal situation in the Northwest Territories. That just means that from our end, where we have control, we need to continue

to be vigilant with how we deal with the dollars we have available to us.

As well, we've heard the Premier say many times, and the support of this House, is to see a successful conclusion to the resource revenue sharing negotiations that are tied to devolution. So that is something I think again, with the commitment from the Prime Minister, that has added to the work that's going to get done on it and the commitment on the part of the federal government. But it's something that we need to continue to pursue aggressively for the benefit of the residents of the Northwest Territories.

I look forward to having Members and departments go through each section of the budget and bring it hopefully to a successful conclusion when we've completed this budget process. Again, thanks for the comments and the support. I look forward to some of the questions and comments as we get into the detail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Next on the list for general comments I have Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to start by congratulating the Minister for a fine budget address yesterday and the presentation of the budget that was conducted yesterday. I know both the Finance Minister and the Premier and the rest of Cabinet have worked very hard over the course of the last year to try to make do with what we have and also to secure some additional funding from the federal government. I applaud their efforts in that and look forward to perhaps working with them going forward to secure more of that funding, especially in terms of the resource revenue sharing, which, as everybody knows, is crucial to the future development of our territory.

I'm going to make a reply to the budget address, but just to highlight a few things for the Finance Minister and provide a few comments. I spoke yesterday and going through the budget exercise, the business plans, the draft mains, one of the recurring themes for me was the growth of the public service. I tried to bring that out again yesterday with my statement. I didn't mean any offence to the union or the public service. What I'm suggesting is that we've allowed this to reach a level where I don't believe it's sustainable over the long run. It's approximately 40 percent of our annual expense, and I don't believe it is sustainable to have that increase every year. We're going to sign a new agreement with the unions here shortly and who knows what that percentage is going to be, but where this money comes from causes me a great deal of concern. Are we going to, just because we have a surplus, eat that surplus up in any kind of new contract? There are going to be other contracts that come and obviously the compounding factor has to be taken into account. I think the Finance Minister has gotten that message through our deliberations thus far and he'll further perhaps get that message, from me anyway, and perhaps from other Members on this side of the House, over the coming few weeks as we go through the budget.

I had mentioned, as well, the fact that the secondary industry, the diamond industry, was left out of the budget address. I know it's included in the manufacturing shipments numbers, but there's no specific reference to the secondary industry in this budget. I think that's an oversight that is ill timed, given the fact of the problems we're facing with the Sirius factory.

I'd also like to mention the fact that the government always speaks of the support that it provides to the tourism industry and it just seems to me that it's just lip service. It doesn't actually come forward and it hasn't come forward recently with any new additional monies for tourism. I think that's an oversight in this budget. Of course, as we go through the various departments I'll draw attention to that as well, but I think it's something that again we have to put our money where our mouth is and if we want to promote ourselves as a world-class destination, we're going to have to spend some money, Madam Chair. That's one thing.

The fact that the Minister mentioned yesterday that economic growth shouldn't only benefit large corporations, but it also has to benefit the young men and women and the residents that live here, I think that is a crucial statement and I look forward to holding the Minister and the government to that. I think that's a key component of it.

As well, I know we went through an exercise last year of having to take a look at our tax initiative. We raised the payroll tax last year from one percent to two percent. That's something I didn't feel that strongly about and I'm hoping the government might try to revisit that decision and, given the fact that our numbers are a lot better this year, consider maybe removing or rolling back that one percent. People are just going to start paying that and it's going to not cost everybody, but it is going to cost residents here more. For some of them who are definitely in the higher tax brackets, it's going to cost them more to live here.

Also in the budget -- again getting back to the Collective Agreement that's coming forward -- nobody knows what the numbers are going to look like, but there's no mention of that in the budget, where the costs associated with any new agreement are going to come from. I think that's something that at least could have been...Negotiations are tough, so it would be tough to ballpark something like that, but we should have some kind of idea what we are willing to go forward with.

As well, there is a statement the Minister made yesterday something to the effect of remaining aggressive, looking for efficiencies and better ways of doing business. I know there have been some examples over the course of the past year where I think we have had an opportunity to try to streamline, to try to be more efficient, and we just haven't done that for whatever reason. That's something I would like to work with the Minister and with the government on going into the future to try to get some more streamlining, more efficiencies.

Our graduation rates are one of the lowest in the country at 43 percent. You get phone calls from constituents that their sons are going to kill themselves, they've got guns and there are crack dealers showing up at their house. You know, crack is a really big issue and so are other addictions here in the Territories. I don't think this investment of \$200 million has addressed that. Maybe it's not just the money, Madam Chair. Maybe we have to re-examine where this investment goes and what it is earmarked for. In my opinion, it hasn't addressed the social ills this territory is faced with. There really isn't any evidence of that investment paying off to date. I would like to make that clear.

The one other thing before I wrap this up, and it has to do with resource revenue sharing and the negotiations that are ongoing for devolution and the fact, again, that the government on a yearly basis is forging ahead just spending money on negotiations. This year it's \$1.8 million for the continuation of devolution and resource revenue sharing negotiations. Yes, they're very important and the money spent is probably money well spent, and I would suggest that we might even need to spend more, but there's something fundamentally wrong with the Government of the Northwest Territories having to spend its own money and resources, the finite resources that we have, to try and get something that is rightfully ours, Madam Chair. I'm not sure how the Premier or the Finance Minister can address this with Ottawa, but to me it's wrong that we have to go and spend our own money, what little money we have, trying to chase down the dollars that are rightfully ours. Something about that doesn't quite add up for me, Madam Chair.

As well, during the next couple of weeks, perhaps when MACA is here, I want to talk a little bit about the breakdown of the infrastructure money to the communities; the 55/45 split. The fact is that 75 percent of our population, Madam Chair, live in tax-based municipalities. The money can be better leveraged if it is in the tax-based municipalities. I'm not quite good with that split and I don't know why it happened that way, but we'll try to get to the bottom of that as well.

Also, in terms of apprenticeship and trades, I know the government blows its horn on the number of apprentices it has and we had the apprenticeship awards ceremony here in the House a few days ago, but I don't think we're putting enough money into it. If our apprenticeship has grown 20 percent in the last two years, where's the evidence that we've got the support on the other side of it to look after the apprentices? To my knowledge, we still only have one apprenticeship officer here in Yellowknife and that's something I think that...and, you know, it all comes back to priorities, Madam Chair, and that's what we have to work towards.

I know my time is running out, but certainly I'll have my comments ready for a reply to the budget address when the time comes. Again, I do appreciate the hard work and commitment that the Premier and the Finance Minister and the rest of Cabinet have shown over the last year, and I look forward to working with them to find some priorities and objectives for the coming year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I didn't hear any specific questions there, so I think I'll just take those as general comments. I have next on the list for general comments, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would also like to offer a few comments on the budget. Yesterday I made a statement about the fact that this is overall a good budget. It certainly is not as gloomy as the one we heard last year. It was very depressing to watch the Minister of Finance last year going on and on about what a dire situation we were in. But to his credit he's worked hard, and Cabinet and everyone else, to get to where we are, and the fact that we got some extra money from the federal government and that took a lot of work on the part of the Cabinet Members, as well as the Premier and the Minister, and I appreciate that.

I would like to state also that I support the fiscal responsibility policy framework and not as something that gives us free reign on borrowing, as I was quoted as saying. I don't believe that it's a licence to borrow more, although it might give the government more room than the \$300 million limit that we have. What I like about it is the element in it that commits the government to get some surplus money to fund these capital projects. It does call for fiscal responsibility on the part of the government so that we use some belt tightening to fund capital projects. I support that and certainly I'd like to see the government moving toward spending at least 10 percent of our total budget on capital infrastructure. I think we fell as low as five percent over the last number of years. I'd like to see us moving toward 10 percent as quickly as possible.

Madam Chair, there are some things that I would like to see more of. I don't want to go over all the good news items we have about the completion of Highway No. 3 or the Deh Cho Bridge over the Mackenzie River. Those are things that I had hoped to be working on when I became a Member and I know that I'm going to be ecstatic when all that gets done.

However, I want to point out some things that I think we're not spending enough money on. One of them is tourism. I do believe that the tourism budget was under threat of being reduced, but we didn't get there and we did reinstate funding. Still, I really think that's an area that's being neglected. I think also that the government has to decide what they want to do with tourism. We do have independent bodies that look after tourism, but also the government is involved still, as well. If the government is going to do it, they should be properly resourced and have more people in the government doing it. If not, we should just let the independent bodies, like NWT Tourism, look after that so there is less chance of duplication and that there could be a comprehensive territorial tourism strategy being planned and implemented by the people in the know directly. I really think that's an area that needs a lot more attention and a lot more resources. I appreciate that we probably could not get to as close to what our neighbours to the West in the Yukon spend and their government spends on tourism, because the tourism industry takes up a lot more prominent role in their economy, but I really think we're falling short in that area.

The second thing I want to talk about is something I talked about yesterday and that has to do with education. This morning on CBC Radio there were lots of very interesting statements made by the citizens of the North. I find it very educational and it just always amazes me how commonsensical and thoughtful people are. I wish we could have a 24-hour phone-in network where people can just call in and tell us what we need to know. Anyway, one of the phone calls talked about the need for education and...I just lost my train of thought here. I think everyone agrees that the basis for...None of what we do, whether in the Mackenzie Valley pipeline development or the diamond industry or whatever wealth and prosperity that's going to come to the North as a result of any kind of development will be of any benefit to anyone unless our people are able to get the education and be able to take on those jobs. What's happening right now is that there is a lot more interest from the students that are a lot younger than high school level. Even junior high school, grades 6, 7, 8. The youth mature faster nowadays and they are interested in trades. We have in Yellowknife a trade school where their trade program at a high school level is

really attracting a lot of young people that we might otherwise lose because they're not interested in an academic field or they're interested in considering an alternative education other than strict academic courses. I see that and I see that being under-resourced and I see that government is not able to get behind it or not getting behind it as much as possible. I see that as a model where it can be set up and implemented in other regions of the Territories. I mentioned yesterday that there's a statement here about the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment getting into a curriculum development that has to do with trades in high school. But I really think if we made any commitments, that we haven't gone far enough in addressing that. In the last Assembly, the first legislation we passed was to reduce the PTR and speak about education. I know that this government is doing sort of what they did before, what the previous government did, but we haven't heard the government really coming out and saying that this is where we want to focus, and we're falling behind in that area. So I know 10 minutes is not a short time, but it's amazing how fast it goes.

Madam Chair, I just want to ask the Minister of Finance -- I don't know if he can answer this or if I should wait for the Minister of Education -- if he has any idea about what is meant by the announcement in his budget on page 10 about the new high school courses being developed for emerging northern occupations? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, what we're looking to do in that area with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in the area of high schools is to begin to look into and start getting into the area of trades itself. Realizing, just as the Member has stated, that not everybody who is going through the school system is going to want to go into an academic field and rather probably would like to go into a trades field. With the position we are in now in the Northwest Territories, we know there's a large shortage in the trades area. So the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is starting to work in that area and refocus to a certain degree, as first steps anyway.

As well, when you look at the apprenticeship side, we are, again, working and hearing the advice of committee members putting more money into that side of it, again realizing that there is a shortage of trades workers in the Northwest Territories. At one time the Government of the Northwest Territories used to be very giving. When it had its own shops -- carpentry shops, mechanical shops -- it trained a lot of apprentices and the apprentices have moved on to the private sector and had their own businesses and so on. So it's something we see ourselves starting to get back into, along with tying to the ASEP or the program where we've tied together with industry, the federal government and ourselves, to train up to hopefully 800 individuals in the North and have them successfully employed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Roland. General comments. I have next, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for this opportunity just to provide a few general comments. Madam Chair, I find it very difficult when we see this in our budget. It was read into the record

yesterday, and I welcome that by the Finance Minister and I think he's leading us in certainly a strong direction so, overall, all our citizens can have benefits. But it wasn't that long ago, in October, that we had read some strong motions from this side of the House into the official record. I find we're sort of missing those types of actions that this side of the House has led with. Over 50 percent of the Northwest Territories is represented on this side of the House. At that time it was 10 Members who voted in favour of things like benefits on our northern resources. I think actually that got unanimous consent, to be honest, from the House; that would be all Members.

Affordable housing and access to housing was a big issue from this side of the House again. This side of the House represents more than 50 percent of the constituents in the Northwest Territories as a whole. Establishment of treatment centres, addiction and treatment centres; there was a strong motion about putting one in Inuvik and in Yellowknife and how we treat those issues.

So I'm concerned that this budget did not hear this side of the House. We can go line by line, as we will next week, and we can talk about each specific department under each social envelope, whether it's GED or Social Programs. I think the government understands that there are problems out there, but it seems like when membership tries to bring forward issues that the community people are saying -- and that goes from both Yellowknife to Inuvik all the way to Smith to Simpson all the way up to Colville Lake -- the people are saying they want these things. If you have practically 60 percent or 65 percent of the people in the Northwest Territories saying we want these things, why is this government not listening? I don't know. It's as simple as saying these motions passed; 50 percent plus passed these motions and I find it very difficult to say, well, this is a great budget, this is a great speech, without identifying some basic needs.

This side of the House didn't come up with a wish list of 1,000 things. In the last few months we said principally we have three or four issues that were significant to our residents of the whole Northwest Territories: again, treatment centres, accessible housing and benefits to northern resources. It's a simple message. How is the other side addressing those requests by Members on this side of the House? I think we're falling short on those issues. I think we've heard that we're missing out on training, and all of a sudden there's a change of gears to put more money into training. I think that's a significant step to aid our people in the Northwest Territories. But I'm still concerned because we talk about pre-construction of the Mackenzie gas pipeline, but I'm afraid that our territory's residents are going to miss the bandwagon. So unless you're in one of those special high profile, already rich businesses who can sort of turn on a dime to be able to be prepared to negotiate or apply for contracts or whatnot, I think the general membership of our Northwest Territories people are going to miss that opportunity.

That goes back to the motion of benefits to the Northwest Territories. Where is our government standing here? It emphasizes areas of the Northern Strategy, but we need our Territories to dig in and say no more. There was discussion in the back room just today about what one pipeline, one group getting their way with our resources. There's nothing we can do to stop this pipeline if the National Energy Board says it goes forward. So our

government needs to dig in and say we need to take control.

I'm pleased to see our taxes are at a safe level, at least a consistent level. I'm waiting for the day to hear from the Finance Minister -- although it's not said here -- to say when we change corporate tax from 12 percent to 14 percent if we've had any significant adjustment, whether anyone has refiled somewhere or not. So I'm looking forward to those discussions, but I think under our northern strategic plan on how we deal with Canada, something needs to be done. This document does speak a lot about some of our needs up here. I think it doesn't identify who we truly are. I read into the record earlier today about the difference between us and Canada; 46.2 percent of growth versus the 12 percent from the 1999 to 2003 period. What more do we need to wake up the big lion of Canada and say hey, we're an engine here, we've got resources, we want to contribute, we want to be a full partner? I'm not seeing that here. I'm seeing soft statements that we're afraid to offend the federal government. I'd almost have to say we need a lesson from Danny Williams about how to stand up tall and strong and look that Prime Minister in the eye and say damn it, we're in charge of our own area, because these resources are just going to keep flowing along and the National Energy Board is in charge of that pipeline and, at the end of the day, they're going to make the ultimate decision.

So I'm not sure; I'm satisfied for moving forward, but I am very dissatisfied because I go back to what I started off by saying, the natural resource motion has been ignored. Addictions treatment centre has been ignored, and affordable housing barely scratched the surface. It's not being addressed. All the Members on this side of the House, our communities need to be treated fairly.

So as far as anything else goes at this time, I don't have a significant question. I have concerns with the lack of investment for our Expo plan that's in here. I do have some concerns on how we're going to deal with hydro in the future and whose authority we really have over this hydro potential. Who has the authority over the rivers? What consultation efforts have we done thus far?

I'm very pleased to see -- I stress, very pleased to see -- that we're going to create a centre of excellence with the Department of MACA to work with the communities so they can help levy infrastructure money and move forward. They are a good department listening to those particular issues, because the small communities, including places like the city of Yellowknife, do not have the resources to get out there and beat those bushes. So MACA is taking a lead to help them. I'm glad to see that there isn't any significant clawback, but I guess, at the end of the day, what are we doing?

So housing...I mean, you guys have to pull up your socks and I can see that this session is going to be a tough one for lack of policy for dealing with disabled people. We need a policy to make sure folks are treated fairly. I'm going to tell a horrible story next week about somebody who is disabled who has run into problems and we're going to have to start dealing with these things. So housing, I certainly think, is not being addressed and we're going to be challenging that.

So at this time no significant question; just a little griping, one could say, at this time. I'm generally pleased in some

cases, and some less pleased. I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Next on my list I actually have Ms. Lee, but Mr. Menicoche has not spoken to the budget yet. So I'll go to Mr. Menicoche for a general comment.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I, too, when the Minister was giving his budget address, was flagging things that kind of concerned me. It was interesting as I went through what concerns me. What stood out the most, of course, is infrastructure for the communities, and it's not so much Nahanni Butte lacking infrastructure, of course, it's the whole hamlet/village issue Madam Chair, that concerns me as well, because here we have a community that's struggling to meet its O and M and because of its taxation label, we're unable to get any new infrastructure money or our community cannot grow infrastructure-wise just because we're spending all our money on O and M. Here we have a unique opportunity too, because of the federal MRIF plan, et cetera. The community of Fort Simpson can't even access that because it doesn't even have a surplus in order to make their one-third contribution, and that really saddens me. I believe the Minister is aware of that and there's going to have to be some way to really deal with it.

AN HON. MEMBER: No wheeling and dealing.

---Laughter

AN HON. MEMBER: No back room wheeling and dealing.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: But the sad fact remains that they don't have their one-third contribution even today. In fact, there's some old contribution money that they don't want to give up, and they are still trying to match dollar for dollar from old water and sewer funding that they currently have. They are just trying to match that and now we're asking them to match another one-third. So we're going to have to take a good hard look at that infrastructure, as well.

In terms of capacity building, several Members brought it up and in terms of pipeline capacity issues and that still has significant concern for me. The latest statistics that we have out there is that 53 percent of our aboriginal workforce is employed, 83 percent of the non-aboriginals are employed as well. So the non-aboriginals basically have full employment, and in our communities only half of the aboriginal people are working. It's no wonder that communities in my riding particularly are not giving overwhelming support to industry, because they don't stand a chance of getting any of the good jobs. So if they are not going to benefit, it's like I've always been saying, why support it if I'm not going to get anything? I'm not going to bother supporting this, and that's what's going on out there.

So in order to give them a unique opportunity, one of the things to do, of course, is to raise their skill level, their marketable skills, and that's why giving them a chance when they're young in school or even, indeed, the young adults that are out there. Recently I was made aware of an education program where the success down south...it's based out of Calgary, they're running it in the small reserves around Rocky Mountain House. There are about 10 communities that they're using this program on

and it raised their course completion rate from 30 percent right up to 80 percent, and their graduation rate has increased, as well, to about 80 percent. Even nationally that is unheard of; an 80 percent graduation rate. But if you really think about it, once you are completing your courses, then you have a good chance of graduating.

So those are some of the things that are on my plate for this year is to say alright, can we take that course, can we bring it up North, can we have a look at it, can we even pilot it out there? I know how hard it is to chance our Education, Culture and Employment bureaucrats' thinking on how to best educate our children and I think if anybody knows best, it's ourselves who have been through the system and live in the communities. So we're going to have to really look at that. That's important to the people back home and it's something new and I'd like to try it and I would like government support in giving us an opportunity to try that, even if the people don't like it and it fails. But I think the basic thing here is that we saw something, we tried it and we don't know if it works or not, but I think our people and our children and our youth deserve an opportunity to at least try it to see if it fits our unique way of doing things.

In terms of the pipeline, I made an extra special pot of coffee this morning to listen to the pipeline recordings, especially with Judge Berger being there, and I was quite curious. I believe overall -- I was kind of trying to keep score -- people are in support of it, but they don't like the way it is happening and there are great concerns. That's the same way I am. I said cool, I stand with these people. I'm concerned about how it's being implemented. If the people and the communities are going to gain or lose really concerns me, because we know what happened the last time and I will keep saying it, is that we lost. This time around is no different. There are court cases and all that happening. Some are beyond our control, but at the same time, as a Legislature and as a government, we still have a unique opportunity to have input with this socioeconomic agreement. We learn every time. The first time, our socioeconomic agreement with that first pipeline was a dismal failure. It didn't even last a year. We gave it a bit more teeth with the diamonds; maybe not as much as people like, but there were some teeth there. We can take it one step further for this new mega project. It's \$8 billion and I believe our government can make a difference for our communities and say look, if you're going to work around here, you're going to have to leave something behind and help our communities. At the same time, the claimant groups have to do their share too. They have to do their due diligence and take care of their people, but I believe that we don't have to be rubber stampers either. Yes, we're in favour of it. It will be a boom to our revenues if and when we get to that point, Madam Chair, but at the same time we still have to make sure that our people in the communities are taken care of, because these are multi-national corporations. They are not going to give us anything. It's their job to rape and pillage, Madam Chair. So we have to do what we can in order to protect our people and that's part of our mandate, each and every one of us as MLAs.

With that, Madam Chair, I would just like to conclude that in terms of the budget I really like the way it was responsive to some of the community needs. It didn't address all the needs, but I believe we're getting there. With that, I remain. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. I'm glad you remain. Next on the list I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to follow up with the comments I made yesterday in terms of the mortgaging of the Northwest Territories and the interest of oil companies and other resource development, such as mining and potential hydro happening in the Northwest Territories. The Northwest Territories is being looked upon as a wealth of resources. Some are referring to us as the last frontier. Our road now to becoming self-sufficient, independent and working with the federal government in terms of negotiating a resource revenue sharing deal and the devolution of programs, it's been 17 years that I've heard the negotiations for devolution have been ongoing. I think with all that's happening in the Northwest Territories, that might be an advantage for us to have these devolution programs and services come into the Northwest Territories.

I'm saying this, Madam Chair, in terms of our mortgaging, because Mr. Roland said yesterday it's like a family mortgaging a house. If you're going to mortgage a house for the long term, there are certain commitments and there are some uncertainties there. You never know what's going to happen in two years or five years or 10 years. You go with the good intentions of mortgaging a house and you hope you're going to do well. It's a good house; the Northwest Territories has a lot of wealth here. People are after our resources and, as owners of our house here, I'm happy to see that he said we have to put our house in order. We have to build relationships with other organizations.

Like Mr. Menicoche, I was up very early this morning and on my second pot of coffee when I was taking notes of the interest of Thomas Berger and CBC's staff. They were talking about the pipeline and the number of issues that we are facing as a government in terms of dealing with the pipeline and the uncertainty of it for sure coming down. There are no guarantees. The United States government is fiercely pushing that agenda to go through Alaska. I heard that we might be taking a big risk if we don't continue supporting this in terms of waiting another 10 or 15 years. Berger said we should take our time, but I agree with the Minister in terms of putting our house in order to make sure that what is ours stays ours and that we can be self-sufficient.

I like the budget that he brought down. For me it's like Christmastime in February. The Minister is Santa Claus and we're all sitting around asking what are we going to get. At Christmastime, sometimes we're disappointed because we didn't get what we want from the man from the North Pole. He's from Inuvik, so I guess he's up that way.

---Laughter

I was thinking about that and I think that we get a good deal with the resource revenue sharing from the federal government that in time we wouldn't be asking for too many things in terms of governance for our communities. The trust that we have to have in terms of asking the bank to mortgage our place here, they're going to want some securities and that's where the whole complexity of putting this deal together and what we have to deal with in the Northwest Territories.

I think I want to just end on that, Madam Chair. As MLAs in our communities, we were asked to come to Yellowknife and sit in the Legislative Assembly. There are lots of concerns and needs out in our communities that people are asking us to get for them and work on. There is lots of money they see that maybe could be spent elsewhere. There are opportunities. The Mackenzie gas pipeline is a real big opportunity for our people. There are lots of opportunities out there; however, you have to balance them with the environmental and social impacts. Is this really going to be good for us? Economically, I heard that it's viable, prime for economics in industry. However, does that outweigh the needs of the communities, our government, the aboriginal governments and the other interest groups? I'm not too sure. I speak for myself as an MLA, to come and see what we can do for our communities. I think there are ways we could help the communities, listen to the communities, start giving the ownership and the authority back to the communities. Sometimes as government we need to step out of the way, and that's kind of hard sometimes. There are lots of resources there and sometimes we don't get what we want. We see the needs really increase in the communities and they look to us as helping them live a better life. I know some of them tell us we're not their government. You're not our government. Yet we still work with them.

I think this government is very unique because it's the people's government. Sometimes we have to think about that. It's the people's government. You've got a tough job over there. As MLAs we bring concerns to you that hopefully you will satisfy our requests. There are ways to work around it. The pipeline is one; the hydro is another that people are concerned about, but they're also looking at the greenhouse effect. The Kyoto agreement is going to be discussed in a couple of weeks in Ottawa. I heard this one on the radio in Fort Good Hope about the social impacts of the pipeline.

A lot of these issues are going to be discussed on the 15th. I think the Minister's budget address, that I heard yesterday, is positive. I'm happy to see the surplus. I've always said that you have my support to get whatever you can out of Ottawa to make sure it stays here. That, Madam Chair, is what I'd like to comment on. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Next on the list I have for general comments is Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank Mr. Roland for his budget speech yesterday. I didn't have a chance to shake his hand until this afternoon. Just a few general comments I'd like to make with regard to the budget speech.

I agree in looking at the \$300 million debt limit, but I agree that if we can show that we can finance the debt, I think it's a good move to make.

A couple other things here, too, are with regard to the expenditure measures. One of the things I found interesting was how government has prioritized what's important in terms of where spending should go. To me it's going to be important because there are quite a few issues in my riding that I will address during the main estimates review.

With regard to the devolution/resource revenue sharing, I think it's very important that we have something in place. Hopefully the deadline for 2006 will be reached. Let's not forget that the federal government will have their budget speech either later this month or early next month. Depending on that, Madam Chair, I think it's going to be important.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Excuse me, Mr. Pokiak. Unfortunately, we were very close to 2:00 when you started your general comments, but I've been enjoying this so much I didn't take note of the clock. I'm sorry, I should have probably taken a break, but I need to recognize the clock. I will assure you your name will be at the top of the list on Monday in Committee of the Whole, and we'll make sure you get your full 10 minutes on Monday; and longer, if you like. Sorry about that. Committee, I will rise and report progress, recognizing the clock, the hour being 2:00.

MR. SPEAKER: Could I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please.

ITEM 21: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006, 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. Second, the honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee. There is a motion on the floor and it is non-debatable. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Before we go to orders of the day, I would like to just take a moment to recognize and thank the students from Mildred Hall and Weledah schools in Yellowknife here for paging for us through the week. It has been a great job that they've done here.

---Applause

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 23: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, there will be meeting of the Board of Management at adjournment of the House today. Orders of the day for Monday, February 14th, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions

8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Replies to Budget Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
 - Motion 26-15(3), Appointments to Standing Committees and Board of Management
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 20, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act
 - Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Education Act, No. 2
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 15, Tlicho Community Services Agency Act
 - Bill 16, Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation Act
 - Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act
 - Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006
 - Committee Report 9-15(3), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 10-15(3), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 11-15(3), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the Draft 2005-2006 Main Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until February 14, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

