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## **HANSARD**

**Thursday, February 24, 2005**

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**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Thursday, February 24, 2005****Members Present**

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

**ITEM 1: PRAYER**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey):** Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Krutko.

**ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS****Minister's Statement 95-15(3): Changes To The Rent Scale Implementation**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the Members and the general public of a change to the planned implementation of the new rent scale.

Mr. Speaker, in 1995, the public housing rent scale moved from a flat rate of 25 percent of income to a sliding scale of between 6.4 percent and 30 percent. This was done to bring our public housing sector more in line with other jurisdictions across the country and to ensure that public housing remained available to clients in need. This change was originally scheduled to take place over a four-year period from 1995 to 1998 but was halted after only the second year by the government-of-the-day.

As Members are aware, the 2005-06 budget for the NWT Housing Corporation calls for this moratorium to be lifted and for the final phase-in to be completed. Our original plan was to make this final change over a two-year period with the largest element of the change taking place in year one. Based on concerns raised by Members, I am pleased to announce a new implementation schedule which will spread any changes equally over a two-year period.

---Applause

Under this new schedule, Mr. Speaker, tenant rent will average 13 percent of household income. This is well below rents in other jurisdictions where 25 percent to 30 percent of household income is charged for public housing. Over 86 percent of our tenants will see increases of less than \$100 a month and over 66 percent of tenants, including all students and people receiving income support, will see no rent increases.

---Applause

As always, Mr. Speaker, seniors will continue to pay no rent for public housing.

It is my hope that the Members of this Legislature will support this new implementation plan. Information on the rent scale implementation is available by contacting local housing organizations or through my office. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

**ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS****Member's Statement On Access To Adequate And Healthy Housing**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to talk about shelters or what some people in this House might call housing.

---Laughter

I like to use the term "shelter," because in many instances, that is exactly what people are living in, not a home or a house but an enclosure that protects the occupants from the natural elements.

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents, especially families with children, are housed in squalid and unhealthy conditions. Their living conditions negatively affect their family fabric which holds them together. By this, I mean families are considering splitting because this will make public housing more accessible for them to move into.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an isolated incident and it's certainly not an issue that's new to the local housing authorities in our communities. People are taking drastic measures to deal with housing issues, measures that have long-term effects on all family members of the household, especially the children.

In most cases where I have been informed from conversations with my constituents, it's solely based on the lack of community consultation and support from the housing department for families who are living in extremely old and deteriorated housing units. It seems like the Housing Corporation is still reelling about the fact that they gave a family a house 15 years ago for a mere \$5,000 and that they should be happy with that. Well, Mr. Speaker, many of these houses were 40-years-old 15 years ago and because the cost to bring them to an acceptable living standard today is considered too high for the Housing Corporation to invest in, people are left with no other option than to stay where they are or to fix the house themselves. That can be very difficult for a family with three or four kids, with no definite source of income because of high unemployment and little economic development in many of our small communities.

Mr. Speaker, everybody has the right to live in a safe, decent and healthy environment. I will ask the Minister of Housing to make a commitment to the residents of the NWT for a fair and impartial process in the consideration of housing needs of the people regardless of past

dealings, a commitment ensuring that housing clients receive solid service reflective of a good government devoid of any prejudice, bias and subjectivity. This is what my constituents ask of this government, to be mindful of the concerns of the residents of this territory to whom the government serves. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Flexibility And Responsiveness In The Delivery Of Housing Programs**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today we are attempting to shed some light on the challenges of affordable and accessible housing for northerners. Mr. Speaker, shelter is a basic necessity in life common to every person. In some circumstances, it is necessary for governments to become involved in meeting the needs of our people for adequate housing. As with everything we attempt to do, we are confined by fiscal realities. It is incumbent on us as legislators when developing programs, policies and investing in capital infrastructure, to ensure we balance the need for accountability with the need for flexibility and sensitivity to the realities of the very people we are trying to help.

Our role in meeting the needs of our constituents for basic housing should be a role that provides for fairness in affordability for those with financial challenges, adequacy for persons with special needs related to physical challenges and availability, where options are limited. All of these considerations must be applied with the ever constant factor of the diversity of our communities, urban or remote, market or non-market, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, we also need to consider whether the shelter we provide is more appropriate through ownership incentives or on the basis of rental. A couple of areas I would like to focus on today are the flexibility that we allow local housing organizations to operate within, in meeting what can be sometimes the unique circumstances in their community and the needs of their clients; and two, how responsive are delivery of housing and investment in capital to the needs of our communities. For example, I believe that some policies have been developed and implemented which have created a serious hardship for public housing tenants. The application in the new rent scale in non-market communities did not provide enough time for tenants to make the transition from rents assessed for low incomes to the higher incomes many have experienced from opportunities created by development that's taking place.

If there are no houses on the market for sale, we did not give tenants enough time to transition into homeownership without assessing rents that were excessively high. For example, we know that when applying for mortgage financing, the first question asked is related to income: How long have you been employed? So a young couple suddenly blessed with a good job at the diamond mine would need time to consider construction and homeownership or rental options.

To my second point, we can't afford any housing boondoggles with our limited available capital. Too often

we have gone into communities with the government-knows-best attitude to solving housing problems, only to find out later that there weren't any updates.

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

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

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, this has resulted in situations like seniors' complexes sitting empty or underutilized and then market housing mobile units sitting empty.

Much planning and consultation must go into these types of initiatives with the clients they are intended to serve, prior to investing. Capital investment should be approached with a business plan no less thorough than if we were investing our own private money.

Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that there are simple solutions to the housing needs. These needs require careful exploration from the benefit of input from affected stakeholders. We can't afford investments and policies that miss the target of meeting the needs and assuring adequate, affordable and accessible housing for those who depend on us for it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Barriers To Homeownership**

**MR. ZOE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to focus on a serious issue in my riding, and that is the transition from public housing to homeownership. The current NWT Housing Corporation policy on homeownership programs is creating an impossible environment for people to become homeowners.

Mr. Speaker, many of my people are employed with the diamond mines. According to the rent scale increase policy, anyone working at a diamond mine basically has no alternative but to consider homeownership. With household income, their rent will go through the roof with the new rent scale. Until such time as they find alternative solutions, they will be paying the maximum allowable rent for their unit; a huge increase in cost for them.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, if they owe arrears, they have to pay that off, on top of paying the high rent on their public housing unit before they will be considered in good standing with the corporation and eligible for a Homeownership Program. Sounds confusing, doesn't it?

In addition, Mr. Speaker, many people in my riding, because of their employment, were able to purchase trucks, skidoos, et cetera, for travel and hunting. These people didn't realize that these payments would put them in an undesirable situation of carrying a high debt load. Because of the impact on their net worth, banks won't even look at them for financing and, depending on the corporation's calculations, neither will they.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Shame

**MR. ZOE:** Mr. Speaker, these people have no alternative solution except those available through the NWT Housing Corporation. The core need for North Slave, excluding Yellowknife, is an astonishing 35 percent. We need to address these numbers.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few scenarios as to what is happening out there with the countless policy barriers to homeownership. My people are being backed up against the wall. The Housing Corporation is supposed to be encouraging and supporting clients' homeownership for high-income public housing tenants, rather than overwhelming them with countless policy barriers to homeownership.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know of one person who would not want to own their own home. I think that anyone paying rent equal to a mortgage would rather pay into something that they own. Mahsi, thank you.

---Applause

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

**Member's Statement On Education Programs For Prospective Homeowners**

**MR. POKIAK:** Qujannamiik, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You may have noticed that we are having a theme day on housing today. I will be speaking on the need to educate public housing tenants, who may have the financial ability to own their own home, on the dangers and pitfalls of purchasing their unit from the NWT Housing Corporation.

Over the last few years, Mr. Speaker, the NWT Housing Corporation has decided to sell off a number of their older units to those tenants or persons who can afford to maintain their own home. I know of a few elders in Nunakput who have taken on the responsibility of these units, Mr. Speaker.

The Housing Corporation has held a number of workshops for the local housing authority tenant relation officers in their regions and in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, the most important thing we have to do is make sure tenants are educated as to the true costs of running a household, paying a mortgage and paying for ongoing maintenance. I know there are a number of people in serious financial trouble because they did not understand the ramifications of signing a long-term mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, these people have told me that it might have worked if the program advisors did an adequate job in explaining that they will be totally responsible for the costs of the mortgages, land leases, taxes, fuel, electricity, water and sewer and ongoing maintenance costs. The point I'm trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that all the new housing programs in the world will not work if there is not an adequate counselling and education program in place.

Mr. Speaker, we need to do more training of the staff at the local housing authorities, the district offices and headquarters to make sure everyone is adequately trained and ready to effectively counsel and educate public

housing tenants who may be ready to move into homeownership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

**Member's Statement On Review Of The Housing Corporation Mandate**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As some of you know, in another life I had quite a bit to do with the provision of maintenance of housing in the Beaufort-Delta, so I am comfortable in providing my thoughts on what we need to do to provide public housing and affordable housing for those who can afford it.

As I see it, Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the NWT Housing Corporation is very simple: Make sure that there is an adequate amount of public housing for people who need it, and have programs and services available to make housing affordable to northerners. We have enough to do in the Northwest Territories, never mind past mistakes like trying to sell housing packages to Alaska and having the deal fall through and having to pay shipping both ways.

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

**MR. MCLEOD:** The NWT Housing Corporation should not be in business. I am also not in favour of the market housing initiatives, as I believe that local housing authorities do not have the manpower to take on additional duties. They spend too much time right now trying to extend the life of social housing units. I believe we could save money by replacing these old units and then there might be time to take on additional work.

There are some simple truths in government, Mr. Speaker. Too much administration costs take away from program delivery. Decisions made in the interest of the people, from the safety of Yellowknife, often have unintended consequences for frontline workers.

---Applause

This needs to be taken into account whenever new programs or initiatives are introduced. Now I am aware that the NWT Housing Corporation will be redefining its mandate over the course of this upcoming fiscal year. I would like to see them remember what they should be doing: providing and maintaining public housing stocks and helping with affordable homeownership options for the NWT residents. I stress, Mr. Speaker, options for NWT residents, not Russians, not Alaskans.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear! Hear!

**AN HON. MEMBERS:** Well said.

---Applause

**MR. MCLEOD:** Let's keep the new mandate simple so people can understand the programs and services that fall out of the mandate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Single Parent Housing And Housing For Singles**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Mr. Speaker...(English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak with you today about the need in Nahendeh for housing; housing for singles and single parents in particular. Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, 25 percent of our households have a core need for housing. This means that there is an issue with suitability, adequacy or affordability with about 200 of the 754 households surveyed by the Housing Corporation; or, in the most simple terms, the types of housing we have now is inappropriate, too expensive, and there is just not enough of it. Yet over the next three years, Fort Simpson will only get 10 new single housing units and then that is it for Nahendeh for the foreseeable future, Mr. Speaker.

I am concerned that low-priced, single units are the most in demand for the disadvantaged person. However, income support no longer covers the cost of single unit housing, Mr. Speaker.

The solution is so simple. For instance, if the government would only consider building a little four-plex in Jean Marie River, that would cure 90 percent of all their housing issues, Mr. Speaker.

I am also concerned about single parents; the picture is even worse for them. The Northwest Territories has the fastest-growing single-parent population in the country. In the 1998 National Child Poverty Profile, it stated that children living with single mothers are more likely to be poor and, in fact, live in deep poverty and will remain this way longer. More aboriginal children live with single mothers. But instead of increasing our efforts to appropriately house them, the government revises the Housing Corporation's mandates away from social housing, Mr. Speaker. There are some simple solutions to our housing crisis in Nahendeh, but we need help for single people, especially those with children, and we need it right away. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement today is about the potential advantage of implementing a tax credit for interest paid on mortgages.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Hear! Hear!

**MR. RAMSAY:** Mr. Speaker, even with the relatively low interest rates of today, a Northwest Territories resident purchasing a \$250,000 home still pays anywhere between \$10,000 to \$14,000 a year in interest for the first 10 years of their mortgage. Mr. Speaker, the cost of living, especially housing costs, is so high in the North that individuals employed in the diamond mining sector often prefer to purchase a home for their family in the South and

commute. We spend a fortune attracting professionals north, only to have them return south after a couple of years.

This government needs to be looking at creative ways to make it more attractive for people to put down roots, Mr. Speaker. If the Northwest Territories were to implement the type of tax credit that I propose, we would have a leg up over other jurisdictions and it would go a long way toward making homeownership affordable for low to middle-income earners.

This idea is not a new one, Mr. Speaker. The United States offers a tax deduction for interest paid on mortgages. Here in Canada, the short-lived Clark government proposed a tax credit for interest paid on mortgages in 1979. Unfortunately, their mandate ended before it could be implemented.

The tax credit idea is quite simple, Mr. Speaker. The system that was proposed in 1979 allowed a 25 percent tax credit for the first \$5,000 paid in mortgage interest, with a maximum benefit of \$1,250. In today's dollars, an equivalent maximum benefit would be 25 percent of \$13,200, or a tax credit of \$3,300. A tax credit has a number of advantages over the U.S. tax deduction. It directs more of the benefits towards lower and middle-income earners and homeowners. A cap also significantly reduces the potential cost of implementing the system.

Mr. Speaker, it's about time that we show some leadership and look at innovative and creative ways of making housing more affordable. Last year we saw a host of new tax measures come into effect. We had to stomach it because of our pitiful fiscal situation. The fiscal situation today is much improved. This year I'd like to see this government look into implementing tax breaks to help make homeownership in the Northwest Territories affordable. Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Minister of Finance at the appropriate time. Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear! Hear!

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Addressing Reductions To CMHC Funding Levels**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In the Northwest Territories today, we have social housing programs that are becoming social housing problems of enormous complexity. Mr. Speaker, we not only have issues that my colleagues have very eloquently outlined today facing us in their communities, but we have a very long-range problem in that the multi-year contract we have with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which today feeds our coffers to the tune of some \$33 million, is slowly, gradually disappearing, Mr. Speaker. According to the terms of the takeover we signed with CMHC, I believe it was eight years ago, it's going to sunset. There will be nothing left of that after the year 2038, Mr. Speaker. This really spells disaster for many residents, especially those in smaller communities where there is such a heavy reliance on social housing.



Mr. Speaker, the 2004 housing needs survey by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation tells us that of the 14,000 households in the NWT, about 2,100 of them are in need of repair; 1,400 of them are overcrowded; about another 1,500 say that affordability is their most significant problem. Mr. Speaker, given that the increases in population and changes in demographics are rapidly changing the face of the Northwest Territories and that we are losing our long-range multi-million dollar source of funding, how are we going to maintain public housing levels? Tens of millions of dollars are falling off our income sheet for the coming years, Mr. Speaker. We have yet to see a viable plan for ensuring that we will be able to continue to be able to afford a decent housing program for our people. Eight years ago we took on this responsibility, and I'm afraid we're not doing a very good job of carrying it through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Housing Programs For Seniors And Disabled Persons**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to talk about the lack of a coordinated policy for housing for seniors and people with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's the responsibility of this government; I think it's the honest duty of this government to make sure that we address the housing needs for our seniors and disabled constituents. Mr. Speaker, I still speak firmly that we do not have a coordinated access program for barrier-free access housing, Mr. Speaker. It should be a principle of this government to make sure our seniors and our disabled constituents are treated fairly and properly in homes; where we do not treat them as shut-ins, but take care of them with the dignity they so rightly deserve, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear! Hear!

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, we may not be breaking any official laws. I can guarantee you that some bureaucrat out there will take a tape measure and say, yes, we're treating this perfectly to the letter of the law. But I'm not talking about building things to the minimum, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about giving people their lives; I'm talking about giving them a life worth living, Mr. Speaker. So I'm going to say that this government needs a firm policy on how to help address the housing needs of those seniors and disabled people, Mr. Speaker.

This government needs to embrace independent living. We have people living longer and wanting to live productive lives. Again, let's not treat them as shut-ins. Let's give them a chance to live a full and productive life, Mr. Speaker, with dignity.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of months ago I brought a couple of units to the attention of the housing Minister. I have to, first and foremost, say that I do appreciate that he did send some people in there to see the Beirut-type conditions that those folks are living under.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, I hope he sent them in there wearing hard hats and safety vests because these were horrible conditions we had people looking into. I have to give compliments to the Minister for addressing that problem, first and foremost. But we can't stop there. Our government needs a policy to make sure these folks are living.

Mr. Speaker, that example, in closing, I'm going to say this was the first step. Finally, it's nice to see the Housing Corporation move their stone feet and get into this race and deal with this problem. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Market Housing Initiative**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you how displeased I am at the way the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation and this government have handled the market housing initiative introduced last year. Mr. Speaker, as you might recall, we had a very extensive debate on various aspects of this policy all during the spring and summer sessions in 2004. At that time, the government begged us to waive their own BIP policy and allow them to bring 22 trailers from Sherwood Park in a hurry, because this was a cheap and efficient way to bring needed housing for teachers and nurses into our communities. Time was of the essence; there were no other options, Mr. Speaker. They assured us that they would have an evaluation done and that they would look into creating a housing manufacturing industry in the North and they would come back with a comprehensive plan and they would not ask to bypass the BIP again. So where do we stand a year later, Mr. Speaker?

We have 14 out of 22 mobile homes sitting empty, dotted all over the North. Mr. Speaker, the department has no clear idea what went wrong. They can't figure out why the people who said they wanted them would not take them. They're asking, Mr. Speaker, for us to give them the benefit of the doubt to bring 22 more units, no questions asked, and waive the BIP again.

Mr. Speaker, I need to know where the government is heading with their money in the Housing Corporation. The Minister indicated, no problem, we can bring 22 more and if they're not taken up, we can give them to social housing, while Mr. McLeod indicated how labour-intensive and more costly trailers will be to maintain.

Mr. Speaker, I need to ask the government, is this where we're heading with the social housing policy? Are we going to become the middleman for trailer dealers from the South, Mr. Speaker?

---Laughter

Is this where the government is heading?

---Applause

I say this is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. Are they going to continue to ignore the BIP that is applicable to everybody else? Mr. Speaker, all the answers I have gotten to this date are not acceptable. I don't believe it's fair to say to

the people in social housing that they can get leftover mobile homes. I don't think it's fair...

---Laughter

...for the government to say we can just waive BIP because it doesn't work for us. I expect the Minister to answer to all of the above. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Sixtieth Wedding Anniversary Of Albert And Febula Bohnet**

**HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before we launch into the pressing housing issues of the day, I'd just like to take a moment to pay tribute to a relationship of love and commitment that has stood the test of time. On February 24, 1945, Albert Bonnet met Febula Heron in Edmonton and married her and, shortly thereafter, he took her to Fort Smith where they reside to this day. They have brought into this world seven children and they are now, as well, proud grandparents 15 times and great-grandparents eight times over. Today, Mr. Speaker, they're celebrating their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

---Applause

Truly a relationship that has stood the test of time and I'd like to thank you for honouring that accomplishment. I apologize for not being at their celebration on Saturday, but I wish them all the best in the world and, of course, may the next 60 years be as good as the first. Thank you.

---Laughter

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. I'm sure that I can speak on behalf of all Members in congratulating them as well, and wishing them the best in the future. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

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

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to recognize three people in the gallery, famous artists: Mr. Antoine Mountain.

---Applause

Also Margaret Donovan, who runs a gallery here in Yellowknife, from Tsiigehtchic.

---Applause

Also Victor Stewart, who's a recreation director in Fort McPherson. Welcome to the House.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Ms. Barb Barnet, who's joining us today. She's the co-chair of the review committee at the Workers' Compensation Board and also a constituent of mine. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you. It's good to see in our Chambers again, Mr. Speaker, Lydia Bardak who was gone for a while and she's back and she's a renowned social activist. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

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

##### **Question 470-15(3): Housing Needs In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. I spoke today about the need for single-housing units in the Nahendeh region. If the Minister could explain to me how he intends to address the needs in the smaller communities in my riding -- like Jean Marie, Nahanni Butte, Trout Lake -- in terms of their single housing needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

##### **Return To Question 470-15(3): Housing Needs In Nahendeh**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have completed two phases of a needs survey. Based on those needs surveys which identify where the majority of the core need is, we are now focusing our dollars and resources to where that highest need is. That's how we basically make our decisions on how we allocate; based on the needs surveys that have been completed.

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

##### **Supplementary To Question 470-15(3): Housing Needs In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Minister details about how resources would be allocated and now, the next logical question, Mr. Speaker, is what is the placement plan or the long-term plan of placing these units in the communities? What resources have they got earmarked for the Nahendeh riding communities? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 470-15(3): Housing Needs In Nahendeh**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, it's a process that we go through by way of a 10-year plan that we have developed. In that plan we are implementing the new needs surveys and also trying to ensure that we are able to accommodate communities that are in need, according to the survey. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, it has to meet the budgetary criteria for the corporation. As we know, we are now phasing out social funding. Again, in order to meet that need, we have to work within the budget. So right now, Mr. Speaker, we have to allocate based on need, but also within the budget restraints we have.

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

**Supplementary To Question 470-15(3): Housing Needs In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just wondering if the Minister had enough time to review the federal budget, in terms of its allocation towards housing. Does it have implications for us and can we expect, in the foreseeable future, to address more of our housing needs in the regions? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 470-15(3): Housing Needs In Nahendeh**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am working in conjunction with Bill Erasmus through the AFN allocation. As everybody knows, in the budget there was \$5 billion allocated for aboriginal housing. We are working closely with Bill and the people he has, developing the proposal to take forth to the AFN meetings this summer; to look at a plan for the North for this funding so we can access funding for aboriginal communities on top of the funding we have through our core funding allocations.

Again, in the budget, that's one area that we're looking at. Also, there is work that is ongoing with the federal Minister of Housing to see about establishing a northern housing strategy that will be developed between the three territories to give to the federal Minister and make him aware these are the territorial positions going forward for housing for northern Canada. How we've been dealt with it in the past is, because of our small population, we've been allocated based on per capita. Out of a \$350 million pot of funds, we received \$400,000 over three years. We cannot meet our challenges with \$400,000 over three years. So we have to change the system of how the dollars are allocated, working with our federal counterparts and our aboriginal partners, in order to meet the needs in aboriginal communities.

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

**Supplementary To Question 470-15(3): Housing Needs In Nahendeh**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to take it away from the national level again and just bring it back to, say, Jean Marie River, their need is four

units. When can the Minister assure Jean Marie River that it's not going to be 10 years from now, but three years from now or two years from now? Does the Minister have the ability to do that? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 470-15(3): Housing Needs In Nahendeh**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the processes we're working on is trying to ensure people have a better understanding of our programs and services with regard to the IHP programs, independent housing programs, our EDAP programs and other programs that are out there. I think that because of the needs surveys we have, I know it's an issue here in the House, on how those dollars are allocated. But again, it's an application-based program. We do have program dollars going into Jean Marie River this fiscal year. Also, looking at the needs surveys that we do have, we are looking at revising our needs based on those communities that have well in excess of 30 percent in core needs. Again, we're focusing on those communities in need and improving the maintenance dollars we do have to improve on those units that are there, to improve the lives and housing in those communities. Thank you.

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

**Question 471-15(3): Funding For Long-Term Housing Needs**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Finance and it relates to our ability to cash flow the growing and inexorable deficit that we have in our capacity to afford our housing program. Mr. Speaker, we heard nothing at all in the federal budget yesterday on a national program, let alone a northern basis, for housing. The CMHC program, of course, is drying up. The Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation has suggested that maybe there's something out of an aboriginal program, but I'm not convinced and I want to go to the Minister of Finance to ask what our options are to cash flow for this very long-term and very real need; our government's housing needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 471-15(3): Funding For Long-Term Housing Needs**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we have in a number of areas and programs with our partners and the federal government, we are trying to come up with working arrangements with them to see if they can continue the dollars for the social housing program. I'm aware the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation is continuing on that initiative. The other areas we would have to look at are to come up with the dollars that are being reduced on an annual basis now. To come up with the additional dollars, we'd have to look at our own-source revenues if it's not going to come from the federal government. So we'd have to look at how we would fund that and that would include possibly more taxing or, hopefully as we go forward, our own-source

revenues, including royalties of the non-renewable resources sector. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 471-15(3): Funding For Long-Term Housing Needs**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister has opened up an interesting area: our own-source revenues. I'd sort of like to turn that around a little bit. What about our own ability to provide incentives to our partners, builders, developers, communities, aboriginals, development corporations, to step up to the plate to join us in this venture? But we would need to make taxation and revenue decisions to, as I say, provide those incentives. Is that something that we have in our toolbox to help build more houses? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 471-15(3): Funding For Long-Term Housing Needs**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do have already within the toolbox, as the Member has mentioned, with the arrangements that have been worked out through the Housing Corporation, incentives that do help people get into their own homes and build homes in the Northwest Territories. The big one around that is EDAP, or Expanded Downpayment Assistance Program. That's one avenue. From a government end, from the incentive to either...I heard a Member earlier in their Member's statement talking about a tax relief of some sort or another. That's something we haven't looked at directly. Our goals are first to try to find more money from those that are directly involved and we consider the federal government as being a key part of that picture. From what we have available to us, one of the things that the Housing Corporation, for example, is doing is selling off some of the older units and single-dwelling units and looking at multi-unit facilities. Instead of one detached home, looking at a four-plex of that type, because we know that the operations and maintenance are lower for a multi-plex than for a single residence. So those are some of the areas they've been working on. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 471-15(3): Funding For Long-Term Housing Needs**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister be able to move these kinds of things forward through Cabinet? Because I know on this side of the House there's a lot of readiness and willingness to listen to some new ideas and some thinking outside the box. But right now I don't have much confidence at all in the proposals that are before us. Will there be some new and innovative ways of financing long term brought to the committee and this Assembly, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Further Return To Question 471-15(3): Funding For Long-Term Housing Needs**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through the Department of Finance, if there are some initiatives brought forward that we could look at that are sustainable from what we see our fiscal picture being, we would look at those and see if in fact they had some merit to go in and investigate a little further. We know, for example, with the reworking of the Housing Corporation and its mandate, there may be some opportunities there to look at going into the area of affordable and sustainable housing and how we would fund those as the Government of the Northwest Territories.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Your final supplementary, Mr. Braden. No further questions. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Question 472-15(3): Mandate Of The Housing Corporation**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask my questions to the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. Mr. Speaker, it seems to be the proverbial debate when it comes to housing; whether or not the mandate of the Housing Corporation is to deliver social housing and incentives, or whether it is to create economic activity and economic development. Over the years, we have, as many other Members have said, tried to hang a lot of extra things on the delivery of housing in the Northwest Territories. We've tried to hang on it things such as training, manufacturing, jobs...It has just downright been the government getting into business through the Housing Corporation with funding things like door factories and all kinds of other things which have kind of clouded the picture of what we're trying to do here. I'd like to ask this Minister for his understanding of this mandate which, it seems, as has been mentioned, may be in the process of being refined. What is the prominent mandate of the Housing Corporation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Krutko.

**Return To Question 472-15(3): Mandate Of The Housing Corporation**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the core components of our initiatives is to look at the affordability, adequacy and suitability of housing for people in the North. I think the biggest element of that is affordability. We hear about people trying to get mortgages, people trying to get into homeownership, but the problem that we're running into is the costs of stick-built homes in the Northwest Territories are excessive. We do have a manufacturing directive that looks at manufacturing products in the North, and in the last 10 years we've spent \$18 million in that area. All that goes back to the homeowner. I think it's important that through those three initiatives, looking at the affordability questions, the suitability and also the accessibility for people to be able to access these programs and not have these restraints in place. So right now through the mandate review, those are the three goals and objectives we're trying to meet through the new mandate change that we're going forward with.

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

**Supplementary To Question 472-15(3): Mandate Of The Housing Corporation**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that answer. It gives me a very clear picture of where he's going because there is always that debate over more houses for our money or fewer houses, but now adding all these other things onto it. What I want to ask the Minister, is it conceivably compatible that we could deliver more affordable housing while at the same time creating northern economy through it? I think of the market housing initiative, bringing in units from the South. Can we accomplish that here in the North? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 472-15(3): Mandate Of The Housing Corporation**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with regard to the question that the Member asked, as it sits right now, nobody in the Northwest Territories has the certification to provide these types of mobile homes. In order to meet national standards, Canadian National Building Codes, and getting the certification that's needed to build these units, right now no one has that certification in the Northwest Territories.

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

**Supplementary To Question 472-15(3): Mandate Of The Housing Corporation**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it would be ideal to be able to provide affordable housing while, at the same time, creating jobs and economy in the North. Would the Minister, through the Housing Corporation, be prepared to pursue with potential interested parties the possibility of manufacturing certified homes in the North for northerners? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 472-15(3): Mandate Of The Housing Corporation**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that's the goal we are facing. We have spoken to respective companies that are considering working in that area. They are companies that are looking at the possibility of establishing such a business. But again, there are proposals that we are suggesting going forward with through the Business Development Corporation, the Business Credit Corporation and working with those other arms of government to help the entrepreneur or the business community that we've spoken to companies in Yellowknife and Hay River and also in Southern Canada who are considering making such a move. But again, it has to be economically sound and, at the end of the day, it has to be affordable. We have to develop a product we can afford at the end of the day to sell to our clients. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 472-15(3): Mandate Of The Housing Corporation**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I agree with what the Minister is saying. I think he has struck the right balance. I think it is possible to create affordable units in the North. Is it currently within the mandate of the NWT Housing Corporation to be able to assist a business to begin with that without going to the Dev Corp or anyone else? Isn't there already a provision within the mandate of the Housing Corporation to create such an industry in the North? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 472-15(3): Mandate Of The Housing Corporation**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, there are several initiatives we are working on. One is looking at the mandate of the corporation and we're hoping to have it ready by April 1<sup>st</sup> to take to Cabinet. Another area that I touched on earlier is the whole area of developing a northern housing strategy to deal with the federal government. In the federal budget there was a whole bunch of announcements looking at the whole area of conservation and looking at energy-efficient homes and whatnot. We have to build that into our building methods in the North, but also look at access to federal programs. So those are some of the initiatives we are working on.

There's also another initiative we're working on with my colleagues in looking at the whole idea of the pipeline and how are we able to access some of that infrastructure that is going to be built, or even have the ability to put this infrastructure together through partnerships or arrangements with communities and industry. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**Question 473-15(3): Seniors' And Disabled Housing**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my belief that some of our government policies date back to the invention of the wheel. Mr. Speaker, this government, in my opinion, does not have a coordinated housing policy for seniors and persons with disabilities. Will the Minister answer the question, do we have any type of coordinated plan and policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 473-15(3): Seniors' And Disabled Housing**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been working closely with the Seniors' Society. We do have a universal arrangement with them where we've funded them to work with us on different promotion packages, such as the seniors' disabled maintenance programs. We do have a lot of programs directed towards seniors with regard to the housing proposal. Again, we are working in conjunction with the

different organizations: the Council for Disabled People and the Seniors' Society. So we are working with them, but we also have programs that are directed to seniors and people with disabilities.

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

**Supplementary To Question 473-15(3): Seniors' And Disabled Housing**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I further rise with a bit of concern because it's working with here, working with there, working who knows everywhere. I feel like Dr. Seuss, for goodness sakes. Mr. Speaker, I know we can do something like this and, by George, we have the paper, we have the hot air. Can we get a coordinated policy that organizes independent, respectful, dignified living for people who are seniors and people with disabilities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 473-15(3): Seniors' And Disabled Housing**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the programs and services that this government delivers, especially in the area of seniors and working with people with disabilities, we do have a lot of good programs. I'm not going to say they are all bad. We do have good programs out there. They do improve the living conditions of a lot of our seniors with regard to our repair programs and our maintenance programs. Also we are looking at the whole arrangement with regard to barrier-free access. The Member touches on that but, again, it's a national standard. We build houses in the Northwest Territories using Canadian Building Code standards. We have to follow those standards, it's a national standard. So again, because of the national implication and guidelines we follow, we have to be directed by those guidelines right now because we don't have those guidelines in house right now from the Housing Corporation.

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

**Supplementary To Question 473-15(3): Seniors' And Disabled Housing**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd really like to know if this government believes that policies need to evolve with the time. Mr. Speaker, will this Minister agree that dignified independent living should be a priority of this government? Do we believe that's an important issue? Do we believe the quality of life is linked to good living for our seniors and people who have disabilities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 473-15(3): Seniors' And Disabled Housing**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the Member keeps touching on what we're doing with seniors and people with disabilities. We are working with those groups. We are looking at our programs and services and because of the opportunity we have in front of us in reviewing our mandate, looking at the programs and

services that we have and also looking at the possibility of revising policies and guidelines that could assist with regard to ensuring that we're able to follow those guidelines to meet the needs of our seniors and people with disabilities. But again, Mr. Speaker, I must make it clear to the Member that we have to ensure that we follow the national building codes that are out there on how we deal with barrier-free accommodation for people with disabilities and how we construct these units.

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

**Supplementary To Question 473-15(3): Seniors' And Disabled Housing**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In no way would I suggest that we should build under the building code. It seems as if the building code is designed as a minimum and a lot of people stick to the minimum, but the minimum does not create quality of life, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister agreed that quality of life is important somewhere in there. He did mention that policies are being revised. I think I've heard him even say we need respectful living with dignity. Mr. Speaker, my question then to the Minister is would he look into a policy that evolves with the times, that addresses the needs of the times, that would identify and have solutions through a policy for people who are seniors and people who have disabilities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 473-15(3): Seniors' And Disabled Housing**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with regard to establishing a policy of dealing with seniors and people with disabilities, I don't see it being a problem. I think that's something we can look at. We have an opportunity now. We're reviewing our mandate going forward with a new Northern Strategy and also looking at how we are going to be dealing with these people. So with regard to the Member's questions, yes, we can develop such a policy and I will bring that forward for the Member once we have it in place.

---Applause

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

**Question 474-15(3): Market Housing Initiative**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, further to my Member's statement, my questions are to the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. In anticipation of his answers, let me just state that challenging the government on these policies does not speak to anything about us not caring about social housing. I just wanted to say that. I believe that it's an accepted premise here that we all want to work to increase housing in the North and meet some of the housing needs. My issue with the Minister is the way in which this market housing initiative was brought up and how it was implemented. Given that there are only 14 uptakes out of 22, and given all the kinds of problems that were experienced, not to mention the fact that apparently there was a misunderstanding in the communities from

those people who might be able to take this on. So by any standard, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the corporation has failed in the grade and they don't deserve to move up to the next grade. So I'd like to ask the Minister why he thinks we should move up to the second phase of this market housing initiative. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Krutko.

**Return To Question 474-15(3): Market Housing Initiative**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do have a major housing crisis on our hands and this is one of the ways that we're trying to resolve that crisis.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Good government.

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** We have to look at housing in the context of how do we get houses on the ground and get more accommodation in communities. This is one of the ways we're looking at. I think that to access 22 units at the cost that we have been able to, we talk about affordability and trying to get program services to make sure that the client that we're dealing with is looking at how these units could be occupied and also the rents that we're charging. That was the big concern under phase one.

For phase two we believe we are able to come forward with changes that will bring down that cost to almost \$1,000 a month plus utilities for these units. Before we were looking at almost \$1,300, up to \$1,500, including utilities. Again, we have to look at it in the context of how do we provide affordable housing in communities.

Also, I'd like to let the Member know that we have, out of the units, nine units which are occupied and presently we have people looking at buying these units. I think you can't go wrong by buying a three-bedroom trailer in a community for \$130,000.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Hear! Hear!

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** I think it's important that now we have something there establishing a market in the community where we never had a market before and by having something that's affordable where individuals can afford to pay a mortgage on these units knowing that the cost is \$130,000.

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

**Supplementary To Question 474-15(3): Market Housing Initiative**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the Minister is stating because of the needs of housing in the North that the government wants to provide housing by way of purchasing mobile homes and that is the government policy, let's have a debate on that. This is a total backdoor way of breaking all the rules, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Minister and the government that this policy was extraordinary. It waived the BIP and it undertook having mobile homes instead of building stick-built homes. The government had an onus to meet that this was going to work, and so far it hasn't

worked. Fourteen out of 22 units are empty and there's no reason to believe that it's going to be any more successful. So I'd like to ask the Minister why he insists on going on with this policy that didn't work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Hear! Hear!

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

**Further Return To Question 474-15(3): Market Housing Initiative**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to point out to the Member that almost 50 percent of the cost of phase one was done through the BIP process. Fifty percent of that investment was put back into the North for the business communities, the manufacturing business that build the septic tanks, the fuel tanks and whatnot put into these units. So I would just like to clarify that for the Member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can't lose sight of the objective that we're trying to meet here. The whole intention was to ensure that we have housing available for our core program needs that are in communities, such as teachers, nurses, we have community wellness workers, we have people that we're trying to get into the programs this government delivers. We don't even have those people in those communities because of lack of housing. So I'd just like to point out to the Member that we are trying to meet an objective, but also a challenge that we are all facing. The government has gotten out of staff housing. We're trying another initiative, which we're not calling staff housing. It's an initiative that we have to ensure that we have program dollars that can be delivered in communities. We can't take down these barriers for communities to say sorry you can't be hired because you can't find a place to stay. We are removing one of those barriers by this initiative. Thank you.

---Applause

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

**Supplementary To Question 474-15(3): Market Housing Initiative**

**MS. LEE:** Mr. Speaker, I'm saying to the Minister that he is not meeting that objective he just stated. Mr. Speaker, this is not addressing the lack of housing in communities. Fourteen of 22 units are sitting empty in Tulita, Fort Good Hope, Fort Liard, Lutselk'e, Fort Resolution, and they have to be sold on the general market. So I want to know if that is a policy now, that the NWT Housing Corporation is officially now the middleman to be a dealer for mobile homes down south to go to communities. Is that what the government's policy is now? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 474-15(3): Market Housing Initiative**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Member should maybe go into these communities and see how many people are occupying these units.

---Applause

In the community of Fort Good Hope, we have three teachers staying in one unit. So you accommodate three people in one unit, and that does not mean that all four units aren't occupied. I think the whole idea to bring down the cost if people want to share rent and whatnot by having roommates, more power to them because they are only paying in the area of \$300 a month for rent. I think you can't go wrong with regard to that, where we have people in social housing who are going to be paying more than that by the rate scale we have. Again, it's an initiative that we're working out. The whole idea was to bring down the cost of housing in communities. We've heard in this House that the rents are too high. So what do we do? We find ways to basically bring down that cost with regard to the second phase of the program. We figure we can drop the cost from phase one to phase two by 38 percent. Again, we're bringing down the cost of those units. The costs are coming down from almost \$1,300 a month to \$1,000 a month for these units. So, Mr. Speaker, if we can have trailers in Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik and elsewhere, why aren't these trailers good enough for communities?

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

**Supplementary To Question 474-15(3): Market Housing Initiative**

**MS. LEE:** Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister should realize the fact that three teachers are sharing a mobile home in Fort Good Hope says that the costs were not brought down. Why else would they have to share the unit, Mr. Speaker? It does not address the problem of lack of housing and it seems that this government applies BIP to communities, but not to businesses in Yellowknife. That's another topic that I'm going to address at another time. Mr. Speaker, the point is, this is not addressing what the government intended to do and the Minister is not willing to consider any other suggestions and look at long-term perspectives of creating a housing manufacturing industry in the North. So I would like to know what he has done, as a Minister, to find out what's available in the North so that we can provide stick-built housing in communities, rather than ordering mobile homes for communities that are not even being taken up. Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 474-15(3): Market Housing Initiative**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with regard to that, talking to manufacturers and other groups, like I stated, there is no one right now at the present time who has certification to deliver or build these units in the Northwest Territories. We have been talking to people in the private sector who are looking at developing proposals and coming forward. Again, Mr. Speaker, the whole idea of mobile units versus stick built, there's almost a 40 percent difference between the price of a stick built and these mobile homes. Those mobile homes do meet national building standards and are also arctic built so that they can stand the arctic climate that we're in. Again, we are working with the private sector in this area and we are considering looking at different proposals and assisting in developing this industry.

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

**Question 475-15(3): Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday I spoke about the high cost of home heating oil and its impact on the high cost of living in the Northwest Territories. Today I'd like to ask him some questions again related to the cost of living here in the Northwest Territories. Is there anything that prohibits the Government of the Northwest Territories from amending its tax legislation to include a tax credit for interest paid on mortgages -- something similar to the benefit that was proposed by the Clark administration in 1979 -- that is specifically targeted at Northwest Territories residents who own homes in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 475-15(3): Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are not any problems with our legislation. We can institute a tax credit on interest payments on mortgages. The proviso is how much will it cost us in our own-source revenue. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 475-15(3): Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to having his department and his officials take a serious look at the feasibility of implementing a tax credit for interest paid on mortgages, including a look into what would be the optimal formula that balances the benefit to homeowners against the cost to government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

**Further Return To Question 475-15(3): Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have my department look at the initiative to see what the pros and cons would be and once I have that information, I'd gladly share it with the Members. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 475-15(3): Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister inform me and the other Members of this House when we might expect to hear back from him and his department on their findings? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.



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

**Further Return To Question 475-15(3): Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for sure by the spring session, and hopefully we could have something before that, but no later than that. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 475-15(3): Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the Minister can answer this question, and that is whether or not the government is in favour of using tax breaks to assist the Northwest Territories to meet the challenges of the high cost of living here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 475-15(3): Tax Credit For Interest Paid On Mortgages**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the government can demonstrate, on many fronts, that we're interested in keeping the cost of living down through many of our subsidy programs. So this would be another one that we'd look at. I guess the big feature of this would be the fact that as we look at programs, is what the cost would be on the revenues of the government. Thank you.

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

**Question 476-15(3): Benefits Of A Tax Credit To Homeowners**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance just said that he would be interested in looking at the kind of thing that my colleague Mr. Ramsay was talking about: tax breaks, tax situations, and what the cost would be to the government. But here we go, we're looking internally again. We're saying oh, gee, this might hurt us. What about the positive impact it might make for the families and the people out there in the Northwest Territories, in the communities, who are coming up short right now because we're not able to think outside that box? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

**Return To Question 476-15(3): Benefits Of A Tax Credit To Homeowners**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we would look at any initiative that would come forward that would cost the government in delivery of that initiative, if we forego taxes in this area of an incentive, we'd have to look at the total cost of that, because if it means we have to come and find another \$10 million or \$15 million from our own-source revenues, we have to balance that off. Yes, there could be some

positive aspects. It would get more construction happening and more people into their own homes. We would need to balance both of those off; I agree. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 476-15(3): Benefits Of A Tax Credit To Homeowners**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, the impacts and the consequence of our housing prices hurts the people of the Northwest Territories in so many ways; in health, in education, and their chances for having stable and steady employment. Is there a willingness, an appreciation, an understanding at the Cabinet level, that housing is an across-the-board responsibility and not just something that lands in the lap of the Housing Minister or the Finance Minister? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 476-15(3): Benefits Of A Tax Credit To Homeowners**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think we again, as a government, can demonstrate the fact that it is across the board and the cost of living impacts on the health of residents. There are a number of factors that we've looked at, as a government, in trying to wrestle with the shortage of housing across the Northwest Territories, and the Housing Corporation has undergone an initiative to try to bridge that gap to a certain degree. Members of this House have put a motion on the floor to decrease the core need, and all of that requires much more money than we have right now, and we either have to come up with new sources of revenue or come up with another way of trying to bridge that gap. So I think we have demonstrated, as a government, that we are interested in that, we'll look at some options. But at the same time, because we are in a tight fiscal environment, we're going to have to measure off both sides of the equation to see if in fact there's a positive enough benefit that we will take the initiative. I think one of the things that has been debated in this House is trying to think outside the box. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 476-15(3): Benefits Of A Tax Credit To Homeowners**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that there are options out there; we just have to be bold enough to go out there and put the case on the table. There's one very apparent one that comes immediately to mind in the Aboriginal Development Corporation who, through land claims settlements and cash injections to the Government of Canada, are, I think, very well positioned to be major players in finding an answer to this solution. Are the Aboriginal Development Corporations and First Nations on that list in our toolbox, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Further Return To Question 476-15(3): Benefits Of A Tax Credit To Homeowners**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, I think we can show examples of how we've partnered with other governments from across the territory, aboriginal governments in some of the initiatives, either through supporting them through negotiated contracts in the smaller communities to help build housing, as well as universal partnership agreements in delivery of the housing program in those communities. There's definitely an option there. At the end of the day even for example in the community of Inuvik, a developer wants a core tenant to be there to make sure that they can afford and they are making a good decision in building multi-unit apartment buildings and so on. They want somebody to backstop that investment. That takes dollars. We're trying to wrestle with that in the big picture. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 476-15(3): Benefits Of A Tax Credit To Homeowners**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, this is an issue across Canada, but it's so acute here across Northern Canada. Has the Finance Minister taken this extremely serious situation up with his counterparts in the other territories to see what we could do if we linked arms and moved this along? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 476-15(3): Benefits Of A Tax Credit To Homeowners**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I meet with my counterparts from the other jurisdictions in the finance area, we use the information we have available to us; the housing information, the cost of living factors and we use that to build our argument to try to get more revenues to our own jurisdictions. So when I go down to meet with Minister Goodale, I'm carrying in my briefcase or my backpack the arguments we've developed in the Northwest Territories to try to convince them in fact we need more dollars to deliver the same level of programs that southern Canadians have already. The cost of living is extreme in the North. We realize that and we're trying to get the rest of Canada to realize that, too. Thank you.

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

**Question 477-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of RWED in his capacity as the Minister responsible for the BIP. I would like to know if the Minister and the Cabinet have decided whether or not to waive the BIP with respect to 22 additional mobile homes under the market housing initiative. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

**Return To Question 477-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The same rules will apply for phase two as they did for phase one. At that point when the decision was made to waive the BIP on the procurement of the mobile homes, it was for the life of the program. So there's no difference between this phase and the prior purchase under phase one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 477-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for economic development, for fair business practice, for fairness of all in Cabinet, how can he justify the government continuing to waive their own policy in spending \$2.5 million? How can he justify that, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Further Return To Question 477-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What's happening here is we haven't rescinded the previous decision. I think this debate was had in the House. I remember specific questions from the Member at that point about it, and obviously our feeling was, as it related to install in communities, we would leave the BIP in place because there was a chance to have value added, there was a chance there would be northern employment out of this. But our feeling was that if the BIP was simply going to be applied so that northern home distributors could make a phone call to Edmonton and get trailers sent up, that there wasn't a lot of value added there and that that was not the best use of public money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 477-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if he and this government operates under that policy, how does the government have credibility and justification to force all of the northern multi-national corporations in their obligations to hire northern, buy northern and do things northern? How can the Minister and the government have any credibility in insisting that when they don't even practice their own principle? Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear! Hear!

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

**Further Return To Question 477-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think, by and large, obviously, we do practice that principle. On a specific where we think there really will be no value added, no benefit in the North, then the question becomes one of finding a balance. Do you insist that the

BIP be in place and allow, as I've said, a northern middleman to apply an additional mark-up on the units being purchased, Mr. Speaker? That was the debate that we had. How much value was there in that? So what we decided was more important was affordable housing in communities. We've seen that the premise of this program is that they'll be on the cost-recovery basis, and even at that, \$1,300 a month in communities for these three-bedroom mobile homes has been a challenge to get them filled. That's why, I believe, the Housing Minister is moving to the smaller units. But if we allowed for the BIP and it added an additional cost, we may have been talking about -- hypothetically, I don't know what the numbers would be -- maybe \$1,350 per month, for homes.

We did feel there was value added in the install and the building of the pads for the trailers in communities, and that is why the BIP was applied to that portion of the contract. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Supplementary To Question 477-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the Minister, that if you call Mr. Les Rocher in Yellowknife, he would say that there is a lot of value added in doing business in the North and that it is not fair for the government to apply BIP just in 15 percent of the projects and not to larger centres. I think he would tell him that he doesn't appreciate the government competing with him in the whole selling of the mobile home business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. I did not hear a question there. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

#### **Question 478-15(3): Review Of Residential Tenancies Act**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions at this point are for the Minister of Justice. Within that department is the responsibility for the Residential Tenancies Act. Mr. Speaker, the government has already committed to a review of this act and I would like the Minister, if he could, to give us a snapshot on when renters and landlords both can expect an opportunity to contribute to this review. Thank you.

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

#### **Return To Question 478-15(3): Review Of Residential Tenancies Act**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe I was going to do a Minister's statement on this issue on Monday, but the answer is we will be launching the consultation process very soon, with advertisements in the newspapers and we will have a web site available for people. As well, we will go out and do focus group consultations and there will also be some direct mail-out, to people that we know are stakeholders, to solicit their input. Thank you.

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

#### **Supplementary To Question 478-15(3): Review Of Residential Tenancies Act**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will still look forward to the Minister's statement on Monday, by the way. I am wondering in the criteria for this, are there going to be any limitations or anything that is not going to be considered in this, Mr. Speaker. Are there any criteria at all of what will or will not be considered in the review of this act? Thank you very much.

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

#### **Further Return To Question 478-15(3): Review Of Residential Tenancies Act**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are planning to solicit specific comment in certain areas where we have had recommendations for change, particularly from the rentals officer. We are also going to open the door on comments on any area that landlords and tenants care to comment on. Thank you.

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

#### **Supplementary To Question 478-15(3): Review Of Residential Tenancies Act**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to hear that there is going to be an open door on it. There is one particular area that has touched a lot of nerves, and that is those two words used in one sentence that can be very dangerous: "rent control." It is a situation that we have had exposure to here in Yellowknife, and very recently one of our other larger communities has a situation that was brought to the attention of this Legislature. Is that something that this government will consider if there is strong public support and interest in pursuing that kind of a policy? Thank you.

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

#### **Further Return To Question 478-15(3): Review Of Residential Tenancies Act**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that I have just about said everything that I was going to say in the Minister's statement, I doubt that I will bother to say one. Members will see in the response to the petition that will be tabled tomorrow, there is encouragement for landlords and tenants to submit their comments to this government on rent control. We are interested in hearing the comments from the public on both sides and then we will assess where we go, once we have had the opportunity for that input. Thank you.

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

#### **Question 479-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development a couple of questions with regard to some comments that were made at a recent press conference, in which the Governor of Alaska, Mr. Frank Murkowski, was seen as saying that the Mackenzie Valley gas project was stalled. Even the Premier of the Yukon,

Mr. Fentie, who was also present at the press conference, didn't dispute the fact that this was stalled. I am just wondering if the Minister can answer a question. The first question is what is his opinion? Is our gas project stalled, or is it not? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member is asking for the Minister's opinion on something. I will allow the Minister to answer, but basically it is an opinion. The Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

**Return To Question 479-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me be clear; I think it is, quite simply, a fact that the Mackenzie gas project is not stalled. It is well into the regulatory process now; the Joint Review Panel environmental assessment is well underway. There has been so much interest in that process and so many information requests of Imperial, that the JRP has asked that Imperial be given more time in order to submit to those information requests.

I know there has been a lot of discussion in the media, back and forth, about the federal government meeting with the Deh Cho First Nations to resolve outstanding issues. I think that is positive and that negotiation continues. I wouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker, to see some access agreements in the North, with the Inuvialuit settlement region and the Gwich'in settlement region, to be concluded soon. I think that will send a real clear message to everybody, that this project is well underway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 479-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will rephrase this question. I will ask the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, will the Mackenzie Valley gas project go ahead of the Alaska Highway project? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 479-15(3): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe it will. I think that is the general consensus. Let me say that we believe that both Alaskan American gas and Canadian gas needs to get to market. We do need to find a continental energy solution. But our project is so much further down the regulatory process, in terms of the Alaska Highway project, I don't think a route has been determined. This decision about whether the NPA or NEB will prevail, is still one that is largely up in the air. I am sure that there are discussions to come with Akaska and Treaty 8 First Nations in the Yukon. There are many hurdles for that project. It is a very good project and it will happen, but clearly it is not as advanced as the Mackenzie gas project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay. Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 7, oral

questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

**Question 480-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing as I gave away my last question by not asking a question, I want to re-ask the Minister of RWED about the implementation and application of the BIP. I would like to know if he can answer how he can justify saying that there is no value added in services that local businesses do provide. They bring in mobile homes, they set up land spaces and they do all sorts of work that puts down mobile homes in the North. How could he say that there is no value-added work in that? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

**Return To Question 480-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For local businesses that would be installing mobile homes in communities, there is value added. There is employment created and that money will stay in communities and that is why we insisted that the BIP had to apply for the installation of these mobile homes. Those contracts were awarded, I believe, largely to northern companies, doing work in northern communities.

In terms of the actual phone call to purchase a trailer from a company in Sherwood Park, we know these can't be currently constructed in the Northwest Territories -- I hope someday they will be -- but we didn't see a lot of value added in that phone call and the potential that that would result in a 15 percent price increase.

Install in communities and the work that that would generate is very important, very important for our local economies. That is why the BIP applied to that portion of the contract. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 480-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on what basis does he suggest that there are no businesses in the Territories who could provide homes? There is no manufacturing mobile home factory, but there are lots of businesses in the North that could provide housing to the North. Is it not his responsibility to look for business opportunities and promote growth and promote opportunities? On what basis does he conclude that?

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

**Further Return To Question 480-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member makes a very good point. There are companies that can build stick-built homes in the Northwest Territories and we could have chosen that approach, but it would have been very difficult. You wouldn't get stick-built homes for \$130,000 in communities. So if it cost \$300,000

to put a stick-built home in a community and you need to, on a cost-recovery basis, get the money back for these 22 homes, you would have been charging a rent...We already know \$1,300 is difficult. I can't imagine the teachers and nurses and professionals in the communities coming up with \$2,000 plus for rent and that's what would have happened, I believe, with stick-built homes. Can mobile homes be manufactured in the North in the future? I believe they can. I am hoping our government will work with anybody who is interested in looking at this business.

We do have to make sure that it's a viable one, but we are certainly willing to consider business plans and work with anybody who has this in mind. I certainly think that would be a positive step going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 480-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say I am very impressed with how the words roll out so well from the Minister, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if all his intentions are dreamed up and practiced in his sleep.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, as long as this government brings up this urgent policy at the last second and says unless we order these homes, we aren't going to have housing for the seniors and we have to go as cheap as possible. How is that going to create an industry? Why is it okay for the Minister to provide all sorts of subsidies for all sorts of industries in the North because we want to create jobs and why would he not look at home manufacturing businesses in the North that creates jobs in the North? Has he looked at that in the last two months? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 480-15(3): Business Incentive Policy Application**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Mr. Speaker, I am not quite clear. I did say we would look at proposals to construct mobile homes in the North. The debate over stick-built over mobile homes was one that was taken. The Housing Corporation looked on a cost-recovery basis of what they could do in communities. They determined that stick-built constructed homes would be in the neighbourhood of \$200,000, mobile homes at \$133,000. It was quite clear that if they wanted a program based on cost recovery, this was what they had determined was the best way to go. So if somebody approaches us and wants to look at construction of mobile homes and a factory due to that in one of the communities, we will certainly take a look at that. We may get back to stick built. This is a balance between creating employment and putting the most economic type of housing on the ground. That's a policy decision to be taken, and those decisions, at this point, lie with the Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Chair will recognize Mr. Villeneuve who hasn't had a chance to ask a question yet during question period. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Question 481-15(3): Alternative Housing Options**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a quick question for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation with regard to the use of trailers as opposed to stick-built units in the communities. In my community, in Deninu Kue, we have five trailers situated there at a cost of \$130,000 per unit. If there was some preplanning done before this whole market initiative was rolled out last year with the ordering of 20 trailer units, I think there would have been better response from community members in both my communities if this government had invested the \$650,000 and built a stick-built apartment building. We would have had a 10-unit apartment building for \$650,000 that would ease up the whole market housing clog that we have in our communities. Now we are stuck with five empty trailers that nobody wants.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Shame, shame.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** I think the stick-built approach would have been something better to look at in the long term and invest into with regard to this...

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

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Oh, a question...

---Laughter

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** There are 22 units on the books here for this year. I am just wondering if the government would consider looking at the cost of those units with regard to the cost of having a stick-built one-bedroom apartment complex in these communities as opposed to two trailers. Thank you.

---Applause

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

**Return To Question 481-15(3): Alternative Housing Options**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, this was an initiative that was done trying to ensure that we meet the needs of our communities and looking at the long-term initiative. The first phase was to try to accommodate the professionals in communities. We heard from the DEAs and the education councils. They said there was a need for housing in those communities. By the time these units were in place in those communities, a lot of people...Right now, we have Fort Res residents approaching the Housing Corporation to purchase these units. In Fort Res, those units came in at a cost of about \$190,000.

Right now, we are open to looking at buyers in those communities. We know there is a major housing crisis in Fort Resolution. In order to accommodate that, we have offered these to professionals. If they are not available, we will consider looking at other tenants.

In Fort Resolution, you have units you didn't have on the ground a year ago. They are available, they are there for sale and we do have individuals interested in purchasing these units in Fort Resolution.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Time for oral questions has expired, but I will allow you to finish with a short supplementary question, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Supplementary To Question 481-15(3): Alternative Housing Options**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if the department looks at long-term, but a 20-year life on trailers is not really looking long term as far as I am concerned with the housing initiative. When we are thinking long term, we have to look at least 50 years down the road. At a cost of \$190,000 per unit, we are looking at almost \$1 million spent in one community and they haven't been utilized for a year now. The \$1 million could have gotten a good size one-bedroom apartment complex, or maybe two. With the second phase of this new market housing initiative that's going to be rolled out this next year and the new trailers and the redesign of the trailers, with the people who are now going to purchase these other units in Lutselk'e and other communities that these whole units went to, how is that going to offset the real market demand of low income families who demand market housing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 481-15(3): Alternative Housing Options**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Mr. Speaker, we do have programs through the Housing Corporation, such as the EDAP program or the IHP program. They are programs to assist from social housing into homeownership. What we have done is amortized this over 25 years. So by extending it by an extra five years, it brings down your mortgage costs and will make it more affordable for clients. We are working with clients in communities to ensure that they make that transition. I think because of lifting the moratorium, we are working with clients in all the different communities and counselling them to see if they are interested in getting into these programs. So we are working with existing programs and we have programs in place to assist people getting into homeownership. We want to get people in social housing who are paying high rents to get them into homeownership and this is one of the ways we can do that.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Short supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Supplementary To Question 481-15(3): Alternative Housing Options**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess with reference to some of these programs that are going to help these people get into homeownership, with reference to some of the programs the Housing Corporation used to run, the HAP program, from the feedback I have been getting from Housing is that that was a very successful program, but that was sunsetted a few years back. The good part of that program is people were able to at least assist in building their own houses. Sweat equity was a big consideration in that program. I think a lot of people took a lot of pride in participating in constructing their own house. What consideration would the Minister give to developing a program that is similar to some of these older programs that were quite successful? It seems that this government always sunsets programs that are successful and I just don't think that's good

governance. I hope people's feedback, with these good programs, are taken seriously. Would the Minister consider a program of similar nature for housing clients?

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

**Further Return To Question 481-15(3): Alternative Housing Options**

**MR. KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have such a program, but people aren't really made aware of it. We do have a log housing initiative that is in place. Individuals who want to go out who want to harvest their own logs, peel their logs and bring them back into town, can have them ready on the site. There is a program to assist those people by way of getting a package from the corporation for the electrical and materials to finish off the unit. Because of the log housing initiative that has happened such as HAP, we ran into problems. The new initiative is based on single, one-storey units. Sweat equity is the whole idea of this program. It's a log housing initiative where the client goes out, cuts the logs, brings his logs into town, peels them and has them on the site. Then they will be assisted through this program. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

**ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS**

**Tabled Document 111-15(3): Letter To The Standing Committee On Accountability And Oversight From The Minister Responsible For The NWT Housing Corporation, Dated April 2, 2004, Re Market Housing Initiative**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a letter written by the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation dated April 2, 2004, in which he states that the government is prepared to work more closely with northern business on future initiatives and find a different approach on the marketing housing initiative. Thank you.

**Tabled Document 112-15(3): Retiring Allowances Act, Actuarial Report, April 1, 2004**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 13, tabling of documents. Pursuant to section 21(1) of the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act, I hereby table the actuarial report to the Legislative Assembly's Board of Management on the funding valuations as of April 1, 2004, of the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act.

**Tabled Document 113-15(3): Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, Actuarial Report, April 1, 2004**

Pursuant to section 11(1) of the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act, I hereby table the actuarial report to the Legislative Assembly's Board of Management on the funding valuation as of April 1, 2004, of the Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act.

Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

#### ITEM 16: MOTIONS

##### **Motion 28-15(3): Tabled Document 108-15(3), "Nation Building: Framework for a Northern Strategy" Moved Into Committee Of The Whole**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the governments of Canada, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and Nunavut jointly released the document "Nation Building: Framework for a Northern Strategy," on December 14, 2004;

AND WHEREAS all four governments have agreed to use this document as a basis for further consultation with all northerners leading up to the finalization of a Northern Strategy;

AND WHEREAS all four governments have committed to involving aboriginal governments and organizations in the consultation process;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories will be consulting with the Northwest Territories aboriginal governments and organizations on this matter at the second Circle of Northern Leaders meeting scheduled for April 2005 in Inuvik;

AND WHEREAS it is crucial that the Government of the Northwest Territories obtain the input of all Members of the Legislative Assembly as part of the overall consultation process;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Tabled Document 108-15(3), Nation Building: Framework for a Northern Strategy, be moved into Committee of the Whole for discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. The motion is on the floor. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Tabled Document 108-15(3) will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Item 16, motions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

##### **Motion 29-15(3): Addressing Housing Needs**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly vision statement sets a goal of adequate, affordable and accessible housing;

AND WHEREAS current policies on housing programs for seniors and disabled persons are uncoordinated and there is a clear need to improve the level of services so that individuals are able to live independently and with dignity;

AND WHEREAS there is significant housing infrastructure that is underused because it was built without ensuring it met client or community needs;

AND WHEREAS the \$33.2 million annual contribution for public housing from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation will be reduced over the next 34 years and will sunset completely by the year 2038;

AND WHEREAS nearly one year has passed since the Premier advised this House on March 29, 2004, that the government had initiated steps toward development of a comprehensive, coordinated, interdepartmental strategy for addressing homelessness in the Northwest Territories;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that the government develop a coordinated housing program for those in need, including an assisted living program for seniors and disabled persons, which allows individuals who wish to stay in their home community or region to do so wherever possible;

AND FURTHER that the government continue to pursue initiatives with national aboriginal organizations, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to secure additional funding to address aboriginal housing needs;

AND FURTHERMORE that the government ensure there is community support and a client base for infrastructure before making capital investments;

AND FURTHERMORE that the government bring to this House by October 2005 a detailed plan including fiscal forecasts and timelines on how to replace the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation funding which is due to be reduced over the next 34 years and sunsets completely by the year 2038;

AND FURTHERMORE that the government accelerate development of a comprehensive strategy on homelessness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The development of the Assembly's position on housing is one that is very high up on the radar screen, very close to all of our constituents, no matter what riding we are from. We are addressing these needs, Mr. Speaker, through our voices here in the Assembly, through our research, through our participation in forums, in housing seminars, in meetings and workshops with our constituents and with the non-government organizations, Mr. Speaker, which are so incredibly valuable to the delivery of housing programs for those in need, for the homeless, for the disadvantaged. Mr. Speaker, there are aspects of this that really must be recognized. It is something we have to remind ourselves of.

Sixty percent of the entire budget of this government -- that is about \$600 million -- is delivered through non-governmental organizations and boards and authorities. Now when we are looking at something as all-encompassing as housing in our society, this is something that touches on many different organizations. It is through

the dedication and commitment and passion of those volunteer-lead organizations like the YWCA, the Salvation Army here in Yellowknife and housing authorities, that we're taking our queues and getting our signals and bringing the attention, bringing the focus, bringing the momentum and the urgency, Mr. Speaker, for the needs that are outlined in this motion. In fact, when we were drafting this, we went from single line furthermores and therefores, Mr. Speaker, to almost two pages, trying to decide how we are going to help keep this message at the top of the radar screen. How are we going to get it through, how are we going to do something that is going to get action and results? We honed this down, Mr. Speaker, to five different areas that we feel are at the very top of the radar screen, and this is what our motion addresses. So to the motion, Mr. Speaker, a coordinated housing program for seniors and disabled persons.

I have attended a number of different workshops and forums in the five years that I've been an MLA, Mr. Speaker. I've seen that we are, as a relatively young jurisdiction, developing our social safety net. We're not doing too bad a job in terms of the policy side. We're listening. We are growing and maturing as a government, in realizing and doing what we can to deliver these kinds of services. But we do have a long way to go in terms of coordinating and really delivering, in as many communities as possible, what the disabled and senior people really have come to so rightfully deserve in other parts of Canada. We're getting there, but we cannot stop at the basis of a piece of paper and policy.

Mr. Speaker, our motion also calls on the government to pursue initiatives with aboriginal organizations, DIAND, and CMHC, to secure additional funding to address aboriginal housing needs. This is where during question period I spoke to the potential of a very powerful partner to be brought into this. This is the weight and strength financially and, of course, to the communities, to the people of the aboriginal development corporations and First Nations. I think there is a natural fit here if we, as a government, can think outside that box and look for really innovative ways to involve other people in arriving at these solutions.

Mr. Speaker, we also heard considerable traffic about the need for government to make sure that when we're going to make an investment or a move into a community, that we do so with the basis of some research and knowledge and confidence about what is going on in a particular community. The market housing initiative, whatever you want to call it, is a prime example of that. In fact, it's almost a contradiction in terms that we're trying to introduce in non-market communities or those that don't have a viable private sector market of their own, we're trying to inject or impose the idea that there can be conventional market housing. If this was possible, Mr. Speaker, doesn't it make sense that there would already be something there? Why are we trying to jam something into a community that is contrived or artificial or really has no basis of success or sustainability from that community's point of view?

The Minister has made a very strong point and, in fact, it was at least in part at the urging of Members on this side of the House that we wanted to have housing solutions delivered to those small communities so they could stand at least that much more of an opportunity, more of a chance to keep their essential workers, their health workers, their teachers, the social service workers, so that

at least we wouldn't have the excuse or reason or cause of poor or inadequate housing as the reason these communities can't keep these people. We continue to endorse it, we need to have that. The way our government is delivering that service has certainly brought this into question and that was the reason, Mr. Speaker, for that particular part of this motion.

I have focused on the need for what I think is an extremely serious long-term problem for this government, and that would be the loss over the next 30 or so years. It might seem like a long time, but it has happened to us every year. We're losing, bit by bit, tens of millions of dollars that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was injecting into the Northwest Territories. The opportunities that we have to replace that with our own devices, I would say we're kidding ourselves, Mr. Speaker, if we think we can do this from our own resources and with the conventional ways of thinking that we have always brought to bear on this. We've got to get going on this one. It will become a much more serious issue not only on our revenue side, but on our expenditures side. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, from the point of view of the health and wellbeing and the wellness of our communities and families, we have to attack this.

Homelessness is another one of those situations, Mr. Speaker, when good times, boom times come, there are inevitably people who are forced out of that stream of wealth and prosperity and really fall into the cracks. It's been something that really hasn't been that much of an issue. It really is not that large and has not been a chronic situation, I think, until in very recent years. Mr. Speaker, especially in our larger communities now where the wealth and the attraction is coming, we're finding that those people, the truly homeless, are becoming much more evident on our streets and businesses, in back alleys and homes. Here in Yellowknife one signal of this is the amount of crime, Mr. Speaker, that is happening in our businesses and in our suburbs. This is at least one sign that homelessness really is here. It is here to stay and we have to do things to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, those are my general comments in support of this motion. We covered here how many different departments? We covered the Housing Corporation, of course; we covered Finance; I suppose we could also say that somewhere in here was the Minister responsible for homelessness. But I would conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that each and every one of our Ministers and the Premier within our portfolios has got a very direct and a very large mandate and responsibility for the state of housing and homes in the Northwest Territories. None of our departments and none of our Ministers can dodge this one and I hope that we can engage them all in this very critical government-wide, territory-wide, society-wide issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the motion. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise in support of this motion and just wanted to point out that a lot of the issues that I face as an MLA, about 80 percent of it is housing. I travel to the communities and that's one of the first things that people point out to me, is that we have to keep addressing our needs. So that's what I've been trying to do. I've been urging, I've been



working with the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation to try to find solutions in the Nahendeh.

In my Member's statement today I spoke about single housing. That's one of the biggest needs that's coming up right now. We don't specifically speak to it in the motion, Mr. Speaker, but that's one of the growing needs that's happening already.

But in terms of the motion; yes, the people do want social housing. I don't know how or when or why our government is moving away from social housing, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I don't know when they're changing the mandate or who gave them the authority to change their mandate. I think we give them the mandate and I think the people give the government a mandate. People still want social housing. In terms of that, once again I'd like to urge government to take the cotton balls out of their ears and say hey, we want social housing. Let's move in that direction again.

There are people out there who want to build houses, they need some help, they want assistance in building their houses. They don't want people to do it for them. But we don't have a program for that anymore. It used to be called the HAP program, and people were proud to be building their own homes. But we're not allowing that to happen anymore, Mr. Speaker. They think it should, and I think it should, and I believe our government should make it happen that way.

As well, in terms of disabled housing, there's a little bit of mixture because it is part of Health and Social Services' responsibility to help the disabled modify their houses, as well as the Housing Corporation does have a bit of a program. So there has to be better coordination and efforts in making our houses more disabled friendly.

But to confuse the people out there by sending them from one department to another department, just doesn't work. It just frustrates people, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to see a more coordinated effort or perhaps another transfer of responsibilities and say, okay, one guy will handle this segment.

Just with that, Mr. Speaker, I think that we have a whole new pot of money set aside in the federal government that was announced yesterday. It's still not clear, but I think that our Minister should go to Ottawa and not come back until he has answers for us.

---Laughter

---Applause

I think the Minister should go to Ottawa and not come back until he's got us positive answers to social housing.

---Laughter

---Applause

With that, Mr. Speaker, I once again speak in favour of this motion. It's, indeed, my way of getting the government to listen to us to bring housing more in the forefront to this Assembly and the NWT as a whole. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't be long; however, I have to stress I was very pleased, at the very end of question period, with Mr. Krutko's willingness to work toward developing possible policies. His willingness is much appreciated on this side of the House, at least from my perspective.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke very clearly about the concerns we have in parts of my riding, and I'm sure they apply to many other ridings, that our seniors are really struggling to live in an environment that shows them dignity. We have people in our communities who have disabilities, who have trouble simply reaching their cabinets. They can't get into their showers. There are an endless amount of problems, Mr. Speaker. I have to reaffirm that this policy speaks clearly to some of the needs I've brought up.

I'm really pleased, quite honestly, that we're having a housing Minister listening to some of the needs in our disabled community. It's nice to see a couple of Ministers are out there who are listening, and I hope the other Ministers who are not listening will take note. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. To the motion. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for giving me the opportunity to speak. I'd like to rise and speak in favour of the motion. Mr. Speaker, I think there is a lot in this motion and it reflects the frustration on the part of the Members in terms of the government's inability to meet the needs of housing in the North. It also speaks to the desire on the part of the Members to improve the situation as much as we can.

Mr. Speaker, I think there is a need to review the mandate and the work of the Housing Corporation in light of the fact that there are so many needs there and that we didn't see in the federal budget any additional funding to meet these needs. I know there are lots of programs in the Housing Corporation that meet the needs here and there in patchwork, but I think it is time for us to review this comprehensively and really have a discussion about where we are going from here.

Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget, there is about \$35 million allocated for the Housing Corporation, and surely it is incumbent on us to do a better job with that money to make sure we create more housing for the people. We cannot continue to have the corporation introduce a policy like the market housing initiative. That was really poorly thought out, I must tell you, Mr. Speaker. I think even the officials and the Minister, in their private moments, would admit that the rollout of that was not as good as it could have been. It's hard to believe that I'm standing here exactly a year after all the debate we had in the House last year, and that there has been no work done to really change and answer to so many questions that were asked about why we are waiving the BIP, why we are ordering

mobile homes instead of doing more long-term thinking and see how we can really provide housing in communities. There is no real long-term view given to how we support and cooperate with the northern manufacturing industry.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of what the Ministers are saying, I can tell you there are businesses in Yellowknife and in Hay River, and I'm sure in Inuvik, there are lots of businesses in the North that would be interested in working with the government and becoming a partner in using what little dollars we have to build housing that meets the needs of northerners, that meets the needs of northern climates, that meets the needs of income situations in our communities. There could be partnerships with the band corporations. There are all sorts of creative ways in which the government should be looking at it, and this government had promised to look at that last year.

The previous Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, the Honourable Michael McLeod, put it in writing that they would look at things differently and that they would not be coming here and asking us for a rush job because they had to meet the barge and whatever external circumstances that they couldn't control. A year later we're operating under exactly the same conditions and I'm just really tired of us sitting here, standing here, being asked to do the same dumb thing over and over again, Mr. Speaker. Sorry; less than intelligent things. Sorry; my apologies for that bad word.

Mr. Speaker, I've already made a lengthy, heated statement about what I think of the market housing initiative as one of the policies that did not work out so well in terms of addressing housing needs.

I am in support of the overall motion. I intend to pursue these issues that I have brought up further for the remainder of the Assembly during this session, because I believe these are really crucial issues that we need to discuss. If the federal government is not doing anything about our housing, it is incumbent on us to do what we can and do a lot more to address our housing needs. Coming up with willy-nilly, temporary, poorly-thought-out policies like the market housing initiative without doing all the homework is not the way to do that. Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of this motion. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

---Applause

Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 15, Tlicho Community Services Agency Act; Bill 17, Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act; 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006; Bill 20, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005; Committee Report 9-15(3), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report of the Review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates; Committee Report 10-15(3), Standing

Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report of the Review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates; Committee Report 11-15(3), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report of the Review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates; Committee Report 12-15(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2003 General Election; Member's Statement 86-15(3), Northern Strategy; Minister's Statement 88-15(3), Update on Oil and Gas Development in the NWT; Minister's Statement 89-15(3), Community Leaders' Conference Report: Preparing for the Pipeline; Minister's Statement 90-15(3), Social Impacts of the Mackenzie Gas Projects; and, Minister's Statement 91-15(3), Preparation for the Mackenzie Gas Project. By the authority given to me as Speaker, by Motion 2-15(3), I hereby resolve the House into Committee of the Whole to sit beyond the hour of adjournment until such time as the committee is ready to report progress, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Okay, I call Committee of the Whole to order. We have a number of items on our agenda today. When we left off yesterday we were on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment general comments. What is the wish of the committee today? Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The committee wishes to consider Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006, with Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Then we will proceed with that after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Recognizing a quorum, I will call Committee of the Whole back to order. We are on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, general comments.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Detail.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** No more general comments? Okay. Detail. I will ask the Minister if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Yes, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Then I will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms if he would please escort Mr. Dent's witnesses into the witness table.

Could you please introduce your witnesses, for the record? Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On my right is the deputy minister of the department, Mr. Mark Cleveland; on my left is Mr. Paul Devitt, director of management services.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Would Members please turn to page 9-13? Activity summary, directorate and administration, operations expenditure summary, \$6.475 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Pages 9-14 and 9-15, information item, directorate and administration, active positions.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Page 9-17, activity summary, education and culture, operations expenditure summary, \$136.110 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I have never read such a big number. Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Page 9-19, education and culture, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$52,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Pages 9-20 and 9-21, grants and contributions continued, total contributions, \$121.112 million, total grants and contributions, \$121.164 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Agreed. Thank you. Pages 9-22 and 9-23, information item, education and culture, active positions.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Page 9-25, advanced education and careers, activity summary, operations expenditure summary, \$41.053 million. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I may be one page out here. Under advanced education and careers, Madam Chair, I wanted to ask a couple things about apprenticeship and employment training. Are we on the page yet, Madam Chair, that covers apprenticeship and employment training under advanced education and careers?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Mr. Braden, you're on the right page.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This particular area, and it's posted here for \$4.666 million if I have it right, Madam Chair, is a fund that's available for employers to tap to help bring their workers into trades and other skills. There is a reduction here of about \$200,000. Not a significant reduction, Madam Chair, but I was wondering if the Minister could advise are there any

areas here where employers are potentially seeing any reduction in this service. This program, which I would like to add is something that I'm proud of; I think Members are. I think it's doing us very well to have this kind of a program here. Are we cutting back in any particular area? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The reductions and elimination of wage subsidies to diamond manufacturing employees of \$84,000 is included in there, and there's a reallocation of salary funding. It's an internal reallocation of \$94,000 being transferred from apprenticeship to fund an existing career development officer position, because we have been able to fund one of the apprenticeship positions under the Labour Market Development Agreement. So there's no change in the numbers of people doing the jobs, we've just been able to move some of our funding into a different area.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The support in the diamond industry; was this a scheduled sunset, if you will, or a withdrawal of access to that program, or is this something that may come as a surprise to employers in the secondary industry? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It was a scheduled or expected reduction. It's a residual that's been left over from the training program we initiated some years ago. It's not part of the overall budget reduction exercise.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Dr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Finally, Madam Chair, in that particular area I'm wondering if the department could produce, not necessarily right now, but will there be an evaluation done or has there been an evaluation done of the impact that's had on the diamond cutting and polishing industry? Was it money well spent? What kind of results have we got to show for that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We know that it was essential to help get the industry up and going in the first instance. I'm not sure that it would be valuable now to follow up with a study as to how important it was. We don't believe that the businesses would have gotten started here without this kind of subsidy. We know that from negotiations we had with the first people who came into the field. The fact that we do have factories that are up and polishing, now indicates, I would argue, that the program has been successful. The continued uptake of graduates from our training course also indicates that there is a market for people in this field in the Northwest Territories now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To be sure, I was told recently that if you put together all the employees that are at work on diamond row in the sorting shops and the cutting and polishing shops, we probably have somewhere in the neighbourhood of 300 people in Yellowknife, including the families and everyone else who has indirect employment. So there's no doubt, in my mind, that we have the foundation for a successful and a sustained industry.

One of the expectations I think that we all had when these shops were getting set up, was that we would be able to attract and grow a northern workforce that northerners would be well suited to this job, given that they had the right training and the opportunity to go for it. So of the people who have gone through the training courses and are now employed in those shops, does the Minister have any idea how many of them are indeed northerners, and are the expectations that I might have had that we truly will have a resident workforce, are they viable? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As Members will likely remember, the Diamond Polishing Program at Aurora College did receive an award for being a world-class program and, yes, we are producing people who can move into the polishing factories and take jobs quite well. We're aware that approximately 65 graduates of the program have been employed in Yellowknife in the secondary industry. We don't track how many people were hired and basically did the apprenticeship type of training before the college started to get into the training. The first two years of training offered by the college didn't include the polishing part. It was mostly diamond grading and sorting. So we don't know how many people that didn't go through the college system might also be northerners, but we do know the success rate of people going through the college system finding jobs has been fairly good. Better than 65 to 75 percent on each graduating class are moving directly into employment fairly quickly. So we think that, by and large, northerners are finding jobs there. They are not the only ones working in the field, but it is an opportunity for northerners to work.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Braden. Okay, thank you. Next I have Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under the section advanced education and careers, I believe there are grants and contributions for literacy. As Members would note, I made a Member's statement relating to literacy funding. I note, Madam Chair, under the details, that literacy funding has gone down substantially for this current year. I'm wondering why the department has cut the literacy funding to the tune of before \$400,000 versus what we currently. For me, Madam Chair, I think it's very essential and from my understanding from the Literacy Council that oversees literacy in the Territories, they are doing a lot of good work, they've done a number of campaigns and they've been very successful and this type of funding shouldn't have decreased. Why has the department decreased the funding for literacy? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$300,000 reduction is to the Workplace Literacy Program. It does not affect the funding that would flow to the Literacy Council or community literacy programs. As Members know, we were tasked to find reductions throughout government and one of the areas we looked for was where the funding wasn't being used on a consistent basis, and what we found was in that program \$300,000 was being lapsed consistently because businesses weren't coming to us with applications to use it. So we don't think that this will lead to a large impact, because it's money that wasn't being accessed by business. It was a program we had made available for business to access through application, but we weren't seeing the applications to use it all up. So this does not represent a decrease in funding to the Literacy Council.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Minister for his answer. In my Member's statement, I encouraged the government to increase or maintain that current level, and although they are decreasing \$300,000 from the business component where they were budgeting for literacy so business could apply for it, we would have been better off if we increased or enhanced the council's funding in that respect. But I'm quite happy that the level of funding is not going to be decreased for the council initiatives for next year.

Madam Chair, another area I wanted to touch on was with regard to the funding that I think comes out of this section; I could be corrected. It is for the initiatives where we have joint partnerships with industry, federal government and ourselves pertaining to the mining initiatives. I'm not sure if it's ASEP. Is that the one that is currently funded under this section, where we put in money with the federal government and with industry to do all the mine training where we trained 800 miners, I think it said, at one time. Is this the area that the money is coming out of? I couldn't find the section that falls under that in this section, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This would be one of the areas that some of the money might come from. It doesn't come from just one area. The GNWT commitment to fund ASEP is in a couple of different places. So this is as good a place as any to talk about that program. The Member is right; we're hoping that over the course of the ASEP program that there will be 800 people trained. They won't all be miners, but they will be trained for jobs that are related to the industry.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Madam Chair, could I ask the Minister, I think his department is the lead, about the total amount of money that our government is putting forward with our partners.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The GNWT will contribute a minimum of \$1.5 million each

year, for the next four years, to meet our partnership requirements. That money includes both mining and oil and gas. So that's the total each year for mining and oil and gas.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Next on the list I have Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have to beg the chair's indulgence and make some general comments as we go along here, because I haven't had an opportunity to address the line item that's important to me in the last couple of weeks. Aside from that, I think what was the key to one of my issues that came out of the election was inclusionary schooling, Madam Chair. So I gave it a lot of thought, and it's one of the big issues, of course, with moving our children along, bumping them along without giving them the skills they need. I don't know how the system came to that place. I was trying to understand inclusionary schooling, I thought that was perhaps that, maybe the Minister can correct me if I'm wrong, was about maybe having everybody in school, including the disabled. I don't know if it was meant to move our weaker students along in grade school, because people are graduating and they are literally barely functioning. Their reading and writing skills are very poor as they graduate. Are we graduating them just to graduate them? Are we moving our children through school so that we have a statistical increase in graduate rates and that kind of stuff? Because they really are not functioning at a Grade 12 level when we're graduating them, Madam Chair.

I think some of the issues that were pointed out to me were because we're not spending enough time with our students in the school and it might have something to do with the teacher ratio. Some people even suggested, Madam Chair, that I think we may need more special needs assistants, because our classes are big and they are spending time on the ones that are lagging. So the ones that are keen to go ahead are suffering. So they're thinking if we had more teacher availability, if we organize our resources to where there was another assistant who helps the ones who are struggling get along, perhaps the rest of the balance of the children would have more time from their teacher in their regular class instead of everybody lagging behind.

I don't know if I'm explaining it properly, Madam Chair. We're spending all of our time at the lower end and people aren't really achieving success on the higher end. So that kind of concerns me. How is the Minister going to address it? It has been at the forefront of our Assembly for at least the past year-and-a-half. Thank you.

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

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member has raised a lot of important issues and it will take me some time to address them. Inclusionary schooling is an idea where we say that everybody deserves an opportunity to be in a regular classroom, and the goal is to keep young people together by age grouping and working with them to realize their skills to the best of their abilities so that they can progress. It's a program that has had tremendous success I think in the Northwest Territories. I know just a couple of weeks ago I was talking to some people in the Territories who are right now very active in working with people who have challenges,

and they say that the young people that they are seeing now who have come through the school system are functioning at a much higher level than what they used to see 20 years ago when everybody didn't necessarily get the opportunity to go through the regular program. They also pointed out that many young people of the same age are much more comfortable working with people who have challenges. So they've seen a benefit to the inclusionary system through that over the years.

One of the other issues the Member talked about was the issue of social promotion or social passing, which is where you are not dealing with challenges that you might otherwise have; for instance, autism or other behavioural problems. But a child who may not be able to perform at the same level as other kids in their class is kept together with that class grouping and that's something that isn't new in theory. It's been around for quite some time. It has been used, more or less, over a number of years this century, depending on the philosophy of the area in which you are watching the school. So in some places in North America, it's been used consistently for a long, long time. In other places, it's almost like a pendulum, they have swung from social promotion to failure, to social promotion to failure in case of not meeting standards. So it's not something that has been consistent.

In the Northwest Territories, the divisional educational councils have a final say as to which method they should use in the region, and the current understanding or the current sort of idea of what is best in the education system right now favours social promotion and keeping kids together with their same age grouping. If a child has failed because they are not successful, it often puts them into a situation where they have failed forever because they don't ever get a chance to get back in with their age group. I think if you think back to when you were a kid in school, there weren't many times that most of us would associate with younger kids, and that's one of the factors that tends to drive kids away from school: forcing them to stick around with younger kids.

In a lot of the work that has been done, the studies show that kids that are held back don't go on to graduate. So it is an area that most educators say that the best practice is to keep kids together with their age group. Teachers are taught to deal with different age groups in a classroom or different grade levels in a classroom, different standards. It's not unusual to have kids who read at different levels in a class, and that's always going to be true. You may have kids that can't pass a test, but you'll still have kids who are reading three or four years ahead of others in a classroom, and you'll have some kids that may have challenges in one area or another. I know I can speak from personal experience. I know kids who are struggling with reading at their grade level, but are doing very well in math and science at their grade level. So if you were to say that because they can't pass their tests in literacy and that you should hold them back, then you'd be holding them back when they are capable of moving on in math and science. That just creates a situation where the kids are not motivated to continue in school. So it's an interesting area to discuss, but, as I said, we do leave the issue to the DEC's to resolve.

I would be hard pressed to disagree with the Member that we could improve on the situation both for social promotion and for dealing with children with special needs if we had more special needs assistants in the classroom. I think that's a no-brainer. We have, over the past four or

five years, dramatically increased the amount of funding that we've put into special needs and support for special needs in schools across the Northwest Territories. It's gone from just over \$6 million to around \$16 million in the course of the last five years. We know though, from surveys that have been done, teachers tell us that they think the level of challenge they face in the classroom is far greater than that, and they would tell you that they probably need more than 15 percent support going towards special needs in order to adequately address them. So I can't disagree with the Member that that would improve our ability to deal with those situations.

Talking about the calibre of our graduates, that's a real challenge. I think one of the big issues that we've got here is oftentimes young people, when they make their choices, make them without thinking about where they are going in the future. We need to do a better job of getting parents and kids and counsellors and teachers at the school level involved together early on -- Grade 8, Grade 9 -- to understand the choices that they make in courses will determine what they come out with at the end. All it takes is 100 credits to graduate, and that doesn't mean that everybody who gets a graduation certificate achieves the same level. There's a tremendous difference. You can get a graduation certificate and go off to university or become an apprentice or, in fact, you can go to university without getting a graduation certificate. All the university cares about is the marks you got in specific courses. So graduation certificates just mean that you've gotten 100 credits with some of the courses that are stipulated, and they don't say that you've achieved at a certain level and you're able to carry on from that level into your chosen field if you have a major that you've built up to in the first place. I think that's where we maybe need to put some more emphasis, is making sure that kids understand that if they choose to take a 16-level course instead of a 13-level course, instead of a 10-level or 11-level course, that there are differences and those differences are going to show up at the end of their schooling and will mean that they need more schooling if they change their mind about what they want to do.

One way we're going to help people understand how kids are doing, and help people understand where they should maybe move with some of those choices, is we're bringing in, as I've told Members, the Alberta achievement tests. So in grades 3, 6 and 9 we're going to get a better picture of how our schools are doing and give us a better idea of where we need to strengthen approaches. Is it just counselling, or do we need to go in and strengthen how we deliver literacy programs or how we deliver numeracy programs? These tests will give us a better chance to understand all that.

The other thing that I've directed, is that schools have to start reporting functional grade level. I think a lot of the times parents don't know how well their kids are doing or what level they're functioning at. So we've directed that teachers have to inform the department what the functional grade level is of the students, and we're encouraging them to share that information with their parents as well, so there is a clear understanding when children are facing challenges and then perhaps a better ability to seek out assistance when it's needed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Your 10 minutes are up.

---Laughter

And so are yours, Mr. Menicoche.

---Laughter

Next on the list I have Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll try to get in as much as I can before the Minister starts.

---Laughter

I just want to start off with saying I know how important advanced education and careers are to people, but what I think happened in the mid-1990s is starting to come back to haunt the Northwest Territories, and that is funding was at such a level where it came out of schools and basically I believe the education system got it in the mid-90s and the first things to go when dollars were tight were things like industrial arts, music, home economics and now it's kind of come full circle. We're starting to get some more dollars, but we don't have a workforce. We have a graduation rate of, I think, 43 percent, which is absolutely abysmal. That's something I think that this government needs to take quite seriously. I know the Minister has talked about testing and other things to try to get kids to graduate from high school; but if that's not a scary stat, I don't know what is. Forty-three percent of our children graduate from high school.

The lowest populated province of Prince Edward Island, I believe, has a graduation rate of 85 percent or 86 percent. It's twice as much as it is here in the Northwest Territories. I think we've got a tremendous amount of work to do to try to...

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Could we have some order in the Chamber, please. If you must, please just talk quietly amongst yourselves. Sorry for the interruption, Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do believe we have a great deal of work to try to correct the course we're on with our graduation rates being what they are. One of the things I wanted to ask the Minister about, and I know there's some money, there's a committee and this and that, is a stand-alone dedicated college facility for Yellowknife. I think it's something that's seriously needed in this community. Yellowknife does have, with no disrespect to my fellow colleagues here, over 50 percent of the population. It's the seat of government.

We do need a college facility here; it's long overdue. For whatever reasons, political or otherwise, a college...Actually, they didn't even call it a college until the mid-90s, I believe. The former Premier even refused to refer to it as a college. But we need a stand-alone campus in Yellowknife. I think the current setup in an apartment building or downtown here with no parking, no access, has no room for growth. People are hesitant to go there because they can't find parking downtown. The space is crowded. It's just not a good setup for a college. I think that's something the government has to take quite seriously and look at; work with different regions and people and try to have a vision for, at some point in time, getting a stand-alone college here in Yellowknife. That's something I feel quite strongly about and I have for a long time. But it's a fight we'll have to take up again some other day, I suppose.

I wanted to ask the Minister, in terms of apprentices, and I know we had Apprenticeship Week two or three weeks ago and the Minister had stated that apprenticeships were up, I think it was 20 percent or 25 percent in the last couple of years. What is the ratio of apprenticeship officers to apprentices, by region, if you could give me that statistic, please? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Madam Chair, I don't have a clue. Sorry. I can't answer that question. I can try to get the information for the Member, but it's not a statistic that we would keep.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll ask the Minister a question more close to home. In Yellowknife, how many apprentices are there and how many apprenticeship officers are there?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We have two apprenticeship officers in Yellowknife and the career development officers in the office help out with apprentices as well, but I can't tell you how many apprentices are registered in Yellowknife. Again, that's information I'd have to get for the Member. We have 300 apprentices registered in the Northwest Territories right now. I expect that most of them are registered in Yellowknife, but the exact number, I can't tell you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think one of the things I heard on the campaign trail last fall, and that I've heard from constituents, is the apprenticeship officers that we have in place are doing an absolutely fantastic job, but we just don't have enough of them and they're overworked. I think if we had another one or two of them, we could go out, get some more businesses to sign up for apprentices and we could have more young people actually doing on-the-job training and doing their apprenticeships. That was one of the criticisms that I had heard, Madam Chair.

The other thing I just wanted to get back to was the graduation rates. I think if the government puts some more effort into the technical side of things...I know we have supported the Trades and Technology Centre at St. Patrick's and we also supported the Akaitcho Trade Centre with YK1 at Sir John, but I think it's time we put more money into the industrial arts and home economics. I think too much emphasis in the past 10 or 12 years has been focused primarily on academics. I think we're missing something here and it's starting to come back to get us now, because our graduation rate isn't where it should be. If we can channel our young people to graduate from high school, they might not be in the matriculation routing, but at least they'd graduate from high school, they'd have some skills and pride in themselves to go into the workforce and be dedicated citizens and want to stay and be productive.

Those are just comments, Madam Chair, that I'd like to give to the Minister. I do look forward to him, if he could, providing those statistics I spoke of earlier; of apprentices by region and officers by region. That would be helpful. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you. First, Madam Chair, yes, we will get the information Mr. Ramsay has requested that I couldn't give today. In terms of the graduation rate, I can't disagree that we need a better graduation rate. I can't disagree that the Member early on in his comments, talked about how the changes in the mid-90s to the funding for schools has impacted on courses like industrial arts. There's no question that's absolutely true. We have, over the past few years, put money back into funding the schools, but back in the early to mid-90s the pupil/teacher ratio in the Territories was, I believe, just under 13 to one. Obviously, that gave schools the flexibility to put people into teaching positions that would offer more electives and still not have classrooms that were too big. Clearly that can't happen as easily now when you're funding schools at the level of 16 to one. So, yes, there's no question that that's made a difference over the years.

The other thing I think we need to keep in mind is that, at the same time in the mid-90s or early '90s, only 40 percent of the kids who should have been in high school were in high school. We've hit 70 percent recently and that's a pretty dramatic change for that period of time. You're not going to get the graduates if they're not in school. If you only have 40 percent of the young people who should be in school there, obviously, you're not going to achieve anywhere near the Canadian average of 70 to 75 percent. We've now got the participation rate pretty close to the Canadian average. The challenge is to continue to improve on the graduation rate.

You know, in the early '60s the graduation rate in Canada was only about 25 percent. Now across Canada, it is about 75 percent. That's 45 to 50 years that it has taken us to get there. Forty years. We are making fairly good progress, but it is not something that happens in one year. It's something we have to keep working on. The changes we make by improving our kindergarten and the amount of classroom support in kindergarten doesn't show up; the differences there don't show up until 12 years later. So it's a slow process, but I think we've made some important moves and we're committed to carrying on with that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one quick question before I lose my time here. The Minister said that currently we have 70 percent of our students that should be in high school and 70 percent are there and we're only graduating 43 percent...What was that number? I know he said we had 40 percent in the '90s that should have been in school. What was our graduation rate in the mid-90s? I'd like to ask the Minister what he thinks is the problem in trying...We've got 70 percent of our kids there. Why are we only graduating 43 percent? What is his department telling him? What are the reasons we're only graduating 43 percent? Are they going to the workforce?

Are they just quitting school? What's happening here? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The graduation rate in the early '90s was 25 percent. So they do lag, but they are improving. You have to keep the kids in school to get the graduates. What are we doing? There is certainly a challenge to get kids to complete school. I think one of the biggest deciding factors as to whether or not young people are successful in school is family support. If kids aren't being supported to get up in the morning and get out the door with breakfast in their stomachs, if they're not supported, if school isn't seen as important by the family, then it's a real challenge to translate the kid being in school to success. One thing that we are happy to say though is that the biggest growth in our success in the Northwest Territories in the last few years has been in the smaller regional centres. That's really what is important to see, because that's where we've really been lagging over the years; seeing success coming from the smaller regional centres.

The issue of success is one we're examining with the board chairs. How we can improve on school success? We have committed, as a department, to work with the Tlicho Community Services Board to examine why schooling appears to be more successful in that region. We're hoping to do a video that outlines some of what we find there. Then we can share that with people across the Northwest Territories, hopefully to improve on success around the Territories.

Madam Chair, if I can, the Member asked about the college campus and I forgot to address that one. Perhaps I'll go back to the college campus in Yellowknife. We currently have had Public Works and Services work on an evaluation of the current facility so we can do a cost-benefit analysis of keeping the campus where it is, expanding to a different location, looking at the different options. I believe they're taking a look at seven different options and I'm hoping to have that work done this spring. Concurrent with that, the college is participating in the community-wide work which is looking at facilities for Yellowknife over the next 10 years, which will determine what is going to be needed in the community over the course of the next 10 years rather than trying to do it on a piecemeal basis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Next on the list I have Mr. McLeod.

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of comments and maybe a quick question. I like the fact that the Apprenticeship Program has not been reduced. In fact, it's been increased and I think that's a good thing. The Social Work Program that was offered at Aurora College, I understand, was cancelled because there were only six applicants. I was wondering if any of these applicants were maybe given another opportunity to go to school somewhere else, even if it means south. There is a lack of social workers in the Northwest Territories. We have six people who want to be social workers I think we should do what we can to try and encourage them, even if it means offering them a chance to go to school in the South. We shouldn't lose them while they're interested, otherwise they may find other career options. That's all I've got for now, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We tried to encourage the people who had signed up for the Social Work Program this year to consider going to the Yukon College and taking the course there. We actually had somebody go and talk to the prospective students and encourage them. We only had an uptake of a couple, I think, that actually went. We are, again this year, going to work with Health and Social Services to try and put a renewed emphasis on recruiting people to enrol in the program. So we haven't given up on it, but we couldn't proceed with the course with that level of uptake. We will continue to work with them. Actually, I'm also advised now that some of the applicants had completed some of their first-year courses, so what the college did was agree to accept them into the second year of the program and will work with them to make sure that they get any missing courses filled in over a period of time, too.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. McLeod. Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of comments on this page here, with regard to the apprenticeship training, also. One of the things during my campaign, I was hoping, with regard to apprenticeship training, that we would utilize one of the base camps in Tuktoyaktuk and the people back home really liked that idea rather than flying to Inuvik. I know, earlier this year, I was going to make a presentation to the Aurora College Board of Governors, but apparently they cancelled that. I had a bunch of numbers for them to look at, but they've postponed that to a later time this month. I will continue to make my presentation to these guys.

I'm assuming on this page here, Mr. Chairman, that it has to do with apprenticeship training. Will this department consider any opportunities for apprenticeship training outside of Inuvik, to places like Tuktoyaktuk and utilize one of those camps? That's my question for now, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The training that's offered in Inuvik is pre-apprenticeship training. It's not the apprenticeship training. That's to help people get ready to pass the trades entrance exams. The college can certainly take a look at offering that in different places, so I would encourage the Member to continue discussing with the college the use of the facilities in Tuktoyaktuk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To give you a bit of history, although I'm sure you probably know it, back in the mid-70s to early '80s, when there was a lot of activity up in the Tuktoyaktuk area, there was a thing called Tuk Tech which was utilized by a lot of people in the region. At that time everything was worked out of Fort Smith, but some of the opportunities like fourth class power engineering and hotel trades, I guess, were offered at that time. They worked really well and I'm proud to say, Mr. Chairman, that under that program, I was one of the



lucky people to get my fourth class power engineering ticket.

So again, Mr. Chairman, the opportunity for a nice sized 200-man camp that can hold at least 40 students in the region was a very good opportunity. Right now in Inuvik, they just recently finished a new college there and they're talking about residences for the college for students coming from outside Inuvik. Rather than wait for something like that, I really think, Mr. Chairman, there's an opportunity to utilize one of the camps in Tuktoyaktuk; have the program set up and get the instructors that are available and their material and it's going to work. I know the Minister, when I indicated this to him, told me to push forward with it, but will that be a real big consideration under this program? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The college has the ability to determine where they run their programs. It's administered by a board and I think that they are quite interested in offering as many programs regionally as they can. To be honest though, they're somewhat challenged because the amount of money we're handing on to them has not increased; in fact, it has gone down over the years. So they are challenged to deliver any more programming than they otherwise would.

If the Member can demonstrate to them the economies that might occur by using the camps that may be available for very little cost in Tuktoyaktuk, then there may be some opportunities there. But it is going to have to be a college decision and it's going to have to be done within whatever resources they have, because we don't have any extra money at this point to hand on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. I have Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to touch on a few areas. I couldn't swear I'm on the right page, but it seems like there's a fair amount of latitude here. I've had a couple of letters from constituents who are interested in the NWT Literacy Strategy funding and these folks are both involved in adult literacy. They have communicated to me that this funding goes to a very good purpose and sees some very good results in our communities. I would like to ask the Minister for his commitment to Literacy Strategy funding and ask him if the budget for this item has been impacted by this year's main estimates. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe that, in terms of literacy funding, the only difference is the \$300,000 that I mentioned earlier that has been cut from literacy funding. That funding was in a program called Workplace Literacy. It was a program that was application-based for employers to make application to provide literacy training in the workplace. It was not being accessed, so we have cut the program by the amount of funds that were being lapsed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then the Minister could confirm, through you, Mr. Chairman, that the other literacy funding has not been reduced for this upcoming fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you'd look at the top of page 9-27, you'll see literacy funding. You'll notice that the difference between the 2004-05 main and revised estimates and the main estimates for 2005-06 is \$300,000. That's the \$300,000 I spoke about.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The other thing I wanted to question the Minister about is the formula funding that has been established for schools on a per-student basis and other things that are taken into account. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the Minister when the formula funding was established. What year was it established in? When is the last time it was reviewed? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The School Planning and Resource Committee, or SPARC, meets annually, at least, to review the formula and propose changes or modifications to the formula. So it is regularly reviewed. I can't tell you when the formula was first put in place, but the membership on SPARC includes representatives from the divisional education councils. So the superintendents typically are involved in discussing the formula. Everybody knows we have a certain amount of dollars and the discussion is then how to best allocate it. That's the committee where the decisions are recommended from.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, just on the Apprenticeship Program. I have a constituent for whom I must ask a question. Mr. Chairman, the Apprenticeship Program is a lot of different trades in the Northwest Territories. Not all of the training for those trades is available here in the Northwest Territories, so obviously some of the theory training is acquired outside; probably in Alberta mostly, I would assume. Mr. Chairman, when the training that is required for certain trades is available in the Northwest Territories, could the Minister confirm that the apprentice has no option other than to attend the designated northern training institution? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we insist that if we offer the training in the Northwest Territories, that's where we will pay for the apprentice to go to take the training.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, then I would ask the Minister if that is consistent with any other type of post-secondary education here in the North. I think of programs like the Nursing Program, the Social Work Program, programs that offer the students the ability to take their training and graduate here in the Northwest Territories. That is a type of post-secondary training. Could you want to be a nurse and decide, at your own discretion, to take your training someplace outside of the Northwest Territories, even though it's available here? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's not totally consistent with our other approaches, but we would likely wind up in the same situation as we did with social workers. If we didn't insist on it, we would have to probably stop offering it anywhere in the Northwest Territories. We've been challenged to try and provide as much training as possible in the Northwest Territories. We have very few students who take this; that's why we can't offer all the school courses for apprentices in the Northwest Territories. We have chosen a few and we have chosen to try and make sure we offer those ones in the Northwest Territories. But in order to gain the economies of scale, we have to insist that everybody who's a registered apprentice and wants the schooling in that course has to take it in the Territories. Otherwise, we couldn't be offering it in the Territories.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If an apprentice is registered in the Northwest Territories, but chooses at their own expense to register in a program in the South, is it recognized in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, that would be normally the case. The apprentice would have to work with the apprenticeship officer and make sure the training was booked through our offices but, yes, that's possible and the training would be recognized, yes.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One other question then is if the apprentice is employed by someone who is accessing the subsidy program for apprentices and is a registered apprentice in the Northwest Territories, then schooling in a southern institution would not be a problem provided that the department did not incur any of the cost for that training. Correct? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said, as long as the apprentice works with either an

apprenticeship officer or CDO to make sure that the training is recognized and approved by us. If you're going to NAIT or SAIT or some other recognized institution, then there should not be a problem. It should be no problem at all.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for clarification then, the program available to employers would not be impacted either by the apprentice taking their program in the South, as long as it was accredited. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dent.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Mr. Chairman, I don't believe they're linked. I think the employer applies for a training-on-the-job subsidy. That's not linked at all to the apprentice who goes by himself to book the schooling with their apprenticeship officer. We can follow up to make sure of that, but my understanding is it would be two separate programs and they're not linked.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** That's all I have for right now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. I have Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I believe it was Mr. Ramsay who had a debate item that kind of interested me. It was with the graduation rates and course completion rates and that's something that I've been dealing with the Minister on over the last couple of weeks, especially in the smaller regional centres. I'm sure I agree with the Minister and the department, that whatever we can do to improve graduation rates and course completion rates would be a boon to our young people, to our schools and to our communities.

I came upon a gap, perhaps in the system and maybe the Minister can address that for me, is that I propose, I said, hey, there is this nice program I ran across, I got support from the community of Liard. I said the department should look at this program, specifically with the Sunchild E-Learning Program that has been used around Rocky Mountain House on the smaller reserves there. Here is a program where they are improving graduation rates, astronomically in our terms, in our levels, because theirs is at 80 percent and ours is at 45 percent. It is even smaller yet as we do the breakdown and get to the smaller communities, Mr. Chairman.

Of course, then course completion rates are right up there in these small communities, and they are similar communities, they are aboriginal communities, aboriginal schools, with the same types of social problems happening in their homes and their communities. Yet they are achieving some success. I am saying I would like to check it out, how it can be applicable to us, what we can learn from it, indeed if there is anything there that we can use.

That is all my proposal was, Mr. Chairman. I didn't want to do a whole scale change of the department, their priorities and all their goals and objectives which they have strived so hard to do. All I wanted to say is that here is something that is working in another community. Can we look at it? Can we get our department officials to seriously consider it? Because anything, like I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, that improves our communities and the lives of our people in those communities, we are going to have to do it. In fact, I am obligated to do it and if I chose to ignore it, then they will choose to ignore me too. Perhaps if the Minister can address that at this point.

I know that we have some type of programming out there. Just looking back in the main estimates, Mr. Chairman, there is a category, education operations and development, I think that is something that will fit in there. I noticed that the budget, in that particular line item, increased by \$700,000 and the Minister indicates to me that he checked his front pockets and he checked his back pockets and they are both empty and there is nothing more he can do. I see that they doubled the thickness of the wallet, so I don't know how he can say that, Mr. Chairman.

Perhaps I can just get the Minister to comment with respect to new development objectives, exploring new options and keeping our mind open, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I will just deal with the Member's last question first, where he is talking about the \$700,000. Just so that he doesn't think that I manage to keep any of it between my front and my back pocket, that money is all going to Alberta. That is what they are charging us to use their Alberta achievement tests, which is the test that we are using in grades 3, 6 and 9. They have started charging us now for using their Grade 12 tests. Not one penny of those dollars is sticking in my pockets, with this Assembly passing it on to Alberta. Just so you know.

In terms of the proposal the Member talked about, it is certainly something that is of interest to us. The Member is aware that the department has contacted the divisional education council. As I told the Member, the department doesn't deliver education, we fund the people at the DECs to do that. When you are talking about delivering an educational program, that is where it has to come through.

We have contacted the DEC to examine their interest in this. We are prepared to work with the DEC to facilitate their examination of the Sunchild model. We are certainly prepared to discuss that with them and work with them to facilitate their examination of it, for consideration.

I will note that the Member is right; we do already offer the same kind of programming in the Northwest Territories as what Sunchild does. It is distance learning and we have offered that for quite some time.

It is interesting to note that at the Sunchild learning model they talk about how learning has to be community centred. It has to be embraced and promoted by the larger community and not just the school. If I remember a little bit earlier when asked what I thought what the biggest reason for success was, it was family support for

education; family and community support. I think that is what we are seeing in the Tlicho region. That is what Sunchild says is the most important part. They also say that there has to be champions in the community for e-learning, there have to be key teachers and relationships. They say key teachers have to come from the First Nations community. For us, that has always been a challenge, finding enough teachers in the North from the home communities and it is certainly one of the reasons we introduced the Teacher Education Program in the Northwest Territories, was to increase the numbers of home-grown teachers, because we really do need to get more of them.

I think that what we will find is that this model is very much in line with what we see as necessary for success, and we are prepared to work with the DEC to help them examine the model to see whether or not it can work for the community. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. While I am glad to see that we are almost in agreement, the fact remains that we may have similar programs, but they are succeeding and we're not. That is all I wanted to explore and say okay, fine, I didn't realize that we had a similar model and I am glad that the Minister pointed that out. But just the same, they are succeeding, we are not. Why? What is the difference here? We are going to have to learn from them, at least have a really good look. We don't have to do anything more than have a good look. If there is something to be learned from it, I'm sure they would be more than willing to share how they are doing things. Perhaps we can dedicate some resources, but we will cross that bridge when we come to that, Mr. Chairman.

The main thing that I would like to point out is that they are succeeding and we're not. I am supportive of us going down and having a look, if that is what it is going to take. The Minister indicated that they are not willing to bring them up, but we should go down, we should see exactly where they are succeeding and we're not.

In the previous discussion here on my first round of comments, the Minister mentioned something to me and something clicked. He said, yes, we are moving our children along and he said that all the teachers are equipped to deal with students in their class who are lagging. But I don't think that is true. For some reason they are not all prepared to do that, and yet we are moving along a group of class with some people that need special needs attention, they need that special attention.

I don't know if it's a huge astronomical cost to have a special needs assistant in each class. I don't know what the inner workings of the department are. The Minister did also indicate that it is a priority of the DECs to indicate how many special needs assistants we need. Do we have any power to say there must be a minimum amount of SNAs, or is it all based on funding or available cash within the budgets of the DEC? The thing that I have been hearing is that definitely special needs assistants are necessary. I don't know how to go about it, without going directly to the DEC and saying look, they are important. I am sure they know that they are very important and they are dedicating as much resources as they can. With that,

Mr. Chairman, perhaps the Minister can comment on those for me. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What I said earlier is teachers are trained to deal with different grade levels in the classroom. It has always been the case that a teacher who's teaching Grade 4 would have some kids who are reading at Grade 3 level and some kids would be at Grade 5 level. It's not unusual to have kids in a Grade 3/4 class reading at a Grade 2 or a Grade 6 level. Again, that's not unusual. It never has been.

What we often hear from teachers in the Northwest Territories is they see more of that in the classroom here than what you might find in classrooms in other jurisdictions. So what would it take to put a special needs assistant in every classroom? I can't tell you. But it would take money. It would take more money than what we are putting into supporting special needs right now. Yes, the decision is entirely with the DECs. They have to choose between classrooms of a certain size and a special needs assistant or perhaps different teachers. So they have to take a look at the number of dollars they get from us and then they make those decisions. It comes back to what Mr. Ramsay was saying earlier. You have different pupil/teacher ratios. So if you are funding at a ratio of 13 to one, they can run a classroom of 20 to 25 students and have special teachers that run programs for computers or that run gym classes only. Instead of having them all as teachers, they may choose to have more special needs assistants, so they could put a special needs assistant in every class. The boards are given that flexibility. So DECs have that flexibility within the funding that we provide them, but they are limited by the amount of funding that we give. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have Mr. Pokiak next on the list. Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like more information with regard to the apprenticeship and employment training. I would like to refer to page 9-26. In 2003-04, they had \$4.112 million. In 2004-05, they had \$4.847 million. In the 2004-05 revised estimates, it was \$4.847 million. There is probably about a \$735,000 increase from 2003-04 to 2004-05. Is that because of numbers going up in terms of training at that time? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, we don't have with us the detail for the year 2003-04, so I can't answer right now the Member's question. I can promise that we will get the information for the Member by tomorrow, but I can't tell him right now.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would appreciate that for the Members on this side.

Just following that, after the revised main estimates in 2004-05, going from \$4.847 million, then in 2005-06, we

are at \$4.666 million. Is there a reason why there's a decline in that, Mr. Chairman?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Part of that is \$84,000 which was an elimination of the wage subsidies to diamond manufacturing employers. This was a program that was in place for some time but was sunsetted. The other is an internal reallocation of salary funding of \$94,000. We transferred funding from apprenticeship to fund an existing career development officer position because we were able to get funding for the apprenticeship position through the Labour Market Development Agreement. So we are basically using federal money to fund a position. That's why we have moved our money out.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to career development, adult employment training programs, there was an issue that just recently developed in Fort Simpson, actually it's been ongoing for awhile, which is we have an old facility that they call La Pointe Hall. They call it Deh Cho Hall now. Public Works is looking at decommissioning it and tearing it down. It's huge. There must be 10,000 square feet in that place. Traditionally it's been used as a training facility over the last 10 years for adult education courses. They are looking at tearing it down. I was thinking how are we going to replace that? I don't see how that's going to be done. I wonder if the Minister can comment on that. How do they handle it in other communities and regions in terms of training facilities? I don't know if I am asking him to build us another facility; it's probably not realistic. But what is realistic, Mr. Chairman, is we can get the department to say they need that building and somehow we can save it, perhaps talk about it as a heritage building. It has a good foundation. They were saying it's good for another 100 years, and actually I have to pursue it further. There have been a few reports that claim it's not a very good building, but everybody is begging to differ.

How does the Minister see us using this Deh Cho Hall in Fort Simpson? Are there any other areas they have, unknown to me, where they can help and train our people in Fort Simpson? What do they do in other regions in terms of training? Do they have facilities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The fire marshal has issued an order that will see the building closed fairly soon, within the next year. So the Member is right; we have to look at new space. There is going to be a meeting on Monday with Public Works and territorial ECE staff to take a look at planning the consultation process to figure out what to do. The issue that we are going to have is going to be that there are some non-government agencies in that space now that wouldn't normally be in government space and that we can't plan to provide government space for in the future. So that is going to be a community challenge. We are going to have to work with the community to see what the options are. As the Member says, it's going to be a challenge.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Minister for that answer. It certainly seems appropriate that department officials had to have some input into this. Of course, the community is going to have some input. I don't know if the Minister is the lead department for this, but at one point the community is going to have to have input because in my constituency meetings, people were saying it's a shame to lose this building. In fact, if it can't be a government office, can we just keep it? Can we maintain it for a training facility, because it's ideal for that kind of stuff? I don't know if it has to be classified as a government building in order to be turned into a vocational centre or regional training centre of some type. I would just like to urge the Minister that we have to bear that in mind. We need community input and there must be some way to save all that space because it's a great place. Simpson is the regional centre. We need that space. I don't know if the Minister can comment on how we can... (inaudible)... use without classifying it as government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know I have attended a lot of standing committee meetings in that building and held public hearings in that building. It is a great old building, but we are not sure whether a change in ownership would change the fire marshal's position. So we'll have to take a look at it. It could certainly be a part of the process we embark on, on Monday, to take a look at that issue.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are on page 9-25, activity summary, advanced education and careers, operations expenditure summary, \$41.053 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-27, activity summary, advanced education and careers, grants and contributions, contributions, continued on page 9-28, advanced education and careers, grants and contributions, total contributions, \$30.207 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Total grants and contributions, \$30.207 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-30, advanced education and careers, active positions, continued on page 9-31.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-33, activity summary, income security, operations expenditure summary, \$61.365 million. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This whole program is working reasonably well and delivering its objectives. I do look forward to the overall review of all of our income security programs, along with other departments, including this one. My question right now in

terms of delivering what we are mandated to do is kind of a localized question, Mr. Chairman. My concern is reflected in some calls that I have had from constituents who seem to have problems with the amount of time it's taking for their case to be heard or reviewed or the ability of the local income support office to respond to problems or complaints or situations that they are having. I wanted to ask, Mr. Chairman, whether staffing within the Yellowknife income support office or anywhere else in the NWT is an issue. Are clients' complaints related to any difficulties because we haven't been able to keep the staff complement up? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have changed the supervisor. We changed the office manager in the last six months. So there hasn't been the actual review done that we had talked about doing. We thought it would be better to let things settle out and let the new management have a chance to have some advice and input in the process. So we should be taking a look at that operation fairly soon and should have some response we can give Members in the not-too-distant future. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Okay. There is turnover. Should committee still be concerned? Yellowknife is a magnet community. We have more people coming into Yellowknife with issues and problems and needing support. Are we beefing up the income support office to respond to that growing clientele, or are we trying to do more with the same? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So far, we haven't added any staff. I think we need to give the new management a chance to take a look at the situation and we will work with the current staff to assess the level of difficulty, if you will, and if there is a problem, we will have to deal with it. At this point, there has been no change.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Page 9-33, income security, operations expenditure summary, \$61.365 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We talked a bit about the Income Support Program. Again, I go back to 2003-04, \$15.717 million. The main estimates for 2004-05 was \$17.956 million and after the revised 2004-05, it was \$18.056 million. Can the Minister give us a breakdown on the regions on income support assistance? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Mr. Chairman, I assume the Member is talking about page 9-34 now.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** That's correct, Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Mr. Chairman, if the Member is asking about the regional distribution of the numbers, we don't allocate the numbers by region. It's a total allocation across the Northwest Territories and money changes. If the North Slave region doesn't need to have as much because the economy is good, then that money doesn't get used there, but it may get used in another region. What we have found is that different regions have different demands every year because of the economy's fluctuations.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think at this moment in time, we will call for a short recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Welcome back, committee. We are on page 9-33, activity summary, income security, operations expenditure summary, \$61.365 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-35, income security, grants and contributions, Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** With regard to income security, have we ironed out how we are going to address subsidies of public housing initiatives? My immediate concern is we are going to have somebody who never asked for income support going to ECE. I am not sure what kind of guidelines are in place. These are people with income, jobs, and typically ECE helps people who are in dire need. I don't know if they have set up a different structure. People are telling me when they are going to ECE, what's actually going on is you have to expose your whole life to ECE in order to get approved for a program and it's pretty humiliating, especially to young families getting a start in life. I just wonder how the Minister and the department is going to address this concern.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. We are on page 9-35 and it's grants. The only thing on that page is student grants. I will allow the question though. Just so that Members are aware, we want to try to stick to topic while we are on that page. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's important in the first year, in particular, of the transfer of responsibility of the program, there will be absolutely no change in the administration. The program will still be delivered through the partnerships that were established by the Housing Corporation. The LHOs will be the agencies that deliver the program and there is no decision that there would be a change to that sometime in the future. Obviously we are going to look at how the program is structured and how it's delivered, but any change is sometime down the road. We are not sure when that is going to take place. I am a little troubled by the Member's comments. This whole income security program includes the seniors' fuel subsidy, it includes student financial assistance. There are many people; in fact, the majority of people who collect income support actually work. A vast majority of them work. There is no shame in needing some assistance at some time in your life. That's something the program is there to accommodate. When the need is there, the government should be ready to step in and provide some assistance.

I would hope that we are not trying to say that somebody who comes to us for student financial assistance is worried because it's in the income security area. In fact, we think it's a great choice to become a student. We think that people who access the programming we offer are there because they are genuinely trying to get ahead.

I would just caution Members about saying there is some kind of stigma attached to asking for assistance, because we certainly don't say that about our students, we shouldn't be saying it about people who apply for the seniors' fuel subsidy and we shouldn't be saying it about people who access income support. The vast majority are only on income support for a short period of time and then they cycle through. The length of time on income support is not big, on average, in the Northwest Territories. In fact, the vast majority are not on income support full time.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I beg the Minister's pardon if I offended him in any way, but my immediate concern is that the Public Housing Program...I must have missed something because that's how I understood it to work, that the people currently getting mortgage assistance in that area would be going to ECE for subsidies. The Minister is telling me this is not the case. Why is the subsidy money in ECE, Mr. Chairman?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The public housing subsidy money is being moved over as a first step in taking a look at the program. We thought it was better to tie all subsidies together in one area with the government. At some time in the future, we may look at splitting the department, so that you have the area that has the adult training and subsidies as one department and the early childhood and K to 12 being another department.

So this is the first step in restructuring government to put subsidies all together and allowing the Housing Corporation the opportunity to focus on a single mandate, and that being to deliver housing across the Northwest Territories. What will likely happen is that the program will change, so that the Housing Corporation collects market rents and we will be providing, through the LHOs or Education, Culture and Employment, income security workers, subsidies to people who need a hand to meet that market rent. But it's the public housing part that we are talking about and it's the straight subsidy programs. It's not the mortgage subsidies and that sort of thing.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was my immediate concern; that we would have had a young couple, because of their salary level, I think the Mortgage Assistance Program, the way it operates they would pay \$100 or \$200 a month less. The way it was rolled out is while this family would have to go to ECE to get...Housing was going to charge them full market rates to get that reduction but, because of their salary level, they would have to go to ECE. So the Minister is saying this is not the case. Is that right, Mr. Chairman?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One little comment before I answer the Member's question. When I got a mortgage, I got it at the bank and I still had to reveal the most minute details of my life to the banker. If you get a mortgage, you do have to declare an awful lot of your private information.

As I said, this is the first step in moving our subsidy programs into one area in government. In the first year, nobody is going to see a change. It's all going to be delivered through the LHOs; the same rules, the same standards, the same program. We are working with the standing committee to examine, based on this government's strategic plan, where we are going with the philosophical underpinning to our subsidies. Once we agree on that, then we will have to take a look at our programs to see whether they need to be restructured. It will take some time for that to happen. In my opening comments for the department, I said it will take a number of years for us to make changes. I am going to have to work closely with the Members of this House, the standing committees and the public as we look at making changes.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my comments with regard to income security. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Sorry for the confusion at the beginning. I have Mr. Hawkins next.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Speaking to the SFA grants specifically, would the Minister be able to tell me how many grants are withdrawn every year? If a student has been disqualified from their grants, for whatever reason, could the Minister tell me how many grants are withdrawn every year?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, I can't. We don't have that information. We could endeavour to have it delivered to Mr. Hawkins tomorrow.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. Could the Minister also agree to give me the number of how many appeals go to the appeals committee? I know there wouldn't be thousands. I assume there would be a few every year. Maybe he could give me the number every year for the last five years, please. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will get that information to the Member. It's certainly not many. I think it's less than 50 since the inception of the appeals committee.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you. Could the Minister also provide the results of those appeals, whether they were upheld or overturned? I am not looking for further details, just whether the committee voted in favour of the student or not in favour. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We could certainly work on finding that information. This is very similar to the written question submitted by Mr. Villeneuve. He asked for some of the exact same information and some more detailed questions as well. So we are working on putting that together. All of the information will be provided to the House relatively soon.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One final question, because I don't have an oral question for tomorrow. Would the Minister be able to provide it by 9:00 in the morning? Is that too early? That was the question.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** I don't believe we can get it to the Member that quickly, no. We have had people working on Mr. Villeneuve's written question now for a few days and we have not managed to put all the information together. So, no. I would do my best to get him the information sometime tomorrow, but it won't be before question period, no.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Hawkins.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Nothing further at this time, Mr. Chairman. I will take his commitment and accept them sometime tomorrow. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess, for the record, I would like to back up maybe a page or two into the overall income security area and state again, for the record, one area of difficulty that our overall income security problem has caused and this is for people with disabilities who are recognized as having long-term disabilities and warrant this kind of support. It's the right thing to do, of course. However, Mr. Chairman, our policies have not progressed to those points where they really seemed to recognize that people with disabilities very often cannot work or are quite restricted in their ability to go out and work. Yet, they are regarded, they are administered, they are monitored as if they were able-bodied people who, once they overcome this certain difficulty in their life, will be able to return to work and either decrease their dependency on the income security system or get off of it altogether. The difficulty this causes for people is they come under an unwarranted degree of scrutiny in their monthly/yearly activities.

One area, for instance, is any income that they may earn is checked against them. If the idea of income security is

to provide a top-up so that they can at least survive, that's fine. I think people with long-term disabilities should be afforded a different set of circumstances. I will use the word less intrusive kind of treatment. So perhaps the Minister can advise whether we are looking at any kind of change in that policy. I have outlined this concern before. For the record, I wanted to make it again to say that we do have a deficiency in our policy and we tend to regard people with disabilities the same way that we regard able-bodied people, and this does cause them unneeded stress and difficulties in their normal course of life.

So I will put that on the record. I know that's an area we have pledged to work on in our overall review of income security programs and I do hope that we get there. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just today I got an e-mail message from an MLA who said a constituent of theirs who is disabled and has lived in another jurisdiction commented to them that ours is probably the best system in Canada for disabled people, in terms of supports.

I think we need to be careful not to say that people with challenges, whether they are physical or intellectual, all want to be treated differently. I think a lot of people feel that they are able to participate and want to be treated like others, so each person is an individual. We have people who you might call severely disabled who are pay-rolled. In other words, they just get a regular payroll cheque, no intervention, every month. Other people may not be as challenged. Those people are expected to participate more and make productive choices.

So it is an individual situation. It's not one where everybody is treated with a cookie cutter and they are not all dealt with the same. If you or your constituent feel that their situation should be looked at differently, they should talk to their income support worker about that and if they are not satisfied, then try appealing the decision, because there is a process to work it through and people should feel that they are being treated fairly. That's the goal of the system. If you feel that you have an example that is not happening, then we should follow up on it.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will take the advice there. There have been a couple of forums in Yellowknife on this area related specifically to housing and people with disabilities, but there were concerns voiced there about how some of the aspects of our system do treat them. I will take the Minister's suggestion that there is flexibility in the system and I would be happy to work with constituents to see if we can resolve their cases. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I would also remind Members that they are welcome to work as advocates for their constituents, working in person with them. If at any time they are not

satisfied that things are being done properly, the appeals system is set up to deal with that.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Finally, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to ask the Minister with regard to income support, when was the last survey done to determine the rates that are currently in income support pertaining to food and clothing?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We raised the rates in 2004. There is a survey done every two years, in conjunction with the Audit Bureau, and we typically try to raise the rates or change the rates as they need to reflect the cost of living in different communities.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So all these income support workers at the community level have different rate structures pertaining to food, clothing, et cetera.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes. I misspoke; I meant to say the Bureau of Statistics and not the Audit Bureau does the surveys.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** It appears to me that the survey wasn't done for the last little while. It appears that the amount of money that the people who are on income support weren't receiving adequate funding for their food and clothing. Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that a lot of these people, especially single-parent families, particularly for clothing, it's not done on a monthly basis when they get their income. Is it done only once or one time? That seems to be the problem, Mr. Chairman, because if you qualify for income support and it happens to be in May, you don't qualify for clothing. That seems to be a problem in various communities across the North. Could I ask the Minister if I'm correct in that area, where the clients are eligible for clothing? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I suspect that the Member is referring to the seasonal clothing allowance, which is a bigger chunk of money on an occasional basis to reflect the need for warmer clothing, for instance, to get through the winter. That is only given out at certain times during the year, and typically only to people who have been on income support for a period of time. As I said in an earlier response, people tend to cycle on and off the system. So if they come in just needing support for a month, the expectation isn't that right off the bat they're going to get that funding right then. It's three months...or six months; sorry. If they're on it for six months, then they qualify for the seasonal clothing adjustment.



**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Mr. Chairman, I think that's the problem. I think six months is a little too long before somebody...By the time six months is up, it could be fire season and they could be going into fire fighting or something, or getting seasonal employment during the summer at a lodge or someplace else. If somebody gets on stream in November and then after April, they will qualify in May, during the seventh month. But if they do find employment, particularly in May for fire fighters who may be on income support during the winter, I disagree and I'm not in favour of the way it's being administered now. I think six months is a little too long. I wonder if the department could look at that component of income support, and maybe lower it to perhaps three months, as the Minister first suggested but then he was corrected by his DM, and it's six months now. I think that's a little too long in order for you to qualify for clothing. What are you going to do for six months if you have a lot of kids and they're just living day to day and not getting new clothes for their kids for six months? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We can have a look at it. Recently there has been a consultation process that we've undergone with people across the North on our strategic plan. I would be interested in seeing, as we go through the data, whether or not any comments came out about that.

I suspect that the theory behind the six-month stipulation is that people come into the program, they have the clothing that they're wearing when they come into the program, and the reason for it happening every six months is that there's an understanding that kids grow out of clothing and people wear clothing out. So there is a portion of the funding each month that is not just all for food; it's for food and clothing and sundry goods. So the monthly amount is intended to cover the day-to-day things. The every six-month funding is to cover the over and above, because your wardrobe does wear out. That's one of the reasons for it.

So, yes, we could take a look at changing the time, but we would have to then come back to the House probably for more money.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** If he does, I would support that particular Minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. We're on page 9-35, income security, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$8.478 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Pages 9-36 and 9-37, income security, active positions. Any questions? Agreed? Page 9-37, income security, active positions. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Mr. Chairman, active positions on income support under the Tlicho heading, we have only one full-

time and one part-time. Could I ask the Minister where these two positions are located? I think the Tlicho region requires more than one-and-a-half positions to serve the four Dogrib communities. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe that both positions are in Rae. It's two equivalent positions, so it's equivalent to full-time equivalents. Given the caseload in the Tlicho region, that's not an unreasonable number when you compare the numbers that we have through regions across the Territories. There is not a big caseload in the Dogrib region. There are not a lot of people who are on income support. The economy has really dramatically impacted the numbers in the whole North Slave region that are collecting income support at present.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Is the Minister saying that the number of people that we have on the frontline, that you feel they are serving the people to their best ability? I'm hearing something a little different, particularly for the outlying communities; not particularly Rae, because the income support is there only periodically. When they're in need, some people don't have phones and they have to go to the band office and start to phone Rae, and if there's a need, it causes some logistical problems where they can't get in touch with the income support worker. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an issue, I know, in some regions. For instance in the Sahtu, the caseload there only requires having one worker in the whole region. So that means that they have to go the communities. They're based in Norman Wells, and they have to get to Tulita, Deline and Colville. But given the numbers who are collecting income support in that region, that's all we can justify, because there isn't enough to keep more than that person busy. That's the situation we find in the Tlicho region, as well. If there are people who aren't being served, maybe we need to work with bands to find a way to improve communication so that it doesn't necessarily increase the number of trips that they're making to some of the smaller communities. If we can find a way to work with a band council or a community council, we're certainly prepared to examine what the options might be.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Page 9-37, income security, active positions.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-38, lease commitments - infrastructure.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-39, student loan revolving fund.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-40, detail of funding allocated to education authorities. Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question on the Beaufort-Delta Divisional Education Council. It has declined from \$23,997 to \$23,881. Is that simply because of teaching positions? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a result of there being 33 fewer students enrolled at the end of September this school year, compared to the previous school year.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Page 9-40, detail of funding allocated to education authorities. Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-42, active positions by region. Questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-43, active positions by community, education authorities. Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-45, college funding allocation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 9-46, work performed on behalf of others. That continues on to page 9-48, for a total of \$9.905 million. Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** We're going to go back to page 9-7, and that's the operations expenditure summary, \$245.003 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Let's go to the capital acquisition book and we'll start on page 7-4. Page 7-4, education and culture, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$137.050 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 7-5, infrastructure acquisition plan, education and culture, total tangible capital assets, \$14.998 million. Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for the record, I'd like to ask the Minister why there's nothing allocated there for the Mangilaluk School. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's no money in here for an addition to Mangilaluk

School. I have made the offer to the community to provide some staff to work with them, to examine a small renovation to accommodate the high school. I think we agree there needs to be some accommodation to properly house high school students in that school. But, unfortunately, the student population in the community appears to be dropping. The school, at one time, was looking like it would become crowded and we did have an addition on the drawing board; but right now, school capacity is 330 and the school population is only 203. So it has meant that the addition has dropped off the plan. But there's no question that there needs to be something done to accommodate the students better for high school, so the department is prepared to work with the DEA and find a way to renovate part of the school to deal with the high school portion. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'm satisfied with that; I just wanted to put it on record. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Back to page 7-5, education and culture, total tangible capital assets, \$14.998 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 7-6, infrastructure acquisition plan, education and culture, infrastructure contributions, total infrastructure contributions, \$70,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Total activity...Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. Under capital infrastructure for community libraries various...Oh, I'm sorry; I'm going to have to wait until next year. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Just a comment. Thank you. Total infrastructure contributions, \$70,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Total activity, \$15.068 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 7-7, advanced education and careers, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$37.656 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Page 7-8, infrastructure acquisition plan, advanced education and careers, total capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$3.192 million. Mr. Zoe.

**MR. ZOE:** Mr. Chairman, enhancement at the territorial level for \$500,000; where are they doing this?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Mr. Minister.

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That carries on from the line above, so it's case management administration system, system enhancements. So those are a computer program that we use to keep track of income support and student financial assistance and other things like that. It's used across the Northwest Territories. Most of the hardware will be located here in Yellowknife.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Total tangible capital assets, \$3.192 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Infrastructure, contributions, \$760,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Total activity, \$3.952 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Total department, \$19.021 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** We'll go back to page 7-3, department summary, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$174.706 million.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Does committee agree that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's estimates are concluded?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, committee. I would like to thank the Minister, Mr. Devitt and Mr. Cleveland, for being with us this evening. Thank you. What is the wish of committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Mr. Chairman, I move we report progress.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** The motion is in order. It's not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will rise and report progress.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please? Mr. Ramsay.

#### ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, 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.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Zoe. The motion is in order. There is a motion on the floor, it is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

#### ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Orders of the day for Friday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 15, Tlcho Community Services Agency Act
  - Bill 17, Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation Act
  - Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006
  - Bill 20, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005
  - 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

- Committee Report 12-15(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures, Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2003 General Election
- Minister's Statement 86-15(3), Northern Strategy
- Minister's Statement 88-15(3), Update on Oil and Gas Development in the NWT
- Minister's Statement 89-15(3), Community Leaders' Conference Report: Preparing for the Pipeline
- Minister's Statement 90-15(3), Social Impacts of the Mackenzie Gas Project
- Minister's Statement 91-15(3), Preparations for the Mackenzie Gas Project
- Tabled Document 108-15(3), Nation Building: Framework for a Northern Strategy

20. Report of Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

22. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, February 25, 2005, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

