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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, March 2, 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. Yakeleya, Mr. Zoe

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 102-15(3): Volunteer Declaration And Action Plan**

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to announce the release of the Government of the Northwest Territories declaration on volunteering and volunteer support initiative. Later today, I will be tabling copies for the Members' information.

These documents signal a renewed commitment on the part of the Government of the Northwest Territories to volunteers and the important role they play in northern society.

The declaration on volunteering is a public statement of our government's ongoing commitment to, and support for, the important role of volunteers in community life. This document will be widely released in poster format during National Volunteer Week in April.

The volunteer support initiative provides a policy framework to guide Government of the Northwest Territories activities. It is designed to outline how the government can take steps to increase volunteer participation rates and provide more effective support to individual volunteers and organizations. Specifically, it contains a number of measures designed to promote good citizenship through volunteerism, and to support non-government organizations with volunteer development.

Mr. Speaker, volunteers are a critical part of community life. They are the firefighters who protect us, the coaches who train and mentor our children, the organizers of community celebrations and the individuals who support us during difficult times.

Over the next few months, Government of the Northwest Territories departments will be working with Volunteer NWT and other organizations to develop a joint work plan to support the volunteer support initiative.

Over the long term, I am confident that we can continue to support the role of volunteers and volunteer organizations and improve the quality of life for all northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement On Funding For The Yellowknife Youth Shelter**

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on February 15th I made a statement in this House about the need for a youth shelter, specifically for time after midnight when the youth centre we have now closes because I indicated in this House that the young people have literally no place to go, especially in winter months. What they do is go down the Gold Range street and see things that probably are a bad influence; we shouldn't have a situation where we have 16 to 18-year-olds walking all night long.

The Minister indicated that his department and his officials were working with the group and looking at all the variables to see what they can do. That weekend, I found out, Mr. Speaker, that the centre opened for the weekend and overnight. I thought I made a difference. I felt so satisfied. I felt so powerful that we actually were able to do something. We make small differences.

Well, I found out yesterday that the funding was for five weeks. It started two weekends ago and it's going to end at the end of March. Mr. Speaker, that's a shame. I don't know what the Minister has planned for those kids who are walking between midnight and 7:00 in the morning. They have no place to go and they are just ripe for the picking by people who are selling drugs and encouraging them to do all sorts of things.

I have to also point out, Mr. Speaker, that while this government is growing, RWED is creating 22 extra jobs, the Housing Corporation is spending \$2 million more on a project that completely failed in its initial year, we are cutting program money, not only for the youth shelter but also for the Children and the Women's Recovery Program. I just learned that the COPS program that was started by Yellowknife citizens is not going to get any funding from government at all. I think, Mr. Speaker, that our young constituents on our streets will tell you that we have our priorities all screwed up and I think it's about time that we fix it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Appreciation For Premier's Visit To The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past week, I was in Tulita for a funeral for an elder who happened to be my aunt. Mr. Speaker, in times like this, people in small communities take the time out to support one another in difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, we also had the opportunity of having the honourable Premier Joe Handley and Minister McLeod come to the community at that time. They drove up to the Sahtu region.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, how much the people in Tulita and the Sahtu region appreciated having Mr. Handley and Mr. McLeod come to the community and give their condolences to our people there. Mr. Speaker, sometimes we get caught up in House business and we forget about the people in the small communities, especially times when there is a death and everyone is affected.

Mr. Speaker, the people in Tulita were ever so grateful for having Mr. Handley and Mr. McLeod come by and shake hands with the family. When I left the community, my uncle said he was so appreciative. For me, Mr. Speaker, that shows heart in this government. It shows a government that has heart and compassion for the people. At times it's really hard for us. For the Premier and the Minister to come by and visit the people for a while, it shows leadership and Mr. Handley's ability to bring the government to the people in times of need. We may not always get what we need, but as long as you are there for the people and listen to them, it goes a long way in people's minds and hearts. For that, we are appreciative.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to Mr. Handley and Mr. McLeod for taking the time out and coming to our people when they were in need. It shows that this government does have heart and has some good leadership abilities. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Impacts Of The Northern Drug Trade

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak today about drugs and the impact they are having on our communities, families, residents and children. I had the opportunity on Monday to attend the session with representatives of Crack Busters, a group trying to help crack addicts through the process of quitting crack cocaine.

I listened to how the group works and learned from local addictions experts, including Dr. Ross Wheeler, how addictive and devastating crack is. Unless you are personally affected by crack, most people have no idea how dangerous this drug is. It destroys families, and addicts will do whatever they can to get their next hit or fix. Many families in the Northwest Territories have been financially ruined by the ravages of crack, and children as young as 13 and 14 are doing this drug in our

communities and parents are left helpless. I wanted to mention today an article that appeared in the Edmonton Journal last Sunday, February 27th, which I will table later today. The title of the article is Big City Drugs Plague Northern Capital. It would appear that we were getting attention in southern press for diamonds, aurora, oil and gas, but now it is drugs. I find this to be very disturbing. I have said previously in this House that we do not have enough resources to combat the scourge that drugs are bringing. I will say again today, emphatically, that, as a government, we are not doing enough to tackle the drug problem.

The city of Yellowknife has three full-time members on the drug squad. We need more officers, more drug dogs, and it is obvious that other communities in the Northwest Territories, like Hay River and Inuvik, do not have the resources to meet the need. I believe it is incumbent on us, as legislators, to act on this situation to try to get the money and the resources to fight back and give our children, our family and our youth a fighting chance. The problem is only getting worse. How many more families will be destroyed? How many more children are going to fall prey to this insidious drug? We have to have a strategy and a plan to get the drugs off of our streets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Closure Of The Remand And Young Offender Facilities In Hay River

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, I want to talk about the not-so-visible consequences of decisions government makes without thinking beyond the economics. Mr. Dent stated in the House recently that the Justice cuts in Hay River are only about economics. It is pretty amazing that a government that prides itself on being fair to the regions and respectful of its workers can take actions that can literally destroy people's lives. For the people in the upper echelons of government, we are told that we have limited options as to how we can deal with them when the stakes are laid and bad judgment is exercised. They can be reassigned, put on indefinite types of leave on compassionate grounds.

This government makes mistakes that cost millions of dollars. Oh, well, let's just sweep it under the carpet. Maybe Minister Dent would like to counter Mr. Ramsay's assertion yesterday that the North Slave Correctional Centre debacle cost \$1.5 million. But I haven't heard any rebuttal, so let's take it for a fact. I find it so offensive that there are no repercussions for wasting \$1.5 million and yet the same department can turn around and wipe out long-standing services and long-serving, dedicated employees in our region to proudly state that they have reduced the government's budget by \$1.5 million.

Jobs and services from one community, in one department...Where is the accountability, Mr. Speaker? In Hay River, there are many stories that could be told about the impacts of these job cuts. Let me read into the record a letter that appeared in the House shortly after the closures were announced.

"Hi. I am 13 years old and both my parents are going to be losing their jobs as of March 31, 2005. The courthouse and Dene K'onia are shutting down. Also, SMCC is closing the remand unit. I am writing this letter to ask you to keep their jobs so we don't have to move away from Hay River. All of my friends are here. I enjoy DJSS, bowling and swimming. My Dad loves his job at Dene K'onia. He had the opportunity to work somewhere else, but chose not to. He stayed at Dene K'onia. My Mom works really hard and enjoys working at the courthouse. They are both casual term employees and will not get paid out like others. Both of my parents will be out of work. Please vote so they can keep working in Hay River." Signed, Jessica.

Mr. Speaker, incidentally, both of Jessica's parents are indigenous aboriginal northerners. Both will cease to be employed on March 31st. So I hope this government is proud of their savings in Justice and the loss of employment in Hay River, the loss of services to residents south of the lake, the loss of years of training and dedication. It is because of people like Jessica that I won't quit asking questions and challenging Mr. Dent on the quality of his information, the quality of his decisions, and the accountability of this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Lack Of Trust In The Government

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to reiterate some of the same concerns I have with respect to some government services and why the delivery of these services is not working as effectively as many government officials seem to tell the Ministers. Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the lack of confidence and trust many residents and businesses have in our government. Many people in the NWT have had past dealings with this government and many of its long-term officials in various departments cannot and will not seek assistance or services from that particular government department simply due to the fact that they cannot get straight answers or the fair treatment they are entitled to, whatever the case may be, from the officials who are in charge of delivering these programs.

Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. I commend anybody who is a long-term dedicated government employee. I am sure many others can attest to their good work. But in many instances, those persons or companies who are getting the lucrative contracts out of that department are the only ones that are cheering.

Mr. Speaker, from my 14 months of experience as a Member of this House, I have seen and, sadly, will likely continue to see, many situations or enquiries brought to this government's attention being treated as just another complaint. Mr. Speaker, if this government does not want to be badgered with the same so-called complaints of the previous government, then my simple suggestion is this: Treat people fairly and with respect. I know that it is the Minister's job to ensure that this simple rule is followed by all of his staff, especially the long-term employees whose

motto still seems to be, "You take what I offer; not what the government has to offer." Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Infrastructure Funding For Recreational Facilities

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement today is about the need for this government to realign its priorities to deal with the infrastructure deficit of the NWT, specifically in the area of recreational facilities.

---Applause

I was pleased to note that the Minister of Finance's budget address placed significant emphasis on the need for infrastructure in the NWT communities. It is a sad reality that the tight fiscal situation of recent years has meant the infrastructure needs of communities have taken a back seat to other priorities and, as a result, the NWT is in a substantial infrastructure deficit. I am pleased to see that the government has recognized this need. In the budget address, the Minister of Finance announced the government's intention to establish a stable funding base of \$25 million per year for infrastructure development in our communities, effective April 1, 2006.

When it comes to spending infrastructure dollars, Mr. Speaker, the priority of this government has not been in the area of recreational facilities. Needs have been identified, but base requirements for recreational facilities continually get bumped further and further back on the 20-year plan. For a long time, there was not much we could do. Fortunately, this is no longer the case. As the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs pointed out in Committee of the Whole yesterday, the department is in a far different financial position now than it has been in the last few years. It has seen an 87 percent increase in infrastructure funding, thanks to the new deal for the municipal governments, the municipal rural infrastructure fund, and the new money under the federal gas tax.

Once the terms of these agreements have been nailed down and everything has been signed off, the department will be ready to realign its priorities within the context of the fiscal flexibility these deals provide. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that a strong argument can be made that it is time this government make its highest priority that baseline infrastructure needs for recreational facilities in communities be addressed. This means that, before other infrastructure projects get the go-ahead, all communities will have access to a gymnasium.

---Applause

This means that, before any community gets a new or second improved swimming pool, no matter how necessary that may seem, all communities of a certain size should have access to a swimming pool.

---Applause

Now that our capital infrastructure funding is looking rosier, we are in an excellent position to move ahead on priority areas that have taken a backseat for too long. It is time to ensure base recreational facilities...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Menicoche, your time for your Member's statement has expired.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and honourable colleagues. Now that our capital infrastructure funding is looking rosier, we are in an excellent position to move ahead on priority areas that have taken a backseat for too long. It is time to ensure base recreational facilities are available to all NWT residents, regardless of where they live. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On GNWT "Get Active" Initiative

MR. ZOE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see the rollout of the "Get Active" NWT Community Challenge yesterday at lunch. The three departments, Municipal and Community Affairs, Health and Social Services, and Education, Culture and Employment, are to be commended for working together to implement and fund this exciting initiative.

The government needs to have more cooperation across departments on issues where the lines of responsibility are blurred. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, just for getting out and being active, you can contribute to the chance of your community getting some needed money to buy recreational equipment. It doesn't cost you anything to participate, and the benefits of your own health are substantial. There are many studies that show that an inactive lifestyle is leading to an increased number of cases of Type 2 diabetes. This is really affecting people in our communities. If you don't want to get Type 2 diabetes, you have to eat right, get up and get active. Go for a walk, cut some wood for elders, or even go out on the land or play with your children. These are all simple things you can do, Mr. Speaker. I strongly encourage recreation coordinators, physical education teachers, community health workers, schools and community governments to support this initiative because, even if you don't manage to win the \$5,000 available for recreational equipment, your community will win with healthier residents. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Operational Review Of The Workers' Compensation Board

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. In 1999, Mr. Speaker, 2,911 workers filed claims with the Workers' Compensation Board. In 2003, five years later,

that number rose to 3,349; about a 10 percent increase in the total number of claims filed. An interesting statistic, Mr. Speaker, is that the number of claims rejected in 1999 was 186, and, in 2003, it was 435; an increase of about 240 percent. Mr. Speaker, I have been making statements for several days now on the state of affairs in our claims adjudication and implementation of services of the WCB. Statistics of this nature tell me that there is something that is not right in that organization, that there is something that needs to be investigated. We have to try to find a way to return to the expectation, the mandate and the belief that employers and employees have of the WCB; to serve the interests of injured workers.

This is just one statistic, Mr. Speaker, that proves that we do, indeed, need to have a serious operational review of at least this aspect of the Workers' Compensation Board. I am going to continue to press for this. 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 Quebec Parental Leave Program

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am going to talk about the Quebec Parental Leave Program deal, Mr. Speaker, that has just been moving forward as of late. Mr. Speaker, I can truly tell you that I believe in my heart that there is no better job out there than being a parent. I think that there is no better federal policy out there than one that recognizes the importance of parents and, therefore, puts a priority on parents by giving them one year's paid leave through their employment service to support that parental leave. Mr. Speaker, I have experience, and I know that nobody out there ever says on their death bed that they certainly wished they spent more time at work. It is about priorities with family they always talk about. We need more government action that leads in that direction to recognize those priorities.

Mr. Speaker, once again, Quebec is leading Canada with talking about priorities of families, childcare and, yet again, through child day care. Yet again, I have to say, they are leading with more time off and better time off. Mr. Speaker, if you are a privately employed person, you don't qualify for this leave, but Quebec has said enough is enough, we have to support our families and our people.

Mr. Speaker, our job here is to respond to the needs of the people of the Northwest Territories to make sure we support the needs with good policies. I think that is critical for this government to move forward. We need to show our priorities by asking good questions and by asking the federal government, can we manage that program? Mr. Speaker, the federal government has encouraged other places and regions in Canada to open up the door on this type of discussion. So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will say I will have questions later today for the Premier of this government to see if he will look into this priority program and see if we can implement it in the Northwest Territories to help our parents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Arnold Gargan, a constituent from Jean Marie River. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to recognize a number of visitors in the gallery who have joined us as part of the volunteer support initiative launch. Mr. Bill Graham, the chairman of Volunteer NWT.

---Applause

Ms. Lani Cooke, board member for the Voluntary Sector Forum.

---Applause

Ms. Julie McNeice, board member for the SideDoor Youth Centre.

---Applause

Fern Denault, president of the Federation Franco-TeNOise.

---Applause

Brian Carter and Josie Gould, NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities.

---Applause

Lyda Fuller, executive director for YWCA.

---Applause

Mr. Leo-Paul Plovencher, executive director for Federation Franco-TeNOise.

---Applause

Ms. Aggie Brockman, executive director for Volunteer NWT.

---Applause

Sandra Taylor from Yellowknife Seniors.

---Applause

Arlene Yaceyko with the Canadian Cancer Society.

---Applause

Cate Sills from Volunteer NWT, a member.

---Applause

I also want to pay a special recognition to Ms. Roslyn Smith who retired last Friday, after 20 years of service

with the Government of the Northwest Territories in her position as the volunteer development officer.

---Applause

I also want to thank her for the significant contribution she has made to the volunteers of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize my brother-in-law Barrett Lenoir, another brother-in-law Vince Halushka, and my sister Cindy Villeneuve.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a very special person in the gallery today, Ms. Sandi Briscoe. She has represented our territory and the NWT government in Ottawa since 1982 and will retire this spring. In addition to managing the Ottawa office and providing direction to visiting NWT politicians and public servants not familiar with the city, Sandi was often the first contact for Ottawa bureaucrats who knew nothing about the North, numerous Ottawa Valley school kids doing special projects on our territory, and prospective northerners seeking information about the NWT; employment, housing, education, medical services and so on.

Sandi started with the Government of the Northwest Territories after the legendary Legislative Assembly lobby descended on Ottawa in November 1981, to encourage federal politicians to include aboriginal rights in the Canadian constitution.

---Applause

She was an important part of the follow-up to that historic event. However, the most distinguishing feature of her career with the GNWT is who she worked for. Sandi is one of the few remaining GNWT public servants who can claim to have worked for all nine Government Leaders and Premiers as well as numerous Commissioners, Cabinet secretaries and intergovernmental deputies during their term. Can you imagine the patience and fortitude that was required to serve such a diverse group?

Mr. Speaker, Sandi has witnessed what few of us have over the past two decades. She served her government and the people of the Northwest Territories with dedication and distinction, always with a smile and immense good humour. She has received recognition which most of us would never expect in our lifetime; an acknowledgement in one of Cece McCauley's columns that she is doing a good job.

---Laughter

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that I speak for all of us in this Chamber and for many officials in our public service when I express our sincere appreciation for her many years of service and wish her the best upon her retirement at the end of March. Thank you. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, I, too, would like to recognize the Yellowknife seniors for being here. I appreciate their watchful eye on us and keeping us all honest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a former high school teacher, Ms. Roslyn Smith, in the gallery. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see so many very influential and important people in the gallery, but I would like to recognize three people who have not been recognized yet. The first one is Diana Beck, who is a youth leader I know of. She's there with Sandi Briscoe.

---Applause

I would like to recognize a very keen observer of culture and politics, a media commentary extraordinaire, Marty Brown.

---Applause

I also see the unrelenting champion of four-legged animals and other animal friends of ours, the chairperson of the SPCA, Janet Pacey. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to repeat the recognition for Sandi Briscoe and the service that she has provided many of us through her years in Ottawa. Good luck, Sandi. I would also like to recognize a constituent, Josie Gould, here in her capacity today representing the Council of Persons with Disabilities. As well, a former colleague of mine from my journalistic days and media personality, Marty Brown.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although they have already been recognized, there are three constituents who I recognize that I'd like to make note of in the gallery today. Lyda Fuller, the executive director of the YWCA is with us.

---Applause

Mr. Fern Denault, the president to Federation Franco TeNoise.

---Applause

And Mr. Bill Graham. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone in the gallery, welcome to this session today. It's always nice to have an audience in the gallery observing our proceedings, so welcome to the Assembly.

---Applause

Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 517-15(3): Funding For A Yellowknife Youth Centre

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Health and Social Services and it's further to my Member's statement. Earlier, Mr. Speaker, I called for some government help to have a youth shelter opened in the city and there is a group called the SideDoor who has worked to make this happen. The Minister was quite generous in his answers to my questions a couple of weeks ago and he indicated that his officials were working with the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority to make this happen. I was happy to hear this had happened, but then I'm hearing that the funding is for a very short term. I'm wondering if this is because the funding can only happen until the end of the fiscal year, and if I could get a commitment from the Minister that the department will continue to work with this, I'd be happy with that. Could he make that commitment? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 517-15(3): Funding For A Yellowknife Youth Centre

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work on this. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 517-15(3): Funding For A Yellowknife Youth Centre

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Should I take that as the Minister saying that he will use his good office to let his department officials know that creating a shelter or making it possible...Not the government doing 100

percent, but making this happen is his priority. Could I take that as his answer? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 517-15(3): Funding For A Yellowknife Youth Centre

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member asked for a ministerial commitment to continue to work on this issue with the SideDoor and Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority past the end of the fiscal year. I've indicated that, yes, we are going to continue to do this. It is an issue that's not going to stop April 1st. So, yes, we are going to continue on this. I do not make these commitments lightly. There are people recording the proceedings of this House in Health and Social Services, so we will be moving on this. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 517-15(3): Funding For A Yellowknife Youth Centre

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this, it's just that you can never be as certain as you'd like to have it. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister indicate whether or not the budget that this House just passed included any elements there that could specifically fall into funding a facility or program money like this? I also heard that in Inuvik there is a youth group there that is having a problem with funding and I'm just wondering if the government has separate pockets of money that look after the needs of the youth in this way. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 517-15(3): Funding For A Yellowknife Youth Centre

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with regard to the specific issue of youth at night, especially on the weekends, and being on the streets, we've been dealing with this under the issue of homelessness for the short term. We're working on a longer-term homelessness strategy as I'm also the Minister responsible for the homeless. I'm working in conjunction with my colleagues, Ministers from the social envelope, and we've put together a short term budget that is before this House now in a supplementary and we intend to come forward with further planning. In Yellowknife we want to continue to work with the coalition as well, and there is also access to federal dollars. So we're trying to come up with a way to deal with both the issue of absolute homelessness, who are those folks who have absolutely no place to stay, and the issue of relative homelessness, which are those who may be inadequately housed. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 517-15(3): Funding For A Yellowknife Youth Centre

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that the SideDoor specifically has funding until the end of the fiscal year. Could I get the Minister to commit to provide me with correspondence that speaks to the

funding arrangement for the next year, given that he's going to work on this? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 517-15(3): Funding For A Yellowknife Youth Centre

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will confirm in writing to the Member what I've just said in this House. Thank you.

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

Question 518-15(3): Scope Of Justice Audit Review

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Premier. Yesterday in the House I asked the Premier about the numbers that were used to justify the reductions in the services in Justice in Hay River, and the Premier shared with me that the Audit Bureau of the Finance department would be looking at the methodology in these numbers. I have to say that I want to thank the Premier for that because, regardless of the outcome, I see it as some small step of progress on this subject which I've been harping about for some time now. I want to thank the Premier for that. I would like to ask the Premier a few questions about that though. Would he be prepared to share publicly what the scope of the question is that was posed to the Audit Bureau so we know exactly what's being looked at? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 518-15(3): Scope Of Justice Audit Review

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has asked the Minister of Finance to have the Audit Bureau look at the methodology that was used to arrive at the numbers. They will do that. Mr. Speaker, I want to be very, very careful that I'm not politically stepping into the realm of the Audit Bureau and somehow compromising their impartiality on this. So, Mr. Speaker, whatever I do I want to be very, very careful about that. So I can't say that we would share what they say publicly. I can't make that commitment right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 518-15(3): Scope Of Justice Audit Review

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just think it's good to know that we operate within a government that tries to be as transparent as possible and while I understand the Premier not wanting to be prescriptive about what the Audit Bureau may do with this, I just want to make sure that the question is comprehensive enough that it actually does some good because this is going to require some work.

Might I also say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very pleased that as of this morning I'd already received a call from the Audit Bureau asking for input. I was very impressed by

that, especially given the fact that the Audit Bureau, according to Mr. Hawkins, is quite short staffed.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, pending the outcome of this work that the Audit Bureau is going to do, would the Premier agree to put the reductions in Hay River on hold until the results of the review are available? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 518-15(3): Scope Of Justice Audit Review

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the Audit Bureau has contacted the Member and I want to assure this House that I didn't have any part of that. That's something that they would have done on their own. I will stay away from the Audit Bureau's work because, again, as I said, their impartiality is the most important in their business. Mr. Speaker, the one thing I can't do is change the amount of money that's in the budget that is before this House. It's before the House. The money that was identified as a savings has been identified in the budget, it's a reduction in the budget. I can't put pieces of this budget on hold. We're going through a process here and I have to respect that process of reviewing the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 518-15(3): Scope Of Justice Audit Review

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well then I really have to question what this entire debate in Committee of the Whole with respect to department's budget is all about if we have no opportunity as Members to affect any change in that budget. As Members all know, we're already looking at expansion of government presence and government roles in various regions throughout the Northwest Territories for the upcoming fiscal year that are nowhere indicated in the budget. So I'm a bit disappointed with the Premier's answer on that. All I'm asking for is that if the decisions were made on good and sound information and the Audit Bureau's analysis is going to bear that out or not, I just don't want anything irretrievable or irreversible to be done until those results are in. I think it's a reasonable request. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 518-15(3): Scope Of Justice Audit Review

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that when we reviewed business plans that this item hadn't been identified early on, because that's where we can make changes, as we build our business plans and build our main estimates. Mr. Speaker, having said that, if we find as we move along in the next fiscal year and so on after this budget is approved, then there are other ways of changing the budget through supplementaries and special warrants and so on. That's the proper way of doing it. I

can't, as the Premier, suddenly start changing this budget that we're reviewing here, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 518-15(3): Scope Of Justice Audit Review

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in fact when the standing committee's report on Social Programs is entered into the record when Justice comes up, I think it's unfair for the Minister to say that this had not been brought up in the main estimates discussions, because that I don't believe is correct. Mr. Speaker, I'm not asking the Minister to change the budget, I'm asking him to put actions related to the budget on hold in Hay River until such time as these numbers can be analyzed. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 518-15(3): Scope Of Justice Audit Review

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes in Hay River -- I'm assuming she's referring to Dene K'onia and SMCC -- are proposed changes that will happen, assuming this budget is approved, after April 1st. That is a time we would be making the final decisions on it. That's where we would have to decide if something was wrong in here, then we would have to look at a supplementary or look at doing it some other way. I can't change that today, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Question 519-15(3): Road Conditions In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week the honourable Premier, Joe Handley, and Mr. McLeod drove up our winter road into the Sahtu. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation. In terms of the winter road complaints from the Sahtu people and the increased volume of traffic into the Sahtu due to the oil and gas exploration, I would ask the Minister if he would inform this House and the people in the Sahtu what the plans are of the department to improve the road conditions in our region for next year. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 519-15(3): Road Conditions In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the trip into the Sahtu and Nahendeh was a real good opportunity for us, as Cabinet Ministers and the Premier, to have some discussions with a number of communities along the way. I think we had, over the weekend, probably around six meetings with different organizations in different communities and we had a lot of discussions. The winter road was always on the agenda and we certainly had an opportunity to take a firsthand look at the road. We thought it was a very scenic drive. There are some stretches that probably could use some

improvement. This upcoming fiscal year, our contracts that we have in place for maintenance are coming to an end. They were five-year contracts. We will be reviewing those. We'll be taking a step back to look at our budgets that are allocated for this stretch of road. We also wanted to do some review in terms of talking to the contractors to see what suggestions they may have, what issues they bring forward. We also wanted to take the opportunity to meet with all the players in the industry who are utilizing our road and see if we can come together in a more coordinated fashion for the upcoming winter seasons. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 519-15(3): Road Conditions In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people in the Sahtu region's favourite song is "On the Road Again." They just can't wait to get back on that road again. Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister if his department would consider, because of the increased volume of traffic in the Sahtu region and the oil and gas exploration, moving one of the offices to have some presence in the Sahtu. Because right now our offices are outside of the Sahtu, for example, in Fort Simpson and other regions. I want to ask the Minister if he would consider having his office presence in the Sahtu region. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 519-15(3): Road Conditions In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the issue of having a permanent presence in the region was something that did come up. We recognize there is a lot more resource development activity in the Sahtu and we also realize there is a lot more traffic. There are people in the communities that now have vehicles and there is a lot more community traffic travelling south during the time that this winter road is open. I will certainly commit to consider having a position in that region. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 519-15(3): Road Conditions In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the volume has increased and I would ask the Minister if he would consider advising us on this side of the House in terms of finishing up the winter bridges program. I know some people were looking at an all-weather road into the Sahtu. Would the Minister consider having that discussion with the people in the Sahtu in terms of having an all-weather road into the Sahtu region? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 519-15(3): Road Conditions In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, all-weather roads in a number of different areas in the Northwest Territories are always at the top of our list. If we can find some federal investment to create all-weather roads into

different areas, we certainly will pursue it. At this time, it's still the jurisdiction of the federal government. We are doing what we can to increase the season. We're putting in bridges. This year we have started a sign campaign; we're putting 650 signs over this year and next year onto the road. We realize that it's probably only half as much as what we really need, but it's going to really improve the safety of the road. We've also set a speed limit for the road that will also contribute towards the safety. We have increased enforcement. I'm not in a position at this point to point to any new dollars that we have to commit to an all-weather road, but I certainly will commit to the Member that I will continue to pursue it whenever I can at every opportunity that I have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 519-15(3): Road Conditions In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to again commend the two Ministers and commend the Minister of Transportation for coming to the Sahtu. It's a good sign to come to the people in the smaller communities. I'd ask the Minister if he would commit to looking at the all-weather road project. Would he consider doing it from the discussions from the community base where they would connect from the different regions and communities before they push down south? Would they look at, having been with the Sahtu people, community approaches in terms of an all-weather road? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 519-15(3): Road Conditions In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During our presentation of our budget, we had indicated that we're doing a number of things across the board. We want to update our Highway Strategy. We have received an agreement for our SIF money and we want to put a proposal together, a strategy together to approach the federal government. As part of this strategy, we're going to change our focus somewhat. Our last Corridors for Canada proposal that went forward was focused on resource development and reconstruction of roads that were in areas impacted by resource development. This time around we still want to be able to invest money into resource areas that are impacted by resource development, but we also want to be able to focus on connecting communities. We realize there's a high cost of living in the Northwest Territories and a way to lower the cost of living would be to have good transportation links. That would be our focus. We are working on that document now and we'll have that over the next while for a review by committee. We'll present it to committee and get their comments on it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 520-15(3): Establishing Community Economic Development Capacity

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the honourable Minister of

RWED. Recently, on the weekend I did manage to make it over to Wrigley, but that's another story.

---Laughter

The needs in Wrigley, Mr. Speaker, are they still need capacity building assistance help with developing their communities and EDO position. It's much like many of the smaller communities in my riding, including Jean Marie River. What are the plans for the Minister of RWED to assist and aid these communities with respect to establishing economic development officer positions? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 520-15(3): Establishing Community Economic Development Capacity

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't, for the Member, indicate what the exact arrangements are in Wrigley and Jean Marie River in terms of EDO support. I can get that information for the Member, but we do have a couple of different arrangements that vary by community and vary depending on what the community's interests are. In some communities, in some regions, we have RWED staff that fill that role and through the community transfer initiative some time back, RWED was able to transfer funding to communities to have them provide the service for the community and on that community's behalf. So it depends on the community as to the option they've chosen. We have found that some communities that initially took on that role have given it back to RWED for a number of reasons. We did have some discussion, as well, Mr. Speaker, with committee about the adequacy of EDO funding by community and by region. A number of other Members have raised that in the House and that is something I intend to investigate and pursue. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 520-15(3): Establishing Community Economic Development Capacity

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess with the imminent split of the two departments, I guess the communities would want to know which department will be the applicable department in terms of accessing these funds that were provided in the past. Which department would fund that particular EDO or that particular sector which is developing capacity, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 520-15(3): Establishing Community Economic Development Capacity

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of existing arrangements, we believe it will be a seamless transition from RWED to the two new departments. But it would be ITI that would be responsible for providing the submissions to communities and staffing these positions where we have that arrangement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 520-15(3): Establishing Community Economic Development Capacity

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess one of the biggest issues is that things are picking up in the Deh Cho, so that's what the communities have been asking. They're saying, look, we're being overwhelmed by these huge volumes of binders of information that we have to go through. That's what I was trying to get from the Minister is if there is a specific program designed to help the communities with this need. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 520-15(3): Establishing Community Economic Development Capacity

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no short answer to this, but I do understand what the Member is talking about. In terms of communities' ability to intervene and the environmental impact statement process for the pipeline, they are challenged. There are reams of information to sift through. I've been discussing that with my colleagues, most specifically with the Minister of MACA, but also with the social envelope Ministers. We had a meeting this morning to discuss some of these challenges. We are looking to provide some help and looking to come up with a framework that will have some answers and provide some solutions for communities. In my travels in communities, I'm hearing the same things. We're hearing that they are challenged in terms of capacity. We want to make sure that everybody can have a meaningful involvement and participation in this process.

To the broader issue of economic development initiatives in general, we hope that this BDIC legislation will be more flexible, less prescriptive, allow for broader partnerships, and allow for communities to not only get access to GNWT programs and services, but be able to lever that with federal money or other money that is available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 520-15(3): Establishing Community Economic Development Capacity

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister for that answer. He covered just about everything.

---Laughter

I'm glad for that. I just have one question I'm curious about. I hope there is not an interruption in service when we split RWED in providing service to the communities. If the Minister could assure me of that. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 520-15(3): Establishing Community Economic Development Capacity

HON. BRENDAN BELL: I can give the Member that assurance. I also want to say to the Member and other Members, if issues do come up and there are things that arise and Members believe it is as a result of the transition process, I want to make sure they bring them to my

attention as quickly as possible. We want to work with our regional staff, as I said, to make sure this is a seamless transition. We want to make sure there's no interruption for our clients and this is of utmost priority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 521-15(3): Addressing Drug Use In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger. During a recent information session with Crack Busters on Monday, there were a few items that the addictions counsellors and Dr. Wheeler, who was there, had brought to our attention that I believe the government should be paying close attention to. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services a few questions. The first question is what type of public awareness and education is this government doing specifically to address the pitfalls of drug use? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 521-15(3): Addressing Drug Use In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have public information that deals with right personal choices, active living, healthy choices, not to use alcohol and drugs. We don't have anything tailored specifically yet to the new drugs, specifically the one the Member referred to, which is crack cocaine. I also attended that meeting, which I found very informative. We are also intending the target part of \$1 million for further prevention with youth in terms of an awareness campaign that focuses on substance abuse, alcohol and drugs, as well as the ambulant concerns that have also been raised. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 521-15(3): Addressing Drug Use In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister didn't mention the fact that the government had anything specifically dedicated to drug use and the troubles that drug use brings to our youth and our families here in the Northwest Territories. The other item that they mentioned is what are we going to do as a government to address the long-term residential care that's needed and the treatment that's needed for these individuals? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 521-15(3): Addressing Drug Use In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as was indicated yesterday by the folks that did the presentation from Crack Busters, they have a program that's not residential-based. Its success

hinges on being able to be in the communities, responsive to people at the community level where they can work through their issues and their support groups that are there to assist them after the 22-week Crack Busters program is completed. Mr. Speaker, I still share the same conviction that our focus has to continue to be working with the communities at the community level, which is why we've invested money in community wellness workers, mental health workers, clinical supervisors and why we intend to proceed with year three of that program to get further resources at the community level. As well, we still have the resources, which we are trying to work on and improve at Natse' Ejee K'eh, and access to southern treatment referral if you need it. We also have arrangements in Yellowknife with the Salvation Army with the program that they offer. As well, we're going to move ahead on doing a better job and bringing on line a medical detox facility at Stanton. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 521-15(3): Addressing Drug Use In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the Regular Members on this side of the House brought forward a motion in regard to reinstating treatment centres in both Inuvik and in Yellowknife and I would like to ask the Minister today what progress has the government made on addressing that motion that this side of the House made last year. Has there been any progress made and when are we going to see residential care and treatment centres finally addressed by this government? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 521-15(3): Addressing Drug Use In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to work and advance the agenda for addictions and mental health, as I've laid out. There was a motion in this House and the intent is to improve the services and we're working on that. The Member indicates that we need two or three or four new facilities and I'm saying that our energy and funds are better spent at the community level. When we can quantify and demonstrate that we will have facilities that will be fully used and we won't need any other southern resources, then I'll be happy to move forward with the project in putting it into the capital plan, but you would have to get in line with other capital projects. But at this point, I can tell the Member that if we built three or four new facilities, they would all be underutilized and we don't have the numbers to quantify the need for that number of capital projects. I want to maintain, Mr. Speaker, if I could just reiterate, the focus, in my opinion, has to continue to be at the community level to get resources on the ground, working with families, with individuals, with other groups in the community to get people to make the right choices and not just build bricks and mortar and facilities to deal with them once they've got an addiction problem. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 521-15(3): Addressing Drug Use In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need to work with community groups, yes, I agree with that. That type of work should happen, but we're here today and we still don't have treatment centres. How long is it going to take for the government to work with the community groups to get us the treatment centres that our communities are demanding and the residential care that our communities are demanding? How long is the work going to take? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 521-15(3): Addressing Drug Use In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been involved directly or indirectly in this business dealing with alcohol and drugs now for over 20 years, and I've been involved that long in trying to advance the agenda dealing with alcohol and drugs. As Minister, I've been here for over three years and made significant strides, especially moving from the Chalmers report and we're going to continue to do that. We have a plan and we intend to stick to it and it's not just a case of banging up residential facilities all over the place when we know that a few years ago we did that and we ended up closing most of them because they were underutilized. We have not yet focused properly on prevention at the community level on getting people to make the right personal choices and to invest the resources at the community level, and not just have centralized facilities that are going to take up all the staff and resources we have. Thank you.

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

Question 522-15(3): Quebec Parental Leave Program

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to rise with a question in regard to what I talked about earlier in my Member's statement, Mr. Speaker, which is the Quebec deal on parental leave and their ability and control over that program. Mr. Speaker, the federal government has basically kicked the discussion door wide open and said come talk to us, and I believe Quebec has their priorities in line with their people. I think we need to ensure that, as well, in a meaningful way. I think this government needs to make tracks to ensure we do have those priorities in line with the people. So, Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier of this government is, is he supportive enough that we will engage in a discussion with our federal counterparts to take upon this opportunity to see if we can implement parental leave in a fair way in the Northwest Territories, such as Quebec has been fighting for since the '80s? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 522-15(3): Quebec Parental Leave Program

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Member has raised a very interesting development in Quebec.

Certainly they have the richest plan now on parental leave in Canada. We are talking with the federal government on devolution, and, along with that, resource revenue sharing and we feel that we need to have a fair revenue arrangement with the federal government that allows us to be able to afford what every other Canadian can afford, and that is clearly spelled out in the Constitution that all Canadians, no matter where they live, should have benefits that are roughly equal. I note that the federal government has provided \$750 million to Quebec to manage this program. So if they would give us \$750 million, I tell you we would have the same programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN. HON MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

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

Supplementary To Question 522-15(3): Quebec Parental Leave Program

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know all of us are listening on this side. That certainly sounded like a commitment to look into that, but maybe if I could get the Premier to reaffirm that in a commitment he'd open up the door to discussions. I don't think its part of a devolution deal. This sounds like a sidebar deal on the parental leave issue only. So if the Premier could address that by saying today he'll look into that and commit to just following up to find out if the Northwest Territories can implement this policy, heck, I don't need my next two questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 522-15(3): Quebec Parental Leave Program

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will look into this one. I know it will be on the agenda for the next Council of the Federation meeting of all the Premiers, because we'll all be looking at it, because often Quebec has its own arrangement with the federal government and the rest of us have a cooperative arrangement. I will certainly look into this one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Question 523-15(3): Social Impacts Of Pipeline Development

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of RWED, Brendan Bell. Mr. Speaker, I heard on the reports that the communities may have a difficult time in terms of the National Energy Board or the Joint Review Panel in terms of the social impacts of the pipeline. I understand that the report is evidence-based in terms of the impacts of the pipeline. I wanted to ask the Minister of RWED is there anything that his department is doing in helping the communities get this information to the boards that gives them more weight on the impacts that pipeline would have

on the communities in terms of the social impacts. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of RWED, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 523-15(3): Social Impacts Of Pipeline Development

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly apologize to the Member; I'm not aware of the specific report that the Member is speaking to. But let me say generally that we recognize that despite the fact that we consider this development boom to be a blessing and would much rather have employment than unemployment, we recognize that there are going to be challenges for communities with this level of employment. There will be, Mr. Speaker, and we can't deny it. There will be social impacts that need to be mitigated. It's important that communities are able to come to the table in the EIS process and make presentations, probably most specifically to the JRP environmental assessment. I think that's the most appropriate vehicle as compared to the NEB, but able to articulate their concerns and make credible presentations. They need resources, Mr. Speaker, in order to be able to do that.

We continue to make the point to the federal government that they will reap the lion's share of revenues from this development. They should be helping communities get to the table to intervene. However, as I've said, social envelope Ministers met this morning with our deputies to discuss a GNWT approach to bringing the federal government to the table on this issue. We want to lay out a strategy and a framework and invite the federal government to plug in and participate and fund part of that approach, because we think it's that important. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 523-15(3): Social Impacts Of Pipeline Development

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people in the small communities will appreciate the employment opportunities and also the business opportunities, but there will also be significant impacts even in the communities. However, the question I'm asking the Minister is that the communities need help in terms of putting together their presentations to articulate to the two panels, and the National Energy Board mentioned that they wouldn't just go on opinion. So I'm asking what is this department going to do to help the communities articulate the social impacts of the Mackenzie gas pipeline. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 523-15(3): Social Impacts Of Pipeline Development

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Specifically to social impacts, which I think is really outside the NEB process, which will be focused more on technical issues, on tolling issues, those kinds of questions specific to social impacts, we want to work with communities. We are certainly going to find some dedicated resources to coordinate this government's

approach to that. I know that the social envelope Ministers are going to sit down, and one of the first steps is to take an inventory of programs and services currently available in communities and then to sit down and recognize that different communities will be challenged in different ways. Some are directly in the pipeline right-of-way. Others will see camps set up right on their doorsteps. So there are different levels of impact. We want to talk about that. We want to better predict, recognize and understand what those impacts will be. I think only then can we engage in a meaningful discussion and debate with communities about how we mitigate that, but part if this we'll certainly be discussing how we can help communities come to the table and participate in the CIS. As I've said, we believe the federal government has to be involved in this and is key, but we're going to do what we can to bring them into the fold and ensure that they meet the commitments that they should rightfully be making. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 523-15(3): Social Impacts Of Pipeline Development

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, three communities in the Sahtu are going to be directly impacted by the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline. They are very afraid in terms of the social impacts. There is increased exploration activity in my region right now and we are seeing the impacts. We are also seeing the benefits. However, the people are really concerned about the social impacts in terms of family violence and alcohol. So again, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister what specific things is his department going to do to ensure that people in the Sahtu will see some benefits in terms of participating in hearings and letting people know about the social impacts? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 523-15(3): Social Impacts Of Pipeline Development

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think one of the most important steps is to make sure communities registered as interveners in the JRPEA process and I think that that has been done. They are challenged though to have the resources to have meaningful involvement and that will be the real problem here. We also need to understand from communities exactly what their hopes and aspirations are in terms of benefits and opportunities, and we need to work that into our socioeconomic agreement negotiations with the producers. But I'll certainly give the Member my commitment that, as lead Minister on this file, I'm working with the social envelope Ministers to ensure that we have an approach that we can sit down and articulate, and we will work with communities to better understand this issue and this challenge and help them better be prepared and equipped to represent their interests and aspirations and concerns, acknowledge their concerns through the EIS process as interveners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 523-15(3): Social Impacts Of Pipeline Development

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister inform us about the socioeconomic agreement? Does it have enough clout or teeth in terms of using it to benefit the communities? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 523-15(3): Social Impacts Of Pipeline Development

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we believe it's the most effective tool. It will build on many of the access agreements that are being negotiated right now. I think it will fill gaps and it will provide some certainty for all NWT residents and all businesses, beneficiary and non-beneficiary in the NWT, and that they will, in fact, see tangible benefits and opportunities from this pipeline development. That's important. We want to make sure that there are benefits that stay here in the North because that really is what will make this development worth it for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 524-15(3): Increase In Workers' Claims Rejections

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board. In my statement earlier, I gave a bit of a five-year snapshot, Mr. Speaker, of the incidents and the rise of claims by injured workers. It's up about 10 percent in five years and it's quite understandable, given the level of activity in the NWT. But our claims division has rejected two-and-a-half times the number of claims filed from 1999 to 2003. Mr. Speaker, this would certainly seem to indicate that we're taking very much an adversarial position decidedly against injured workers. Can the Minister explain, Mr. Speaker, this disturbing trend in our rejection rate of workers' claims? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Krutko.

Return To Question 524-15(3): Increase In Workers' Claims Rejections

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member is right; we do have a high number of accidents or incidents in the workplace, but because of the workers' compensation system, it numbers somewhere about 3,000 individuals a year. We do have an appeals process and I think that because we have seen a change in attitude, we're starting to see more people coming back with appeals that have been appealed in the past and also allowing the Appeals Tribunal to do their job. I think one thing that we've seen in the past is because there was a major backlog of the number of cases, we have put more resources and more people in that office to process these appeals. Right now, as it sits, through the number of accidents that are being reported and the number of people coming forward with applications, almost 90 percent of them are being

processed through the Workers' Compensation Board. That leaves 10 percent that are being appealed. So in the national average, that's about where things are at.

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

Supplementary To Question 524-15(3): Increase In Workers' Claims Rejections

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I might take issue with a couple of the numbers. I'm just looking at the 2003 annual report, which is the latest document before the public. Mr. Speaker, the number of claims appealed bounced up considerably. Let's look at that five-year picture from 1999 with 36 claims appealed; in 2003, 60 claims were appealed; a 60 percent increase. Is this not also a sign that our claims system needs an overhaul, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 524-15(3): Increase In Workers' Claims Rejections

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, we do have a 90 percent rate of processing applications. Again, I think because of changes in legislation, we are now dealing with a federal corporate ruling which dealt with a chronic pain disorder, which is now being diagnosed as part of the compensation system and because of the Supreme Court decision, we're starting to see more people coming forward with those types of complaints where before they were rejected. Now that we have this new decision made by the Supreme Court, people are coming forward again, filing their appeals on the basis of this new ruling.

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

Supplementary To Question 524-15(3): Increase In Workers' Claims Rejections

MR. BRADEN: That would be a very tangible and believable explanation, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that court ruling came out after the block of statistics that I'm talking about. So I think the Minister is trying to wedge something in here that doesn't really reflect the difference here. I would also suggest the Minister go back and check his math. The number of claims appealed is about double what he suggests it is, and I would say again we're looking at 36 claims in 1999 and about 60 in 2002.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I pressed the Minister on the recommendation for an operational review as posted by the Act Now legislative review, but his answers seemed to link us very closely with our sister territory Nunavut, of course, with which we share this board. I'm looking for answers, Mr. Speaker, for NWT injured workers. My question is do we have to wait for Nunavut's authorization to go ahead with an operational review before we can begin to look after our own injured workers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 524-15(3): Increase In Workers' Claims Rejections

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we need an operational review. It is a costly endeavour and the monies that are spent to operate the workers' compensation come out of the employers' and employees' pockets. I think that we have to realize that, and also realize that they do an audited statement every year, through the Auditor General of Canada. Also, they have concluded a review in 2002 in regard to a special audit that was done on the operation. If the Member would like, I can get him a copy of that audit that has been done on the operations in 2002, to show him exactly how that review was done. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 524-15(3): Increase In Workers' Claims Rejections

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, of course, the audited reviews and reports are available for every one of our agencies and departments. That is not what I am looking at, Mr. Speaker. It is a review of the way in which we treat injured workers, not the numbers. Assessment rates went up for employers in 2003, Mr. Speaker, but acceptance rates for injured workers' claims are going down. Meanwhile our fund remains remarkably strong, at a robust 110 percent, according to 2003 figures.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame, shame.

MR. BRADEN: Which is more important, Mr. Speaker, the fund or the injured worker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 524-15(3): Increase In Workers' Claims Rejections

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the workers' compensation system we have in the North is probably one of the best we have in the country. It does meet the requirement of having no-fault insurance, so no one will get sued, but also to ensure that the workers, when they do get injured in the workplace, are taken care of. That is the whole idea of the regime and also having an appeals systems so those members who are rejected, when they put an application forward on whatever grounds, have an opportunity to appeal that decision.

In order to allow for that independence, they do a rigorous job of having hearings; basically doing investigations. All through that, the decision is made by the final Appeals Tribunal, which is forwarded back to the board to say yes or no. I think that we do have a process that is the best in the country and I think it is working great.

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

Question 525-15(3): Cost Overruns At The North Slave Correctional Centre

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice today. Mr. Speaker, the Premier shared with us a process

whereby money gets approved in our system and had indicated that you can't just add money back into budgets or spend money at will. It needs to go through a process to be voted on and to be debated and consulted on and so on. I would like to ask Minister Dent a question today, because I find it curious that cost overruns in one area results in, what I think to be, cuts in another area. I would like to ask Mr. Dent what process he went through whereby he secured the \$1.5 million for the overruns for the operations for the North Slave Correctional Centre. Where did he get the money? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 525-15(3): Cost Overruns At The North Slave Correctional Centre

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I haven't ever said that we had cost overruns at the North Slave Correctional Centre. The department didn't seek supplementary funding for the operations. There will have been some money that would have been allocated from one resource to another, whether it was permanent employees to overtime, or permanent employees to casual, it would have been handled through the normal process. The overrun that has been referred to isn't something that we have characterized as an overrun. We haven't come to this House and sought supplementary appropriation for it. The department will be very close to its budget, the allotment that was provided by this House last year. At this point, I think there is a good likelihood that we will be within budget, although, as I said, it will be very close. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 525-15(3): Cost Overruns At The North Slave Correctional Centre

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, then I am led to believe -- and I hope the Minister can understand why I am a little sensitive about this subject of where we spend money, because of where we are needing to cut money, Mr. Speaker -- that the independent review on the North Slave Correctional Centre, that the Corrections Canada intervention at the North Slave Correctional Centre, the wrongful dismissal suits, the overtime, the paid leave, all these things were manageable within the existing budget of the North Slave Correctional Centre. That is amazing, considering that we have gutted the budgets for other facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 525-15(3): Cost Overruns At The North Slave Correctional Centre

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Corrections Canada paid the entire cost for their staff to come up and work with our staff in the facility here. They feel that it is a good training opportunity for their staff to see how another operation works, as well. We sought the assistance from an experienced person in B.C. on the human resources side, and the corrections department in B.C. only asked that we pay 25 percent of his salary for his work with us, as well as his transportation costs.

We have gone out to find economic ways to accomplish things. There was always an expectation that in the move to the new facility, there would be a requirement for increased overtime and casual use, because you have to train people and you can't train people without having extra staff on at times to make sure that the coverage is always there. Some of the overtime had been expected and, yes, we have been struggling to live within budget. Some of the cost-saving measures that I have outlined to the Member already included the reduced use of casuals in the North Slave facility, through moving all of the young offenders to Hay River for a period of time. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 525-15(3): Cost Overruns At The North Slave Correctional Centre

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, those are some fine contributions that we received from other jurisdictions and other governments, I guess. Although the Minister didn't take the opportunity to respond to the assumption that the costs were in the \$1.5 million range, could the Minister please commit to provide to this House if those extraordinary costs were due to the problems with efficiently running the North Slave Correctional Centre? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 525-15(3): Cost Overruns At The North Slave Correctional Centre

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can reveal what is available. I know that, for instance, the FMBS has told us that we can't reveal all of the numbers because, in many cases, they might indicate a specific person. I will take a look at what can be provided. I don't think it should be difficult to get that information for the Member, because I believe that we have already provided a good part of this information, or as much as we can, to other Members in this House. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 525-15(3): Cost Overruns At The North Slave Correctional Centre

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just one final question. For the benefit of those people who work in the facilities in my community, could the Minister please confirm for us that the remand unit, the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre and the Dena K'onia facilities were run efficiently, effectively and in fact came in with their operations under budget? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 525-15(3): Cost Overruns At The North Slave Correctional Centre

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the best of my knowledge the operations in Hay River were all run effectively and very close to on budget, if not under budget. Thank you very much.

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

Question 526-15(3): Addressing The Northern Drug Trade

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask some questions today to the Minister of Justice. I am sure the Minister of Justice is aware of an article that appeared in the Edmonton Journal on Sunday, February 27th, and the fact that it painted a very negative picture of Yellowknife. The title of the article is, "Big City Drugs Plague Northern Capital," and actually made reference to 50th Street here in Yellowknife as a little Hastings. I am wondering if the Minister of Justice is aware that we only have three, that is three, full-time drug squad members in Yellowknife. I would like to ask the Minister what his department plans to do to address the drugs that are on our streets and the impact that these drugs are having on our families and our youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 526-15(3): Addressing The Northern Drug Trade

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I attended the session earlier this week with Crack Busters and the article that the Member refers to was passed around there so, yes, I am aware of the article and I am aware of the issue in Yellowknife. It was quite a dramatic presentation that we received from Crack Busters.

Mr. Speaker, the enforcement of high level national or international drug targets is the responsibility of the federal policing, whereas street and mid-level targets fall to the province or territory for enforcement. So we work with our partners in the RCMP to provide them with the funding to go after the street level or mid-level targets.

I have no doubt that there are probably in the range of a number of members of the RCMP working in Yellowknife, probably around three. I am assured that the RCMP are working on a plan to address trafficking in the Northwest Territories and all drug activity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 526-15(3): Addressing The Northern Drug Trade

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that there is very little evidence that the RCMP have the resources and the manpower to try to tackle the problem that is hitting our youth, hitting our families and destroying people here in the Northwest Territories. I would like to ask the Minister of Justice if he has had discussion with the RCMP with regard to the drug problem that faces the Northwest Territories. What have those discussions been? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 526-15(3): Addressing The Northern Drug Trade

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, I have spoken to Chief Superintendent

Summerfield about the issue of drugs in the Northwest Territories. Much of our discussion in the past year has been about working with the federal government to make sure that all of the federal positions are filled in the Northwest Territories. The Government of the Northwest Territories is responding to the resourcing request that has been put in by the RCMP and some of that is in this year's budget. I am hoping to follow through and complete the numbers that they have requested in next year's budget. I have talked to the Standing Committee on Social Programs about how that will be coming forward in the business plans.

Mr. Speaker, all three of the highway traffic resources that are included in this year's budget proposal will be, I have been assured, cross-trained by a program called Pipeline, which the RCMP says makes them as effective or more effective in dealing with drugs, particularly since they will be working on the highway that brings most of the drugs into the southern part of the NWT.

We have also worked with the RCMP to make sure that in this year's resource allocation, there is funding for a dog. The dog will be cross-trained and will also be used for drugs and will be used in different areas. As I said, there are other plans that are afoot that I have been assured by the RCMP, but they have not shared the details with me because they don't want them to become public. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 526-15(3): Addressing The Northern Drug Trade

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the bottom line is that people out in the communities or small communities have an indication of who the drug dealers are, where they are selling the drugs, where they live, and they don't see anything done about it. That's the problem that is facing people here. Where is the action? I know the Minister stood up in the House last week and said the two new traffic positions were going to Hay River, but according to the RCMP they aren't going to Hay River. Again, and I asked this question last week and I will ask it again today, is Hay River getting two new RCMP officers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 526-15(3): Addressing The Northern Drug Trade

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To speak to the Member's first allegation that people know that there are people who are dealing drugs and there is no action taking place, the RCMP can't do it alone. They need to have witnesses, they need to have people tell them they are prepared to go to court and say this person is dealing drugs. I would encourage anyone who knows that sort of information and has it, to report to the RCMP that that will happen.

In terms of the allocation of traffic positions, the RCMP had started a pilot project in Hay River that put two positions into places that would have gone at the end of the pilot project. What we are doing with that allocation in this budget is turning those into permanent positions. There was a pilot project to see whether or not there was

an effective allocation of personnel that was funded through different resources within the RCMP and the positions won't remain there if this allocation isn't approved in this year's budget. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Time for oral questions has expired. Item 7, written questions. The honourable Member for Deh Cho Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are there any nays? There are no nays. We will return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mr. McLeod.

REVERT TO ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize somebody from my hometown, Richard Lafferty, from Flashpoint Facilitators is here. I would like to welcome him. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, written questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 78-15(3): Positions Related To The Diamond, And Oil And Gas Industries

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to Floyd Roland, Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board.

Can the Minister provide all GNWT positions and their locations related to the diamond, oil and gas industries?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 116-15(3): GNWT Declaration On Volunteering

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled GNWT Declaration of Volunteering.

Tabled Document 117-15(3): NWT Volunteer Support Initiative

I would also like to table the NWT Volunteer Support Initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 17, Modernization of Benefits and Obligations 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), Preparing for the Mackenzie Gas Project; and, Tabled Document 108-15(3), Nation Building: Framework for a Northern Strategy. 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): I call Committee of the Whole to order. We have a number of things on our agenda for Committee of the Whole. What is the wish of the committee for today? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. The committee wishes to consider Minister's Statement 86-15(3), Minister's Statement 88-15(3), Minister's Statement 89-15(3), Minister's Statement 91-15(3), Tabled Document 108-15(3) and then consider Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006, particularly with the NWT Housing Corporation.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay, committee, I am going to call us back to order. The next item on our agenda is the discussion on the Northern Strategy. To start things off, I am going to ask the Premier if he will please provide some background and some opening remarks on the Northern Strategy. Mr. Premier.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to take some time this afternoon to set the

context for the debate on the Northern Strategy. Then the Minister of Finance will speak on some of the specific financial issues we face. I want to say that, while one of the most important tasks that we have as MLAs is to deal with our constituents and with specific issues that are of importance to them, we cannot ever forget that we also have a responsibility to take a lead on charting the course of the Northwest Territories over the next number of generations.

I believe the impact of decisions that we make as a government over the next couple of years is huge, because they will determine like never before in our history the direction that we take. The Northern Strategy provides a unique opportunity for northerners to involve themselves in discussion of the policy issues that shape the future of this territory; not just the next three or four years, but for generations. The potential of our territory is unlimited. I believe, and this government believes, that if we do it right, the Northwest Territories has the potential to be a have territory. The Northern Strategy can provide us with even more tools to allow our territory to grow politically, economically and socially.

To achieve this, devolution and resource revenue sharing must be at the heart of the Northern Strategy. We have an opportunity, through the management of our resources, to find that balance between economic development and environmental protection, to ensure northerners are primary beneficiaries of the development of northern resources, to diversify our economy in a way that limits the boom-and-bust cycle resulting from resource development, and to become a contributing member of the federation. It has been noted many times in the Legislative Assembly that our government has limited fiscal flexibility. Although we are doing what we can to mitigate the negative impacts associated with development, we cannot do it alone, especially for projects such as the Mackenzie gas project.

Madam Chair, I want to be absolutely clear that this government fully supports the Mackenzie Valley project. We support the Aboriginal Pipeline Group in negotiating taking an equity position in this project; something that would have been unheard of in the past projects of this magnitude. We support the work that is being done by the Producers' Group to negotiate access and benefit agreements. We support the Joint Review Panel process in reviewing this project. The piece that remains to be completed, and I repeat, is a fair devolution through a resource revenue sharing agreement. To accomplish this to ensure that northerners are primary beneficiaries of their resources, the federal government must step up to the plate. This means delivering on the Prime Minister's commitment to make substantial progress on this file by spring and a final agreement in 2006. We are concerned that without this commitment from the federal government, support for the pipeline in the territory will fade. That is why we need to stand united and continue to make the case that federal investments in the North are in the national interest.

We don't have much time for the North to compete with many other priorities in Ottawa. Nevertheless, we want to be as inclusive as possible in the development of the Northern Strategy. We have and will continue to engage northern leaders and key stakeholders over the next few months, respecting the vision, priorities and actions contemplated in the context of the Northern Strategy. Today, we look to you to hear the views of the Members

on how to proceed. Guided by the seven goals proposed in the Northern Strategy framework document, my colleagues and I would like to share some ideas of types of actions and initiatives we might want to pursue under each of the categories. I want to ensure that any initiative or action we pursue in the Northern Strategy are consistent with and built on the hard work we have done together in developing the strategic plan.

For example, under the Northern Strategy framework goal titled Strengthening Governance, Partnerships and Institutions, we must have a completed AIP on devolution and resource revenue sharing by spring 2005 for the Northern Strategy to have any relevance to the Northwest Territories. What this means specifically is obtaining the administration and control of public lands and waters and related jurisdictions and authorities normally held by a province, which are currently administered by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Northern Developments, Northern Affairs Program and the National Energy Board.

It means creating an effective, efficient coordinated resource management regime in the Northwest Territories that fosters sustainable development and provides certainty of process and outcomes. It also means receiving an adequate net fiscal benefit from resource revenue to provide for the provisions of necessary programs and services by Northwest Territories governments, and incentive for continued development.

In the Northern Strategy, devolution of resource revenue sharing is about nation building, about making the Northwest Territories self-sufficient and self-determined. However, a key component of any nation building in the Northwest Territories must include aboriginal people's desire to be self-determining. Emerging aboriginal self-governments will also need the resources to implement their self-government agreements. They will require the fiscal resources to provide programs and services, invest in infrastructure and maintain flexibility to address their own priorities; similar to other governments. This will be critical as you move away from the negotiation-type relationship with aboriginal governments, to a mutually-respectful intergovernmental relationship. Ultimately, it will be up to the Government of the Northwest Territories and aboriginal governments, in partnership, to fully realize the vision of a strong, unified self-reliant Northwest Territories.

Under the goal of establishing strong foundations for economic development, I want us to think about what inputs are critical to building a strong economy and what actions could help us diversify our economy. The NWT is facing an unprecedented rate of economic growth, but often the benefits of resource development are not felt equitably throughout the Northwest Territories, so we need to diversify our economy and level the playing field. Appropriate infrastructures such as transportation and communication are needed to support economic development and provide access to resources. Research and baseline data related to resources will assist in identifying opportunities for growth in various sectors. Tourism is a major opportunity to diversify our economy, particularly in our smaller communities. Tourism requires sustainable development for product development and marketing and a Northern Strategy can be a vehicle to advance this.

For example, while we have been successful in getting development in our non-renewable resource sector, we also need to focus attention on our renewable resources; one of the biggest ones is hydro energy. As Members are aware, the NWT is at a critical stage with respect to development of NWT hydroelectric resources. We have made the required investments up to this point, but now require additional resources for detailed engineering and environmental feasibility studies. Federal investments in hydro development appear to be ideally suited for inclusion in the strategy. There is a level of awareness of our potential within the federal government in Ottawa as well. The response has been very positive. Investments in hydro development can fit many federal programs, from Kyoto implementation and environmental funding, to infrastructure and economic development funding.

Under the goal of protecting the environment, there are opportunities for both the Territories and federal government to work together on various environmental issues, such as climate change and contaminant cleanup programs. There is a need to establish a monitoring and mitigation regime for the biophysical environment. Past environmental management practices have left an undesirable legacy of a number of contaminant sites in the Northwest Territories which must be addressed.

Under the goal of building healthy and safe communities, we need to work on priority issues such as healthy lifestyles, building community infrastructure and improving housing for our residents. Our government has reaffirmed its commitment to support a healthy lifestyle. Together with other social program departments, we are working to engage our federal counterparts to proceed with active living and healthy choices programming for all northerners.

We were pleased with the recent announcement of the federal government on MRIF and the new federal deal which will provide full GST rebate and a portion of federal gas tax revenues to communities. Both of these are welcome. Together with the commitment made by our government in the budget on additional funding for community infrastructure, we believe we are beginning to address the infrastructure deficit we have in many of our communities.

Under the goal of reinforcing sovereignty, national security and circumpolar cooperation, we are looking to engage the federal government on issues such as security and surveillance in the North, reinforcing Canada's sovereignty in the North, effective northern-based search and rescue capacity and leadership in matters of circumpolar cooperation.

Under the goal of preserving, revitalizing and promoting culture and identity, we can discuss issues of critical importance to northerners; issues such as the preservation and promotion of aboriginal languages for present and future generations; recognition and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity of people in the North; promotion of the use of traditional knowledge and practices in northern decision-making; and, preservation and promotion of our unique northern history and culture.

Under the goal of developing northern science and research, there are opportunities for better coordination to set pan-territorial research and management agendas using a more collaborative ecosystem-based and integrated approach. Northern boreal forests are a unique

NWT resource. Knowledge of our forest, lands and environment is incomplete, and we need assistance to understand the impact on our wildlife habitat.

Large-scale development projects, in the past, have identified gaps and have promoted considerable research. Land-use planning efforts often identify further research needs. Programming specific to vegetation inventories, forest productivity, and ecological land classification require greater support. A cooperative approach is required to gather all of the baseline data prior to any major development.

I have only touched on the surface of the issues that can be addressed through a Northern Strategy process. There are many critical issues that I have not addressed due to the time constraints today. I know that Members of the Legislative Assembly will raise many of these issues. I look forward to hearing your views on the issues that we should consider in the development of a Northern Strategy.

I also want to take this opportunity to encourage fellow MLAs to seek input from their constituents and from other stakeholders in their communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Next, I have Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. The vision adopted by the Assembly last May begins with the word self-reliant. The vision that leads off the Northern Strategy framework uses this phrase in its first sentence. Self-reliance means that we look to ourselves first to tackle our challenges and to improve our lives and our communities. If the NWT is truly to achieve our vision of self-reliance for individuals, families, communities and as a territory, we need the right tools and we need the resources.

There is much work to be done. With adequate financial resources, our job will be made easier and our chances of success enhanced. Governments in the NWT, territorial and aboriginal, need to ensure that fiscal arrangements meet the needs of our residents. These arrangements must provide adequate funding. They must include appropriate incentives to encourage economic development and growth. They must allow the territorial and aboriginal governments to work together to effectively and efficiently provide programs and services to the people of the NWT.

The Northern Strategy framework sets as a goal the strengthening of governments and institutions, in order to provide northerners with effective governance and greater control over decisions central to our future.

If this is to be achieved, the strategy must address the need for a fair resource revenue sharing agreement between Canada and the NWT governments. It must include adequate and responsive funding under both formula financing and aboriginal self-government financing arrangements. As a territory, we rely on the federal government for about 70 percent of our revenues. This large percentage recognizes that the cost of providing public services in the North is very high compared to the capacity of the NWT's 42,000 residents to finance those services.

In 2005-06, NWT residents and businesses will contribute over \$240 million in territorial taxes and other own-source revenues. Furthermore, on average, for every dollar of expenditure made by the federal government in the NWT, more than 50 cents of federal revenue, or almost \$500 million per year, is generated in the NWT for the federal government in the form of taxes and other payments. It is estimated that, between the diamond mines and the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, government revenues from resource development over the next 20 years will approach \$20 billion. However, the federal government currently receives virtually 100 percent of royalties from resource activities in the NWT.

Although the GNWT does receive some tax revenue from development, under recent arrangements, much of this tax revenue is clawed back through a lower grant from Canada. Until we negotiate new arrangements with the federal government, Canada will continue to receive more than 90 percent of the total royalty and tax revenues from non-renewable resource development.

This is not sustainable. Given that it is northern governments, the GNWT and aboriginal self-governments will bear the brunt of the expenditure impacts created by development. It is northern governments that will face expenditure demands for job training, for counselling and for addition programs, for policing, for infrastructure repair and upgrading, and for environmental protection, to name just a few. We must ensure that NWT governments have the fiscal resources to provide our residents with levels of public services comparable to those anywhere else in Canada.

The federal government has recognized that recent agreements with the governments of both Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia are a step towards self-reliance for those provinces. Clearly the negotiation of a resource revenue sharing agreement that ensures that northern governments receive a fair share of resource revenues is a critical requirement for continued development in the NWT. A major component of the Northern Strategy is the federal commitment that the conclusion of a devolution and revenue sharing agreement is a priority and that we will see significant progress in the negotiations by this spring.

Last October the federal government announced significant changes to our formula financing arrangement. The previously separate although similar arrangements between the federal government and the NWT, Nunavut and the Yukon have now been amalgamated. There will now be a fixed amount of funding for formula financing for all three territories: \$1.9 billion for 2004-05; \$2 billion in 2005-06; and, after that, the funding will grow at a rate of 3.5 percent a year. Canada will establish an expert panel to provide recommendations on the allocation of these fixed amounts among the three territories. These recommendations are expected before the end of 2005.

It is critical that new arrangements respect the fundamental principles that have guided formula financing since it was first implemented 20 years ago. They must ensure that each territorial government has adequate funding to provide public services in a high-cost environment. Arrangements must recognize that the territories provide programs and services to small populations in remote locations, often with health and social indicators well below national averages, with limited infrastructure and in the harshest climate in Canada.

New arrangements must also be responsive to changing circumstances within the territories. Territorial governments must be able to respond to changes in program and service needs brought about by population change, or economic changes affecting their jurisdictions. Arrangements must provide the territorial governments with the incentives to become as fiscally independent as possible. The territories should be encouraged to develop their economies and growing their tax bases and excessive clawbacks should be removed.

Finally, the new arrangements must not pit the territories against each other in order to meet our fiscal needs. The expert panel is tasked with making recommendations on territorial financing, and its work must reflect the vision articulated in the Northern Strategy framework; strong, responsive government working together to build a prosperous and vibrant future. This vision, however, does not apply only to territorial governments nor to the GNWT in particular. In the future, the GNWT will not be the only government in this territory delivering government services.

Aboriginal governments, as they conclude self-government agreements and draw down their jurisdictions, will assume some of these responsibilities for their citizens. Aboriginal governments must have the capacity to be self-governing. The establishment of aboriginal self-governments will lead to additional costs to run new self-government institutions and to build capacity in those institutions.

The GNWT, given its limited fiscal capacity, cannot fund incremental costs without reducing funding available for other programs and services. It is incumbent on the federal government to fully fund these incremental costs. Fiscal agreements on funding arrangements, including tax sharing, will need to be negotiated between each aboriginal government, the federal government and the GNWT. The primary objective of these arrangements should be to ensure that aboriginal governments have adequate funding over the long term to deliver programs and to run their government structures.

Fiscal arrangements between aboriginal governments, the GNWT and Canada must be structured so that all governments can operate effectively and efficiently. The arrangement must be workable, sustainable and consistent. They must adhere to the same principles that we expect in our formula financing arrangements with Canada. They must be adequate, sustainable and responsive.

The GNWT and the Aboriginal Summit have had very successful discussions over the years on how self-government fiscal arrangements could look and how they could be integrated into formula financing, resource revenue sharing and tax sharing. These discussions would even be more productive if the federal government were to participate as well. The Northwest Territories wants to be more self-reliant and, to accomplish this, we must have the right tools. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank both the Premier and the Minister of Finance for their brief overview of the Northern Strategy. It does cover a

tremendous amount of ground. I know I have 10 minutes here; I am going to try to cover the points that I feel I need to cover and then I will pass it on to some of my colleagues here.

The first thing is that I am still not 100 percent convinced of the Northern Strategy and how the Northwest Territories is going to be seen by the rest of the country as being different than Nunavut or being different than the Yukon. I know that both the Yukon and Nunavut have a lot to offer Canada as well but, in terms of being an economic engine for the country, the Northwest Territories is by far a much better vehicle for that. I know our economy grew 21 percent last year, whereas Nunavut's actually shrank and the Yukon's was stagnant. I see it as being more pan-territorial in nature, rather than specific what it can do for us. That does cause me some concern; and I know that the Premier has talked about it, that the Northwest Territories is going to get it's say, is going to have it's specific needs addressed, but I have yet to really see how that is going to work out or be played out.

What I see is a bunch of lofty goals and objects how we are going to fit our own specific needs into those but, for what it is worth, I am going to try to do some of that. The fact that the federal government has actually figured out that there is life north of 60, after being in power in Ottawa for over 12 years, is something that I am really glad to see. Finally somebody woke them up in Ottawa and they realize that there is life north of 60 and this Northern Strategy, in my mind, is years overdue, it is about time. That is all I have to say and I do look forward to hopefully some good things coming out of it.

In the Premier's opening remarks, he was mentioning the fact that we have to ensure that northerners are primary beneficiaries of development and northern resources. I know that the Premier and Cabinet and the rest of my colleagues here have known for some time that I have been interested in developing a resource trust fund for the residents of the Northwest Territories. I am a believer that the federal government should have some time ago, perhaps even before diamonds were discovered here, maybe even when oil was discovered at Norman Wells, started to put some money aside for the residents who live here. They haven't done that and we are here, we have been talking about devolution and resource revenue sharing for almost 20 years and I really do hope -- and I do put a great deal of faith in the Premier and the Finance Minister -- that this government, after many governments before it, can finally deliver the goods on devolution and resource revenue sharing because it is long overdue.

I know the concept of a trust fund is something that, unless you had money to put into it, you don't have one. So the money that is leaving our territory today, I don't understand why and I know it is a complicated subject, but why couldn't Ottawa just look at putting some of this money aside? Both sides agree that there is an obvious dispute over who gets what and are we getting our fair share, and until such time as that dispute is resolved, I believe that Ottawa should be putting the money aside. Maybe not necessarily to us right away, but put it aside so that when that money starts to build up, we know the type of magnitude that we are talking about.

One of the things, and I know it comes up in the Northern Strategy, that I think needs to have some attention brought to it is the fact that Canada has long sovereignty in the Arctic and in the North and we have to try to find

ways of attracting people here to the Northwest Territories and to the Yukon and Nunavut, as well, but specifically the Northwest Territories. Ways in which we can do that have to be fully explored. I talked the other day about perhaps looking at making interest you pay on your mortgage as a tax credit, some things like that. We have to start thinking about these things and we have to start putting it back.

If the federal government is indeed interested in the Northern Strategy, in trying to develop the Northwest Territories, then I think they should be looking at helping us pay the price by instituting some kind of tax break or a beneficial tax regime. It's already somewhat beneficial to live here, but we have to make every effort to make it as advantageous for people to live here as possible. I think that will certainly go a long way towards giving us more of a population base, more of a workforce. We will hopefully get some type of market housing economy, even in some smaller communities, if we start looking at this; trying to get people into homeownership and thinking about owning their own home, putting down roots in the Northwest Territories. I think those types of things are things that I believe should be in a Northern Strategy.

The federal government has to understand that we are different; has to understand that the cost of living here is phenomenal. If you filled your fuel tank in your home lately you know what that is all about, or put gas in your car, or bought groceries at the store. It is more expensive to live here. We have had a difficult time in trying to attract professionals, especially teachers, doctors, nurses, and we need to look at ways that we can keep people here; get them here, keep them here and keep them happy.

That is something that I would like to see contained in here somewhere, is the federal government to make some kind of effort to give us that ability or to help us pay for tax breaks for people to live here. That just hasn't happened, for whatever reason. Again, I know the Premier and the Finance Minister and the rest of Cabinet have done a great deal of work. Actually, we have come a long way in the short time I've been here. The Premier has done a heck of a lot of work in this regard and I think he is on the right track.

One of the things that does concern me, however, is the recent deal with Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the fact that now some of the other provinces are crying foul about that deal. I wouldn't want to see a potential deal with the Northwest Territories being sidetracked now because some of the other provinces are upset. We are in a different position here, we are different than Ontario, we are different than Saskatchewan and I just hope that we don't get lost in the shuffle in Ottawa again and get pushed to the back of the bus.

I do certainly appreciate all the hard work that the Premier has put in on this and look forward to supporting him on it and moving forward and finally one day getting what we deserve here, and that is devolution and resource revenue sharing. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

---Applause

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I, too, have some grave concerns over the exploitation, I

would say, of our natural resources and who gets the true benefits here. Our struggle and our goal and our objectives for gaining province-like powers or province-like stature or, indeed, even provincehood as an eventuality. I hope that everybody shares that dream along with me. It has been with us a very long time. It's about a 125-year-old dream. As soon as they labelled us a territory, then we wanted to break free.

I come from a riding that is predominantly aboriginal. The majority there are aboriginal and during my campaigning period, Madam Chairperson, when I talked about resource revenue sharing and keeping our resources, self-reliance, self-government; everybody knows what that means, because that is something that we want to achieve as aboriginal people as well. Everybody knows what those mean and when I came to the Legislature, we are talking about the same thing.

It is a consistent dream throughout the North, with all the aboriginal claimant groups and ourselves, so when I look at it I say, okay, we do have something in common; we have a common thread that runs through us all, throughout the whole North now, it's just a matter of getting there.

Everybody has different ways of doing things, of seeing things. Their realities are different, but I know that we are dialoguing, we are talking with each other. We may be at an impasse or a standstill at some points, but I think that eventually we will stand together and we are working towards that aspiration, that goal of being free. In fact, it is like our opening prayer every morning at this Legislature, it's up to us to take care of the aspirations of those we serve, and I truly believe the aspirations are to be free to control our own destiny. I believe we are going to achieve that.

I think one of the ways to do it, is that a lot of the barriers that are standing in our way are many of our own imbalances up here in the North. That gets in the way of many things. I am going to say disparities that are between the communities and power rates are one way of doing it. Everybody is asking why are we all different. If we are all the same, why are we doing things differently? It is the little things, it's the little victories, the little things that are making life easier in the communities that can bind us and, I really believe, lay a path for us to be marching to Ottawa with one voice.

Our base needs must be addressed and that is all that is ever asked of me and that is all that I am asking of this government too, on a daily basis. Let's just take care of the real needs of our people and we will move forward from there. A lot of it is having to hear people and that is all it is. When I talk about base needs, it's something that I have been pursuing, too, for a long time. Ever since I have been elected, I have been talking about a base need in Nahanni Butte, like the gymnasium and that is all it is.

---Applause

---Laughter

That is my vision. That is all it is, is listening to our communities and making it a priority. On a territorial-wide scale, too, like I mentioned, we have been trying to do this for 125 years and finally, Madam Chairperson -- the federal government calls us a frontier, they have been investing into us for like 125 years and we have been like

a transfer for the federal government -- finally now we are like a net contributor to Canada. The Treasury Board has a long memory and, I don't know how they do it but, over 125 years they are saying, now the NWT is going to have to pay until it balances out and we're all even. But I don't think it has to be that way, Madam Chair. I believe that there must be a way for us to keep the benefits of our resources, but Ottawa is continuing to treat it as a boon to their coffers. It's simple. People are studying colonialism and there's only one way to subjugate your people, and that's to make them dependent on you and don't give them the resources to be independent. It's textbook. I believe that.

In order to break out of that, one of the biggest barriers we have is the current royalty regime. We're talking about we want resource revenue sharing, but we're just going to get a percentage of the three percent royalties that they're getting from our coffers. I have some friends who are saying, look, Kevin, you guys want to run your billion-dollar government on resource revenue sharing, but if it's true resource revenue sharing, you guys are only making \$120 million a year. How the heck are you going to run your government on \$120 million a year as it currently exists? So the royalty regime has to be changed too.

So I kind of look at that and say we have a long ways to go, but it begins today and our predecessors in the 14th, 13th and 12th Assemblies all made little major steps. I'm looking forward to this NWT Day that's going to happen in Ottawa, because that's going to make a huge impact. I think we did that in the 12th Assembly when we brought more power and ability to our job back here in the Northwest Territories.

So that's the way I see it, because the only ones who are benefiting are the multinational corporations and we're the ones who should be benefiting. Because when I go home, that's what people are saying. They're truly saying that. Hey, if I'm not going to benefit from this pipeline, then I don't want it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Then I think about what they're saying and I say no, but the business is wanted. Then I think about it and the businesses are kind of leaning that way too. If my business is not going to grow or get opportunities, then there's no benefit for me supporting it; therefore, I've got nothing to gain. Go around me; I don't want it. So we do have to let Ottawa know that, hey, taking care -- like the Premier says in his statement and the Finance Minister in his -- take care of our people, our communities and then people will see there's a benefit here. Then they'll support it.

Today, at first face, it doesn't appear that it will benefit us because I look at these multinational corporations and that's their job. That's their sole existence; to rape and pillage. They're coming and taking everything they can for free. It's like that first pipeline. They built that first 12-inch oil pipeline in 1985 and they got it for free. They're sitting there laughing, and I keep saying we can still go after these guys. We can't go backwards, but we could tell them today, look, you guys are contributing to our communities, our infrastructure and our people. We can and I believe we have the power to do that. What we're still learning, people have memories, too, Madam Chair. They see this pipeline, they got it for free and what's going on is that we have this new mega-development, another

pipeline, and industry is not doing anything. They are saying it's between the First Nations groups and Ottawa. They're just sitting there laughing because they know if worst comes to worst and Ottawa has to draft a national interest legislation to get that pipe installed, based on the Continental Energy Strategy, they'll put it in and then they have no obligations like they did the last time. That's what happened, is that they used the old technique of divide and conquer again.

We're so busy fighting that we're not spending our energy and resources training and developing our people, developing capacity, because we've been talking about it for two years and we have no foundation on which to base it on. It's just around the corner, Madam Chair. They're talking finishing and completing the application in 2006. If you think about it, that's 12 months from now. Then they'll get their permits and then construction starts in late 2007. This is mind boggling. People said it's going to move quick, and it is, and people don't see that.

Perhaps, Madam Chair, I'll just stop with that point. But I believe that if we did get more province-like powers, because I know they're not going to give us provincehood today from Ottawa, control over the lands and resources and water then, yes, we'll be able to do a heck of a lot more than we're able to do now. So just bringing little bits and pieces home. I'm a patient type and I don't mind bits and pieces because I'm also logical and know they're not going to give it all to us on a platter. We're going to work hard and show them that we have structures and we have things in place to handle these extra responsibilities because the time is right. I'll just stop there, Madam Chair. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I didn't know I was up next. I'm happy to make some comments about the Northern Strategy. Certainly the documents we received, especially the Framework for a Northern Strategy, provides such a large scope of issues to discuss. It really covers everything under the sun. We're not only just talking about the issues involving the NWT, but now we're talking pan-territorial. I must say, I'm not conversant on various specific issues of Yukon and Nunavut to argue or make statements from that point of view. I will focus my thoughts on the Northern Strategy from the Northwest Territories' angle.

I think I share with the Premier in saying that we are certainly at a very exciting time. There is so much going on and I think this Northern Strategy is just another layer of process accompanying what's going on at the tables for devolution negotiation and resource revenue sharing. We have so many economic and resource development projects happening. So economically, politically and in many different areas, we are certainly living a very exciting time. I think that we are very well placed in terms of getting our voice heard in Ottawa, as well. I think we need to recognize that. I think it benefits us that our current Prime Minister took the time...While he was waiting to be Primer Minister and while he was Minister of Finance for 10 years he crisscrossed the country a lot. He came up North a lot. I do believe he has firsthand knowledge about the issues and challenges and

opportunities of the North and I think that's reflected in the federal agenda.

I think that also helps in that we have an MP in Ottawa who is responsible for this file who has been in that office for over a decade. I think that has to be helpful in getting our challenges and our issues and our uniqueness to the table not only for the NWT, but all of the North. I think Premier Handley and this Cabinet is really well placed to capitalize on that and fast forward this file that has been going on for a long time. As Mr. Menicoche mentioned, we are building on the works of all the previous assemblies. It has only been about 20 years since we had first elected a Government Leader, in the name of another Mr. Braden, and a lot of these issues have been on the agenda for the whole time. I remember reading a former MLA here, Mr. Ballantyne's pamphlet and I could not believe how many items on his platform included all the things that we're talking about. But I'd like to think that while a lot of things seem to remain the same, we have made a lot of progress and I really believe that we are fortunate enough to live in a political era within the next two, three, four, five years where if we are fortunate enough to make that leap into the next world where all the things that we have been working on and our predecessors have worked on are going to result into something real.

Having said that, I want to make a general comment about what I'd like to see. Let me just say, on the governance side I think what I'd like to see from northern strategies is, we have to figure out...The devolution and resource revenue sharing and all that, I agree with. But we also know that we have various aboriginal and land claim settlements and negotiations going on and I would like to see them all settled, of course. But I think, given what's going on, we need to set up a process more clearly that would determine how everybody, all the governments, work together. Because I believe truly that none of this separates us or gets us onto our independent road where we don't need you anymore, we're going to do it on our own. I think it is really about creating a different relationship for the federal government, territorial government and all the aboriginal governments. As we get more agreements settled, it's more important that we have that understanding. If we had devolution from the federal government for many of the province-like responsibilities, for example, there has to be a redefining of the role about the presence of DIAND in the North and exactly what they're supposed to do. The same for the territorial government. We will have to have a redefining of roles in that. Whatever happens, I think it's really important and I think it's something we have not done enough of, is getting a clearer picture of how we're all going to fit together. I have so many little things I wanted to add.

An agreement on intergovernmental affairs relationships would be an issue I would like to see the Northern Strategy deal with. Another thing is related to that, the financing, taxation and sharing of revenue. I think we all agree, and I think all the aboriginal governments agree, that we need to get a bigger share of our revenue. I think something that has to be dealt with is how we're going to share that revenue. This morning I heard on the radio that as of August 4th, once the relevant laws are passed in Tlicho, the people who live on Tlicho land, their federal tax will go to the Tlicho government and that's a reality that's happening. That's what it means for that government to be there. I think things that have to go with these political developments is an understanding and framework for the

people to understand this is what it means. We're going to have four levels of government and people are going to pay taxes to this or that, and who's going to provide services? I think if we're going to succeed in having all of these aboriginal governments settling their claims and having a new relationship and a new world, there is more room and need for information and understanding and education to all the people that are here and living together.

I think that can be said about so many different things we're doing in the framework for the Northern Strategy. There is an issue of circumpolar cooperation and preserving, revitalizing and promoting culture and identity, developing northern science and research. These are all the things that you just have to get really excited about. I really do believe that we are placed in a very unique situation. We are doing really exciting things politically, in terms of resource development. But there are lots of things, I think, we can do in a different way in terms of promoting culture and identity. We have the most powerful aboriginal people in the country. We can show the rest of the country about how we preserve our language, how we preserve our culture. How do we have eight or nine strong aboriginal governments and their people living together? How do we do governing differently? All those things are not clear yet, I don't believe.

I think there is so much going on that we cannot do enough to get the people that we represent to understand what we are doing. Because the more information and buy-in you have, the better. I speak not just for non-aboriginal people, I'm just talking about regular people up and down the valley, up and down the river who want to know what all this means to us and how that affects us and who's going to look after us and what's going to happen to our culture, our identity. I do believe, also, we could be a leader. We could be right out there in northern science and research and even political development. We could have a school on aboriginal self-government negotiations for all the people around the world to come and study.

I just ran out of time, but I think I can get another chance to speak. So I'm very excited about that, but we need a clearer framework understanding, much more dialogue and a clearer vision at all levels of government to be able to tell the people that we all serve this is where we're heading, this is what it's going to look like, this is why it's going to be better for all of us, and this is how we can show it to the rest of the country and the rest of the world. Thank you.

---Applause

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Next I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you for recognizing me, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, when I think of this, it's about making tracks again. I stress the word "again" because I was reading one of Marleau Montpetit's books, and I was perusing one of the pages, and in 1881 the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly was fully elected. If you really wonder what that means out there, that's what Mr. Menicoche was referring to: 125 years ago we were a government. We were a big region, but that government was dissolved and in 1905 the Northwest Territories was elected. It was dissolved and it was replaced by an appointed council. But it wasn't until 1975 that we then

proceeded forward and became a Legislative Council and then proceeded again to be known as the Legislative Assembly in 1976.

The reason I'm saying this is because there was a Premier of the Northwest Territories many years ago. His name was Premier Haultain and his phenomenon, at the day before the creation of Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905, his fundamental principal belief for western Canada was to think big. It's time we made tracks again and it's time that we think big. We shouldn't be selling ourselves short on what we do in Canada. I think we can prove that over and over again. I think it's time we take our rightful place.

When I watch television and I see people like David Peterson, who is a former Premier in Canada from Ontario, and he questions the ability of the Northwest Territories for being a full participant at the table, a full partner in Canada, it really bothers me. Because he even questions the right for P.E.I. to be involved at that level. So I really wonder if we're thinking big enough. Canada recognizes us only when it's called to their attention that we've gotten up from the kid's table, for goodness sake. I'm tired of that type of attitude that they have in Ottawa about this.

There has been endless discussion about moving Indian and Northern Affairs jobs to the Northwest Territories, at least being governed on the ground in the Northwest Territories by our colonial department called DIAND. But their refusal to do that is still there. I think the Government of Canada is completely out of touch with the Northwest Territories, as well as the Yukon government and the Nunavut government. At least this Northern Strategy, if I may say, is starting to think big, as I've said earlier.

Madam Chair, I'm really looking forward personally, as well as other Members are, to NWT Day in Ottawa. I had my sandwich bag packed, as I've told the Premier I would. I'm serious, we need to go in with a big bang and let them know that we're very serious. I can appreciate we've got a Member in Parliament who's going to try and open up the doors for us to talk to the right people. I appreciate that the Premier has been talking to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs about the right timing but, again, we have to ensure we think big and respect is drawn to the attention of our needs.

I have to express my concern, though, by continually being linked at the hip with the other two territories. The Northwest Territories, as everyone knows in Canada, is such a net producer. We're trying hard, we're going forward, I think we're a progressive area. Yet we're being held back in conjunction with the other two territories and I think what we're being told is just because you can win the race, you can't run ahead of the others. So I'm concerned that we're being held back from our potential. With thinkers like David Peterson and who else knows who is out there who wants to hold us back, I'm not even sure. I honestly cannot fathom a reason why the Government of Canada does not have respect for our Legislative Assembly to put us on a level playing field at the full table of discussion on any matter. Madam Chair, they still call our Premier a Government Leader.

Now there are a lot of inroads that have been made by many governments that have come before this Assembly and I think we're starting to get that attention. But this government needs to get the acknowledgement I think it

deserves. Someday they will change that NWT legislation and call our Premier a Premier, rather than referring to him as the Government Leader, as I've seen in the correspondence from the Prime Minister's office.

As far as negotiations go, I see the vision here and I really can't say much about it. I can support it, absolutely. I mean, everything here is something that I want and I'm sure it's something everyone around this room wants. It's still about independence and taking control and governing the people that we're elected for. I'm still concerned about the fact that we should be in a situation here where we're kept at bay, when eventually, back in 1881 when we were a Legislative Assembly fully elected back in those days, it's like our powers and responsibilities were dissolved forever. I honestly cannot come up with a reason for why we are being held back and, like I said earlier, at bay.

The Premier has told us himself that to deal with the Government of Canada we had to deal with Finance Canada on one side and Indian and Northern Affairs on the other and get the attention of everybody. I really wish the Prime Minister himself would take this file and say, okay, if we're going to deal with the Territories finally, let's deal with them with one lead Minister only, where one lead Minister can deal with all related items. If it's Finance, it doesn't matter; if it's Indian and Northern Affairs, it doesn't matter to me. But I think to be progressive, we need to again think big.

Madam Chair, I don't really have much more to add other than the fact that I'm an advocate for bold moves because bold moves are important. I want to recognize, other than obviously the flag lowering of Newfoundland's Premier, but Danny Williams I really think was thinking big. He stood his ground, he pled his case and told Canada that Newfoundland needed a better deal. It's being held back from its rightful place.

I think our Premier -- and I would give him my support -- if he needed to think big along those lines to get out there and beat the drums and say we're thinking big, we're here, we're loud and we need to be treated with respect. So whatever the Premier needs from me, I am more than willing to support that. Again, we have to think big. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's all I have to say right now. I may come back later, but at this time that's all. Thank you.

--Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I have Mr. Yakeleya next.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I was at a negotiation session one time and I read where it says in order to get to the Promised Land you have to negotiate your way out of the wilderness. I think that's what we're doing here. I think the Northwest Territories has a lot of promise and things could happen in the Northwest Territories. I think right now with this Northern Strategy, that the Premier is giving us an opportunity to look for vision in the Northwest Territories; things that we'd like to see in the North.

Within the 15th Legislative Assembly we have only a short period of time, four years. We do the best we can in four years, Mr. Chairman, in laying the vision, in this statement it says, for generations to come. This is a long process we're entering. As far as our vision for the North is, we know the North is full of riches in resources and tradition

in our land, and that we're laying the foundation for our children. Hopefully one day we will see it. Just like we negotiate our land claims. I told this to our people when we were negotiating our land claims, that we're negotiating the tools. God willing, we'll see some of the things come to fruition. However, this is not for us. We're just laying the foundation and maintaining that foundation that maybe one day our children's children will benefit from what we negotiate between the territorial government and the federal government.

I think, Mr. Chairman, the Premier has given us an opportunity to look at the vision for the Northwest Territories. Hopefully that vision will be that one day we would have a discussion on provincehood, in terms of becoming a true provincial partner in the Confederation of Canada.

Mr. Chairman, the heart of the Northern Strategy, as Mr. Premier talked about, is devolution and a resource revenue sharing agreement. Devolution, I understand, started happening in the 1870s. That's when they started developing into the Northwest Territories, the transfer of responsibilities from Ottawa to the Northwest Territories. Now we're just talking about it in terms of seeing some benefits and as to manage it; the economics and the environments and seeing the benefits in the finances that would reflect our uniqueness in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Chairman, the Premier also talked about the Northern Strategy being a living document. I see that living document as evolving, as something that we hold sacred to us. Mr. Chairman, the living document that some of our people talk to in the smaller communities are the treaties that they have negotiated with the federal government. This Northern Strategy could be in the similar spirit and intent with the Government of the Northwest Territories. We're laying the foundation for our people.

I see this Northern Strategy as getting some of the basic needs to our people in the communities. We're encouraging our people to have healthy lifestyles, healthy choices, but when you pay \$16 for a 10-pound bag of potatoes in Norman Wells, it's pretty hard to have a really healthy lifestyle. So the high cost of living in our small communities is really hurting us. Shelters and homes in our communities; the basic needs to have decent homes and decent living shelters for our people is the number one priority.

I'm happy to hear Mr. Premier talk about the hydroelectricity for people to cut down our power and the damage it's doing to our environment by using diesel-powered generators in our communities. We could benefit from the hydro dam. That will certainly help us in our communities. Also, the services that we want to evolve from Ottawa to the Northwest Territories in terms of programs and services with regard to devolution would improve the quality of living in our communities.

I guess, Mr. Chairman, when I look at the Northern Strategy, I see it as a long-term, sustainable vision developing for our people in the North. I look forward to developing this with our people in the communities, in our larger centres. We look forward to the leadership on the Premier's side, in terms of his Ministers going after what is possible for us. We're looking for them because they have that capability right now. They're our leaders right now. It's like us on this side here. As Ministers, you have that responsibility to work on our behalf and this is an

important piece of work that is coming up and I think it's about time that the Northwest Territories starts thinking about powers. We want to call it a policy, but I don't know if we really want to right now. I don't know if we have the capacity to have that discussion, but that's something that our people are looking forward to in our small communities. They're looking for direction from this government to step it up a bit. So I look forward to further discussions on this in the coming years, Mr. Chairman. I think that's all I have to say. Thank you.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Mr. Yakeleya. I have Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These comments from my colleagues have been very interesting here today. When I look at this document and the document that was introduced by the government with respect to the Northern Strategy, I have to ask myself what is new in this. What's different about this strategy as compared to any other strategy that's been developed over the last 20 years? I hate to be the pragmatic voice here, but I think we need to ask ourselves what's the key point. What are we trying to achieve here? Look at the devolution and the resource revenue sharing; if it's a new deal with Ottawa, why not just say that? I'm reluctant to overcomplicate the issue by again reciting all of our positions on everything, which are kind of not all that unique. It's kind of a given, like healthy people, self-reliance. You can take and transpose that onto any people anywhere in the world and those would be aspirations of anyone there. We certainly want to stand apart and make us unique. So I think that the Northern Strategy shouldn't be overly complex and complicated, because I think the danger in making it too complicated is that we end up identifying so many priorities and, in fact, there is no priority and then what do we accomplish.

I have been around for a little while and sometimes when we talk about these things, I just feel like we're stating things in kind of like platitudes that don't really translate into something real. We talk about a lot of concepts having to do with how we govern ourselves. We talk about self-government. All it really comes down to is how we organize ourselves as people in society, to ensure that people can interact with each other. I mean, what does anybody really need in life? We need food, we have basic needs, shelter, and we hope for something purposeful to do to be able to support ourselves. We'd like to have a few friends, family. I mean the needs of human beings are pretty standard. How we need to organize ourselves as a society to ensure that our children are educated and that we have health care services, we spend a lot of time talking about who is going to do those things. I guess the whole point of devolution is we say we know better, we can do better. So in order to do that, we need the resources to do that and that's just about how simple it is to me and the same applies to self-government.

I think self-government and claimant groups are saying we know what's best for us. We're unique in ways that have to do with culture and language and location and geography, and we know better than anybody else how to organize ourselves to meet the basic needs of the people that we are.

So I know I'm probably oversimplifying it, but I think I've sat on every constitutional forum that has discussed how

we're going to organize ourselves in the last 20 years, and sometimes I just wish we could take one small piece out of some of these plans and actually just do it. I know it's easier said than done, but, man, we've been talking about devolution and resource revenue sharing for an awfully long time. I'm glad that some people think that there's something on the horizon and I would like to believe that too, but somehow the partners, the people that are going to come to the table are going to have this dialogue and are going to discuss with us, have a different agenda. I'd like to believe that, but when we get to this point of more autonomy and more resources, in order to serve the needs of our people better I don't want people to get the idea that that's some kind of utopia either. It's not going to be some new world. It's just going to be us organized in a slightly different way with the same challenges, the same issues and again saying we think we know what's best to bring to the table to address those needs and to really facilitate the aspirations of the people that we represent.

So I guess if I could offer some encouragement to our leaders who will be having this discussion, it would be to be very precise and focused and try not to complicate things. Sometimes I think we should take what we've accomplished and put things on a line, on a timeline, on some kind of a continuum so we can see where we were, where we've come from, where we are right now and where we think we're going just to keep things in some kind of a perspective.

I have heard some new things today like the idea of a trust fund. That's a very tangible, specific thing, which we could say okay, let's try and achieve that if that's something that we agree to. The new time frame is something I see new in this strategy. There have been some time frames put around some of these things we want to accomplish and if we realize them, then that is something new and that is something to work towards.

So I guess pretty much that's all I have to say. I just hope this isn't yet another strategy. I hope that we can kind of weed out the things that have been said before and look at what's new, what's different. I think just the more concise and focused we are, the more likely we are to actually see something tangible. That is the advice I would give to our leaders and the people who will be having this discussion with us. Let's advance the agenda, but let's not get it weighted down with too many priorities, which will, I think, at the end of the day, kind of distract from actually getting things done. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Madam Groenewegen. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To set a course for the future, whether it's a short or a medium or a long-term one, it really helps me to get a sense of where we could be if I'm able to see the future and then know that I'll be able to take action on the future. This is the opportunity that I think we've been given here. It's a huge opportunity for ourselves and for our sister territories to really be able to envision and shape and set our sights on who we want to be, where we want to go, how we want to work and understand each other, and how we're going to set our relationships up with the rest of Canada and the rest of the world. So it really is a great opportunity. Probably a better than once-in-a-lifetime chance for a part

of Canada to say here is where we want to go and to have the attention of the senior level of government and I think, along with that, of our partners in the other provinces.

So I embrace this but, at the same time, I don't want to oversell it either, to myself or anybody else. This isn't as if we're getting a blank cheque and we can write it ourselves. In outlining these objectives and these visions and the dreams along with that, we've got to realize that we'll have to take responsibility and accountability for what we do in order to get there. Not attaining the kind of things we might want to do is going to be as much our fault or our problem as anybody else's. Really this is an exercise for us to leave the nest, if you will, leave the den, go out into the real world, if you will. In so many ways for the time that we've been the Northwest Territories, we have not been living the same style or have the same kind of conditions or opportunities placed on us that the rest of Canada does. We really have a lot of artificiality here. I would really like to get away and get out from underneath it and this is a chance to say to ourselves and the rest of Canada, here's how we'd like to do it.

Mr. Chairman, seeing the future and being the future is my way of positioning this. What I'd like to do for the next few minutes is give you some snapshots of where I would like to be if I was writing a report on the Northwest Territories 10 years from now.

So here's a report from the year 2015. The Northwest Territories today is a part of Canada that is free of the Northern Affairs Program...

AN HON. MEMBER: All right.

---Applause

AN HON. MEMBER: Back to the future.

MR. BRADEN: ...and the old-fashioned, patronizing, colonial mandarins. There are a few of them in Ottawa who I think are the real barriers to us moving along. We've had decades of long-distance rule, Mr. Chairman, and on one hand I tend to think if I was in their shoes I'd say, my gosh, after all these years of paying money into that big pink part of the map we're finally getting a return, do you think I'm going to let any of it go? No. I want to see the coffers of Canada finally repaid by that northern sinkhole up there. But now we're on the verge of becoming an enormously rich contributor to the rest of Canada. Is either side fair to the other? I don't think so and that is why we need to cut that connection, get rid of that connection, this Northern Affairs Program. Locate those jobs, not only those jobs, that's really, Mr. Chairman, a rather technical part of the whole process, but take the mandate and locate it in the hands of the governments in the Territories and the communities and the First Nations in the regions. So that's one way that I would like to describe what we'd look like 10 years from now.

Mr. Chairman, we're going to be able to report on the Northwest Territories where individuals and families and communities are back in control of their lives. We are still going to have to deal with the alcoholism and the substance and drug abuse and the temptations of the material world. They'll all be here with us. This is human nature, but, Mr. Chairman, they're going to be things that we can manage as a government because we have good systems in place. We have people who are prepared to

take responsibility for their actions and we will not have these things crashing and ruining so many of the lives in the communities of the Northwest Territories, which I think is what is happening today.

We will see in 2015, Mr. Chairman, I fervently hope, that we will be able to put the shameful legacy of residential schools behind us. I think this is one of the major contributors to the ills of so many people and communities in the Northwest Territories. We are trying to grapple with that and we're going to deal with it. Time will be a large factor in how that is healed and not the only one, but I hope that 10 years from now we can say that we really have left most of this behind us and we are able to get on with building our lives.

I hope that 10 years from now, Mr. Chairman, this Assembly, this room, is going to have value and purpose and relevance to the people of the NWT and is seen as a place where we are making a difference in people's lives so that we are respected, we are looked up to, we are a desirable place to come and work. We're not there right now, Mr. Speaker. This institution has got some room to grow and improve.

I hope that along with that we will see a workforce that gets satisfaction and rewards from being in our employ and being at the service of the public for the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Chairman, I hope our lakes and our lands and our waters are cleaner than they are today because the legacies of a lot of old bad practices are with us today. We have the tools at our disposal now to engage in really cleaning them up. I certainly hope we can make that happen and that 10 years from now we can say this is a cleaner land than it is even today.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that, among the regions and the communities and the peoples of the NWT, we aren't looking at each other as much anymore as being richer or poorer or bigger or smaller or more or less advantaged or disadvantaged than each other. This is a dynamic that occurs in any jurisdiction, but I do hope that we can overcome that. We are all different, we will always be different. We can recognize and even, in a lot of areas, celebrate those differences, use them to our advantage, Mr. Chairman. I really hope that we can avoid the temptation to dominate one or another because of our geography or our size or our mass or our wealth and that we will be good neighbours and we won't be competing so much.

I'd like to see, Mr. Chairman, that the NWT and Nunavut and the Yukon will emerge as truly contributing parts of Canada and not just in a physical way, but as part of the fabric and colour and the grit and the texture of what Canada has become and has the potential to be. Not, as I said earlier, just as this big pink part of the map that sucks up so much southern texture and money. I believe there's an awe and a pride in this land and I think we have a requirement, Mr. Chairman, to live up to that.

I see the NWT in 10 years, Mr. Chairman, as a place that has a new name and an identity that really does reflect who we are and what we want to be that projects our image to ourselves certainly, but also to the rest of Canada and the world. I am not going to get into what the new name should be right now. I'm not going to bite on that one. But, in 2015, Mr. Chair, we are going to have a

new name. My colleagues, Mr. Chair, are suggesting that we call it Bill. Why don't we call it William? Mr. Chair, I hope that our cultures, artisans and creators can live in a place where they can flourish and grow. The health of any society, I believe, can quite quickly and accurately be gauged by the health and state of its arts and artisans. Our languages, music, traditions, both traditional and aboriginal, and those of other Canadians who live here now in Yellowknife boasts more than 100 nationalities living in the city. Is it 107? There are 117 languages I am hearing, Mr. Chair! That is extraordinary. Among our population, we count one-third our aboriginal people. Yellowknife is the biggest aboriginal community of the NWT.

I am getting all sorts of suggestions here, Mr. Chair. But the point is that when we create an environment where our arts, cultures and traditions are strong and they flourish, the rest of our society is probably very healthy as well.

Finally, Mr. Chair, the world hungers today for our oil and gas. Let's do the best we can to gain from it. But let's be ready, Mr. Chair, to take up a much bigger challenge. That would be when the world starts to hunger for our vast resources of fresh water. That, Mr. Chair, I am convinced will be struggle, a battle we must start to prepare for right away because it would be the biggest test of all of our unity, resolve and commitment to ourselves, to our environment and to the rest of Canada. That is the report from 2015. Thank you, Madam Chair.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. We have Mr. Zoe next.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on the issue of the Northern Strategy that we are anticipating to develop, I echo a lot of stuff that is in the Premier's Minister's Statement 86-15(3) that was given in the House, but I think the framework that he made reference to has a number of visions, principles, goals and objectives. It is for the three territories to develop. I am not sure, even if we do develop this Northern Strategy, the three governments at the end of the day will have to agree to the final document.

Now, in terms of priorities for the pan-territorial stuff, I am not sure if the other two governments would have the same priority as us. We may differ. I don't know how it is going to turn out at the end of the day, if we are going to agree on these pan-territorial issues. That is one concern I have. Nevertheless, with these goals and objectives that are in the framework, I agree. But I think, we, as the Territories, have to identify our own priorities versus Nunavut and the Yukon because we are all different. There might even be subheadings for different regions; for instance, gas and oil, diamonds or whatever we come up with. So there has to be a specific category for each of the territories and their priorities. There are a lot of these headings that are the goals and objectives that are in the framework I agree with. But there are going to be more subheadings within those areas.

I know that we are moving in the right direction. It is going to take us a lot of work. I don't know if we are going to conclude what the Prime Minister said hopefully by 2006. We are starting now. The funding that was given to us when they launched the strategy, this initiative, is not

going to be in place until some time in June I believe. Our portion of it is around \$40 million. We still haven't decided how we are going to utilize that. Are we going to support all the stakeholders? Are we going to use some of this money to get input from the stakeholders, the municipal and band councils, or the Aboriginal Summit? I am not sure. These are questions that need to be answered. There are a lot of issues pertaining to developing this Northern Strategy. It has to be a comprehensive one because this is for the medium and long-term plan for the three territories as it stands now under that framework agreement that has been submitted here. I think our government has to take the initiative right now to start putting discussion papers or the first document out for further discussion with our northern leaders.

The direction that is being anticipated now is that we are going to do that as our government. We want to make sure that the stakeholders have enough time to look at whatever document we come up with ahead of time, but they need resources. I am not sure if our government has considered how we are going to help the stakeholders, because they need people to take a look at it. They are going to develop their own priorities based on the framework that is out there and what we give them as we see as the government. So they have to analyze all those, and they have to come up with their own document for their own organization, region or plan on these priorities for them. So we need resources. I am just wondering, Mr. Chair, if our government is going to be providing those types of resources to the stakeholders. That is one thing that has to be determined now before we start getting into asking our organizations and stakeholders to have their input. A lot of these stakeholders don't have the money to undertake this type of initiative on their own. Money is always tight in that respect.

The priorities for our government, like gas and oil, I agree with. Also revenue sharing, devolution and working with our northern aboriginal governments which is going to be key for us to develop our comprehensive strategy for us here in the Territories. It is going to take a lot of people, consultation and work put into this strategy. It might not be done within a year. I think it might take a little longer if we are going to do a thorough, comprehensive Northern Strategy only for us here in the Territories. I am not sure how quickly for the other two territories, but, at the end of the day, the three governments would have to sit down and agree to what is in that particular strategy. Hopefully the Government of Canada would look at this strategy and say this is what the people of the North, the three northern governments want and let's see how we can help them with their aspirations. It is going to take us a lot of time, effort and resources.

I agree with all of the other comments that Members made. It is going to be individual people who want to have comments and input. It is going to be a challenge, not only for us but for the three territories that will put this comprehensive Northern Strategy in place. We have to do a thorough work to make it very comprehensive because it is not only for today or next year or the year after, it is for the long term. It is for our generations to come, so we have to do as much as we can to make sure that we cover everything within this strategy. Mahsi.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Zoe. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will add a few comments onto this. I like what I see in a lot of this. I kind of look at everything in black and white. I think things are usually pretty simple, like Mrs. Groenewegen has said. One of the things that I like here is this resource revenue sharing. I am reading here where 100 percent of the royalties go back to Ottawa. I don't agree with them. This is our territory. These are our resources. The benefits from these resources should stay here. I think this government has actually taken it upon themselves to try and make sure that the resources stop here and people of the Northwest Territories benefit. I commend them for that. I think that they will be able to accomplish that. I read in here with interest where it says the lands are administered by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. We don't use that the word anymore. That is an old word. It is just a lot of things in here that I see. Like I said, I see everything in black and white. I don't like the fact that we are continually being tied in with the other two territories. I like to think that we are the Northwest Territories; we are not the pan-territories. However, other than that, most of the things that I see in here I like. This is something that will be getting looked at by the leaders throughout the Northwest Territories. With the leadership that we have in the Beaufort-Delta, I am sure they are going to be more than happy to give us their point of view. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I have just a few comments. For the vision of the Northwest Territories, I was really curious in terms of seeing if our government will ask some of our elders. Now, I can see clearly the vision. Now, I see. Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger...

---Laughter

...to ask our elders to ask about the visions for the Northwest Territories. Our elders have always given us visions and stories about our land and people. They have a vision about the Mackenzie River. They have a vision, believe it or not, about the pipeline. My grandmother talked about the cruise missiles coming through the Mackenzie Valley way before it came down the Mackenzie Valley. They had stories. It would be very interesting in this government here to ask our elders, who have some special knowledge about this land -- we've been here for thousands of years -- to ask them what their thoughts are on the vision for the North. They surely can help us about the land, especially about how we take care of it and how we are supposed to take care of the land in light of the development that is going to come down here. I guess I would like to see if this Northern Strategy process would incorporate some of our elders, a special room that would give us some stories to help us. I think that is one of our keys here, is to get the elders involved in this process here. Right down the Mackenzie Valley, we have wonderful old people who have stories, visions and prophets, things that would happen for the Northwest Territories.

What are we to expect in the life of this government? I certainly would like to see some development happening

in our region in terms of possibly a two-lane highway in the Sahtu to Tuktoyaktuk in terms of infrastructure. Health services for our people in the small community, maybe our vision is in Colville Lake, we can see the doctor more than what happens now. We see a dentist twice a year in Colville Lake. Maybe we can see them longer. Those old people there really look forward to the vision of the North. Mr. McLeod said that there are lots of resources here. How come some of our communities don't see some of the services that other regions take for granted? That puzzles them. Those things that we look forward to, in terms of some of the basic needs in our communities, that the other centres take for granted. That is just the way it is. But, hopefully, we could change that around, that our old people could stay in the region rather than fly out. So those are the things that mean a lot.

That is why I say, Mr. Chair, that when we look towards our leaders and Ministers, people back home say those are our leaders. We have to support them. You ask us, we give you words. That is what they told me back home. You are our leaders, so we give you words. The same thing goes back to our Ministers. They are our leaders. They are the ones that are working on our behalf. So I am glad that Mr. Handley had this discussion here in terms of a strategy for the vision of the Northwest Territories. They are asking us what the vision is for the Northwest Territories. What are you guys doing? What is our vision? They have all these resource developments. We have all of these things going in the Northwest Territories. Give us something to look forward to. We can say with pride, maybe down in Ottawa, maybe down in our communities, we can say this is what we plan for the Northwest Territories. What do you think about this? They have to look for something to keep going. We have the Mackenzie gas project possibly coming through. We are not too sure if it is certain yet, but there are lots of good talks of it coming through. People want to see something of benefit from that project. I am more interested to see what kind of results you get from the discussions from the communities and from my elders. You have to get to the elders. I don't know how you are going to do it, to listen to them. There are not many of us in the Northwest Territories. We are very close in terms of our families. But the smaller communities really want to see the basic needs at least being met. That is what I want to say, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Does the committee agree that consideration of Ministers' statements...Oh, Mr. Premier. Sorry.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to make some closing comments on this discussion we had this afternoon. I want to say, first of all, that I really do listen carefully and will read Hansard very carefully on the good comments that were made today. I think that was a good discussion, the kind of discussion that I hope we can have more often because there are many things going on in this territory and in the North that we have no control over, whether it is by big multinationals or whether it is by other governments or whatever there may be. We are not in control of it. I don't feel that we have to control everything, but we have to be part of everything. We have to understand what is going on. It makes me very uneasy if we are just drifting along with the development. It used to be that development just happened incrementally. You found another patch of good

land, farmers moved there and then they moved further north and further west. In our territory, it was we would find another mine or another pool of gas and you would have development that way. I believe we have an opportunity to manage that.

There are a few people who talked about some good practical suggestions that stood out, like the trust fund. Many of you mentioned the cost of living, a common thread we have here as northerners.

When we first began to look at the strategy, I thought we did, as a Legislative Assembly, work on our own NWT strategy as our guidance for the life of our government. I believe that's a good document. When we started to look at the North, and I had discussions with the Prime Minister going back over a year ago, we realized that the North is not just the Northwest Territories, just Yukon or Nunavut or just a combination of those three. There are many issues that affect all of us, so it was necessary to look at some things that were pan-territorial and say we can't talk about a climate change strategy or an energy strategy or sovereignty or security as just being Northwest Territories. We need to look at some of those things pan-territorial, but there are some things that are specific to our territory.

I see this document we will develop this spring as a first cut of a strategy as being one that will have a chapter or chapters on pan-territorial issues, but there will, very clearly, be a chapter on the Northwest Territories. As Members have said, we are quite different than Nunavut or Yukon. So there would be a chapter on the Northwest Territories, a chapter on Nunavut and a chapter on the Yukon.

Why include the other territories into the strategy? Well, it is because of the pan-territorial vision we need to have, a northern or arctic vision. Also because as one territory talking about its own issues, we may feel it's really big but when we look at all the priorities the federal government has, we are just a small piece of the whole agenda. So how do we make our issues into a major force in Ottawa? That is to talk about the North as a northern unit, because that's how the Prime Minister sees it. I am very happy with the extent to which the Prime Minister has bought into this and the extent to which he understands the pan-territorial issue, but he also understands the individual territories are very, very different and that one size doesn't fit all. We are going to have to do things different for us than the way you do it in the Yukon or Nunavut.

The other one is we look forward. We are very lucky because today it's us. We are riding the top of the wave in terms of economic development and lots of exciting things on the political front. Tomorrow it might be the Yukon, it could be Nunavut. So we will go through these things, but I think we have to work together with our northern partners on it.

Not only do we work with northerners, we also work with the Council of the Federation, that's with all the Premiers across the country. A few years ago, we moved from the kids' table to the big table. Other Premiers don't talk about the Premier of the Northwest Territories or Yukon as government leaders anymore. They talk about us as Premiers. We get exactly the same rights at the table as they do. They support us on our issues. We support them on their issues. I think by working together, that common thread we talked about goes further than just in the Northwest Territories. It's a common threat right across

the North. I believe we have more clout nationally and globally if we talk about the North as a place that we all live and we can all work together at.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

HON. JOE HANDLEY: So we will put together a strategy this spring. I am determined that we have something that we can take back. I like Mr. Yakeleya's comments about the elders, that they have vision. I don't know if it's something that comes from age. When you are young, you think you are invincible and life goes on forever, and as you get older you start thinking about what purpose you have served. How do I make a lasting difference that's going to go on? Maybe it's partly my age that lends me to want to have our government leave a vision that has some impact over the longer term. We are only here for four years and then somebody else comes along and we don't want to be just moving all over the place. We need a plan where we are going. Part of that has to be with other territories. Part of it has to be on our own.

It is about getting food and shelter and protection, but a strategy goes a lot further than that. Those are the basics. What we are talking about as we develop the strategy is the right of our people in the Northwest Territories, and in the North generally, to have equality with all Canadians. For us, as a government, to have the resources to be able to deliver the same kind of quality of programs and services as Canadians get anywhere else, that's what people want. That often goes beyond the basics. We all, as Canadians, have an equal right to benefit from the wealth in this country and the rights we enjoy in this country. We will do it a little differently in Quebec than we do in the Northwest Territories or Newfoundland, but we all have a right to that. You shouldn't have to live a second-class life just because you live in the North or you live in a small community or you live in a community where it isn't right on a mine site or next door to a mine or a pipeline or something. That is what we should strive for in our Northern Strategy.

Environment is important, in my mind. That's critical. That lasts forever, but we sure change it a lot. We need to manage how development happens and we need to clean up the messes that have been there and we need to manage how that environment is going to be managed in the long term. You know non-renewable resources don't come back, but we don't want to live in a wasteland.

Sovereignty issues are important and we need to look at that. That's a pan-territory one, as is environment, in my view, because both of them go beyond any borders. None of us want to see somebody else having the right to just go in and occupy a piece of land because they want to get the resources off it, nor should they have the right to have missiles whizzing down the valley or going over our territory, nor should we be having ships travelling through the Northwest Passage without ever asking or having regulations. Those are things that are important to us too, on environment and sovereignty.

Another one that's very important, in my mind, is climate change and energy. When I met with the western Premiers last June or July, one of the things that I was very happy that we achieved was having an agreement among all the western Premiers on a Western Energy Alliance. I think it was Mr. Braden who gave me a copy of the Globe and Mail where the Yukon called for an arctic energy strategy. We are doing things, but we are doing it

a little bit piecemeal here. So we need to bring this together as territories.

I think we have been sort of, to some extent, used by some people in the South. Not intentionally in an abusive way, but we have been on things like health research, as an example. Why aren't we leaders on health research? Why aren't we doing northern health research ourselves? Aboriginal people have lived here for a long time with traditional medicine, but you don't see it in our health system. It's all southern pills. Why aren't we doing research. Why do have people come here for the summer and do fieldwork on us and then go home and write their papers? We should be taking control of issues like that. Maybe not just us as the Northwest Territories, but maybe in cooperation with other territories.

There are a lot of areas where we need not just food and shelter, but we need control of our own lives. We need to control what's going on around us. We certainly need the support of the big industry and their development and ability to generate an economy. We need the federal government, as well, with their role in this country of ours and their ability to move things. We need the Prime Minister. So this document I see is one that is a combination of putting together a strategy for us in the Northwest Territories and for each of the other northern jurisdictions to do the same, and also to deal with some of these pan-territorial issues, and then to develop action plans that will say here's how we're going to clean up these environmental sites, here's how we're going to take control on the health side, here's how we're going to manage our economic development, our regulatory business. But that's the kind of document I see.

I very much see this, as well, Mr. Chairman, as a living document. I don't think we plan to prepare a strategy this spring and it comes out in a nice, fancy bound copy and then that's the end of it and it's the strategy. I think this will change, and it's a document that we should be talking about and elders should be talking about and school children should be talking about, about where it's taking us.

As I said in my introductory comments, we have an obligation for those very specific things that our constituents need right now, but we are the leaders who are going to have to take charge of the big vision of where we're going. We're the ones who present the whole territory and we need to do it, of course, with the regional and community people, but it's us who have that responsibility.

I want to say, Mr. Chairman, I really appreciate the comments today. I think it's a good beginning of discussions on our strategy. Like everyone else, I look forward to moving ahead with this, moving ahead with some of the stuff we've started like the plan to move on the April 6th Ottawa trip. I think when we do the briefing on devolution, you will find that it's moving. These are not things we've been talking about for a long time with no progress. I think we are, as a government, making some good progress on these things, and I'll be pleased to share that with you as we continue on. I'm determined that we will keep the Prime Minister to his word, and I know he's determined to keep to his word too, so here's our opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Mr. Premier. Does the committee agree that consideration of Ministers' statements 86-15(3), 88-15(3), 89-15(3), 90-15(3) and 91-15(3), and Tabled Document 108-15(3) are concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Agreed. I would like to thank you very much. Consideration of these documents is concluded and we will call for a short recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Welcome back, committee. I will call Committee of the Whole back to order. We are on the NWT Housing Corporation. I will ask Minister Krutko if he would like to bring in his officials. Is the committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Then I will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms, if he would please escort the witnesses to the table. We are on general comments.

Mr. Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses, for the record? Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Madam Chair. To my left is Mr. Jeff Anderson, chief financial officer; on my right is the president of the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Fred Koe.

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

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. When I was first elected, they said housing would be one of my biggest files and it certainly has been and continues to be to this day. In fact, I just got another letter today that I would like to table.

---Laughter

There is a young family making a low income. They are living in an old house and want some help, but we can't help them. I don't know what happened to our program to help young families who want to do things by themselves, Madam Chair. That's kind of touchy when I get a letter like that.

So somehow our programs have gravitated away from social housing and it's something that I have been pressing, especially in this sitting of the Legislature. I don't know when or where it was that government decided to get away from social housing. I don't know how it came to be, but the fact remains that the people in the communities expect it and want it. If we are going to be a consensus government and listen to the people, then we are going to have to listen to them. They want social housing. They want programs like this to help out young families who want to renovate or get into new housing who have low income. That's the reality that's out there. Not everyone is making a good income and we gear all the programs towards them. We have EDAP and the rest of them. Not everyone can afford to buy a house in the communities. I don't know if they will be able to for a long time to come, Madam Chair.

I would like to urge the Minister to look at this and to seriously consider it. In fact, people are saying I am building a half house too. They come from the era when we had the HAP program, the Housing Assistance Program. People are just looking for help for their electrical, or for the plumbing or shingles, or the windows and doors which are very expensive nowadays. They are just looking for assistance to help them build the rest of their house, Madam Chair. Yet we don't have a program for that anymore. I believe it's detrimental to our communities, our people and the young people in the smaller communities. In larger communities, it's not that noticeable, but in smaller communities it certainly is.

I don't know how we are going to do it, but I will continue to urge this government towards social housing. At least in my riding, they are asking for social housing and I think we should listen to that and design something around that and use some of our resources. We have a bit of a window, so maybe we could do it for them.

Right now, the core needs are so high we are going to have to alleviate what we can right off the bat, just like for the community of Trout Lake. We are scheduling one house a year because they are a very small population. This year alone, we have three or maybe four young families who want their own accommodations and want to take on the responsibility of owning a house. We just cannot do it. If we are able to design a program right off the bat and put in four-plexes or six-plexes into communities and alleviate those core needs right off the bat and address four needs at once would be a very good use of our resources, Madam Chair. I would like the corporation to look at that because it would alleviate four families in Trout Lake and that takes care of everybody's needs. If you don't today, then it makes the need look that much more dire. So that's how much of a big impact we can have in a small community like that.

It's the same in Fort Simpson. The needs are high there. I noticed that in the capital plan, I think they want to do four units in a couple of years from now and six units three years from now. If there is a way, Madam Chair, that we can switch those long-term plans around and get those six units this fiscal year or the next fiscal year, we will get a bit of a jump on it. The way that inflation is, even though inflation looks low, every year that we put things off, things are costing more and more and has a big impact on the way we do business. In fact, just in Fort Liard alone the plan is to spend \$2 million there and I am glad that we are going to do it all at once instead of waiting, because it is going to cost us that much more. To do a frame house nowadays is really expensive. I think we are being charged about \$200,000. It never used to be that way. We used to build a frame house for \$100,000, but for whatever reason the market is depressed so it is costing much more to build these same houses. If we can address those needs right away, that is one way of getting a jump on the forced growth that is happening.

Speaking of Fort Liard, Madam Chairperson, I mentioned we have a \$2 million program going in there and the Minister is well aware and has been working with the community of Fort Liard. We do have to design the program, we have to get a competent manager in there and we need lots of inspections, we need adequate inspections to go in there as we are retrofitting, as we are building, as we are catching up to Fort Liard again. Because with \$2 million, it would be a shame not to do it properly and waste all that money and resources that Fort

Liard has an opportunity to rebuild or rebase their community in terms of homes and housing.

There again, I would throw that out as well. Let's catch up to them. Liard has got a great need, let's do four-plexes or six-plexes. Let's get them in there. Let's use economies of scale so that as we are building, we can address as many needs as we can right off the bat.

I was thinking today, it's been a while since I spoke about mould.

---Laughter

That is a huge impact that Fort Liard has and the reason why we are spending so many resources there is that we have to address it. I am not too sure what the department is doing there, but I was talking to a fellow back in Fort Simpson during my last visit and he said, look I've got this machine that helps kill the mould dead cold, it actually kills them and you can paint on it. What we have been doing in the past is that we have been painting over the mould and not seeing it, but it is still alive. This guy says that he has got a machine that actually kills the mould. I said that's nice, I wonder if the corporation is aware of it. But it's just taking little unique ideas like that and actually exploring them and seeing if there are some facts behind what he is talking about and test it. Where to better test it than Fort Liard? I would urge the department to at least look at that because if that is true, then they are going to save a lot of money because the mould is into a lot of wood and a lot of drywall. We are talking about actually tearing it out and if there is a way to save it and not actually have to tear walls out, Madam Chairperson, then I am certain that it is going to reduce the cost.

That is one way, especially in Fort Liard, that I see it happening. I have been working with the department too, to set up a project interim manager for a couple years to oversee this project. It's \$2 million but, I'm not too certain about the plan of attack. Perhaps the Minister can address that for me. As well, I know a lot of it is into repairs, some may in fact be new units as well as some suggestions like let's do a four-plex or six-plex. I know that having a housing authority or a housing society is an important aspect of the department being able to assist the community. I'm not sure what stage that is at, if they are able to negotiate this contract for Fort Liard.

Even though we are building all these houses, Madam Chairperson, another thing that concerns me is that we are taking people that have been in low rental or rental units for so long, that when they do finally move into houses of their own, they do not have the skill set to take care of their own homes. For whatever reason -- and I don't want to belittle these people -- they get caught up in having others take care of their plumbing needs or their repair needs. I spoke to the Minister about actually doing a home maintenance program before we transfer these people over. Some people love that kind of stuff, they have been in the maintenance field or they've had a home before and this is a new home so they know how to take care of a home, but for the most part we see lots of homes getting destroyed quickly and I think that is part of it. The little holes that are happening are not being patched right away, they are just letting it add up and then the home gets damaged rather quickly and it's just hole after hole and then that whole room or that whole wall looks horrible.

It's just teaching them the basics and I know it's not going to be one time only, it will have to be an annual event. Perhaps I will just stop here now, Madam Chairperson, and let other committee members refer to the opening comments of the Minister. In fact, if the Minister can address some of the concerns that I did bring up. Thank you.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I would like to thank the Member for his concerns and issues because I think it is important to realize that we can't develop social housing, because social housing has been discontinued since 1992. It's almost 13 years ago that the federal government got out of building social housing. I believe that is one of the main problems that we are running into in the Northwest Territories, because that program is not delivered anywhere in Canada anymore. Because of that, we are having such a housing crisis, not only here in the North, but also all across Canada because there are no more federal dollars expended for social housing.

Another major challenge that we face, especially in the Member's riding, is we don't have local housing authorities in all communities. We have some 23 local housing authorities, but there are still 10 communities out there that we don't have a presence in. Most of those communities are in the Nahendeh area and also in the small communities like Colville Lake and other communities in the territory. That again is another arrangement that we have to try to work through, because we don't have social housing stock or public housing in these communities. In Fort Liard, there was a federal program that developed Kotaneelee housing, which was delivered through CMHC in Ottawa. Again it is a program that they walked away from and we got stuck holding the bag. Now, because of that, it's costing us about \$2 million just to deal with the mould problem that is there in the community.

One of the ways that we can get around that is through either establishing local housing authorities in those communities or else establishing universal partnership agreements with the local community council or the band council to look at taking over managing housing in those communities, so that we can look at delivering housing programs in those communities. Right now the way the programs are being delivered, especially in a lot of the smaller communities, is application-based programs. Right now, we have in the budget some \$8.6 million for IHP and home repair programs. Most of the expenditures that are going into the Member's riding are for those types of programs, such as IHP, which is Independent Housing Programs that people applied on.

Again, it's about \$1 million that is going into the Member's riding for the IHP; in all, about \$140,000 for home repair programs. Again, the challenge that we face is that we have to get away from the idea that because the Housing Corporation does not have a local presence, we still have to find a way to deliver housing in those communities. With regard to the Member's concern regarding core needs; especially in the community that we designate through the needs survey, there was a motion passed in this House because of the surveys that we have done. We have 20 communities in the Northwest Territories that fall well in excess of 30 percent. In some cases, using

Colville Lake and Wrigley -- Colville Lake is at 67 percent and Wrigley is 50 percent -- roughly 50 percent of the people in the community of Wrigley are in need of housing.

Again in order to meet that demand, we have to either make a major investment in housing and decide in order to bring these units down just to meet the 30 percent level, never mind trying to exceed it, we need about 188 houses for these 20 communities to get them below that 30 percent core need. That is a major investment; somewhere in excess of \$20 million. Those are the types of things that we have to work on.

In regard to the mould -- I know we had this debate in the House -- we had a professional person go in there and do a report on the mould problem in Wrigley and through that he made recommendations on how to deal with the problem. We have already committed financial dollars to this program and we have already put the materials on order, as the Member knows. We are waiting for the band in Fort Liard, in regard to Beaver Enterprises, to give us a proposal for a negotiated contract.

Again we are working on it, but, as the Member mentioned, there is a problem when people go from social housing into homeownership. We do have different programs in regard to a Supported Lease Program. This is for those people who are in social housing that want to purchase the unit that they are in. It is a two-year transitional process. Within that two years, you work with the tenant to really get an understanding of what it really means to be a homeowner. Every month you get him to pay the power bill, or pay the water bill, or pay the fuel bill and make them aware that these are actually costs that you are going to have to be responsible for when you become a homeowner. So they can do it while they are still in social housing and do a two-year transitional process. Also work with them to find where they can get a mortgage to either mortgage the purchase of the unit that they are in or work them into a program that is going to be able to assist them, such as EDAP.

That is one of the ways we are trying to work people into homeownership but, again, it comes back all the way to our core needs in a lot of these communities. That is some of the responses to the Member's questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. On the list for general comments, I have Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Villeneuve and Ms. Lee. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Just reading the opening comments from the Minister, for general comments, Madam Chairperson, I want to say... Like my colleague Mr. Menicoche mentioned, in the Sahtu region housing has been a really big issue for me in terms of the services, the building of houses, and just basic, general housing. I believe, over the past year, we have made some progress in terms of taking care of those needs. We are still a long way in terms of the housing programs, especially for the community of Fort Good Hope which is in dire straights in terms of home repairs and improvements for the people, and for the elderly people in the community of Colville Lake, as the Minister made previous comments to, into the housing program.

I want to just talk, Madam Chairperson, about just one subject. There are lots of subjects we will talk on, so I want to just focus on one in terms of the Minister and the corporation's response to housing needs, focusing on the professional needs in our community, the market housing initiative that was in last year. There was a real concern in my region to get some houses into our communities for professionals who want to stay in our region. The department responded we had to work out some of the kinks there, and so I wanted to say that I see that the Housing Corporation is looking at Norman Wells having some more units go in there. We have been asking for a long time to help set up the regional Sahtu health board in our community. We have always been told that we don't have the housing units and it's been a big desire for my region to get a health board set up and I am happy that the Housing Corporation is responding by suggesting having eight units go into that community to support that initiative. I know that the people will be happy in our region.

I am the first to admit that the first year of this initiative didn't work out as well as it should have, and that the government could have done a better job with consultation and planning. However, those are the trials and errors of putting the program in right away. The program was put in pretty fast, again to meet the needs, and this program needs to be tightened up on several fronts. Still, housing is a big issue for us.

The market housing in our communities in the Sahtu is very critical, as I said before. The main focus was the professional homes for teachers, nurses and even social workers. To get these professionals into our communities was difficult. However, I think we are starting to look at a solution to it. I know from the reports, that maybe we should look at the trailers that are in there now, and redesign them and some other units. That would go faster and be more suitable for our community members who are planning to make their home in the Sahtu for a couple of years or even longer. I know the cost of the units was an issue for some of our professionals in there, and I understand that the cost will come down by having some of these units come into Norman Wells and to the other communities in the North. They would be more attractive to our communities.

I guess, Madam Chairperson, what I am saying is that in our region we are looking for these homes for professionals so we can have people stay in our communities to teach, to look after our health care system and to stay longer. For a long time we have been struggling with how to get qualified professional people to stay in our communities, and these units are nothing. They are a good step in terms of getting them into our regions. The second phase of this market housing initiative I fully support, on behalf of the Sahtu, to go ahead with it.

I looked at the report one time, Madam Chairperson, and the Sahtu had the highest needs and we had the least amount of money going into our region, in terms of repairs, and I think that is changing. I want to say that the increase of the rental scale was of some concern. I hope that we can work out some arrangements for strong financial counselling for our people who are going to move into those brackets. I know a lot of people who want to buy their own homes. Again, we are somehow caught in that dependency in terms of the government owning it and paying for all of the facilities, the utilities. Now we are

having a change of our thinking in terms of becoming homeowners in terms of owning our homes. For some of that, it is a new notion for our people to be a homeowner. It requires some changing. We look forward to some strong counselling support that housing would give to our people in the Sahtu region. Small communities like Colville Lake, who goes to bat for them from the Housing Corporation? Me, as an MLA, on a daily basis. Who works for them? Who speaks on their behalf? I don't know. They have housing issues. I am not really sure how we can work that out with communities that don't have a voice on a regular or daily basis.

Again, I go back to Fort Good Hope because that is where most of my concerns were raised as an MLA. There is concern in Fort Good Hope by the old people who have their homes that lack the repairs and services. I am just hoping that the corporation will put money into home repair in these small communities. I went to one home, Mr. Chair, in Colville Lake, where there was plywood for a floor there. You can remove the plywood, and you can see the ground. Again, I go back to the basic needs of our people and housing is a basic need that, I think, needs to be looked at seriously.

I hope that this corporation gets the money and gets some fight for money from Ottawa to give them a significant amount of money to this corporation to build those homes for our people in the communities. You have to have our own people. The money has to be there. We can't cut back. Those are basic needs for our communities we are crying for. It is critical for people in our communities to have well-built homes. I hope the department look at some of those needs that are so vital to our people in small communities.

In closing, Mr. Chair, there was an elder I saw in Tulita who is from Fort Good Hope. This elder had his house broken into over this past winter. He has plastic on his windows during 43 and 44 below. Homes like that, it is a crime. It is in a community. I don't know how he made it through the winter, but he is 74 years old. He said that he would live in that home until someone would help him look after his house. Again, housing is key for our people in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as the Member mentioned, there are a lot of challenges we are facing, especially in the Sahtu communities. I think, as a government, we have to ensure that we are able to meet the challenge, but I think that one of the more important things is that we have to start to either put more dollars into the building of housing or else ensuring that we have a strategy in place. Right now, we are developing a northern housing strategy in conjunction with the Northern Strategy. But in order to meet the demands, like I mentioned, we need 188 houses on the ground just to bring our percentages down to 30 percent. There was a motion passed in this House. They want us to do that by year 2007. That is two years from now. With regard to that motion, we have to find ways of dealing with it. Again, the concern is that we cannot continue to blame the federal government for getting out of social housing and other things. I think we also have to realize that we have a lot of communities. The Sahtu is one of those areas where we have percentages well in excess of 30 percent. I will just mention the Member's communities: Colville Lake, 76 percent; Deline, 42 percent; Fort Good

Hope, 37 percent; and, Tulita, 36 percent. Again, just by those percentages alone, we realize how big the crisis is. Just to meet the demands of the community of Colville Lake, we have to put 15 units in there just to bring down the core need of 76 percent to 30 percent, almost doubling the houses that are presently in Colville Lake. So we are looking at 15 units that we are going to have to deliver just to meet that demand in the small community of Colville Lake. Again, there is a cost to that.

The same thing is with regard to Fort Good Hope. In Fort Good Hope, we have 168 houses. Out of that, 62 of those houses have some core need. So almost one-third of the housing in Fort Good Hope have something wrong with them. In just meeting the core need of people to get houses, again, we need some...Fort Good Hope, we are looking at 37 percent of those people are in core need. Again, it is a major challenge just to bring Fort Good Hope down to a certain level. We need something like 12 houses right away. We are, through the budgetary process and also looking at our surveys that were done, looking at putting almost \$5 million into the Sahtu this year.

With regard to housing, we are looking at almost \$1.3 million for independent housing so individuals can own their own homes through that program. Again, when you talk about maintenance programs and trying to bring our units up to a certain level, during my tour over the summer, I traveled from the Beaufort Sea down to the Deh Cho. One thing that I saw, which is pretty obvious, is that we have a lot of units that have deteriorated over time. You have a lot of old public housing in a lot of these communities that have had almost 30 or 40 years of life. The cost to repair these and to continue putting money in there is very expensive. Right now, just to do a maintenance program in the Sahtu, we are looking at almost \$700,000. That is for this summer.

I would like to thank the Member for supporting the initiative with regard to market housing because that is one initiative that I feel that we have to deliver. It has to be affordable. More importantly, you mentioned low income people trying to get homeownership. A lot of these people can't afford a \$200,000 home. For most of them, that is their first home. I think you have to be realistically aware that most of these people probably have seasonal employment, either working in the oil and gas industry, which is mostly with regard to the oil and gas sector, and most of that activity takes place in the winter months. Again, we have to be open to that and also work with communities to look at homeownership.

One of the other things that I think is important is that we do have a process for communities to be more involved in program delivery. We have what you call universal partnership agreements that we sign. It is a contract between ourselves, the local housing authorities, the band councils, and community organizations to deliver programs on our behalf. We have the Seniors' Society in the NWT, where we have this type of agreement to assist us in getting out there and explaining our programs and services and sitting down with the elders to explain the elders maintenance programs and explaining to the homeowners that there are repair programs out there and then also assist them by way of filling out applications and working with people at the regional level to improve that communication. Again, those are some of the areas that we are working on. We are developing a housing strategy for the North and I think in order to go to Ottawa and

knock on doors and meet with the Minister, what they are asking for is give us a housing strategy made in the North that will deal with your challenges in the Northwest Territories and write down what it's going to cost and give us some ideas and solutions as to how to deal with your housing crisis in the North, and that's what we're doing. Again, that's something that has been requested by the federal Minister of Housing that he wants us to develop such a strategy for the Northwest Territories and also for Northern Canada. So then when we do argue with our federal counterparts from the provinces, we can say look, these are the challenges we have in the North. This is what it's going to cost to fix it and these are the programs that we're going to be delivering to do that. So again, that's how we're trying to deal with that problem. With that, Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Next I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I wish to continue discussion on the housing initiative, also known as the trailer junket, and I wish to know about what are we going to do about trailers or the lack of trailers going into certain communities. Really what I'm getting at is we're putting another 20 trailers or so out. There will be about a total of, I think, around 42, but the total doesn't really matter so much. It's the fact that we're still missing trailers in some of these communities and they still have a requirement of health professionals such as nurses, teachers, et cetera, in communities that are getting nothing. Again, to inspire my confidence, to get my support on this trailer initiative, I have to understand what we are doing about these communities that are struggling to get places and locations for these nurses. What are we doing on a case-by-case basis to reaffirm that that's exactly what the community wants, that's what they want to support, and that they can have a solid number to deal with, such as rent? I'm not going to pick a community to talk about, I'll let the specific Members speak about their community needs, but we need a dollar number so if you go to whatever community, these communities need to know in advance about roughly what this rent is going to be. Because if they are going to hold on or try to attract a nurse or a teacher or whatnot, they have to be comfortable by saying we can guarantee you a place to stay for \$1,000 a month, if that's what the cost is.

We have communities that are not on this list and that affects us all here. Someone might think it doesn't affect the Yellowknife Members. Well, I would argue it does, because what that does is take resources that have to go pay for hotel fees. That makes unhappy Members and we want happy Members on this side of the House so we can get business done and not talk about this trailer problem continually. So what are we going to do about those communities that aren't getting any of this trailer initiative? Maybe if the Minister could make me happy a little bit on the issue, if it's possible. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, these are mobile homes, not trailers. These are actually physical homes that people live in and I think it's important to realize that since this program has come out, we have identified 42 units; 22 the first year and 20 this year. But I think because of the publicity that this program

has got, I think it's helped us in attracting other communities who are now calling us asking us if they can get these units in their community, such as the hamlets in different communities. They are calling us, we don't have to call them and I think because they realize that this is such a good deal financially to themselves, but also they are in the same challenge we are trying to attract professionals, SAO financial officers, that, if anything, we do have to reach out to more communities with this program.

We're only going to be able to deliver this year to communities in regard to Norman Wells, because of the health board challenges. We were talking to people in Rae in regard to their challenge with the Tlichó deal, because they realize there's a major challenge and also their community services board is requesting that they realize in order to face this challenge, they have to have something that's affordable at the end of the day and it's also economically cost efficient. I think that in order for us to do it, one thing that we've done is we have looked at restructuring these facilities. We've talked to businesses that are now coming to us asking us to partner with them so that they can build either multi-plex units or look at duplex structures. I think that we are definitely seeing a major increase in other organizations out there that are now asking us to deliver.

I think the whole idea of the market strategy was to ensure that we can develop a product which is designed for the North, but also we're able to meet the needs of a lot of our professionals. I think you can't just restrict them to teachers or nurses or the RCMP or hamlet staff. We are starting to realize that a lot of these communities are running into barriers where they cannot even deliver basic core programs that this government offers, because of not having staff.

We just got a request from Tulita from an individual that used to work there who had to leave the community because they couldn't find housing, and now they want to go back there because now they realize that they have an option.

So these are professionals who have left and are coming back because now they realize that there is housing accommodation there. I think that from the experience that we've had from the first phase, we are realizing that now there are people who have options. We are getting requests from communities where we have these units. Yes, they were vacant, but at least now we have for sale signs in the windows and now people are calling our regional offices requesting that they be considered to be able to purchase these units. We have a community that didn't have a market and now there is a market, and that's the whole idea of developing a market strategy for non-market communities where there wasn't one in the first place. So again, we have people who now have an option, which wasn't there a year ago.

Again, I'd like to ensure that we do offer this to other communities that find themselves in a similar predicament, where we have to be able to work with them to ensure that they do have adequate, affordable, suitable housing for the professionals in their communities but, more importantly, to ensure the communities are able to deliver core programs without having this barrier in their face because they cannot attract professionals in their community. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Minister. The reason I raise this point again is to reaffirm that we still have communities that we're not meeting their basic needs, and by no means I'd like to restrict them by saying only nurses can get them or whatnot, or only lawyers or teachers or whatever the case may be as applicable. I wouldn't want us to think that. I mean, we have to say something. If SAOs, communities want them to do whatever they want, that's their business and that's not my business. Our business here is to make sure that we give them that type of resource so they can have that opportunity. Not to pick on my good colleague from Tu Nedhe, but I know a few of the units are empty there and you're saying that we've got for sale signs on there and we're having people call us. Well what's stopping us from selling? Now we've heard the song about people are calling us to buy them. I don't want to sound hostile or anything, but let's just sell these darn things if no one wants to rent them. Why are we holding on to them?

I guess in that respect, because, of course, time is running short, I'll also ask this question, which is again I stress not to pick on my good colleague, I'm sure they need those seven units, but if we have not all five units used at this time, then why would we continue to put two more units into Resolution and why wouldn't we consider another community that is not even on this list? So really what I am getting at is a share the wealth kind of perspective. I'm not trying to take them away from Resolution by any means. I want to make that clear to everyone and even make eye contact with my colleague. I hope he knows I mean that in the best way, he's probably giving me a little scowl at this time. But the issue is we've got units in communities that aren't even being used at this time. You can pick any community you want, but if we've got them sitting there empty now, why are we putting more in there when we've got communities that don't have them? Really, that's the point. I just had to pick someone to put a name and a face to.

So the issue really is maybe we need to go back. Can I get a commitment from you to go back and evaluate at this time? Maybe we need a market housing initiative in the 2006-07 budget that can help spread some of this gap, but I don't want to be putting more modular homes into communities that are already sitting empty. No offence to the Minister, but if people are banging on our door and wanting to buy them, then sell the darn things because, as I see it, we are subsidizing either full houses or we're certainly subsidizing empty houses and I would sleep better at night by feeling good that people are sleeping in them, rather than us trying to heat them and let them freeze up or whatnot on their own, sitting empty, and we'll pay a certain premium if we run into the problems with them being empty.

So I apologize if my good Member on this side of the House is worried I was speaking on his community, and by no means I was. I'm just firmly against that if we're putting these continually into communities and they are not being used, we should be asking ourselves why do we continue to do this when we have communities out there that are getting nothing. I can't look them in the eye and say we'd rather have empty units in this community rather than give you a chance. So any thoughts from the Minister? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are not two units going into Fort Resolution this year. There's six units going into Rae-Edzo, two into Aklavik, eight into Norman Wells, two into Deline, two into Rae Lakes. But just in regard to Fort Resolution, since the last time I met with the Members, right now we do have an expression of interest by an individual, an employee with the local housing authority. We have someone who works in the mines who is interested in purchasing, and also we have an expression of interest by a teacher to look at renting or purchasing. So we are starting to see people come forward to our people at the regional office. They're putting in enquiries and I think now they realize that we do have for sale signs on these units and we will be taking offers from these people because I think it's important that we occupy them. But the other thing is that now we have people who are taking the pressures off social housing by moving them into these units so others can acquire those social units that we have.

I think it's important to note that we are seeing, all through the territory, an interest in these units. If the Member wants, I can give him an update.

In regard to Fort Liard, we have had discussions with the band about purchasing and also we've had a renewable resource officer interested in purchasing. So we do have people in those communities who are interested in.

Also, I mentioned Tulita. We have just received an expression of interest from a professional who is moving back to Tulita who is interested in purchasing this unit. So again, it shows you that people now have an option they didn't have before and they are attracting people back into our communities by way of ownership of a home. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: I have to agree with the Minister that they do have some very challenging tasks before them to try and alleviate some of the pressures that we have in our housing crisis in the NWT. I don't want to talk about a lot of the things that a lot of the other Members have already raised with respect to housing. I'm sure that in every community in the NWT we all have basically the same concerns and issues with housing, and options that probably could be the same options of how we are going to fix the problem. Probably everybody is along the same lines that just the delivery of the housing program is one of the big barriers to the programs at being effective and in alleviating the housing crisis.

With that, I have spoken with the Minister on prior occasions with respect to the delivery of the programs and the people that are delivering them at the regional level and at the LHO level. I'm sure the Minister is aware that a lot of the feedback he gets from clients in the communities, be it social housing clients or homeownership clients, is the lack of two-way communication between the department officials and the clients that they're there to serve. A lot of that communication just doesn't happen. Although a lot of the times the Minister gets the word that, yes, they are working on it or they are consulting with community

members about this or individuals with respect to their housing needs, but in a lot of cases that never happens and it never goes any further than that. A quick phone call or a visit, people would appreciate, even from the regional levels. That I have brought up with the Minister before and I'm sure we can work something out in the future to help avoid those kinds of simple problems that could be solved really easily.

More specifically, I would like to get on to some of the stuff like the maintenance management operating system. The Housing Corporation probably puts millions and millions of dollars into developing this program to make maintenance management of all the LHOs and the Housing Corporation a little more efficient and effective. When that program was implemented about five years ago, I was still employed with the local housing authority and we took this program and started using it and there were a couple or three years there that the program was just totally useless. I guess there's no better word for it. When the LHO managers get together every year to discuss LHO problems, funding arrangements and the like, with the Housing staff, there's always concerns there with the maintenance management system and how it isn't working and there are too many glitches in the system. Who even thought of that in the first place? Because there are many programs out there that have been developed by experts like Microsoft and whatnot that could have been just as easily incorporated into this inventory management system that the government reinvented.

When the LHOs get together, the managers get together every year and they kind of give the Housing Corporation a list of recommendations on changes that they could do to better deliver social housing programs or just basic EDAP programs and repair programs. A lot of those recommendations never get followed up or acknowledged. They just go and probably once they get into the office, they are just put on a shelf or put in the shredder and then the managers come back again a year later with the same concerns, the same public outcry about why these programs aren't working for them. Again, it seems to be like a really bad cycle of lack of communication or response to what the LHOs are telling them. They are the people that are dealing directly with all these housing programs and the clients that they are out there to deliver them to. I think that any recommendations that come from those people should be heeded and maybe incorporated into some of the programs that the Housing Corporation wants to change or customize to individual community needs. I think that's something that is very important for the Housing Corporation to understand. These people are on the front lines and they're the ones who are allocated a certain amount of dollars, which usually is not a whole lot. They deliver to the best of their ability and when they come back with good plans, they're usually just gone unabated.

With that, just as far as the market housing initiative goes, I think it was a good idea that they are trying to establish some kind of market in these communities. But I have to tell the Minister, that could have a real negative effect with new homeowners. If you're creating your own market, which might be a little over inflated if you start getting appraisers in there and doing market value not really based on development costs per se, but more on a market that isn't even there and you start saying these mortgages are worth \$160,000 for a housing unit which is probably not worth any more than \$100,000. So I think this whole

market housing initiative the department has to be really careful with when they're trying to establish a free market when it isn't actually a free market, it's more or less a market driven by government. I don't think that lends itself as far as helping people buy their own homes. I think just to have a negative impact on that part.

I know the federal government funding for the public housing in Canada in general is going to be sunsetted, I think they said in 2032 and that's why they're taking this new market rent initiative and reinstating it because the LHOs have to find better ways of making people pay rent. I don't think that this big rent adjustment or this new phasing in of the new rent scale is going to help anybody. I think the corporation has to take a more individual approach to helping their clients. They have to treat everybody independently and individually. We don't have a whole lot of people here. We're only talking maybe 5,000 clients or so in the homeownership program and not many more into public housing. I think the government and the Housing Corporation should treat everybody individually, based on their circumstances, their income, their history and their aspirations and the like. It just doesn't happen, it seems, and people get kind of frustrated with that.

But you know, that's just one of the obstacles that the Housing Corporation has to tackle in the future and I look forward to seeing some improvement. Just a quick question, I guess, with the EDAP that's being delivered here in Yellowknife and the eligibility requirements for that. I just want to ask the Minister what is the income threshold requirement for a resident in Yellowknife to get the EDAP eligibility?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just with regard to the Member's question, I think it's important that we start getting communities more involved in the program side of housing. I think I mentioned earlier that one of the ways we're doing that is we're working out universal partnership agreements with bands or Metis locals to hire people to explain the programs and be the contact person in that community to do the follow-up with the different regional staff. I know my office is always open to Members. If you do have concerns from your constituency or your ridings on a particular individual or client that we're working with, I'm more than willing to assist you by making the headquarters staff aware and also working with people in the regional operations to make them aware these issues are out there and for them to act on it.

I think, if anything, if we can improve the communication between the Housing Corporation and our tenants and people in our communities. That's going to go a long way to ensuring the delivery of our programs and services that we have to simplify, but also make it user friendly. I know for a fact that was one of the issues I've heard throughout my visits over the summer in a lot of communities. It seemed like people came to their communities, they took applications, they took a look at your house, they left and you don't see them for eight months. I think, if anything, we have to have better follow-up. I think from that I've basically instructed the department to start making use of these contractual agreements we have to improve the capacity of not only ourselves as an organization, but improve the involvement of the communities, local

housing authorities, to start taking more ownership of the program side of these things than simply being involved in the operations and maintenance of the community housing stock.

With regard to the local housing authorities, I know the biggest challenge they face is in the area of collections. But we have been definitely improving in that area and most communities are well in excess of 87 to 90 percent collections. I think that shows you that the communities are being more involved and working with our clients. I think that we do have to work out a system that we know people in order to...You mentioned the question of what it takes for someone to apply for EDAP. I think in Yellowknife, for instance, it's well in excess of \$78,000. I think a lot of people in communities don't earn that type of salary and we have to look at our programs to ensure we don't discriminate on the basis of income. We have to ensure the program is universal, but we also have to have allowance that people should not be excluded simply on the amount of income they generate. We also have to realize we have to look at ways of how to spread out a person's mortgage who wants to go for EDAP. Like I mentioned, even by extending it for another five years could be a way these people could find it affordable. Instead of going 20 years, go 25 years. There's the possibility to go 30. I think those are the types of things we have to look at in regard to reviewing the mandate of the corporation and also in developing a Northern Strategy.

I think one of the challenges we're facing, not only here in the North but across Canada, is why is it that First Nations people make up the majority of people in public housing in Canada. I think that's a question we have to look at. Social housing is an issue, but how do you make that transition of three generations of people who have lived in social housing or public housing? We have to break that barrier. For some reason we're not seeing that transition.

I've been working with Billy Erasmus with AFN and we've also heard about an aboriginal housing strategy and that's one of the issues they're trying to face also. They have the same problems in the reserves in southern Canada and other places with respect to the whole area of housing.

Just with regard to an issue you raised about the maintenance programs we have. The program we use with regard to the maintenance management operations system, we have held workshops. There have been two in the last few weeks, one in the southern part of the territory in Hay River and one in Inuvik for people in the Sahtu and Beaufort-Delta region. We went over the maintenance program. One of the areas that I mentioned that we as the corporation have identified, we've put more dollars into the budget to look at the minor and major repairs we need on a lot of our stock, but also ensuring we have a good maintenance program so we have ongoing maintenance. You don't just do maintenance one year and then forget it for two or three and then realize you have a bigger problem than you did when you first started. The key is ongoing maintenance. You have to continue to keep up with your maintenance program. Again, in the budget, like I mentioned, there's \$5.3 million just to deal with public housing and to start making those improvements on our housing stock, but also to try to extend the life of those programs.

Another issue that you touched on was the whole area of social housing and the declining dollars with regard to

those social dollars, which will basically decline to zero in 2038. The biggest challenge we have there are most of the social housing programs, the 2,300 units we have, a large portion of this money, especially on the operations side, the O and M to operate these units, come out of that \$30 million. So how do we replenish those dollars back into our system? One of the ways we're looking at is selling off our housing units, to take those O and M dollars out of those units that we sell and put them back into these multi-plex units that we're looking at building, which are more economically efficient, and also cheaper to build.

I think the other area that we're having a challenge with is the whole area of land development; just trying to find assessable land to build. As I mentioned, we need 188 units. Where do you put them in a lot of these communities, because they do not presently have land available.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yeah!

---Applause

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move we report progress.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Wahoo!

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole? Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Ministers' statements 86-15(3), 88-15(3), 89-15(3), 90-15(3) and 91-15(3), as well as Tabled Document 108-15(3) and Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006, and would like to report progress, and that Ministers' statements 86-15(3), 88-15(3), 89-15(3), 90-15(3) and 91-15(3), and Tabled Document 108-15(3) are concluded. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. There is a motion on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya. The motion is in order. 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 Thursday, March 3rd, at 1:30 p.m.:

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| 1. Prayer | MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 3, 2005, at 1:30 p.m. |
| 2. Ministers' Statements | |
| 3. Members' Statements | ---ADJOURNMENT |
| 4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees | The House adjourned at 7:46 p.m. |
| 5. Returns to Oral Questions | |
| 6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery | |
| 7. Oral Questions | |
| 8. Written Questions | |
| 9. Returns to Written Questions | |
| 10. Replies to Opening Address | |
| 11. Petitions | |
| 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 17, Modernization of Benefits and Obligations 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 |
| 20. Report of Committee of the Whole | |
| 21. Third Reading of Bills | |
| 22. Orders of the Day | |

