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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Tuesday, March 8, 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 Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 106-15(3): Official Languages

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. Many times in this House we have discussed the importance of languages to all northerners. The diversity of official languages recognized in the Northwest Territories makes us unique in Canada.

During March we celebrate the value and importance of languages to our northern life. March is:

- Aboriginal Languages Month
- March 6th to 20th Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie celebrates Francophone culture
- March 20th is International Francophonie Day

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to the support of all our official languages and this is an opportune time to profile some recent activities in this area:

- The Official Languages Board and the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board have been established and the second meeting of both boards is currently taking place.
- The first annual report on official languages was released in October 2004.
- In August of 2004, the aboriginal languages and culture-based education directive was issued to education authorities across the NWT. This directive clarifies the ways that aboriginal language funding may be used in schools.
- To support children's development of their aboriginal language, 18 language nest programs have been funded.
- Dene Kede curriculum for Grade 9 classrooms has been completed and will be made available to NWT classrooms this month.
- French first language schooling offered through the Commission Scolaire Francophone de Division has been expanded this year to include Grade 10 at Ecole Alain St. Cyr.
- The aboriginal interpreter-translator certification standards for testing in Chipewyan have been completed and the first exams should be administered by this summer.

- The aboriginal language communities are completing 47 projects ranging from on-the-land camps to producing a documentary film on elders' history.
- Through Literacy Strategy funding, the aboriginal language communities are completing approximately 28 projects ranging from terminology development to teaching literacy to young mothers.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is committed to supporting all the official languages of the Northwest Territories. The involvement of each of the language communities working in concert and collaboration with the GNWT is essential if we are to protect, maintain and hopefully revitalize language usage. Over the past few years, the renewed emphasis on partnership and collaboration has strengthened our efforts and established a solid path for us to follow in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Member responsible for the Status of Women, Mr. Dent.

Minister's Statement 107-15(3): International Women's Week

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Strong, dynamic women have contributed to the sustained development and progress of the North. From March 6 to 12, 2005, we celebrate International Women's Week to recognize the contribution women have made to our society. Today has been designated a special day to honour their contributions.

With the national theme "You are Here - Women, Canada and the World," I want to acknowledge women who have helped shape the North through their wisdom and actions, both big and small. Northern women improve our world everyday, by making a difference in the workplace, representing the public in elected assemblies, nurturing their families or simply by making healthy choices and being strong role models for their families and communities. Women constantly exercise their power in positive and meaningful ways.

During International Women's Week, we will be celebrating the contribution of women in communities across the North. Today the Status of Women's Council of the Northwest Territories held its annual bread and roses luncheon in Yellowknife in the Great Hall of the Legislative Assembly to present the Wise Women Awards. I encourage northerners to participate in events across the NWT that celebrate women and their achievements.

Let us all celebrate the progress that women have made this week and reflect on how we can remove barriers to ensure that women are equal, respected members of NWT society.

As Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I salute the contribution of women to the healthy progress of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Canadian Women's March 2005 Coalition

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in honour of International Women's Day, I would like to take this opportunity to speak about the Canadian Women's March 2005 Coalition. This is a group made up of 10 national women's and social justice groups committed to the elimination of poverty and violence in Canada and making the links between local and global actions.

Mr. Speaker, they are launching their international campaign today on International Women's Day and it will go on to October 17, 2005, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Poverty. In particular, Mr. Speaker, the coalition is pushing the federal government to meet 13 demands which were first announced back in 2000. There will be events held around the world and Canada including one that will be held in Yellowknife on May 2nd. Mr. Speaker, the 13 demands, for the record, are as follows:

1. Restore federal funding to health care and enforce the rules against privatization of our health care system;
2. Keep the promise to spend an additional \$1.5 billion over five years for affordable housing and build 25,000 new affordable housing units every year for the next five years;
3. Implement a publicly funded and publicly accountable not-for-profit national childcare system;
4. Increase old age security payments to provide older women with a decent standard of living;
5. Use the surplus from the employment insurance plan to increase benefits, provide longer payment periods and improve access, as well as improve maternity and family benefits;
6. Support women's organizations for equality and democracy;
7. Fund consultations with a wide range of women's equality seeking organizations prior to all legislative reform of relevance to women's security and equality rights beginning with the Criminal Code and ensure access for women from marginalized communities;
8. Implement a progressive immigration reform;
9. Contribute to the elimination of poverty around the world;
10. Adopt national standards which guarantee the right to welfare for everyone in need and ban warfare;
11. Recognize the value of exclusion of women with disabilities from economic, political and social life and take the first step of ensuring and funding full access for women with disabilities to all consultations on relevant issues;
12. Establish a post-secondary education transfer and increase funds to a national system of grants;
13. Immediately introduce and adopt proactive pay equity legislation based on the federal Pay Equity Task Force recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Nahanni Butte Access Road

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the road to getting a gym built in Nahanni Butte is hard to navigate, rocky and uncertain, literally. But today, I would like to speak to you about getting to Nahanni Butte and the completion of the access road.

Mr. Speaker, the Nahanni Butte access road has been discussed in this House for 10 years, ever since 1996. In 2003-04, the Department of Transportation report on public access roads said that these roads formed an important part of our highway system. Improvement to these roads would increase safety and decrease highway maintenance costs by reducing the blading, grade repairs, granular and dust control requirements.

Furthermore, the Governance and Economic Development committee, in their review of the 2003-2004 Main Estimates, urged the department to complete the public access road projects and devote any additional funding the department receives to get this done.

Well, here we are in 2005, Mr. Speaker. The Nahanni Butte access road is still incomplete. Although the Department of Transportation has scheduled the access road to be partially constructed up to 2007-08, the bulk of the funding to complete it lies in that black hole called future years. Now that we have the tax money, let's strike while the iron is hot and get this road finished. While we are building it, let's throw in an innovative training program that will train some people in Nahanni Butte to be heavy equipment operators, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while this government accelerates this program and gets this road built by 2008, some far off distance and uncertain future is not good enough. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Recognition Of Wise Women

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, March 8th, today, is International Women's Day. Traditionally, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made in the areas of women's political and social rights, a time to call for change and a time to celebrate acts of courage and determination of ordinary women who play an extraordinary role in creating strong and healthy communities.

The national theme for this year's event is, "You are Here - Women, Canada and the World." The national theme urges us to pause and take stock of exactly where women are as a group today. There have been substantial advances for women in civil rights in the ninety-some years, since Women's Day became an international event, two notable dates for women's civil rights in Canadian history are 1920, when Ottawa extended the right to vote to certain Canadian women over 21, but not aboriginal women. Aboriginal women had to wait until 1960 for the right to vote when the Canadian Bill of Rights received Royal Assent. Today, there are still nations where women have yet the right to participate politically.

Yesterday, in Kuwait, hundreds of women protested in the streets demanding their right to vote and run for

parliament. Civil rights are important, Mr. Speaker, but they do not guarantee that conditions for women will improve. Although women in the NWT have equal rights to participate politically, the extension of a right does little to provide equal access. Right here in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, there are only two women and there are no women in Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, the national theme, "You are Here - Women, Canada and the World" also speaks to the grassroots character of the work that is done to improve the status of women. Real change is never handed down. Real change begins with the effort women put into improving conditions for women right here in our own communities.

In honour of National Women's Day, I want to recognize the extraordinary efforts of women who take up grassroots leadership roles. These are the women who are leaders in the frontline jobs traditionally occupied by women, such as nursing, teaching, counselling and parenting. But these are also women who choose to enter fields that have been traditionally dominated by men, such as trades and politics.

So, Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to extend a heartfelt congratulations to the women who were recognized as the wise women in the Northwest Territories. Their names are Ruth Wright, Tonya Cazon, Helen Tobie, Alphonsine McNeely, and Sister Agnes Sutherland. Congratulations to these strong, wise women. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On NWT Mental Health Act

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to talk about mental health and mental illnesses, Mr. Speaker. In our modern society, mental illnesses and disabilities are viewed a lot differently today than they were even a few decades ago. We see this in many different ways, Mr. Speaker, in our own homes, in our hospitals and community care centres, in courts and legislatures. We are dealing with this terrible affliction more progressively and compassionately. There is, through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Human Rights Acts, a much greater emphasis on the individual's autonomy.

The NWT's Mental Health Act, Mr. Speaker, was first developed in 1988 and has since been amended in some ways over the last 17 years. Mr. Speaker, the Mental Health Act is a powerful piece of legislation because it can take away from an individual their right to have control over their own lives. It also puts a great onus on those medical and legal professionals, Mr. Speaker, who may be compelled to do this in some circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, our Mental Health Act is quite out of date with a lot of the more modern thinking and approaches to how we should be treating the occurrence of mental illness and disability as legislators. There is, of course, the ever present influence of alcohol, but another shift in the way we need to be looking at this is a disturbing increase in the availability and the impact of street drugs. These are things that are in the medical and the court system now that just weren't there even a few years ago. I know, for the professionals who have to deal with this, it often raises questions for them. Do they have to deal with the situation in a medical sense, or is it perhaps a police or social issue? This is why, Mr. Speaker, I believe our

Mental Health Act needs to be revised. I will be asking the Minister later on today what plans we have for addressing this.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On The Northern Strategy

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to use my Member's statement today to address the proposed Northern Strategy. I am very happy that the federal government and the governing Liberal Party who have been in power in Ottawa for 13 years have finally realized that there is life north of 60.

---Applause

The strategy itself is long overdue and welcomed by all who call Northern Canada home. Last week in this House, Members had an opportunity to speak to the Northern Strategy. I enjoyed listening to my colleagues on this side of the House as well as the Premier and Deputy Premier. We all share a love for the Northwest Territories. This is our home, and we represent all of the 42,000 people who live here.

---Applause

The residents of the Northwest Territories have put a tremendous amount of faith in us, as leaders, to deliver and finally get the Northwest Territories a fair and equitable deal on resource revenue sharing and devolution. Our job as Regular Members is to support and encourage our government to get a deal for us. I wanted to say that I believe the Premier is doing all he can to get some action out of Ottawa. He needs all of our support in this effort. Our future depends on it.

The Northern Strategy is a huge opportunity to show how different the Northwest Territories is. We have to demonstrate to the rest of Canada that we are deserving of special attention.

---Applause

Our economy last year grew 21 percent, compared to the Yukon economy which was stagnant and Nunavut's economy which actually shrank. We are certainly a going economic concern. What do we need in the strategy? We need some concrete examples from the federal government that shows they understand our situation. We must address the high cost of living here. With things like tax credits for interest paid on mortgage payments; a living, breathing resource trust fund; value-added industrial development to look at keeping some of the fuel here that is going to be leaving soon and some already does in the Norman Wells pipeline, so people can actually afford to heat their homes; other tax breaks; and, a beneficial tax regime. Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the other item missing from the strategy is an EDA, an economic development agreement with Ottawa.

---Applause

Why do we continue to be dealt only crumbs from Ottawa? The recent funding of \$90 million over three years split between three territories is almost insulting. Has anyone even ever figured out how to access this money and apply for the funding? I would be surprised if anybody really knows the answers to those questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Recognition Of Jeannette Mandeville

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Today is International Women's Day. I rise to recognize the progress and advancement of women in society, specifically in achievement by a female constituent of mine. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Jeannette Mandeville was born and raised in Deninu Kue. Although she currently lives in Hay River with her husband Roger, she still has a strong connection and attachment to the community of Deninu Kue. A well-rounded individual with an educational background on native studies and social work, she has also enjoyed being outdoors fishing and boating, just to name a few of her interests.

On February 10, 2005, during the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Award ceremony, Ms. Jeannette Mandeville, an employee at the Ekati diamond mine for more than four years, was recognized as a recipient of an award for her exceptional achievement and certification as a security officer at the mine. Mr. Speaker, as a woman from aboriginal descent in a non-traditional occupation, it is my pleasure to recognize and congratulate Ms. Jeannette Mandeville again for her achievement in the private sector.

Aside from the fact that she was one of the only two female recipients to receive an award, it is a big step, indeed, for herself personally and, more importantly, to the bigger picture towards addressing gender inequality.

Mr. Speaker, in our own public service, the percentage of women is only at two percent. Today being International Women's Day, it is a perfect time to celebrate the achievements made by women in society and also to reflect on the journey that women have gone through and still continue to work on for the benefit of the younger generations. All I can say, Mr. Speaker, is kudos to Jeannette for setting a fine example and paving the way for the younger generation of women in their pursuit for non-traditional occupations. It is very encouraging indeed. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Federal Appointments To NWT Boards

MR. ZOE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we talk a lot in this House about the power that the federal government has over us in terms of the purse strings which they hold. However, Mr. Speaker, what we don't talk enough about is the power that the federal government has in the Northwest Territories when it comes to the appointees of federal boards and agencies.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board are federally appointed as are the members of the Mackenzie Valley Impact Review Board, and this is to name only a few. The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water board, for instance, has three main functions. They process land use and water use applications, issue land use and water licences and, finally, they issue directions on general policy matters concerning the use of land or water or the deposit of waste. Mr. Speaker, this means that these boards are

deciding what development projects go ahead and which ones don't. The appointees to these boards seem to have as much, if not more, power than our own elected officials. I think that these are the kinds of decisions that need to be made by the stakeholders and not by some federally-appointed body. By stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, I mean those people who have to live on the land and whose families have to live on the land and will have to suffer the consequences of the decisions they are making.

Mr. Speaker, when the federal Minister of DIAND is making appointments to a board, he or she has to think of what is good for the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I know these boards often include people appointed on the recommendations of the First Nations and also the Government of the Northwest Territories, but it is the federal Minister who has the final say. Mr. Speaker, it is the right of the aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories to be the stewards of their own land, but they cannot do this until the power to make decisions over land development rest in their hands and in their hands only. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Reducing The Role Of The Federal Government

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past week, we have spoken many times of making history in the Northwest Territories in terms of devolution, revenue resource sharing and the Northern Strategy and becoming like a have province in the Northwest Territories. We often see, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government also plays the big role of big brother in many of the areas in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, in every aspect of our life, we are affected by government's decisions. Mr. Speaker, we would like to know when the federal government will get out of the big brother's role and allow us, as northern people, to make the right choice for us that is good for us in the North and not have the federal government dictate as to what type of decisions or appointments that they can make to boards that will affect our lives.

Mr. Speaker, over the course of many years, we have slowly moved away from the big brother concept, from 1867 to today. However, we often wonder if the federal government is still following the policies that reflect 1867, or in 1870 when the Northwest Territories was transferred from the British to Canada.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government again take a stand with the federal government and listen to the people in the North who will be affected by the federal government's decisions such as the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board appointments? These appointments should be done in the North and for northern people who are affected greatly in these types of decisions. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On International Women's Week

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With today being International Women's Day, I would like to

recognize all women across the NWT for the contributions they make to their communities. Many times, some volunteers are needed. Women are the first to sign up. Without them, many programs would not be up and running. We have to recognize mothers who try to raise their children to make good choices in life; daughters who grow up too fast and are getting married; and grandmothers who, in many cases, end up raising their grandchildren and are the backbone in many families. Women who are in the public service should also be recognized and can serve as role models for all young women. Women like Sharon Firth with her Olympic experience, and Bertha Allen, an Inuvialuit elder, both will be recipients of the Aboriginal Achievement Awards. Ruth Wright, who is a constituent of mine, was just given a Wise Woman Award today and should also be recognized. We have two Members in the Assembly, Mrs. Jane Groenewegen and Ms. Sandy Lee, who are both Members of this Assembly...

---Applause

...and represent their constituents with such passion that many in Cabinet would rather face a man that is six-foot-eight and 300 pounds.

---Laughter

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we must not forget the wives of the NWT. Many of us here have wives who must look after the home in our absence. Sometimes they must feel like they have another child with the way we act.

---Laughter

I would like to extend our appreciation to all of the women of the NWT for all that they do to make our lives better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On School Truancy

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to focus on a serious issue that seems to be rising in our schools. It is truancy. Mr. Speaker, it takes a whole community to raise children. Unfortunately, not everyone wants to participate. Schools can only do so much. Some parents seem to leave it up to the child or teenager to take their education in their own hands. Tardiness and lack of attendance affect our children and their ability to stay focussed at school and eventually some students drop out unless there is some form of intervention.

I have spoken with staff at various schools, and the problem seems to be that the school itself is truly powerless. They don't seem to have any status or authority, if you may, to get involved and deal with the situation immediately when it arises. Even if they had the authority to get involved, they do not have the resources to do anything about this. Mr. Speaker, there is an Education Act that does allow for parents to be charged up to \$500 but, as of yet, I have not heard of any parent ever being charged under this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as soon as truancy is identified, the schools should have the authority to step in and take control before it is too late and another child is lost to the drop-out list. Mr. Speaker, these children will simply fall through the cracks and drop out which is not in the best interest of these individuals, society and definitely not in the best interest of this darn government.

Mr. Speaker, we will have an alarming number of children dropping out. Even this year, graduation rates are slowly climbing but they are still very, very low. Truancy is a serious issue. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say two important things. Truancy is a symptom and there could be a thousand reasons as to why, but we owe it to ourselves in our roles here to ask why.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, and finally, I should say as well, under the Child and Family Services Act, we talk about physical harm, abuse and neglect; we should certainly have a section here to deal with truantries and allow our Health and Social Services system to get out there and to ask why. 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. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 563-15(3): Enforcement Of Education Act

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in my Member's statement, truancy is becoming a serious issue in the Northwest Territories. My questions will be to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Would the Minister tell me if the Education Act that permits a parent to be charged up to \$500 has ever been enforced? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 563-15(3): Enforcement Of Education Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not aware of any parents having been taken to court because their children were not in school.

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

Supplementary To Question 563-15(3): Enforcement Of Education Act

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have spoken to some educators out there and they have said that when they recognize truancy and they phone these parents and there is no answer, there is nowhere for them to truly go. Why has the Department of Education, Culture and Employment never stepped in to own up to their responsibility to deal with truancy? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 563-15(3): Enforcement Of Education Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to challenge one thing that the Member said and that is that truancy is becoming more and more of a problem. In fact in the last 10 years, the attendance at school has increased dramatically across the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

Ten years ago the attendance rate for high-school-aged children in the Northwest Territories was less than 40 percent; this year it is well over 70 percent. We are making impressive strides in getting children all across the Territories to attend school.

If the Member wants to look into it, I have been asked this question previously; I have looked all across Canada and have found that no jurisdiction is charging parents for not having their kids attend school, because it is not effective, it doesn't help. What we need to do is we need to work with kids and families to encourage them to get kids into school. If the families don't support what the kids are doing, whether you force the kids to be at school or not, it's not successful. We have to have family support for kids to be successful.

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

Supplementary To Question 563-15(3): Enforcement Of Education Act

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate what the Minister said. On that note, what resources do we provide the schools and the district education authorities to ensure that we get these truant kids into school? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 563-15(3): Enforcement Of Education Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The chairs of the divisional education councils and I have talked about attendance as one of the crucial areas that we want to increase. The education councils know that if they don't have the kids in school, they don't get the money for them; so attendance really does impact on the amount of money that is available to a divisional educational authority for schooling.

I have talked to principals who go out and knock on doors to talk to families to get the kids in school. DEAs are working out all sorts of different strategies within their communities -- whatever works for them -- to encourage kids to be at school. We have land claims organizations and community corporations that provide cash incentives to get kids to attend school, so it is a community-driven initiative across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 563-15(3): Enforcement Of Education Act

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister left out one specific area. As I understand it, funding is linked to attendance in roster enrollment, but that is only checked, I believe, once a year. In a certain period, that sets the funding rate for the whole education period. That being said, what is the Minister willing to do to address the truancy issue through legislation that empowers either Health and Social Services to go in and check on what is happening with these children or allow the education system and the DEAs, as he has pointed out, to go in and knock on those doors to make sure these kids are okay? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 563-15(3): Enforcement Of Education Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe we need anything further to empower anybody to follow up on things. A DEA has the authority now to ensure that kids are attending school; it could become a child protection issue if parents aren't ensuring that their

kids attend school. We already have the tools to do it from that side, but that is not going to work. That doesn't help the kid to be successful. Forcing them to be there when their parents don't support them being in school is a waste of time. We have to work with families to make sure that the families are supportive of kids being in school, so that the kids are there to learn. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Question 564-15(3): Centralized Services For Seniors

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister responsible for Seniors. Mr. Speaker, in the Sahtu region there are 199 elders who are over 60 years of age. Mr. Speaker, there are numerous government departments, services and programs that are for the elders; for a lot of them English is a second language or they do not speak English at all. A lot of them communicate in the aboriginal language of North Slavey. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Seniors whether this government is planning any type of program that he oversees which can work with other departments who are dealing with seniors, in terms of having a one-stop shop for elders to do their business, rather than to run in all different directions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Seniors, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 564-15(3): Centralized Services For Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the seniors' action plan was done, it was done with that kind of concept in mind, where we had a number of departments -- Education, Health and Social Services, Housing and MACA -- work to come up with a strategy for seniors.

We are anticipating being able to have some federal money to better fund those different initiatives. There is an intent to try to make it as convenient as possible. We work with the territorial Seniors' Association here, we assist them with funding, we assist them with their help line where seniors can call and get services, and help sort out any questions they may have. We have some resources in place and some processes in place to do that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 564-15(3): Centralized Services For Seniors

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister is correct; I see in the federal government budget, there is \$13 million provided to create a national seniors' secretariat to serve as a focal point for collaborative efforts to address new challenges facing seniors. Would he consider a territorial secretariat for seniors, so that the seniors could look forward, within this government, to see a territorial secretariat set up for them in the regions in the Territories? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 564-15(3): Centralized Services For Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, currently I am the Minister responsible for Seniors, which gives a focal point to the issues related to seniors. We have a strong working relationship and a funding arrangement with the territorial Seniors' Association. We have in place the pieces we need. We also have a very close working relationship with all the authorities and the boards within the regions that work on mainly seniors' issues. We have processes in place to do that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 564-15(3): Centralized Services For Seniors

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the Minister then; when would this department or when would this government roll out its plans so that Granny from Nahanni or Uncle Orville from Colville Lake...

---Laughter

...could see that they can only go to one place in the communities to have all these programs under one roof? Today we don't see it; so when can we see it? Thank you.

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 564-15(3): Centralized Services For Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are resources on the ground in every community that have, as one of the job responsibilities, to assist all the people, including seniors. We have members from across the Northwest Territories on the NWT Seniors' Association that I meet regularly with, as well with the boards. Also, I have very close feedback from many MLAs on issues in their jurisdictions. I believe that we have resources there. If they are not given enough profile on the ground to the services that are available to seniors, then I am definitely prepared to look at that and work with the authorities and the boards to try to remedy that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 564-15(3): Centralized Services For Seniors

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister consider having the seniors under one ministry? Of all the programs, I know that you are working with the different departments, would the Minister consider taking that to the Premier or Cabinet to consider having one Ministry just for seniors, that cover all the programs so there is effective, efficient coordination there for our elderly people in the communities? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 564-15(3): Centralized Services For Seniors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the last Assembly that was an issue that was raised as well, and there was work done to

look at whether that would be practical. Given the fact that there are a significant number of health programs, for example, that pertain specifically to seniors, and at the same time there are another number of related issues that are often covered off through MACA or Education, what is being done, Mr. Speaker, is that when we look at consolidating the income support and subsidy programs, which includes all the programs outside of health that benefit seniors with fuel subsidies and such, we are looking at consolidating those, as the Member knows, under one roof. As well, the health programs will continue to be administered through Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

Question 565-15(3): Enrollment Levels For Social Work Programs

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day, but this week is Social Workers' Week. Earlier this week the Minister of Health and Social Services made a statement in praise of the work that social workers do. This is also the first academic year where there were not enough students enrolling in the Social Workers' Program at Aurora College. I have asked questions in this House about what the government is doing to see that that does not happen again. Surely, I think that we do need to produce our own social workers and if there are not enough people going in, then the government has an onus to look into that. I wanted to know if the Minister and the Minister of Education, and the government as a whole, have done any kind of review to get some real answers to what happened. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 565-15(3): Enrollment Levels For Social Work Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Member raised the issue during the review of the budget of Health and Social Services, I indicated that I would be talking later that night with the president of the Social Workers' Association, which I did do. We had a fairly lengthy discussion. One of the topics of concern was what is happening in the college; the need to do a better job in marketing the college program and what other things should we be doing as a department to better support the social work profession.

I have since had meetings with the deputy to pass on some of the concerns, and the fact that there is a willingness and interest for us work collaboratively with the Social Workers' Association. I have also had discussions with the president of the college to talk about -- and he raised the issue as well -- we have to put our heads together to come to grips with how we better market this issue.

I also just met yesterday with the social work managers/child protection managers that were in town from across the Northwest Territories. One of the issues that I put on the table to them was I asked for their advise and feedback on what they thought we could do to better support the profession of social work so that in fact we could encourage people to join this very honourable profession and have more students signing up at the college. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 565-15(3): Enrollment Levels For Social Work Programs

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am still not getting the answer as to, Mr. Speaker, whether the Minister and government are interested in doing a review of the program at Aurora College. I can see that he is talking to various players, but I am not hearing that there will be any kind of formal process to really get to the bottom of what is going on. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that you can't solve the problem unless you know what the problem is. I am not getting the indication that the government has a clear idea of what has happened. Can I get more solid information from him as to exactly how he envisions that he is going to improve this situation by fall? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 565-15(3): Enrollment Levels For Social Work Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was following up on this issue because it is an important issue and not just for the sake of a conversation with a bunch of people that I know are good conversationalists. This is a serious issue. I have laid out a fairly extensive list of contacts. The president of the Social Workers' Association is also the chairman of the department for the social services program has already had meetings with the college administration to try to look at what issues are there that may be prohibiting or impeding the success of this program at the college level.

I have talked to the president of the Social Workers' Society, plus I have talked to the president of the college. I have had discussions with the deputy minister about our need to pay attention to this; to look at it with the same kind of attention that we paid to nurses and doctors and allied health professionals, when recruitment and retention was an issue.

We are going to bring the lessons we learned there and the planning we learned there to bear on this particular issue as well. So there is a lot of work underway. Whether that is formal or enough or not for the Member, I am not sure, but it constitutes a lot of action and activity already underway by many people. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 565-15(3): Enrollment Levels For Social Work Programs

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I still think, far be it from me to call for a study, but this is a real problem. I would like to see the government do something solid and concrete by this fall; way before that so that the college and we are ready to get more students in. I would like to see the Minister do more than just having meetings with the stakeholders; not that there is anything wrong with that. Could I get the Minister to commit to reporting the results of all of his conversations and consultations to us by the June session, so that we can take part in it as well? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 565-15(3): Enrollment Levels For Social Work Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since the Member was

encouraging or saying that I have to be Minister to conclude all the studies I already have underway, I could probably squeeze in one more.

---Laughter

But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, this doesn't require a study. This requires a plan of action and, yes, I would be happy to report back in June. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 565-15(3): Enrollment Levels For Social Work Programs

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that the people in this profession are saying is safer working conditions and probably a better compensation package. It doesn't help that the government writes job descriptions in a way that seems to attract southern educated social workers, eliminating the chance for people up here to get a job. Will the Minister look into that as well, while he is studying -- yes, another study -- with a deadline, though, for June? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 565-15(3): Enrollment Levels For Social Work Programs

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is currently a collective bargaining process underway that includes the social workers, and the issue of compensation will be dealt with directly through that process. If there are classification issues, then there are processes to look at that as well. Very clearly, we are interested in having a profession that is attractive, that has a good package of compensation and enumeration and we are going to look at all aspects, the same as we did for the allied health professionals, to make sure that we are competitive and that we have our classes filled with northern students that are going to become social workers tomorrow. Thank you.

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

Question 566-15(3): New Courthouse

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Justice, with respect to the courthouse that is being planned. I understand that this initiative was being brought forward by this government. Constituents of my riding are concerned; they want to know why we need to spend so much on such infrastructure. They want to know why we are building another courthouse in Yellowknife when we already have one there, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 566-15(3): New Courthouse

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the years, the courthouse has become too small for the number of cases that are held in it. Right now, in the last year, we have had rented space outside the courthouse for a large civil case: the Giant Mine trial. With that one, we spent over \$355,000. Just since Christmas, we've had to rent space in one of the local hotels for courts and we will again this year. We know about another large trial that's coming up later this spring that we're going to have to rent space outside the courthouse. What's happened is that the growth in the number of cases that are being

heard in Yellowknife has meant that we can't house them all in the space that's available. That's one of the biggest problems, and the other problem is security. The security issues that surround the courts right now can't be dealt with. So we have a choice: either rent more space or build space. Since it seems to make more sense for us to pay ourselves rather than paying a landlord, so the government has decided to propose the building of a courthouse.

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

Supplementary To Question 566-15(3): New Courthouse

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand a little bit about the reasoning behind that and perhaps the Minister can tell me what is the estimated cost of this new courthouse. Is this like a Class 'D' estimate and how old is this estimate for the new courthouse, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 566-15(3): New Courthouse

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The estimate that we have was provided by Public Works and Services. It is a Class 'D', so an initial estimate, and it was prepared by Public Works and Services within the last few months, just since fall. Right now they have estimated the cost to be about \$41 million.

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

Supplementary To Question 566-15(3): New Courthouse

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that some of the expenditures that they're looking for in 2005-06 is to do a full engineering study and the budgeted amount is around \$41 million. I'm just wondering, at what point will the government put the brakes on this project if it exceeds the \$41 million bill?

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

Further Return To Question 566-15(3): New Courthouse

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has decided to initiate this project by going to a full set of plans and then going out to tender. So before we break ground we'll know the full cost of the project. This isn't going to be handled through a construction management process where the costs could escalate after the construction has started. It is our intention to make sure that we know the costs before proceeding with it. All of the amounts that will be spent on the building will have to be voted by this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 566-15(3): New Courthouse

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's what I'm looking for. I just want the government to assure us that they're not going to run into a situation where they get half a building done for \$40 million and then are going to ask for another \$40 million to complete it. That's been our history and I'd like to know what the

government is going to do for this project that's going to prevent that.

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 566-15(3): New Courthouse

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, where we've seen significant changes in project costs have been through the construction management process and this government is not prepared to undertake that process for this building. We are going to get the full set of plans done and then go out to public tender. Once we have the results in, we will award the contract. That way you know what the cost of the building is going to be. Thank you.

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

Question 567-15(3): Mental Health Resources

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Health and Social Services in the area of our Mental Health Act and its modernization and the services that we provide. Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding, if I have the statistics right here, that about 50 percent of all visits to doctors are because of mental health related illnesses or problems that people are having. My question is does the NWT have enough capacity and trained workers and professionals to deal with the caseload of mental illness now before us? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 567-15(3): Mental Health Resources

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, like every problem area that we do have, there are more problems than there are resources. The people who are on hand to do the work are coping. We do have funding available for another psychiatrist, but have yet to be successful in recruiting. Are there problems that could be better served? Probably, but we have a significant number of resources on the ground, in the communities, mental health workers, community wellness workers, in addition to the nurses and doctors and psychiatrists here, and some psychologists and counsellors. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 567-15(3): Mental Health Resources

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, in my statement I was talking about the changes in legislation that have come about as compelled by what's going on out there on the streets and especially in the area of recognition of human rights and other new laws that are entrenching the rights and freedoms of the individual. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister, how serious is the gap in our legislation regarding current laws on mental illness? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 567-15(3): Mental Health Resources

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, as the Member indicated in his statement, this piece of legislation is about 17 years old. It does have gaps. It's not on the legislative agenda for this Assembly at this point, but it is a piece of legislation that is on our list, but we have other more pressing ones like the Pharmacy Act and the Public Health Act, which are very, very old. Generations old. They're seriously out of date and we're working on them. As well as the Personal Directives Act, the Tobacco Act that is coming forward, and there's a piece from the child and family services as well that's coming forward, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 567-15(3): Mental Health Resources

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a meeting that I had with some mental health professionals a few weeks ago, it became apparent that there are some aspects at least of this that could very well serve not only those people suffering from mental illness, but the professionals who have to grapple with trying to make the right decisions using our legislation as their platform. Would the Minister consider at least a preliminary investigation into what might be done to address some of these more pressing human rights aspects of our law? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 567-15(3): Mental Health Resources

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll commit to investigate the Member's concerns. I've seen some of the documentation he's pulled together, keeping in mind that we have a capacity issue in terms of how much legislation we're able to do in a given period of time. But I will commit to look at that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 567-15(3): Mental Health Resources

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the Minister would perhaps even broaden that to include the whole of the Mental Health Act. It is a sizable piece of legislation and given that some...I know there are many of these larger pieces of work that really are carried over from one term to another, they will take more than the years that we have left in this Assembly. Would the Minister take a serious look at investigating and modernizing the whole Mental Health Act? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 567-15(3): Mental Health Resources

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, very clearly we have an intent to modernize and redo the Mental Health Act, it's just that it's not on the top five or six pieces of legislation that we have on our agenda that we have left in the life of this Assembly. Very clearly, it's one of about 26 pieces of legislation that we have that is out of

date and needs to be fixed. At this point, a decision was made where I looked at the pressing priorities to focus on two major pieces, which are the Pharmacy Act and the Public Health Act, in addition to the tobacco and the other personal directives one. We're not arguing that it needs to be done; it's just a question of capacity, timing and sequencing. Thank you.

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

Question 568-15(3): Affirmative Action Policy

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister responsible for the FMBS, the Honourable Floyd Roland, with regard to the affirmative action policy that the new human resource amalgamation is planning on eliminating, I guess, out of the new human resource plan. I just wanted to ask the Minister a question about the establishment of the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee when the affirmative action policy was put into place in the early '90s. I just want to ask the Minister, if this committee still exists, what input into this new human resource organization is this Affirmative Action Advisory Committee going to have? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The honourable Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board Secretariat, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 568-15(3): Affirmative Action Policy

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the affirmative action policy will not be eliminated. What we are doing is looking at its structure and incorporating it into the new organization and how we would carry on business as the Government of the Northwest Territories. Just to be clear and on the record, affirmative action is still an issue that we're dealing with and looking at how we can carry it forward. If it has the same title or a different title, that's something to be decided.

On the committee the Member spoke about, that has not been in operation for quite some time, so the work we're doing is going to be from in-house and then going to Members initially. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 568-15(3): Affirmative Action Policy

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess just with respect to the committee that hasn't been in operation for some time, I guess, that could be one of the reasons leading up to the demise of the whole affirmative action policy in the government. I think it's because this committee hasn't been established, it hasn't had any input, it hasn't had any feedback, and it was set up as a monitoring system for the affirmative action policy and that hasn't happened and it hasn't panned out to what people have expected it to pan out to be. I guess the new name the Minister was referring to with the new affirmative action policy and the new human resource amalgamation would be to something along the lines of a succession planning program, which, to me, is the same as the MAP that this government has and is currently lacking in a lot of indigenous aboriginals that are participating in that program; one in nine employees to be precise, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask the Minister if the affirmative action policy wasn't part of the criteria for the MAP and

that education is paramount in anybody advancing in the government in their employment status. That I agree with to some degree, but how much weight can somebody put on their experience in government? Some people have 20 years and they've trained people for three years...

MR. SPEAKER: What is your question, Mr. Villeneuve?

MR. VILLENEUVE: ...and the MAP, one of the criteria is that you...

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: I just want to ask the Minister what reassurances can he give aboriginal government employees that their experience, and in some cases lack of education, is not going to be the only determining factor in their advancement in management positions? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 568-15(3): Affirmative Action Policy

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we should be clear again that the affirmative action policy is not dead. This government is still committed to it. It is still part of our hiring practices. The specific area of succession planning and so on, they are pieces of what we're going to put together and improve on as the Government of the Northwest Territories through our corporate human resource service centres. With the ability, once we have the staff together, working together and having the support of their colleagues, and with the same interpretation of the rules that we operate by, we will be able to improve on the way we deliver human resource services to our employees.

On the specifics of the MAP program, there is some concern there. We're working to try to improve that area. Initially people can nominate themselves, put themselves forward for it, and it can be from all sectors, from communities, regions, headquarters staff. As well, they can be nominated by someone else from within the government and put their name forward. Once their names are in, they go through a process and an assessment. That assessment goes on your ability to get the job done. So whether it's a formal education or an informal education, your experience all comes into play. It's an assessment of where you are in your work history. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Short supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 568-15(3): Affirmative Action Policy

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess with the MAP program, the lack of aboriginal participation in that program, I know that people are nominated and they can nominate themselves, but a lot of people are putting forward their names, but they're just not getting fair consideration, as far as they're concerned, Mr. Speaker. On a few occasions people have applied twice. I notice they're on the second round of the program implementation, and still they're being turned down. These people are long-term government employees with lots of experience. They know in their own mind they can do the management position duties and responsibilities that are asked of them, but the people who are doing the assessment on them are the same people who aren't really big advocates of this whole affirmative action policy, Mr. Speaker. So you're kind of caught between a rock and

hard place because human resources is the judge, jury and executioner...

MR. SPEAKER: What is your question? Do you have a question, Mr. Villeneuve?

MR. VILLENEUVE: I want to ask the Minister, when people are applying for this MAP, how can he be sure that they are going to get a fair assessment and a fair hearing and a fair interview with the people that are carrying out the program? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 568-15(3): Affirmative Action Policy

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd have to take exception with the Member stating that we have employees out there who are not committed to the policies that we have in place. If there are examples of that, if there's proof of that besides accusations of employees not following the rules, then definitely bring them forward to me and I will work to address them. We have a policy in place. We need to follow those policies. We know there are some problems with the one management program that we have in place. In fact, we're trying to, as we go forward, incorporate it into the work around affirmative action and see how we can in fact bring people up from the communities and regions. Right now it's sort of targeted towards headquarters. People from the regions can apply, but one of their considerations is they'd have to move to headquarters. So we're looking to try to expand it so that there's a regional component of that. Once they move up in that system and move up in their ability to get that job done then they can move on to the next stage. There are bits and pieces. We understand there's a problem; we recognize that and we're going to work to change and fix that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Short supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 568-15(3): Affirmative Action Policy

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for acknowledging that they do recognize that there is a problem with that policy and there's a problem with implementation of the policy and that's been happening for the last 10 years that this policy has been in place. I guess I just wanted to -- going back to the people in the MAP-- this MAP is a Management Assignment Program and management in this government...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Villeneuve, do you have a final question?

MR. VILLENEUVE: ...people in management positions. With this upcoming MAP, one...

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: How is this MAP supposed to improve the aboriginal representation in management when there are no aboriginals in it?

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

Further Return To Question 568-15(3): Affirmative Action Policy

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Management Assignment Program that's in place, or MAP as we call it, was developed to try to move from within the existing workforce of the Government of

the Northwest Territories; people who would have the ability to move up and take on the higher level positions and hopefully, with a succession plan, a person can come all the way up and take over a deputy minister position. That's sort of the long term of things. When it was put in place, it was again there for everybody in the Government of the Northwest Territories. It wasn't specifically designed for aboriginal people. It was for the whole of the government workforce. It's something that's been there. We recognize that we've got a problem when you look at the numbers, the statistics at headquarters and the managerial positions. We recognize that's an area and we're going to have to work on improving that. Thank you.

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

Question 569-15(3): Future Of Territorial Court System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to ask any questions today, but then somebody reminded me about the courthouse, so I have to just jump on that bandwagon here for a minute. Mr. Speaker, when we perform our duties as a government and as a Legislature we take some great pride in saying that we consult with aboriginal governments, thus things like the Circle of Northern Leaders. When we talk about our capital planning process we also take some great pride in the consultation that takes place around that; protection of people, protection of assets, all those good things. Mr. Speaker, my question today to the government side is how much consultation is the government going to do prior to proceeding with spending about an entire year's worth of capital on one project, given the devolution and self-government negotiations which are ongoing? Because it's kind of undoable once it's done. It's kind of like the North Slave Correctional Centre; once it's there in order to be utilized it's going to attract a certain amount of jobs and programs and so on. I'd like to know what the government's position is on that in terms of other governments in the Northwest Territories, in terms of consultation. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 569-15(3): Future Of Territorial Court System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The function of the courts is not expected to change significantly in the future. There will still be a need for courts and for their operations. The unfortunate fact is that we don't expect that the amount they are using will go down. There isn't much you can do about not providing the space. Right now we don't have adequate space. One way or the other we're going to have to provide it. So we have consulted with Public Works and Services and have been advised that there are two choices: either rent more space or build new space. The advice from Public Works and Services is that the most economic way to deal with the current shortage of space is to build space. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 569-15(3): Future Of Territorial Court System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice makes it sound like this

\$41 million expenditure is not debatable and that there are no other options or alternatives to be considered. With respect to looking at the future of justice and the delivery of justice in the Northwest Territories, how much of that is there any flexibility in with respect to what will be devolved to aboriginal governments? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 569-15(3): Future Of Territorial Court System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a democratic system, as the Member is aware, the courts are an independent leg of the governance process. So we have the government, the Assembly and the courts. It's a responsibility of the government to support the courts with adequate fiscal resources to conduct their business and adequate physical space to conduct their business. So we are going to follow through on that requirement. Mr. Speaker, when Public Works and Services did their assessment, they advised us that the net present value of leasing equivalent space in the Territories was in the order of \$60 million and the net present value of building was in the area of \$40 million. So we're convinced this is the most economic way to provide the space that is required. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 569-15(3): Future Of Territorial Court System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that adequate is the operative word here and that's the thing we need to think about is adequacy. We, as Members of the Legislature, have had information shared with us with respect to this business case that can attempt to be made on behalf of this courthouse, but there hasn't been much communication out there in the public. So even though we're only spending \$1 million, \$1 million is still a lot of money on an engineering study and I think the communications should have preceded any expenditure by this government. I'd like to know where we are at with communications. Otherwise there's going to be a huge backlash on this project. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 569-15(3): Future Of Territorial Court System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On all of the capital projects we have there is a similar amount of consultation, whether it's a school or hospital or the courts. When you're talking about building projects, we have a similar amount of consultation. We have been pressured by the courts for many years to respond to their needs and this is something that we have to do. It has been proposed by governments prior to this one. Two governments prior to this one have announced that they were going to put the money for a courthouse in the capital plan, but did not follow through on those commitments, and this government is now following through. Since 1997 we've been approached by Chief Justice Halifax, Justice Richard and Justice Fraser, who have directed that we need to do something about their space requirements. Mr. Speaker, we are following through on that.

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

Supplementary To Question 569-15(3): Future Of Territorial Court System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that Justice Richard and Justice Halifax will like to know and read Hansard today and find out that they're responsible for the new courthouse at \$41 million just like the previous Justice Ministers were all rhymed off yesterday in terms of taking responsibility for some of this. Before the \$1 million is spent, what tangible consultation is going to take place? Can the Minister commit to today, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 569-15(3): Future Of Territorial Court System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There will be the planning process that will involve the architects, typical of any capital project that's going forward in the Northwest Territories, whether it's a school or a hospital. Will there be a consultation process? It's not intended to go out and consult all across the Northwest Territories for what the building will look like, no more than was done for this building. The process is one that we will try and do economically, which means we will find out from studies what space is needed and how to best accommodate that in the most economic fashion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 570-15(3): Federal Economic Development Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and go back to my Member's statement. I just have to correct myself, firstly. I mentioned the fact that it was \$90 million over three years; in fact it's over five years, which equates to about \$6 million per territory per year. I'm wondering if the Minister is aware of how somebody might go about applying for receiving funding under this northern economic development money that was announced last year in the throne speech in Ottawa. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 570-15(3): Federal Economic Development Funding

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fund the Member is referring to, we've had discussion with DIAND about the money and how it will flow. We're encouraging DIAND to quickly determine what criteria will be used to evaluate proposals that come forward. We have had a lot of people in the territory interested in discussion how they might access some of this money. At this point we're referring people to DIAND. They are controlling the money and determining how the program will be rolled out. We don't have that detail yet. We're hoping to get it soon and it's certainly something on my list to speak to Minister Andy Scott about when he visits next week. I have had previous discussions with both Minister Scott and Minister Blondin-Andrew and urged them to move quickly to roll this money out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 570-15(3): Federal Economic Development Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the administration of the funds and the handling of the funds that are available, I'm wondering what discussions our government had with the federal government and the officials at DIAND that would see the Government of the Northwest Territories, which I believe would be a better vehicle to deliver this much needed economic development funding to our residents. What discussions took place between our government and DIAND in regard to who would administer these funds? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 570-15(3): Federal Economic Development Funding

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's quite a bit of history here; a number of meetings and discussions at several levels in our government with federal colleagues. I also had discussions with Minister Blondin-Andrew and Minister Scott. Collectively the three territories initially believed, and there's probably still some belief, that the money should be turned over to the territorial governments, there should be bilateral contributions. We believe we have the vehicles to deliver the program funding. The federal government was insistent this was a federal program, they weren't prepared to devolve. They do want to maintain the authority to make the decisions on which programs get funded and how this money is going to be rolled out. That said, Mr. Speaker, we are just, at this point, happy to see the economic development money will be delivered in the North. We do want to be involved in the program delivery as much as possible, but clearly it's a federal program and we aren't in control of it at this point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 570-15(3): Federal Economic Development Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister, to his knowledge has anyone who lives in the Northwest Territories received any of this funding from the so-called economic development money? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 570-15(3): Federal Economic Development Funding

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not to my knowledge. My understanding is that initially the federal government had hoped to roll at least \$3 million per territory out for this year prior to March 31st. It's obviously quickly approaching March 31st. I don't think that's going to happen. I think now in the latest correspondence I have from Minister Scott he's referring more to the \$30 million and how that will flow going forward. I think that's an encouraging sign. I don't think this needed to be a sort of rush job at year-end to push a bunch of money out the door. I'd rather see a well thought out program, so I think that's the approach the federal government is taking here. I don't believe the program criteria have been established and if they have, they certainly haven't been communicated to us yet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 570-15(3): Federal Economic Development Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the Minister and I appreciate his response. Absent in the Northern Strategy is economic development and an economic development agreement. I'm wondering if the Minister can tell us how Regular Members and how this government might be able to address the fact that an economic development agreement is absent from the Northern Strategy, and I believe it should be included. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 570-15(3): Federal Economic Development Funding

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that's how Members of this House feel. I know that that's how residents of the Northwest Territories feel. We do need an EDA agreement. I've made that very clear to both Minister Blondin-Andrew and Minister Scott. Minister Blondin-Andrew agrees, as well. What we have right now is this economic development money for the next five years. Minister Scott has made the point to me that we need to talk about how to best use this money and make the compelling argument that he can take back to the Treasury Board that says this was money that was well used, obviously there was a need in the North and we need to develop and long-standing, long-term program for the interests of northerners. We're going to certainly work to make sure that that happens, but I do agree with the Member and with Members in this House in saying that a short-term program is not going to meet the needs of northerners. We need something for the foreseeable future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 571-15(3): Role Of Elders In Government

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week we had a discussion on the vision of the Northwest Territories. It was a very good discussion amongst Members and the other side and, Mr. Speaker, in fact the Premier had some air time on CBC talking about the vision of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, when we look at the big picture of the Northwest Territories, there's a key piece of this vision that needs to be included. It's our elders, Mr. Speaker, and I want to see or hear from the Premier in terms of what type of support would he give our elders in the Northwest Territories as a reflection of this government in terms of having them play a role in our government in the North. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 571-15(3): Role Of Elders In Government

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our elders are very important to us and to aboriginal cultures in particular. There is need, as we develop the strategy, to have some consultation as we talk about safe, healthy communities to ensure that there is a way for elders, whether it's through band councils or through municipal councils or through their MLAs, to have some input into

government and the things that we do as the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 571-15(3): Role Of Elders In Government

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier is 100 percent correct; our elders are very key to us in our communities. I'm asking would the Premier consider the principles of supporting an elders' council with this territorial government, not just the band council, but in this government? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 571-15(3): Role Of Elders In Government

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we put the strategy together -- and that's our objective is to have a completed strategy for this year -- then we want to take it out for consultation. I would like to get input from a lot of the seniors about what we should be doing as a government, rather than me trying to decide what's good for them. So I look forward to the consultation on the strategy, starting with the Circle of Northern Leaders and then branching out from there, and I welcome suggestions that seniors and others may have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 571-15(3): Role Of Elders In Government

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the strategy starting with the Circle of Northern Leaders and other meetings with elders down the Mackenzie Valley, I guess I'm looking for a time frame. Could the Minister bring to this government a complete end result of the strategy to have discussion in the House in possibly looking at the involvement of elders within this government? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 571-15(3): Role Of Elders In Government

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, my view or my vision of what this document will look like would be a document that would have pan-territorial chapters that would deal with things that go right across the North and then there would be chapters dealing with issues and priorities for the Northwest Territories. When we meet with the Circle of Northern Leaders, I want to present them with some draft action plans for them to start looking at and I hope at that time we would then have some feedback. I'm sure the Member will raise the issue about seniors at that time. We would take the comments from the Circle of Northern Leaders and go back and redo the action plans. I expect we can have turnaround within two or three months of the Circle of Northern Leaders where we would have something back. I also want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that the Northern Strategy is what we call a living document; it can be changed at any time as priorities change. So no one has to feel that things are frozen in time somehow and can never be added to the strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 571-15(3): Role Of Elders In Government

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I liked the Premier's answers on the Northern Strategy as a living document that can be changed. Through the discussion that the elders give, can we give elders/seniors some special consideration in terms of being part of this government? I think we're missing that key here in terms of how we do government and reflecting the traditional culture and values of the Northwest Territories. So would the Premier ensure, as close as possible, that the elders are involved in this whole development of the strategy? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 571-15(3): Role Of Elders In Government

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree that the elders have to have an opportunity for input into it and I hope each of us as MLAs do make a point of talking with the seniors, with the elders within our constituencies. That's one way of doing it. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly open to considering any kind of proposals that Members may have, the public may have, and seniors themselves may have in terms of how they may be involved. In saying that though, we have to keep in mind the costs of doing it and make sure that we're doing it in a way not just for seniors, but for everybody's input in a way that is most cost effective and does give us good guidance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. Item 7, written questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 80-15(3): Government Action To Address School Concerns

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Could the Minister provide detailed information on what this government has done to deal with truancy, high dropout rates and the low graduation rates of our schools in the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 8: RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I'm in receipt of a return to written question 73-15(3) asked of the Honourable Charles Dent, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment by Mr. Yakeleya on February 17, 2005, regarding the hiring of teachers.

Return To Written Question 73-15(3): Hiring Of Teachers

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Yakeleya on February 17, 2005, regarding the hiring of teachers.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table statistics on the number of teachers that have been hired from southern Canada by educational district since 2001.

The total number of new teachers hired from southern Canada came to 110 in the school year beginning in 2001, 147 in 2002, 120 in 2003 and 79 in 2004. Most significantly, however, the percentage of northern

teachers out of all teachers hired has increased during this period. In 2001 only five percent of new teachers hired in the NWT came from the North. By 2004, that figure had increased to 18 percent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ITEM 12: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS

Bill 21: An Act To Amend The Public Service Act

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has reviewed Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act, and wishes to report that Bill 21 is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 70(5) and have Bill 21 ordered into Committee of the Whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 70(5) and move Bill 21 into Committee of the Whole for today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Bill 21 is ordered into Committee of the Whole for today. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 121-15(3): Number Of New Teachers Hired From 2001 To 2005

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Return to Written Question 73-15(3), I wish to table the following document entitled Number of New Teachers Hired from 2001 to 2005. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 14: NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 31-15(3): Performance Audit Of The Workers' Compensation Board

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, March 10, 2005, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that the Legislative Assembly request that the Auditor General of Canada undertake a comprehensive performance audit of the workers' compensation function of the Northwest Territories/Nunavut Workers' Compensation Board and report thereon to the Legislative Assembly; and further, that the performance audit examine the organization, training and orientation of personnel, practices, attitudes, philosophy, internal performance measures, procedures and resources associated with administering claims made by the injured workers to ascertain whether these conform with, and claims are managed in accordance with, the spirit and intent of the act; and furthermore that the audit examine the adequacy and appropriateness of the board's corporate governance model and accountability relationship to the Government of the Northwest

Territories and the Legislative Assembly; and furthermore that the Auditor General examine such additional factors as she, in her opinion, feels are relevant; and furthermore, that all employees, officials, board and tribunal members actively cooperate with the Auditor General in providing all appropriate documents, records, papers and information; and furthermore that the Auditor General is requested to complete this special performance audit as soon as practicable and provide a report to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. 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; Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act; 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; and, 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. By the authority given 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 Mr. Ramsay in the Chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Committee, we have a number of items before us. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committee wishes to consider Bill 19, Appropriation Act 2005-2006, with Aboriginal Affairs, Executive and the Legislative Assembly, as well as Bill 21. We wish to consider Bill 21 first. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Agreed. Thank you, committee, and we'll now take a short recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): We are on Bill 21. We are going to start with that in Committee of the Whole. I would like to ask the Minister responsible to introduce the bill.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: I am pleased to introduce Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act. The staffing appeals process provides for public accountability of staffing within the GNWT public service. The proposed legislative amendments to the Public Service Act will enhance this accountability by enabling revisions to the staffing review and appeals regulations to strengthen the staffing appeals process by making it more independent and transparent.

The proposed changes to the Public Service Act include an appointment mechanism for staffing review officers as well as a more extensive regulation-making provision. This legislative change will enable further and more extensive work to be done on the staffing review and appeals regulations.

Currently, the Staffing Appeals Committee is comprised of three members: the secretary of the FMBS delegate; the president of the UNW delegate; and a mutually agreed upon chairperson. The public and employees frequently view this structure as giving either management or the union the ability to influence the outcome of an appeal.

In order to increase confidence in the staffing appeals system, it is the intention to remove union and management representatives from the process. It is proposed that independent staffing review officers from outside the government would conduct staffing appeal reviews and decide the outcome of staffing appeals.

Increased accountability will also flow from the proposed changes as the appeal process would be extended to competitions for excluded and management positions, below the assistant deputy minister level.

The current system of only allowing appeals for UNW bargaining unit competitions results in a widespread perception that there is no accountability in the staffing process for managerial and excluded positions. Subjecting management and excluded competitions to public scrutiny through the appeals process should change this perception.

Should these legislative amendments of the Public Service Act be approved, then the next stage of work of the staffing review and appeals regulations can begin in earnest. It is proposed that amendments to the regulations will include a requirement for the staffing review officer to complete written decisions, with reasons for upholding or denying the appeal, to be provided to the appellant. Currently, the report of the staffing appeal panel is not provided to the appellant or the proposed appointee. Instead, only the decision, whether the appeal is upheld or denied, is communicated to the appellant and the proposed appointee.

As you can appreciate, this type of an approach often leaves participants in the staffing appeals process wondering if their concerns have been heard. While providing written decisions for appeals will create greater understanding and confidence in the system, it will not make all candidates on a competition happy with a competition outcome. The very nature of the staff process is that only one person gets the job and the remaining applicants are disappointed that they did not get the job. In order to instil public confidence in the process, appellants require clear and reasoned justifications for the appeal decision.

While this proposal will provide for an independent review of an appealed competition, the staffing review officers would not have the authority to appoint individuals to positions. The staffing review officers' role is to determine if the staffing policy was adhered to on an appealed competition. Their appeal decisions will include directing the competition process be restarted at the point in the staffing process where the error was made. The hiring decisions would appropriately remain in the hands of the employer which is the case with the current staffing appeals process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am prepared to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. I now look to the committee who reviewed Bill 21. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight conducted its public review of Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act, on March 7, 2005. The committee would like to thank the Union of Northern Workers for their presentation and the Minister and his staff for introducing the bill.

The committee is generally supportive of Bill 21, which will result in long overdue improvements to the staffing appeals process for public service jobs. The committee noted that many of the proposed changes to the process are not included in this bill and will instead be reflected in the regulations. The committee would, therefore, appreciate an opportunity to discuss the regulations with the Minister before they are approved.

The Union of Northern Workers also expressed an interest in having input into the regulations. In particular, they would like to ensure that union members are allowed union representation at appeal hearings, Mr. Chairman, that the union is informed when appeals are filed, and that they will have access to the review officers' reports and recommendations.

They also would like to see measures put in place to ensure consistent application of the rules by all staffing review officers across the NWT. The committee would encourage the government to work with the union in drafting the regulations and to accommodate their request where practicable.

Mr. Chairman, currently, staffing appeals are heard by a committee made up of a GNWT representative, the Union of Northern Workers representative and a third person agreed upon by the other two. With the new process, all the staffing review officers will be appointed by the Minister. Members asked the Minister if this raises any concerns about their independence. The Minister indicated that his role will be limited to intervening where there have been procedural irregularities and, for the most part, he will be following the recommendations of the review officers.

Members also asked the Minister, Mr. Chairman, about the qualifications of the staffing review officers. The Minister and his staff advised that they intend to recruit people with experience in investigative work and will also provide a rigorous training program on the GNWT staffing process and policies.

The union requested that they be given an opportunity to have input into the selection of the staffing review officers. The committee appreciates the Minister's agreement to consult with the union before making the appointments. The committee was advised that while the intent was to initially recruit one officer for the northern NWT, one for the southern NWT and one for headquarters, the Minister will reconsider this should the number of appeals in any of these locations result in too high a workload for one officer.

The officers will be contracted on an as-and-when basis.

Mr. Chairman, the committee looks forward to the coming into force of this bill and the regulations later this year and believes it will bring a substantial improvement in terms of both fairness and transparency over the current staffing appeals process.

Following the committee's review, a motion was carried to report Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act, to the Assembly as ready for Committee of the Whole. This concludes the committee's opening remarks on Bill 21. Mr. Chairman, individual Members may have additional questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. I would like to ask Minister Roland if he would like to bring in witnesses.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Does committee agree that we entertain witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort in the witnesses. Thank you.

Mr. Minister, I was wondering if you could introduce your witnesses for the record. Thank you.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have with me today the director of legislation, Mark Aitken; to my immediate right is Mr. Lew Voytilla, secretary to FMB; and, to my immediate left is Ms. Lynn Elkin, assistant deputy minister of corporate human resources. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome to our proceedings this afternoon. I will now move on to general comments on Bill 21 by Members. General comments. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comments will be brief and very supportive of this bill. I have had at least one fairly extensive encounter with a constituent who had a number of difficulties in some staffing appeals and it was quite apparent that the difficulties were within the regulations and the steps that either the appeal process is required to follow or not required to follow and sometimes the interpretation of those really caused some issues. So this is very welcome, certainly from the people who work for us and I would also like to think among the people who are responsible and accountable for the workforce, so we can get a better rulebook in place here. This is very progressive.

As the report indicated, the Minister was quite willing to accept union input into the recommendations that he will make on who the staffing appeals officers will be and to allow access to the process of designing and writing the regulations, which is where much of the success or the complication will be in those regs.

Mr. Chairman, I really had one question to put to the Minister and his staff. That is just how extensively are these appeals processes applied? Certainly there is our main workforce, but then there are boards, agencies, authorities committees, commissions, et cetera. To what extent are these in place for those arm's length organizations? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this would apply to all government staff. So all public servants, whether they are on education boards or health boards, the only group that would not apply to is the Power Corporation. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That really satisfies my curiosity on this bill. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be speaking in favour of this and in these adjustments. As I see it, we are now opening up the appeal process to show transparency by making reports available to the appellant. I think those are good things for the people who do appeal to the process, whereas a decision in the old days up until, of course, the date that this gets changed, is either a yea or nay. It is upheld, and folks will sort of feel left out of the system and try to understand why their appeal wasn't upheld. I appreciate and I also applaud the efforts to include that transparency.

The other thing that I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation towards is the fact that this does enable other people to appeal more of a management side of the equation which, previously, they were excluded. As I understand it, this now still excludes ADMs and DMs. However, it does open it up to a broader perspective and allow more people to appeal positions that they feel rightly they should have been selected, or at least had a more serious shot at. That being said, I applaud the move forward in transparency, and I look forward to less phone calls in this area as the system is showing that it is truly being responsive to the needs of the communities. Thank you very much. That is all. I have no question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Are there further general comments to Bill 21? Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to applaud the Minister of Finance for embarking on this amendment, because I think that it is long overdue and it is something that the public will definitely embrace and probably use the staffing appeal officers quite regularly, I guess. Like my friend was saying, it might lessen the amount of phone calls that we are receiving every day with regard to employment opportunities in the government.

In his briefing here, there are three positions for staffing review officers that are going to be considered, based on their experience with the workload and reviewing the number of appellants in each region, they will kind of move around the workload a little bit. I was just wondering with those positions, are those positions all going to be located here in Yellowknife, or are they going to be in the regional offices?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the three positions will not all be located in Yellowknife. One of them will be in the north and one will be in the south part of the territory. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is good to know that people will not have to phone or write Yellowknife in order to get their appeal heard or considered for review. Earlier, we were talking about some of the inquiries we get with respect to hiring practices by the government...you know, aboriginal people that are applying for government positions are being screened because the affirmative action policy is

something that is kind of not strictly adhered to nowadays. Is an appeal legitimate, based on a concern by an employee who is not given an opportunity for a position, because of the lack of consideration for the affirmative action policy? Is that going to be included in staffing review guidelines for employment consideration? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as anybody who would apply on a government position would be aware, through the form to apply, they would make the selection if they were an aboriginal person in the Northwest Territories and therefore considered P1. So if they felt they weren't considered a P1 or a P2 in the existing categories in place, then any policy we have could be appealed if they felt that it wasn't adhered to. It is pretty straightforward on that section of it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess my concern is if a P1 appeals to a review officer and the review officer doesn't...It is clearly stated that they are not in a position to authorize the appointment of any individuals to any positions, but I am just curious. If you have a P1 that is qualified in his eyes, and he applies to the staffing review officer to review his lack of an appointment to the position because of...If they followed all the rules and did the process according to what is stipulated in the competition and whatnot, how much consideration would...because the final decision rests in the hand of the employer. It is stated right there for any staffing appeals process. So how much weight would the affirmative action policy carry in having an appeal revisited?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the process, as laid out, is with our policies that are in place. Each applicant would be put through that. They would be followed. If the rules are followed, then there is no ground for appealing if that is the basis of the concern. So as we go forward from here, as we have stated, to clarify where we are going and to make this a more transparent process, going with the independent staffing appeals officers, it is our goal to limit the concern that people are not being given a fair opportunity for the jobs that are in place. As we have it, the rules are there. They are to be followed. If the rules are followed and applied, then it should be fairly straightforward. But that is one of the reasons we are going the way we are, is to try to create a little bit more independence on how the process goes. Hopefully, at the end of the day, people would agree with that. As stated earlier, there will be individuals at the end of the day that still will not be happy with the decision because they would not be successful. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question on the question of the independence of the staffing review officers. I guess I am understanding that they are going to be government employees. I don't know how arm's length they are going to be from the government, because they are going to be ministerial

appointments, I guess. How is the Department of Finance going to ensure that the staffing review officers are totally independent, unbiased and objective when it comes to reviewing any kind of staffing appeals process? What kind of reassurance can the public get to just having any confidence in the review officers that are going to be put in place?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Minister.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as we are laying this out, the process is we would put out a request for individuals who have interest in taking up those positions. They would not be allowed to be government personnel. So a government employee would not qualify for one of these positions. They will be contracted positions. Once they are selected and will have the experience to fit the criteria, they would be in there for a three-year term. The only reason they could be removed would be for not following the rules, not going in accordance to the act.

So the Minister-of-the-day cannot go back for one year into a term of a staffing review officer's position and decide to make a change. It's pretty well guaranteed tenure for three years, unless there is cause or incapacity. So if an individual becomes ill, that would be the other reason we would try to find a new position. As the act comes into place and change happens, selection is made and three years is what the individual would be put in for and could only be removed for incapacity or not following the rules. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Any further general comments? Clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Bill as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does committee agree that Bill 21 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Bill 21 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, committee. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, witnesses.

---Applause

We will now move on to Aboriginal Affairs. I would like to ask the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to provide his opening comments on his departmental estimates. Mr. Premier.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs' 2005-2006 Main Estimates for the committee's consideration.

The proposed operational budget for the ministry is \$8.198 million. This is a \$265,000, or 3.1 percent, net decrease from the 2004-2005 Main Estimates due to the following factors:

1. \$297,000 in budget reductions, primarily in the areas of travel and contract services, as well as a reduction of one position;
2. a \$30,000 net increase in term funding to resource devolution negotiations; and
3. a \$2,000 increase from Public Works and Services to assist with increase TSC chargebacks.

The resources will be used in support of the ministry's primary objective which is to represent our government and protect the interests of all residents of the NWT in the negotiations of lands, resources and self-government agreements, as well as devolution and resource revenue sharing agreements. Furthermore, the ministry is tasked with maintaining mutually beneficial working relationships with aboriginal governments.

Negotiations

The ministry is currently involved in the nine negotiation tables: Beaufort-Delta, formally known as the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit; Deline; Tulita; Deh Cho; Akaitcho; Northwest Territory Metis Nation; Saskatchewan Denesuline; Manitoba Denesuline; and devolution and resource revenue sharing. Once negotiations are concluded, the ministry is also responsible for coordinating and overseeing the GNWT-wide implementation of the settled agreements.

These negotiations are usually tripartite in nature and vary in complexity. For instance, the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit are working towards a regional style of self-government, the first ever in Canada, and the communities of Deline and Tulita are aspiring for a community-style self-government. A combined lands, resources and self-government agreement will result in four public community governments and a Tlicho regional government in the Tlicho settlement area.

To date, the Beaufort-Delta and Deline have signed agreements-in-principle and are working on their final self-government agreements. As we all know, the Tlicho Final Agreement recently received Royal Assent. All parties have also now agreed upon an effective date of August 4, 2005.

Progress is also being made on other lands, resources and self-government tables. The Northwest Territory Metis Nation expects to have a draft agreement-in-principle this summer. The Akaitcho Dene First Nations look forward to signing a principles document during Minister Andy Scott's visit this summer. The GNWT fully supports these objectives and is working with Canada, and the Northwest Territory Metis Nation and Akaitcho to achieve them.

Devolution

Through discussions on the Northern Strategy, the Prime Minister agreed that devolution is a priority and has targeted an agreement-in-principle for this spring and a final agreement in 2006.

Claims Implementation Activities

In addition to the operational budget, the ministry receives \$313,000 from the Government of Canada to fund three positions to coordinate and manage GNWT implementation activities flowing from the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in and Sahtu land claim agreements.

- With respect to the Sahtu Final Agreement, the ministry, the Government of Canada and the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated successfully negotiated a new 10-year Sahtu implementation plan. In recognizing the increased level of activity in the Sahtu settlement area, the new plan includes a substantial increase in operational funding for the various Sahtu land claim boards, the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated and the renewable resources councils;
- With respect to the Gwich'in Final Agreement, the ministry is working with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Canada and a contractor to produce an educational CD-ROM for school-age children in the Gwich'in settlement area. The CD-ROM highlights the history and content of the Gwich'in Land Claim Agreement;
- The ministry is working closely with GNWT departments, the Tlicho and Canada to ensure that all pre-implementation activities are completed prior to the August 4, 2005, effective date; and
- In follow-up to the Auditor General's recommendations, the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in and Sahtu implementation committees agreed that their respective annual reports should be more results-based. Historically, the annual reports have only reported on activities and accomplishments of the previous year. Results-based reporting will strengthen the reporting process by helping the parties to define clear objectives and measurable indicators. With measurable indicators, the parties will be able to determine success over time with respect to implementing land claim activities and obligations. The ministry is working with each of the implementation committees to overhaul the format of the annual reports, consistent with recommendations put forward by the Auditor General.

This concludes my opening remarks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have Mr. Menicoche, as chairperson of AOC, for committee's comments.

Ministry Re-profiling

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has noted with concern that there is a substantial degree of duplication and/or overlap between certain mandates and activities of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and those in the Executive, in particular the Intergovernmental Relations and Strategic Planning office, IGRASP. Some Members are of the opinion that this has led to a waste of valuable human and fiscal resources. Others point to the overlap of responsibilities and accountability of certain high-level GNWT officials.

An important part of the work undertaken by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and by IGRASP relates to devolution and resource revenue sharing negotiations. This work falls under the ministry because of the nature of the tripartite negotiations with the federal government and the Aboriginal Summit, whereas the IGRASP office is involved

because of its responsibility for GNWT participation in intergovernmental activities.

Members also note that the incumbent secretary to Cabinet, to whom the IGRASP office reports, also assumes the position of deputy minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Furthermore, a new associate deputy minister position has now been created within the Executive, to work closely with the secretary to Cabinet and deputy minister for Aboriginal Affairs. This position has been filled by an individual who will continue to occupy the position of assistant deputy minister for IGRASP, as well as assuming new duties as associate deputy minister. Given this level of overlap, the committee does not see a convincing rationale to continue to operate two separate units.

The standing committee has brought the issue of duplication to the attention of the Premier on several previous occasions and the Premier has responded favourably to consolidation, however, it has been brushed off as a project for a later date. The committee is of the opinion that it is well past time to bring these two separate entities together in one unit for the sake of clarity of mandate as well as streamlining efficiencies with the aim of cost reduction.

Finally, Members have pointed out on several occasions that there is a disconnect between the title 'Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs' and the important work that is done on behalf of all northerners in the area of devolution and resource revenue sharing. Consideration for a name that more accurately reflects the business of the ministry could also be looked into at this time.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends that the Premier come forward to the committee, prior to the review of the 2006-2009 Business Plans, with options to re-profile the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and IGRASP.

The committee further recommends that the proposed options address the existing problem of duplication of responsibilities and identify possible cost reductions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche, for your opening comments. Minister Handley, would you like to bring in witnesses?

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does committee agree that we allow witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Sergeant-at-Arms, if you could please escort in the witnesses.

Thank you. Minister Handley, if you could, for the record, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is Veronica Puskas, the manager of planning and analysis for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; on my right is Bob McLeod, deputy minister of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, Mr. McLeod. Welcome Ms. Puskas. We will now move on to general comments on departmental estimates for Aboriginal Affairs. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to Aboriginal Affairs as it applies to the whole of the NWT and particularly my riding where we have the Deh Cho First Nations engaged in their process of, they call it the Deh Cho process, are the efforts similar to what is going on with the NWT of wanting to maintain control over their resources. I am glad to see that our government is supportive of this and, for the most part, is trying to keep their hands away from it and let the process unfold, particularly in the last year or so, where it has been particularly tense in the court cases launched by the DCFN and the federal government.

Of course, in the midst, embroiled in all of this, are some of the things that are of interest to us as a government, which is the planned Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline project. It has a huge impact for us in terms of upsetting the stage for future growth for the Territories as a whole and all the communities. In the middle of it all, of course, is the Deh Cho First Nations, and rightly so, because the majority of the planned pipeline passes through the Deh Cho region.

I come here and I am supportive of the aims and the goals of the Deh Cho First Nations. I have said many times in the halls of the Legislative Assembly, that the last time they created or installed a pipeline in the Northwest Territories, our communities didn't benefit at all. This is something that is near and dear to me as well, and it is something that I want to get on with; this socioeconomic agreement and making sure, at least from a government perspective, that our communities and our people are protected in the long term. That is aside from the land claims or the Deh Cho process that is happening right now, Mr. Chairman.

There are a few different things that are happening that apply to the Deh Cho First Nations. We have the Intergovernmental Forum, the Aboriginal Summit, DCFN is still listed as observes and I still think that we have to extend every effort and continue to invite them to the table and assure them that just because they are participating, that doesn't mean that they are buying into the process. For the most part they are saying that they're against, but then they have to be involved too, because the more they know about the process, then the better informed they are. There are lots of things that are happening. I don't know if it's outside of them, because they are choosing not to participate, but if we somehow use our Aboriginal Affairs to encourage, to ask for their involvement. Just because you are involved, does not mean that you are saying yes to anything. The more knowledge that we are able to share with them or the more knowledge that they want to get from our process, would be that much better for things as we go along in the future here, Mr. Chairman.

With respect to devolution, perhaps the Premier or the Minister can let me know -- I believe there were four areas of devolution left -- in terms of defining it. There is water, there are lands and resources, I believe mining was one of them. If the Minister can speak to those four things and some of the current plan that is being planned by the department in terms of assisting devolution processes. Mr. Chairman, I think I will just end on that note and allow the Minister to respond. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Menicoché. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me say, first of all, that we do respect the Deh Cho process and the right of the Deh Cho people to negotiate

the process that is underway right now. Our approach to this has been to be helpful and, at the same time, not be blocking anything that may be standing in the way.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, while we want to be supportive of the Deh Cho, we also have to ensure we carry out our government responsibilities for all other regions in the Territories and other settled claims and other negotiations. We are continually needing to balance our activities and we try to do that in a way that is sensitive to everyone's rights and aspirations.

Mr. Chairman, we do continue to support the Deh Cho, we continue to invite them to the meetings that we have. Whether it is with the Aboriginal Summit or meetings with aboriginal leaders in some other capacity, the Deh Cho are always invited. I have not turned down an opportunity to meet with Deh Cho leaders at the community level or at the regional level.

I want to help this move along. Like others, I suppose, I also want to see the Mackenzie Valley pipeline go ahead, but go ahead in a way that is beneficial to everybody. We are not running over somebody's rights, so I support the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and hope that we are able to work well with the Deh Cho in achieving both of those.

I think we can have both things happening at the same time, where we are moving ahead with the Deh Cho negotiations, at the same time as the pipeline pre-approval activities are going on over the next two or three years. There have not been negotiations with the Deh Cho since November, when the court cases were filed, so it has been frustrating for everybody that there is no progress being made right now.

There are a number of areas, as the Member has mentioned, that are under negotiation. Environmental management regulation is certainly a piece of it; that includes how the lawmaking authority is going to be settled there. There is the MVRMA boards and process and how that will come together. The Crown lands and waters are certainly areas that are being considered for devolution, which includes the administration and control of federal Crown lands, surface and subsurface, and authority to collect resource royalties and revenues and so on. Administration and control of water and whatever other associated powers are under section 92 (a).

I might emphasize, Mr. Chairman, that some processes, such as the MVRMA, are not -- I think the federal government has made that pretty clear -- going to create another process, but, again, that is their position at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Menicoché.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is fine now, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Menicoché. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As Mr. Menicoché highlighted when he read the report, the area that rose up from our briefing with the Minister on this was the growth in separate fields, Mr. Chairman. The mandate and the role of IGRASP, as relates to the mandate and the role of Aboriginal Affairs; the crossover and overlap that these two agencies were starting to see.

Also, Mr. Chairman, as the report details to some extent, the creation or jockeying of senior deputy positions to try to accommodate this. The recommendation that

committee has made here, Mr. Chairman, is that we would like the Premier to come back in the next business plans with options to reprofile the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and IGRASP, to see if there is a way of streamlining what does appear to be sort of concurrent mandates going up in different regions.

What I wanted to ask the Premier, Mr. Chairman, was whether he sees that this is an area where we could do with some streamlining or some re-profiling. Thank you.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is always room to streamline and if we can find areas to do it in, then we will do that. We certainly take seriously the committee's recommendation that we look at how we can integrate IGRASP and Aboriginal Affairs and for that reason, I have not appointed another deputy minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Rather, I have asked Mr. McLeod to assume both roles; not both salaries, but both roles.

We have been doing it that way and I intend, as soon as we have time to do this -- and I hope we can do that this summer -- to start doing some work on how we could integrate the IGRASP and MAA so it all becomes an intergovernmental affairs department, whether it is aboriginal government, provincial government, federal government and so on. We are looking at that, we heard the committee loud and clear and we will continue to work in that direction.

Mr. Chairman, I would say that there is less room for streamlining with Aboriginal Affairs and Executive and so on than you might have in other departments, because a lot of our core services are already integrated. For example, finance and administration is just one section that provides services for Executive, for FMBS, for Aboriginal Affairs, so there is no savings there. The savings would be primarily, I suppose, at the senior management level there may be some positions, but these are both small departments; they are not going to save us millions of dollars.

One other comment I want make, Mr. Chairman, is with regard to the associate deputy minister position we have created in IGRASP -- even though we are not doing the Executive, Members have referred to it -- that one is partly because of the workload and responsibilities that people have to carry and the fact that I have one deputy acting for two departments, so just the workload and the responsibility. The other piece is that this is also a way of getting females into senior management positions. The associate deputy minister, Gabriella Sparling, is basically taking on many of the responsibilities we would normally give to a deputy. That is one way of doing that, as well. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the discussion. I guess, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to double check with the Premier that the committee more or less has it right. We aren't misreading or misinterpreting some of the actions that have been taken and we are not totally off base in recommending that. At least from our side of the fence, we do see a number of similarities coming through here and we found it confusing; mandates that were seemingly quite similar and seemed to involve a lot of the same people and the same outside organizations, but yet were being handled in different places.

As long as the committee hasn't fundamentally misread something, then I look forward, Mr. Chairman, to something later on this summer, if I heard the Premier right this time, perhaps a more combined intergovernmental affairs shop. Thank you.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, I think the committee is right and we are looking at that and, in fact, there are sections -- I think the main one is the policy and communication section -- where we may be able to integrate those responsibilities between IGRASP and MAA into one section, even before we get into the business plans for the next fiscal year, 2006-07.

Where we can, we will begin, but, Mr. Chairman, the committee's recommendation is fair and one that we respect. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: That is it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. I have Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to make just a few brief comments here with regard to the opening remarks by the Minister. It's good to see that he is working with the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in, the Sahtu and the Tlicho people.

In his opening remarks, the Minister indicated that the department is responsible for coordinating and overseeing the GNWT-wide implementation of settlement agreements. I am just wondering if there is any money coming from the GNWT or are the feds putting all the money in for implementation of these plans. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, the money that I referred to in the opening remarks, the \$313,000, is money that is flowed to us from the Government of Canada to fund three positions for implementing the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in and Sahtu land claim agreements. So that is federal money. But in terms of implementing the agreements, we also, as a government, spend a considerable amount of money implementing all of the articles in the agreements that are within our mandate. For example, in forestry or wildlife we contribute substantially through the various departments, not through this department. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister tell me exactly how much money the federal government is putting into the implementation or coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the settlement agreements? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, I don't have a number for how much the federal government would provide to the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in and the Sahtu directly themselves, but what I have only is the amount of money that they flow through us, which is the \$313,000. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can I ask the Minister then, is that \$313,000 enough for the three positions to operate, manage and coordinate the implementation? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, the \$313,000 is the amount they give us and we're managing within that amount. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll go back now to the Sahtu Final Agreement. I'm just wondering, in his opening remarks the Minister also indicated that it includes a substantial increase in operations funding for various Sahtu claims and boards. Will that money come out of the GNWT or will that be from the federal government? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, that would be federal money. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you. Just one more quick one here. Does that include the Tlicho Implementation Agreement, too? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, no, it doesn't include the Tlicho. The Tlicho money would begin to flow August 4th during the coming into effect date. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Further general comments. I'd like to show committee we're on page 2-95. We'll pass over 2-95 and come back to that one. We'll start on 2-99, Aboriginal Affairs, operations expenditure summary, \$8.198 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 2-101, Aboriginal Affairs, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$300,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Contributions continues on to page 2-102, Aboriginal Affairs, grants and contributions, total contributions, \$1.63 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Total grants and contributions, \$1.93 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Pages 2-104 and 2-105. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move back to page 2-99. My apologies. We have a motion.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Is committee agreed that we go back to page 2-99?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Okay, Mr. Hawkins, page 2-99.

Committee Motion 29-15(3): Recommendation To Reprofile The Ministry Of Aboriginal Affairs And The Intergovernmental Relations And Strategic Planning Division, Carried

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, committee, for allowing us to go back to page 2-99. Mr. Chairman, I move that this committee recommends that the Premier come forward to the Accountability and Oversight committee prior to the review of the 2006-2009 Business Plans with options to re-profile the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and the intergovernmental relations and strategic planning division of the Executive offices;

And further, that the proposed option to address the existing problem of duplication of responsibilities and identified possible associated cost reductions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Thank you.

---Carried

---Applause

We'll go back to pages 2-104 and 2-105, Aboriginal Affairs, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 2-106, 2-107 and 2-108, work done on behalf of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): For a total of \$456,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. We'll now go back to page 2-95. That's the program summary, operations expenditure summary, \$8.198 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. We'll now turn into volume two here. On page 2-11. I'll give you a second here to pull out your volume two to page 2-11. Under program summary, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$142,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 2-12, Aboriginal Affairs, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$142,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that consideration of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I'd like to thank you, Mr. Handley, Ms. Puskas and Mr. McLeod. Thank you. Thank you, committee.

I will now ask the Minister responsible for Executive Offices to provide his opening comments on departmental estimates. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: I am pleased to present the 2005-2006 Main Estimates for the Department of Executive.

For 2005-06, the Department of Executive is requesting a budget of \$8.946 million, which represents a .83 percent, or \$76,000, increase from the restated 2004-2005 Main Estimates.

Economizing Measures

The Department of Executive has identified economizing measures in the amount of \$314,000 from the restated 2004-2005 Main Estimates.

- \$42,000 for the Beaufort-Delta office. When the department was first asked to identify areas of reduction, the regional office in Inuvik was explored as potentially rendering savings. At that time, the department identified a \$42,000 reduction by eliminating the executive assistant position. Since that review, much has happened in the Beaufort-Delta. In April 2004, the Beaufort-Delta Regional Council, BDRC, completed development of the Beaufort-Delta Agenda, a document that details the vision and priorities of the Beaufort-Delta region. In response to the Beaufort-Delta Agenda, the GNWT and the BDRC agreed to work collaboratively towards the development of a joint work plan to further the priorities contained in the agenda. The GNWT has also undertaken an independent functional review of the executive office in the Beaufort-Delta that made several recommendations on what form this office should take in the future. The Executive Council has reviewed the functional review and developed a draft response, which was shared with AOC on March 2, 2005. In this context, the department will be revisiting the reduction and the required resources to further the objectives of the proposed office;
- \$100,000 reduction achieved through the elimination of two positions that have been vacant for a significant period of time. These positions are located in the Commissioner's office and in the Public Utilities Board. Of course, there is a need to ensure these offices have adequate resources to carry out the core functions of these positions. This will be done through the amalgamation of duties with other positions or through contracts;
- \$30,000 reduction in the Minister's home travel budget;
- \$50,000 reduction in the Premier's travel budget; and,
- \$92,000 reduction across various other O and M funding in all divisions in the Executive.

Additions

As Members are aware, this government is involved in considerably heightened intergovernmental work and, as such, is requesting a one-time target adjustment in the amount of \$355,000. The Northern Strategy, devolution, resource revenue sharing, effective participation in the Council of the Federation, First Ministers' meetings, Western Premiers' Conference and their associated committees and working groups have required greater coordination and effort within our government to continue to advance in these areas. The department will track all costs and will provide justification for an ongoing target

adjustment in the 2006-2009 business plans to be reviewed in the fall of 2005.

These main estimates also includes a 2005-06 and ongoing target adjustment of \$30,000 to help the corporate communications and protocol division properly manage the GNWT's trademarks and copyrights, known in law as "intellectual property."

Finally, recognizing the importance of women's issues, the department will once again be providing a grant-in-kind to the Native Women's Association, in the form of free use of government office space. The cost of this grant-in-kind has increased and, therefore, the department is seeking an increase of \$15,000. This is a non-cash requirement and will be offset by a similar increase to grant-in-kind revenue in the Department of Public Works and Services.

I am now prepared to answer any questions that committee members may have. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Premier. Now I would like to recognize Mr. Hawkins for his opening remarks.

Input Into The Expert Panel On Equalization And The Council Of The Federation Panel On Fiscal Imbalance

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. During the review of the 2005-5006 Draft Main Estimates, the committee had an opportunity to speak with the Premier about the federal initiative to establish an expert panel to look into issues related to equalization payments to provinces, and the proposed sub-panel that will consider the financing formulas that govern the flow of federal money to the territories. The committee was pleased to hear of this initiative and is hopeful this process will lead to an improved financing formula that addresses many of the shortcomings of previous financial arrangements with the federal government.

The committee was even more pleased to hear of the First Ministers' intentions to establish a corresponding panel, through the Council of the Federation, to look at the fiscal imbalances of federal financing, the amount of money that goes to the federal government as compared to what stays with the provinces and territories. Both panels will report back by the end of December 2005.

The Premier advised Members that he had had some opportunity to provide input into the composition of the Panel on Fiscal Imbalance. The committee feels it is absolutely crucial that the sub-panel on formula financing and the panel on fiscal imbalance have representation from individuals familiar with the NWT's issues, given that the fiscal history of the GNWT is not widely known. The committee looks forward to being advised of the composition of these panels once it has been established.

Understanding that the work this group will undertake has the potential to have an enormous and far-reaching affect on the fiscal situation of the NWT, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight strongly believes that it is essential that the history and current situation of the territory be clearly communicated to the panel: billions of dollars in resource royalty revenue, collected from the extraction of territorial resources over the years, have been funnelled into federal coffers.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends a proactive approach to communication with the Expert Panel on Equalization and the Council of the

Federation Panel on Fiscal Imbalance to ensure the NWT's position is fully understood and represented;

And further, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight also recommends that the government adopt a collaborative approach with the Aboriginal Summit with respect to a communications plan for input into the two panels.

Beaufort-Delta Regional Office Review

The Beaufort-Delta regional office was established during the 2003-04 fiscal year to assist the region to coordinate its preparation for the implementation of a final regional self-government agreement. The office was to be implemented on a one-year trial basis, and evaluated after that period to determine if it should be continued.

The regional superintendent of Education, Culture and Employment took on the Beaufort-Delta regional director position on a trial basis. In September 2004, the Premier advised the committee that he had met with the incumbent who informed him that in her view, the workload at the Beaufort-Delta regional office did not, at that time, merit a full-time position. She suggested she could do her former position and the new position simultaneously. In addition, the fiscal restraint and government-wide cost-cutting initiatives led to the decision to eliminate the office's administrative assistant position.

After the one-year trial period, the Premier advised the committee that the regional director would be producing a progress report on the work of the regional office, to be submitted by December 31, 2004. The committee was, therefore, surprised to learn that, in fact, a private contractor had been commissioned to write another report on the need for the Beaufort regional office. The committee is somewhat critical of the decision to hire another contractor to review the regional office. This is seen as yet another example of using scarce funds to hire costly outside contractors to provide "expert" advice on a situation that consultation with internal staff would reveal just as effectively. The Premier had received the report at the time of the review of the 2005-2006 Draft Main Estimates and he committed to sharing it with the committee after Cabinet had been briefed.

The standing committee is of the opinion that the initiative to establish a regional office in the Beaufort-Delta was commendable and that there is a strong need to formalize GNWT coordination in the Beaufort-Delta and other regions. The complex political environment in the regions, which is in part a result of self-government negotiations and agreements and rapid resource development initiatives, demands a stepped up coordinated effort on the part of the Government of the Northwest Territories. A coordinated presence in the regions is essential. As it stands, circumstantial evidence suggests that interdepartmental coordination and communication at the regional level is inadequate.

Regional directors were eliminated in 1996, as a substantial cost-saving initiative. The role of regional directors was replaced by a somewhat haphazard approach coordinated through a committee of regional superintendents, with varying degrees of effectiveness depending on the region. Since then there have been considerable changes in regions as self-government negotiations advance. The committee is of the opinion that the establishment of the Beaufort-Delta regional office on a trial basis indicates the government's willingness to explore the possibility of formalizing much needed regional coordination and is pleased with this effort. The

committee looks forward to reviewing the two reports on the Beaufort-Delta regional office, and exploring possible options to move forward on regional coordination in the Beaufort-Delta and other regions.

Recommendation

The committee recommends that the Department of Executive consider different options to use already existing personnel and resources to create a consistent system of coordination in the regions;

And further, that the options be presented to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight prior to the committee review of 2006-2009 Business Plans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Would you like to call in your witnesses, Mr. Premier?

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Is the committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can the Sergeant-at-Arms please escort the witnesses in? Thank you.

Thank you. Mr. Handley, can you introduce your witnesses, please?

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me are Bob McLeod, deputy minister for the Executive, on my left; and Carl Bird, director of corporate services for the Executive. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Handley. General comments. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Among the many different areas that this very active and diverse and, I should say from my perspective, pretty efficient group does is the overall communication mandate for the GNWT. Although it is disseminated, Mr. Chairman, across our departments, there is a policy function, I believe, that is vested in the Executive and a kind of umbrella coordinating function and expectation for consistency and performance that has its home in this government's Executive department.

We talked about this at some length in the committee's reviews with the Minister, Mr. Chairman, and I find it very interesting to read all departments' business plans, especially their environmental scan, Mr. Chairman. These are publicly available documents which I find well-written; they tend to be fairly candid and objective in their outlook and I found the Department of Executive's was no different.

I found it was a good read for me, Mr. Chairman, and the Executive plugged in their situation with the overall goals that this Legislative Assembly has established. Those are very high level goals, but when it comes to accountability in things, we need to make some connection with what it is this Assembly says it wants our civil service to do and how they're going to go about it.

In this examination, Mr. Chairman, the department makes the point...I'm just going to read a couple of lines here. Attached to goal number three, that residents of the NWT have knowledge about and can actively support the government's agenda and they're able to access and contribute to the development of the programs and the services of the government. The part that I found interesting was -- and this is authored by the department - it says that it can be argued that the success of GNWT

programs and initiatives is predicated not only upon how well the programs are planned and executed, but how well they are communicated to the public and understood by the public within the overall context of the government's agenda and stated objectives.

The expectations that we all have on departments is growing, Mr. Chairman. With all that, as the department has pointed out, the need to be able to communicate in a timely and accurate and accessible way is absolutely essential to how people hold us accountable and whether or not they feel that in some cases their tax dollars are being put into the places where they need to be and that maybe once every four years, if Members so choose, they deserve to get re-elected. These are very much the things that I need to know about as an MLA.

The department, Mr. Chairman, points out that there has been an increase in the requests from Cabinet to departments for proof of communication, but it also goes on to say that departments are not evenly resourced. There is a notable lack of senior level communications positions. The policy directors and managers are not required to undertake training and communications planning. Our communications policy is not adequately understood or enforced. The organizational structure of our government does not facilitate coordinated across-departmental communications. I'm just paraphrasing here and I'll stop lifting things out. As I say, Mr. Chairman, this document is available and can be seen.

It points to some faults and some shortcomings and actually quite a tall order for this department to tackle that communications function, Mr. Chairman, and bring it back to a point where indeed it is going to help us along. According to the description that we have here, we are badly hobbled, maybe even handicapped in the communication area. So with that outline from my perspective, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to hear where the Minister, where the Premier would like to take this part of his mandate. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The communications is one of those tasks that has sort of a never-ending potential, never-ending shortfalls. No matter how much we do, there's always some that we miss somehow. We just don't quite get to doing it all. In light of the restraint that was exercised when we developed this business plan and this budget, we maintained ourselves with just the three positions in corporate communications and protocol. There is the director of that section or assistant secretary responsible for communications protocol, one communications specialist and a protocol officer who works with them in that office. So it's a fairly small office, a very busy office, and a hard-working office. They have a huge task to do and I'm impressed with the Member's thoroughness of reading our business plan because we do outline a lot of responsibilities in there.

I think it has been reasonably effective, at least in helping us to maintain a fairly good level of coordination on the government-wide initiatives, trying to coordinate or integrate a lot of corporate approaches as a government. I think we've done not bad, given the limited resources we have. This is certainly one of the areas that I will be looking at as we begin to plan for our 2006-2009 Business Plans because I would not want to try to defend the limited resources we have in this area as being the idea. It isn't,

but it's a matter of whether or not we can afford to put more into this area.

I might add, Mr. Chairman, that as well as these individuals who coordinate all our activities, many departments, most departments also have a communications person or, in some cases, more than one. So it's not as if they are the only three who are doing the work in this area right across government. It's a matter of us trying to coordinate it and stay focused and stay on message as a government. I think we've done quite well in the last year. I hope this year goes well. We've not found ourselves getting far off message, so far. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: I guess the aspect that I was looking at, Mr. Chairman, and the Premier referred to it, was really the across-government. Not so much I don't want to isolate the Executive or any department, but it's that across-government expectation of communication. One aspect of this is, as the Premier pointed out, where each department has one or two communicators and many of our boards and agencies also have those kind of functions within them, we've seen a couple of interesting moves fairly recently, Mr. Chairman, with technology where we've kind of brought together our IT people into a service centre. We're about to engage in that kind of thing with our human resources. Is communications something that may be within the same realm where there are some government-wide policies, services, resources, whatever, that could be applied for everyone's benefit? I really want to avoid the word centralization because communications cannot be centralized, but the delivery and the mandate to do so I believe could be better coordinated without any increase in resources. Would the Premier care to comment on that bit of speculation? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, I certainly agree with the Member that we don't want to centralize communications. I think that would cause immense failure in our communications as a government. We're not thinking at all of going in that direction. But I think through technology there are ways for us to continually improve our communications. One, of course, is right to the basics of our communications people meeting regularly. On top of that, there may be things that we can do with better web sites and other ways of ensuring the communications is coordinated.

We are looking at ways of doing that but, as I said, centralizing or trying to control department communications more, going beyond just helping to make sure we're focused on message is a little bit risky and it could backfire on us because it starts to appear like centralization and people begin to lose some of the identity of the department. So, Mr. Chairman, I understand what the Member is saying. I agree with him and certainly any thoughts Members may have with how we may improve our communications, I'm receptive to that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Handley. General comments. Does the committee wish to proceed into the details of the estimates?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can you turn to page 2-19, Commissioner's office, operations expenditure summary, \$182,000. Volume one. Sorry. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What page are we on? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-19, volume one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Just for the record, I'll read it over. Commissioner's office, operations expenditure summary, \$182,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Pages 2-20 and 2-21, Commissioner's office, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-23, Ministers' offices, operations expenditure summary, \$3.665 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-25, Ministers' offices, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$173,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Contributions, total contributions, \$515,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total grants and contributions, \$688,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Pages 2-26 and 2-27, Ministers' offices, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-29, executive offices, operations expenditure summary, \$4.685 million. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a question on the \$50,000 increase in contract services for the executive offices. Maybe just give me some clarification on what that entails.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, the \$420,000 is up from \$370,000. That's a whole number of items. Contract services include our auto, office space lease, the Northern Strategy development, \$125,000; Bear Facts newsletter, \$22,000; NewsLine services, \$24,000; trademarks and copyrights, \$30,000; ethics counsellor, \$30,000; equipment leases, \$30,000; recycling and waste paper management, \$9,000; and, miscellaneous as needed and when needed services, \$88,000. Mr. Chairman, the \$50,000 difference is made up from a number of small increases in all a variety of contractor services we do. I don't have the specific one for each one of those services. Some of them are new. For example, the Northern Strategy development is something that wouldn't have been in last year's budget at all. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: No, that's fine with me. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Page 2-29, executive offices, operations expenditure summary, \$4.685 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Pages 2-32 and 2-33, executive offices, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-35, Public Utilities Board, operations expenditure summary, \$331,000. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I'm not sure if we went through page 2-30 on the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards. Are we not providing any funding to that organization anymore? Is it sunset? Is there a different department that's going to be providing them with any NWT government funding? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Before we do that, does the committee wish to go back to page 2-30?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you. Just a quick question on the Aboriginal Achievement Awards. It doesn't look like there are any estimates for 2005-06. Maybe the Premier could just make some clarification on that one.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, if the Members look at the 2004-05 year they'll notice that we had nothing in it in the main estimates for 2004-05, but in the revised mains we put in \$30,000. What we do is, this sunsets each year and we ask departments to contribute towards the \$30,000 from across the GNWT and we come up with that. So our intention in future years, of course, is to continue to contribute \$30,000 to this very worthwhile cause. So this year you will see again a revised mains with the \$30,000 in it. Thank you.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I was just wondering, why not just include it if it's going to be there anyway? Thank you.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, we could in future take a look at doing it through Executive and have it as a standing part of our budget each year. The original contribution at one time was originally made out of RWED and then it was decided that wasn't appropriate, that all departments should contribute to this cause. Many of the people who are selected from the Northwest Territories come from different areas. Sometimes they are long-time elders who have contributed that way. Sometimes it is people who have contributed with sports and so on. The best way is just to have it coordinated through the Executive but each department contributes. If the Members wish, when we do the next year's business plan, we can revisit that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Handley. Mr. Villeneuve. Thank you. Page 2-30.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Go down to page 2-35. Public Utilities Board, operations expenditure summary, \$331,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Pages 2-36 and 2-37, Public Utilities Board, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-39, Beaufort-Delta regional office, operations expenditure summary, \$83,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Pages 2-40 and 2-41, Beaufort-Delta regional office, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-42, work performed on behalf of others, \$236,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-43, information item, lease commitments - infrastructure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we go back to page 2-13? Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Committee would like to introduce a number of motions which, I think, can find a home on this summary page of the Department of Executive. I will start with the first one here, Mr. Chair, and some of my colleagues will pick up some of the others.

Committee Motion 30-15(3): Recommendation Re: Communication With The Panels On Equalization And Fiscal Imbalance

Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends to the Department of Executive to take a proactive approach to communication with the Expert Panel on Equalization and the Council of the Federation panel on fiscal imbalance to ensure the NWT's position is fully understood and represented;

And further, that the government adopt a collaborative approach with the Aboriginal Summit with respect to a communication plan for input into the two panels.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): They are just handing out the motion right now. Are there any questions? Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Very briefly, Mr. Chair, just to set the context. In committee's review of the budget and the draft mains, we were acutely aware, of course, of the changes and the impacts that were to happen and, in fact, did happen as a result of Ottawa's uptake on the NWT's agenda. The Premier should take no small amount of credit in that. But we also were well briefed and quite appreciative of the reliance that we now have on these panels, the Expert Panel on Equalization and the Council of the Federation panel on fiscal imbalance. They kind of have a lot of our fiscal future and wellbeing in their hands, Mr. Chair. So committee wanted to send a message to the government, to this department, as the lead hand, if you will, to make sure that, I think the word aggressive was in here. Is it in here? No. Okay. I am looking at the wrong motion, Mr. Chair. Anyway, the point of this motion is to give the government the strongest mandate possible to go to these panels, communicate our approach as strongly and clearly as we possibly can, and that we

collaborate with the Aboriginal Summit, in effect our governance partners here, on how these two organizations can make an impact at the panel level. That is why we wanted this motion put on the floor, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-13, Mr. Hawkins.

Committee Motion 31-15(3): Recommendation Re: Negotiations On The Northern Strategy

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories take an extremely aggressive and clear defined stance in negotiations on the Northern Strategy with the federal government to ensure that the federal government acknowledges the particular opportunities and needs that result from the Northwest Territories' strong economy. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-13, Mr. Yakeleya.

Committee Motion 32-15(3): Recommendation To Review The Western Arctic Leadership Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a motion. I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment undertake a comprehensive review of the Western Arctic Leadership Program to assess the value of the program;

And further, that the results of the review be presented to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight prior to the committee review of the 2006-2009 Business Plans. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Western Arctic Leadership Program has been in effect for a while. I believe it has been about 15 years. It is time that this government takes a look at the program to see the usefulness and effectiveness it has had on the communities. For my region alone, there were 20 people who went to this Western Arctic Leadership Program. I have had several calls from the communities of Deline and Fort Good Hope in terms of strong support for this Western Arctic Leadership Program. The government's contribution to it is greatly appreciated. If the department takes a look at it and sees the value of it, I would like to continue seeing the continued support for this. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chair, a little bit of administration here. This recommendation, as you would have noted, applies to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and is not on the books here for the Department of Executive, but we wanted to get it on record, so that is why it was brought in at this point. Thank you. That is all, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-13, Mr. Braden.

Committee Motion 33-15(3): Recommendation To Consider Options For Regional Coordination

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have one more motion to read. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends to the Department of Executive to consider different options to use already existing personnel and resources to create a consistent system of coordination in the regions;

And further, that the options be presented to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight prior to the committee review of the 2006-2009 Business Plans. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Page 2-13.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Program summary, operations expenditure summary, \$8.946 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we now turn to volume two? Page 2-2. Sorry about that. Okay, can we go to page 2-4, volume two? Okay, Commissioner's offices, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$128,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-3, executive offices, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$128,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 2-2, department summary, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$3.386 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): We will go back to volume one. Page 2-5, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$47.195 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does the committee agree that the consideration of the department estimates is concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. At this time, I would like to thank Mr. Handley and his witnesses. Thank you very much. What is the wish of the committee? Do you want to take a break? At this time, we will take a short break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Welcome back committee. I would like to ask Mr. Speaker if he would like to present the opening comments for the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Delorey.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, colleagues, I am pleased to present the 2005/2006 Main Estimates for the Legislative Assembly on behalf of your Board of Management.

The proposed operating expenses for the Legislative Assembly in 2005-06 are \$14.477 million. In preparing the estimates for the Legislative Assembly this year, the Board of Management was mindful of the fiscal pressure facing the government as a whole. As such, this year's operating expenses represent a decrease of just over 4.2 percent from last year's revised main estimates. Likewise, the infrastructure acquisition plan includes no items for the Legislative Assembly this year. Those of you who have firsthand knowledge of the parking situation will be aware of how hard it was to come to this decision, as there are some things we know need addressing in the very near future.

The proposed reductions in this year's estimates will have a noticeable impact on the services provided to Members and the public-at-large. Be it the elimination of six full-time employees, the reduction of committee meeting transcription or the capping of the Members' capital accommodation allowance, these cuts will be felt throughout the organization. However, as you are no doubt aware by now, this year's budget will result in reductions in the services provided by all government departments to the people of the NWT. Your Board of Management was keenly aware of this fact when it sat down to draft its estimates this year and is proud to propose a budget to Members that leads by example.

On a more positive note, the previous fiscal year was an eventful one not only because it was the first full year for this 15th Legislative Assembly, it was also an historic year in that it witnessed the recruitment and implementation of the NWT's own Human Rights and Equal Pay commissions. A great deal of effort went into recruiting and appointing Members to the various offices and panels that make up these important arm's length agencies. This fiscal year will be the first fully funded year for both the Human Rights and Equal Pay commissions.

Last year also saw the implementation of sweeping amendments to the Official Languages Act. These amendments resulted in a significant change to the scope and role of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the resulting transfer of funds from the Assembly to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for the operation of the Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board and the Official Languages Board. Again, 2005-06 is the first full fiscal year for the Office of the Languages Commissioner under its new scope.

In all these cases, I am confident that we have provided adequate funds for these arm's length bodies to carry out their important mandates with the independence they require.

The year 2004-05 was witness to a second historic event when the leaders of aboriginal, territorial and community governments met for the first time under one roof on the Hay River Reserve in April. Perhaps as an indicator of the success of this first leaders' meeting, the interim president of the Aboriginal Summit proposed that a similar meeting of northern leaders take place on an annual basis. I am pleased to announce that this year's estimates includes funding to host the second meeting in what I hope to be a long-standing tradition of northern leaders working together to build a shared vision of the NWT. This year's meeting will take place in Inuvik from April 18th to 20th and will focus on the development of the Northern Strategy.

Mr. Chair, in follow-up to the fine work performed by the previous Board of Management, this year's estimates include a modest amount of funding to begin the cultural enhancement of this great and symbolic institution as it enters its second decade of service. A fabulous group of individuals from all corners of our territory were recently appointed to serve on the first Cultural Enhancement Advisory Commission which will be ably chaired by the deputy speaker, Mrs. Groenewegen. I have high hopes for the work that this commission will do on behalf of the people of the NWT and look forward to seeing the results.

Finally Mr. Chair, this year's estimates includes funding to begin the work of two important independent commissions: the Electoral Boundaries Commission and the Independent Commission to Review Members' Compensation and Benefits. Both these commissions have a great deal of work to perform in order to submit their recommendations in time for consideration prior to the election of the 16th Legislative Assembly. You can rest assured that these commissions will receive full support from the Legislative Assembly, both financial and otherwise, in fulfilling their important mandates.

In terms of forced growth expenditures, the Legislative Assembly is subject to the same inflationary pressures as other government departments. There is \$193,000 in additional funding required this year to cover negotiated increases to compensation and benefits. In addition, the increasing cost of utilities and heating fuel continue to put the same pressure on the Legislative Assembly budget as they do to the budgets of individual northerners and businesses.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to take this opportunity to once again thank the Members of the Board of Management for their hard work on behalf of all Members in proposing this year's estimates for the Legislative Assembly. The estimates before you today provide the financial and human resources necessary to meet the needs of the Legislative Assembly and allow it to carry out its essential mandate within a climate of fiscal restraint.

I look forward to responding to any comments or questions you may have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would you like to bring in any witnesses?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, I would, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the committee in agreement that we allow witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Sergeant-at-Arms, can you escort the witnesses to the table?

For the record, could you please introduce your witnesses.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is Mr. Myles Moreside, director of corporate services; and to my right is Mr. Tim Mercer, Clerk of the Assembly.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome, gentlemen. General comments. I have Mr. Menicoche first.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to speak on this topic. It's regarding the parking facility. Perhaps I can ask the Speaker what the long-term plans are for the improvement of parking. There seems to be some solution in the long term for that. As well, I have been using the facilities after hours and it's always a pain for security to come and unlock the door. I believe, at one point, the previous Assembly was looking at a magnetic door opener. I just want to bring it up again and see if that is still in the plans or if that's something that's doable.

Actually, I think it is doable, because I heard some remarks that they are concerned about security, but in some buildings that have far more employees than us and are managing okay and seem to get in and out of their buildings after ours, so I don't see what the big problem for ours would be to institute a system such as that. I would find that it would just make my job a little bit easier when I'm in Yellowknife. In fact, some of the considerations is you can use a common one downstairs, and when you are getting up to the offices...Well, I'm not too sure, but I think it is doable and workable, especially with the technology we have nowadays. Those are just a couple of things that I would like to bring up for now, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Menicoche for your comments. I know that the parking issue that he speaks about is one that has been brought up to the board and to me on a number of occasions and it is one that we know has to be dealt with. Because this year was a year of fiscal restraints, we didn't look at putting any money into that area or anywhere else actually, within the Legislative Assembly budget.

We do have plans going down the road. Right now we are looking at different areas where we could increase the parking around the building and doing some work on getting some cost figures. Down the road, in a couple of years, in the 2006-07 budget, we have earmarked \$675,000 to improve roadways in here, which would include some more parking areas. Keeping in mind that there may be some other developments within the area in Justice. That would give us a great ability to work in partnership with them in improving the roadway and the parking in this area. We are looking at that area going down the road; however, we do know that it is an area that has to be addressed in the very near future.

On the other issue that Mr. Menicoche brings up, with security in the building. That was also an issue that was looked at. I think it was somewhere in the year 2000, during the last Assembly; there were different issues that were looked at, at the same time as security was looked at in the building, and extra lighting, and that was one of the issues that was taken out of the plan to take any action on, mostly because of costs. There are a number of issues that come into play with it.

To secure this building properly where you would get into your office with just a pass key, once you are inside this building, the whole building is accessible, so there was a considerable cost -- I can't remember exactly what the cost was -- to have that building secured where you would get in with just a swipe card, but I know there was a considerable cost to it. It was an issue that was looked at before, not to say that we couldn't be looking at it again. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just with respect to the magnetic pass cards; is there an estimated cost, that makes it so prohibitive? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We would have to look back at the estimates that were put forward a few years ago or get a totally new estimate on it, but I wouldn't want to even guess right now. I can't quite remember the figures, so I wouldn't want to guess. It would be something that we could get a cost on fairly easily, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Menicoche beat me to the chase in regard to the parking, but he also brought up another issue that I know I have concern with, although I wasn't on planning on discussing it today, which is the doors. I will speak specifically to the parking and I do have concerns with the issue that this building represents itself as an open opportunity for people to come forward and have celebrations of life: weddings, special ceremonies, et cetera. It truly is one of the buildings for the people, and yet we have people park here, even park illegally, while events happen.

The Speaker I am sure is more than well aware of the circumstances that we have out there, and I just find it very difficult that we are not planning for this now in the short-term. I am looking for some proactive short-term solutions, so that we can address it through a major capital initiative, but we right now have people policing the parking lot. So if we had it during, for example, a concert situation; we have people out there policing it, making sure that folks all park on one side, but again we still are allowing our folks to park illegally. Does the Speaker have any suggestions on how to deal with this on the short term, until we can come forward with a capital initiative to address the roadway? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again on the parking issue, it is an issue that I know is important to Members and to the public that do come here and use the building. Whenever there is an event here, we do put on extra security to try and prevent people from parking illegally out there, but we do know that when the Members are here and most of the parking stalls are taken, for extra people coming to use the Great Hall, it is an issue.

There may be some very simple things that we could do for the present time to put more awareness out there, to let people know that there is not a lot of extra parking here and that if they do park illegally, they are going to have their vehicles removed. But that is not the answer for the long-run.

People choose to come here to use the building for different events as well, and maybe it is incumbent upon us to maybe let them know the parking situation that we have around here and the importance that we know that it is going to have to be addressed in the near future. Is it possible to look at doing something very quickly? I am sure if people were to come to the Board of Management with that specific request, certainly we would have to put a request into FMBS or whoever to see if we can get some extra funding to get that done in the near future. It is certainly not a matter that we don't want to do it, it is just finding the resources to do it right now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess at this time then, I would like to put a request into your position right now, as Chairman of the Board of Management as well as Speaker of the building, to get some assurances that we will look into it in this fiscal year about addressing it again.

It is a building that welcomes people. Just at the opening up of this session when Mr. Roland read in his budget, there were cars parked every which way and I have to say that I am embarrassed; truly I am embarrassed that we invite people to come here to see and follow along and be part of our opening budget, but yet we have nowhere for them to park. I would like to hear that the Speaker will look into it, at least in this fiscal cycle and see if we can come up with some at least short-term solution, other than telling people to park and cab it here. If I could get that assurance from the Speaker at this time, that will be more than sufficient. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will do that, I will bring that to the Board of Management and we will see what ways we can address that and see how much commitment there is for extra resources to deal with that situation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of areas, and I appreciate the Speaker's presentation here. This is his first presentation before committee.

---Applause

Welcome to the witness chair, Mr. Delorey, Mr. Speaker. In his comments he mentioned one of the innovations we are undertaking here is the creation of the Cultural Enhancement Advisory Committee to this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, this committee had its origins in the last Assembly, in the 14th, when one of Mr. Delorey's predecessors commissioned the report on what could be done in and around the building to more dramatically reflect the cultures and the peoples of the NWT. The Board of Management undertook to take this report up, and one of its prime recommendations was the creation of this committee.

The board will recall that in a meeting, I think it was late last year, I took a concern to the board about the policy base by which this Assembly had enacted this committee and by which it was going to guide its affairs. The question that I would like to put to the Speaker, given that I fully support a much broader cultural program for this building and certainly don't want to interfere at all with

what the committee will undertake, but I have not seen evidence of a development of a policy or the basis of how we want this program to continue. Would the Speaker please advise where and how we might expect that aspect of our governance to develop? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The new Cultural Enhancement Commission that has been formed came out of a recommendation from the report that came to the Board of Management from the previous Assembly, and one of the recommendations in there was the creation of this Cultural Enhancement Commission.

We did receive Mr. Braden's comments and his concerns with this commission. We discussed them at the board level and the board felt that there had been enough input into the preparing of that proposal, that document, that report to the Assembly, that we could proceed with establishing that commission.

The commission has not gotten together yet, but there were some guiding principles in there about what they were meant to do and they will be strictly an advisory board, advising the Board of Management on different areas of cultural enhancement around the building. I know that it is a very important area for the building and for all the Members here. I think if there was one area that we lost on when there was a division between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, a lot of the cultural works in the building went with the Nunavut government. I know that there is a lot of interest in increasing the cultural enhancement of the building, so I look forward to the work of this commission.

The policy that Mr. Braden is talking about; we haven't established a policy per se, but they do have a mandate or guiding principles of what they will be looking at. Once they come together, they will be establishing what kind of working relationship they are going to have with the board and on what areas they are going to be looking at. It is pretty broad in what areas they can make recommendations back to the Board of Management. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some of the things that the Speaker has outlined are indeed still of concern to me. We are creating this advisory committee, and to paraphrase the Speaker -- to work out the basis of its relationship with the Board of Management -- I would respectfully suggest that that is backwards. It should be the Board of Management that is laying out the terms of reference and how we would like the commission to serve the Assembly.

I look at this, Mr. Chairman, in the overall context of good governance, that we have a responsibility here to be clear and direct in our expectations of these boards and agencies and commissions. In fact there is major review underway right now, more than 100, that have been created over 30 years. Here we are creating a new one and yet we don't have a policy base or the kinds of things that I think should be in place.

Mr. Chairman, I don't want to get into an argument here tonight, but I would like to place on public record my concerns that this is a very welcome and a very valuable part of how this building and how this institution reflects the people of the North, and I would hope that in the

coming months as this commission does come together that a constructive working relationship can indeed be created and hopefully through that a policy base that we can all rely on.

I can stop there, Mr. Chairman. I did have one other item I wanted to bring to the committee's attention, but if the Speaker would have any further comment to what I have just said.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the comments that the Member is making and I know that this is an area that is near and dear to the heart. The Outcrop report that was accepted or turned into the Legislative Assembly, did lay out a number of areas that this committee would be responsible for and some of the art work and some of the types of art work that should be displayed here. There were recommendations that they be strictly northern and different areas.

I know that we also, before we put this committee together, not a policy per se but there was definitely a terms of reference drawn up for this committee and those terms of reference had input from everybody in Caucus. There are areas that outline what their job will be, but we will for sure look at...Maybe once the board gets together, there will be further talks on that, and I am sure that Mr. Braden will be making his views known to that commission as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In a somewhat related vein, I have noticed sitting here and working for the past month in this session, Mr. Speaker, the number of visitors, especially Japanese visitors, that were seen here in the Legislative Assembly has grown considerably over what I have seen here in past winter months.

From being here on a steady basis throughout the year, I know that the Legislative Assembly and our grounds are very much a part of the tourism product of Yellowknife as the capital, and justly so; it is a magnificent building and we are all very proud of it. One of the things I am wondering if we could do a more extensive or a broader job of, Mr. Chairman, is actually demonstrating and embracing the role that we have, the place that we have in the tourism menu, that the capital city offers. We are an attraction, we certainly have a story to tell, and we are proud of it.

But, Mr. Chairman, to the audiences, especially like the Japanese, we have no literature, no interpretation in their language, either in signs or audio tapes or brochures. I wanted to ask the Speaker if he might consider a plan, perhaps even a bit of a pilot project, in this coming fiscal year to see what we could do to become a part of the tourism world here and make some effort. I suggest that it would not have to be an extensive nor an expensive effort to be effective, but to demonstrate that we really do appreciate the role that we have and that we could send that message out to some of those visitors. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I appreciate the Member's comments and suggestions. I know that the point that he brings up is one that we're very

aware of. The number of visitors that we have coming in here and the Japanese tourists coming to the city are coming in fairly large numbers and we see them in here all the time. Those tours are put on through the Visitors' Centre and we do work in cooperation with the Visitors' Centre in working with those groups coming here. I think the suggestion that Mr. Braden is referring to what we could do here to maybe make them feel more welcome and maybe having a presentation, whether it's an audio tape about our building and some of the symbols that we have that are representative of the Northwest Territories would be something that would be very good to do. I think at the same time when we talk about something like this, we have to keep in mind the fact that we have 11 official languages in the Northwest Territories and it may be a good time to look at doing a presentation not only in Japanese, but in all our official languages as well...

---Applause

...and put something together that would make it a place for everybody to come and visit and make them feel a little bit more welcome. So I certainly appreciate the comments and, yes, I think that it's something that we should definitely look at and see where we can make some improvements in those areas that are not too big an expense. I think we certainly can find some areas to do that. So I will commit to look into some of those issues. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was going to talk about the smoking area, but since I don't smoke it's not an issue for me anymore.

---Applause

I don't have my vehicle here all year, so I don't have parking issue. So that's not an issue with me.

---Laughter

Mr. Chairman, the comment that the Speaker made was in regard to page 2 of his presentation. The proposed reduction would have a noticeable impact on services provided to Members and the public-at-large. So I just want to know are we seeing the noticeable impacts right now. If we are, I haven't seen any. Is it something coming down the tubes that I should keep my eye out for or keep my glasses on in terms of some of the noticeable impacts that will be coming down the tubes that the Members would take notice on? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Although I don't think the Member has to sit on the edge of his chair to wait for something to hit him pretty hard and surprise him, there are some reductions that we did make that are going to affect all Members in how we operate in the Assembly. For example, the capital allowance for Members; we've made some decisions where we looked at the cost of a two-bedroom apartment and it was up to about \$30,000. With the amount of available rental space in Yellowknife now, we think that the price has pretty well levelled out. So we decided to put the rent scale back to 2003-04 levels, I think it was, and that still allows for \$27,000, which I think is still ample for a Member to get an apartment here in Yellowknife. There are even issues like the reduction in security out here after midnight, when Members can't get in from midnight until 6:00 in the morning; transcripts from committee meetings, if we don't

think that they're an official meeting or that it's overly important that we have those meetings recorded, we've cut back on those services a little bit. But, all in all, I think that the cutbacks are fairly minor. So I don't have all the areas, but we do have them in here and I can certainly make those available to the Member. I don't think the Member has to worry about major cutbacks that are going to affect the Member in a big way; but if he wants the detail on all the areas where we have made some minor adjustments, we have the detail to give him that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, in terms of being able to relax and not sit at the edge of the seat, the places that we are staying now in Yellowknife are really nice. I think we're okay. I'm speaking for myself, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to talk about the Cultural Enhancement Commission and I think it was a really good move. In one of your documents, one of your goals is to include the promotion of the Legislature as a place of the people and the place of the people is here in the Northwest Territories. So I think you are following up that and I support that 100 percent.

I'm a little bit sceptical in terms of working on some of the issues that Mr. Braden indicated in terms of Japanese tourism, because of the conflict we may be in with other organizations in Yellowknife that are also vying for tourism with the Japanese. So I would be cautious in terms of that and where the money is coming from. So just a little caution there. I'm not opposed to this. I'm just being cautious in terms of what may happen or what may transpire.

For the Cultural Enhancement Commission, I look forward to the type of work that they're going to do in the Legislative Assembly and how this place is going to hopefully transform into a place that truly represents the culture and the values of the people in the Northwest Territories, especially the first people in the North; the aboriginal people. That has to really come out here. So I support that.

The issue of us as MLAs in our small communities and our constituencies, the demographics are so different that one region has an all-weather road and another region has fly-in for my community. Certain times of the year we can drive through the region on the winter road system. When we don't use the highways as the most economic means of travel, our budget seems to go up quite high. So I'm hoping that we can have some discussion in those areas in terms of looking at some of those numbers that would reflect the true cost of travel and doing our business in these communities that are higher than the southern parts of the Northwest Territories. I would appreciate a comment from the Speaker in terms of any type of consideration that has gone on within his department in that area. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First I will speak a bit on the first comments that the Member had with doing something for the Japanese tourists in the building, and I just wanted to put the Member at ease that it wouldn't be a promotion for us trying to capture a tourist market, but they do come here anyway because of the Visitors' Centre and as part of their tour to the North. It

would be something that would just be geared to making them aware that we appreciate the fact that they come here and having a little bit of a description about the building and some of our artefacts in their language, or that they could maybe put headphones and listen to that as they are going around the building. Again, it's an issue that has brought out some other important aspects about addressing that same issue with all peoples of the Northwest Territories and truly making them feel welcome when they come to the building as well.

I think the Member is referring to constituency budgets a lot there, and that was taken into consideration when they put the constituency budgets together. Some of them are quite a bit different. I think Mr. Pokiak has probably got the highest one because of the geographical area that he covers, or maybe it's Mr. Yakeleya that has the largest one, I can't quite remember. But I know that it's an issue that has been brought to the attention of the board a couple of times now, that should be looked at again.

We are in the process of establishing an independent commission to look at Members' compensation and benefits, and that will be one of the issues that they will be looking at. So as far as what we're doing from our office, we're going to put those issues to an independent commission to look at and make recommendations back to the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to tell the Speaker, Mr. Chairman, that the services by the Legislative Assembly have been really good for me. Just a comment to say that I appreciate the services that his department offers to me. I'm satisfied and that's why I say I don't see any noticeable impacts. Just a comment to give your staff a pat on the shoulder to say they are doing a good job, they are doing their best in helping us out as new MLAs and to let them know that I appreciate them. Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have a quick comment with regard to the Page program. It's a huge opportunity for our students from the regions to come to the capital for probably a week at a time, maybe two weeks at a time, to get involved in the Legislative Assembly. But I had an experience where I ended up paying for some of the costs like places for them to stay. It's coming out of my budget, then there's always that inequity where Yellowknife MLAs have Pages but they are not paying anything. So I would just like the Speaker to comment on that.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame, shame.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's a crying shame.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that this was an issue that came up in the 14th Legislative Assembly. As a matter of fact, I was one of the ones, as a Regular Member in the 14th Legislative Assembly, that pushed to have some kind of a program put in place and supported by the Legislative Assembly to bring Pages here to experience a week or two weeks of session. I think it's a very important program that we have. I know

that in the 14th Assembly we did come up with a bit of a policy where the Legislative Assembly pays for two Pages per Member per session to come over here, and they pay the travel expenses to bring the Pages over. However, for the rest of the costs, the Member is still responsible for meals and for accommodations and then the Pages also get paid for the time that they put in here. So it is a very good program. It may be an area, as well, if Members put that down with the commission as an area that they would like to have reviewed again of whether it should be supported more by the Assembly, I'm sure that this independent commission would probably be more than willing to have a look at that as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll just end on this note that I don't think the commission has anything to do with the Page program. I think it has to do with the office and that they should pay for meals and accommodations. I don't know why it's coming out of my budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Menicoche. Any further general comments? Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to rally through a whole bunch of issues. Maybe I'll start off with part of the discussions that have already taken place. Parking, Mr. Chairman; I think we need to improve that service, not only for Members, but for the general public.

I know that the Cultural Enhancement Commission will be looking into beautifying the outside and the inside and stuff like that. I'm sure I'll have an opportunity to give them some of my thoughts on how I see certain things to be done in terms of enhancing our cultural elements inside the building and outside.

On another issue, in regard to Pages, I think the responsibility should be with the Assembly. I know for accounting purposes I think some is being charged to Members' constituencies and then some to the general pot for their salaries and compensation for the kids getting paid. I think it should be coming out of the general pot from the Assembly.

In regard to staffing, Mr. Chairman, in terms of the number of affirmative action percentages here at the Assembly, it is very low. I would like to see what could be done in that area to increase our percentage in that area.

Another issue that really concerns me, I have even lost track now, Mr. Chairman, as to when I can speak Dogrib. I know that there's a schedule that was produced, but I haven't seen it for months. Different Members can speak their own language, but only periodically. It's not simultaneous as we had years ago where all languages were provided. So that concerns me, Mr. Chairman, especially when here we are promoting all of our official languages in the Territories and we're not using them in the House as much as we should be.

On another issue, Mr. Chairman, in regard to the Speaker's program. I know the Speaker's program, through his office, he used to travel to different communities, went to the schools and talked about the programs and what we do here maybe in a mock thing or as a general assembly in various schools. I recall the former Speaker doing that. They had their own little program in place where they would travel around and talk to students.

I'm not sure if those issues that I raised have been decreased or are being enhanced, Mr. Chairman. So if I could get the Speaker or his staff to maybe comment on the issues that I raised. Mahsi.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know if the Member wants to pursue the parking issue and the Cultural Enhancement Commission issue further. I know I've given kind of where we're heading with that area and it's something that we want to promote and we want to do in this Assembly. We realize the importance of it.

As far as the Pages program is concerned, again, that's certainly an area where maybe the independent commission that we're going to be looking at may be an area that they can look at. Not necessarily at the Pages program itself, but that they could take that into consideration and look at Members' budgets where the Member's constituency budget may be able to be bumped up, for example, to cover that type of a program or the Member could also put a request in to the Board of Management to have that looked at. We would have to bring it up and see where we could find the money and do it. I know that the program is a very important program for everybody across the Territories, and it is costly to bring kids to Yellowknife to partake in that Pages program. I was probably one of the luckier ones, coming from Hay River, as far as travelling; probably one of the lower expenses travelling. I know for some Members from the north it would be very expensive to bring Pages down here. I am sure if the Member was to bring that issue and make it an issue to the Board of Management, we would look at it again. So I would encourage the Member to maybe look at that. He definitely made some good points that he is bringing up.

As far as the languages in the House, that is an area that we don't use a lot. We do have a budget for languages, the use of official languages in the Assembly here. It is not hard to get interpreters here to use the official languages. All that we do is we ask that the Member let us know ahead of time what day he wants to use his official language in the House, and we would bring interpreters in for that. So there is no set schedule but, if we do receive a request from a Member saying that he wants to use his official language in the House on that particular date, arrangements can be made for that.

The Speaker's program, again, the Member brings out some good points; all those things about the Speaker going around and making presentations at schools, or speaking, or putting on mock parliaments are all good suggestions. The Assembly used to do that a lot more in the schools. I think we have taken a step beyond that now where in our Youth Parliament we bring in kids. It is talked about at the schools quite a bit, and kids are picked from the schools to come here and take part in the Youth Parliament. Again, that has proved to be a very successful program and one that the students really look forward to coming and taking part in.

On other programs of what the Speaker can do to promote the Assembly and government, I know that we are working right now on doing a possible Mace tour of all the NWT communities, where the Speaker would go along with the Mace and explain what the Mace means, the symbolic meaning of the Mace and how it was created and made. There is an awful lot of history in it, and it is

very much representative of the whole Territories. I think that would be a good program to take part in.

I am certainly open to go into schools and talking about the Assembly and the role and promoting this government. I think it is a big part of what the Speaker's job should be. I look forward to areas like that where I can take part in those events. Any suggestions that the Members have, we are certainly open to them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just on the issue of language services that the Speaker indicated that we don't have a set schedule for the various languages. The onus is up to the individual Members to approach the Assembly to provide that service, but it causes a problem. We don't know when we are going to have a big delegation of our constituents in the House. You can't really predict. Sometimes, it is nice. If you see a large delegation in the House that you weren't aware of and you want to speak in your own language, the opportunity is not there for you. I wanted to speak in my language, but I couldn't because the interpreters weren't there. It is unfortunate. It causes me a great concern because sometimes, out of the blue, I feel like speaking my own language. I can't just say, okay, today, on this issue, I am going to speak my language. I don't work like that. It is the way I am feeling that day or, if I want to make a point to the government on a certain issue and I want to speak my language so that my people understand what I am trying to convey to the government, I would rather do it in my own language so they understand where I am coming from. It makes it difficult, Mr. Chair, to leave that onus on individuals. It would have been nice. I know maybe the previous government didn't provide that service, because of fiscal constraints and stuff like that, but we have a surplus. Maybe we can get more money so we can have our regular interpreters back again. I think it creates not only employment for individuals, but also helps us to speak our own language any time, rather than trying to have a schedule of services for languages. That is the comment I wanted to make, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly appreciate the Member's comments and don't deny the fact that Members would like to speak their own languages in the building and have that service provided. I know, when we had it before, it was an extremely expensive service to have all the official languages here on a constant basis. A decision was made that it was just too expensive to carry on that way. There have been different things done now to try and make it more affordable and still allow Members to use their own language in the House.

On the other point, when there are delegations in the gallery and Members want to use their own language in the House, there is nothing stopping them. They can use their own language any time. It is just that we wouldn't have the interpreters on hand on that particular day if it is just on the spur of the moment. But there is certainly nothing stopping the Member from addressing the Assembly in his own language on any day. Again, if we were to look at a totally different program like that, it would be something that would have to be looked at very closely and whether the funds would be available and if the will of

the House would be to do that again. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just with respect to Mr. Zoe's comments and translators for us, I believe that as well. Far before we hire any translators for people from outside our country, we should be hiring translators for ourselves. I would just like the Speaker to keep that in mind. I know that the one time they hired a translator on my behalf, I was able to use them and it helped me stimulate the use of my own language, and written-wise, too. I just wanted to make that comment in support of Mr. Zoe's efforts. You have to remember, too, that Mr. Zoe brought our Legislative Assembly to a standstill in the 13th Assembly. I believe he is getting frustrated enough that he will probably do it again. Thank you.

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

MR. ZOE: I was just going to remind the Speaker on what my colleague said about when we debated the Official Languages Act in Norman Wells. I spoke my language, and we had to shut down the whole House for the whole day before they got the interpreter. So the point I wanted to point out to the Speaker; I am sure he is aware of the rules that we have in place. He knows them better than I do, I think. If someone objects in a formal sitting on a point of order, we have to shut down the House in order for them to have that service available. I just wanted to note that, because it could happen. Although he indicated that there are people up in the gallery that can speak my own language, but it won't be translated. If other Members don't know what I am talking about, if they raise a point of order, they could literally shut us down or even ask a Minister a question during question period. The Minister would rise on a point of order and say, I don't know what he is saying. I just wanted to note that, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just on that, the Member is right. If he is asking the Minister a question in his language and the Minister doesn't understand and we don't have interpreters in the House that day, he wouldn't be able to answer the question. But the new Official Languages Act does allow any Member to speak in their own language in the House on any day whether or not we have translators. He is still allowed to use his language in the House. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Just one question there, Mr. Chairman. Does what we're saying get translated in our language back to the communities or is this straight English? I don't follow APTN too much. Is this translated into North Slavey?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The proceedings on a daily basis in the House do get broadcasted in official languages by ATPN on a rotating basis and there's a schedule out of what days each language is being used. They just rotate the languages and ATPN does carry it, but not in every language on

every day. It's on a rotating basis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I guess just a point that Mr. Zoe makes a good point in terms of the question in our language. I believe The Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment made a statement earlier today in terms of the official languages of the Northwest Territories and ourselves to promote it. Somewhere it talks about the Members taking a lead here in terms of the Legislative Assembly. I just ask the office to consider more uses of translation in terms of Mr. Zoe's point, because that's the first language and that needs to be really honoured and respected, I guess, in the best way we can do it. With the limited amount of funding we have in the budget, I know we're in tight constraint and things need to be looked at again and given some consideration in terms of putting your plans forward. Because I guess Mr. Speaker is right that if we want to use our language we could use it, whatever, but the other side won't understand. They'll shake their head. I guess it's going to be interesting if it ever comes to that point, Mr. Chairman. I ask if Mr. Speaker and his staff would give some consideration to accommodating some of the needs of Mr. Zoe. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We can certainly look at it again. I know it would be a fairly substantial expenditure that would have to be looked at by the whole Assembly and a considerable budget set up for it, but we can always look at it and maybe go back and see what that program cost before and what it would cost to set it up again. We can always look at it, that's for sure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will do some work on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just with respect to affirmative action goals, written goals in the Legislative Assembly, because that's something the Speaker was looking at. What are the target goals for the office as of today? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We used the affirmative action policy quite regularly whenever we're hiring positions. The numbers are not certainly where we would like to have them and a number of issues come into that. It's not that we don't look at those, they're even to the point where we had some candidates picked out for jobs and then they decided they weren't interested in them. So we do participate in the Management Assignment Program. We have one member here who works as a table officer who takes part in that under the affirmative action policy. We do offer work experience opportunities for the Native Women's Society. We will be having a Sergeant-at-Arms training position to provide some young aboriginal person with some experience in the proceedings in the House, with the intention of making the advancement opportunities available to them. We also continue to hire summer students and intern positions here with research and public affairs that we do use the affirmative action policy for. We're trying to meet our goals

in there and increase our numbers within the Legislative Assembly staff. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Once again we have another department with no written targets or goals and I'll maintain again that they're not goals or targets if they're not written down. We need something written that we can measure against. It will help the department. So that's what I'd like to see when it comes to the Legislative Assembly, I want to see it written down there. We spoke about it several times this week and last week that we should have a reflective northern workforce, especially when we do have tourists coming through those doors. They should see a workforce reflective of the North. With that again, I would urge the speaker to ensure that these targets and goals are written down, perhaps by the next business plan or even starting today. Thank you.

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

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mahsi. (English not provided) Mahsi.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Zoe. Committee, we're on general comments. Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Mr. Chairman, I just had to make that point in terms of the comments of my colleague the Member for Sahtu raised with our Speaker. As you're well aware, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Dent has made a statement today on our official languages. This month is the month to celebrate that; the whole month of March. What I said is I agree with my colleague that it's imperative that we try to provide those services back again. I think it's warranted so the people of the Territories know that we're enhancing our own aboriginal languages, especially here in this institution. I think they have to see us taking the lead. Other departments are doing certain things. Different groups are doing different things in terms of promoting languages and I think our institution here should be the number one they look at because we're televised and it's in all homes across the Territories. Mahsi.

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Zoe. I'd like to draw committee's attention to page 1-10, revenue summary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 1-13, activities summary, office of the Clerk, operations expenditure summary, \$7.525 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Pages 1-14 and 1-15, office of the Clerk, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 1-17, office of the Speaker, operations expenditure summary, \$157,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Pages 1-18 and 1-19, office of the Speaker, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 1-21, expenditures on behalf of Members, operations expenditure summary, \$5.335 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 1-23, office of the chief electoral officer, operations expenditure summary, \$360,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Pages 1-24 and 1-25, office of the Chief Electoral Officer, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 1-27, statutory officers, operations expenditure summary, \$1.1 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 1-29, statutory officers, grants and contributions, contributions, \$330,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Pages 1-30 and 1-31, statutory officers, active positions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 1-32, work performed on behalf of others, \$20,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Please return to page 1-7, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$14.477 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I draw your attention now to volume two. We are on page 1-4, Legislative Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Office of the Clerk, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$18.169 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Then we are back on page 1-3, department summary, infrastructure investment summary, total net book value and work in progress, \$18.169 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Does committee agree that the Legislative Assembly's main estimates are concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. I would like to thank Mr. Speaker, Mr. Moreside and Mr. Mercer.

Does committee agree that we have concluded the detail of Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Are you ready for clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Clause by clause.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I will draw your attention to the grey binder, tab 19. Please get those ready. We will give you a minute.

Does committee agree that we stand down the clauses and deal first with the schedule?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. We will turn to page 3, schedule, part I, vote I operations expenditures, total appropriations for operations expenditures, \$974.310 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Part II, vote II, capital investment expenditures, total appropriation for capital investment expenditures, \$105.761 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Total appropriation, \$1,080,071,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. We will now go to clause by clause. Clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): To the preamble.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): To the bill as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does the committee agree that Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006, is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Bill 19 is now ready for third reading.

---Applause

Does committee agree that committee reports 9-15(3), 10-15(3) and 11-15(3) are concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. There's a motion to report progress. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will rise and report progress. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 20, report of Committee of the Whole. Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act; Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006; and Committee Report 9-15(3), and would like to report progress with five motions being adopted, that committee reports 9-15(3), 10-15(3) and 11-15(3) are concluded, that Bill 21 and Bill 19 are ready for third reading and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. There is a motion on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

---Applause

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 Wednesday, March 9th, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 17, Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act
 - Bill 20, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005
 - 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

- Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006
- Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act

22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 9, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:09 p.m.