



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

4th Session

Day 27

15th Assembly

HANSARD

Friday, February 10, 2006

Pages 919 - 948

The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Friday, February 10, 2006

Members Present

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

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good morning, colleagues. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement On Passing Of Respected Fort Simpson Elder Albertine Rohdes**

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am devoting my Member's statement to a very well-respected elder of Fort Simpson who passed away on Wednesday, Mrs. Albertine Rohdes. She shared her traditional, cultural and spiritual knowledge and skills with all, and with a passion that is rare to find. She was like a museum to the people of Nahendeh and throughout the Northwest Territories.

Her political involvement stretched throughout the decades, influencing the development and the path of our communities and people. She was there during the birth of our aboriginal and Metis political organizations, '70s, '80s and '90s. Her sphere of influence and the people she touched are extensive, and I am sure that even some of us here today in this House remember a special moment we were honoured to share with her.

With Albertine, family always came before work or politics. She had an amazing knowledge of family, that far-extended family, even two or three generations of ancestors all over the North. She was often the one who kept many families in touch. People say she was the keeper of names, very important to who we are and where we come from as a people.

A special condolence on behalf of our Assembly to her husband, Herb, her sons Wayne and Joey, and her two daughters Beatrice and Amy. She was a grandmother to six children, three grandsons and three granddaughters.

We will never forget how she nurtured as a mother and grandmother, inspired as a friend, and guided as a leader and elder. Albertine has passed and as we grieve, we must always remember we were blessed to have had her in our lives at all. She lived a life full of love and she will always be remembered.

I once heard a saying, Mr. Speaker, that good people die, but death could never kill their names. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Need To Update The Mental Health Act

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. As Mental Health Week comes to a close, I would like to bring to the attention of this House the concerns of many families and the victims of mental illness and professionals involved in health care service about the suitability of our own Mental Health Act. The NWT's act was passed in 1988, Mr. Speaker. Today, it is clinically, administratively and perhaps even from a human rights point of view, significantly behind the times.

In most other jurisdictions, the foundation of mental health legislation has moved from the concept of where a victim of mental illness may be a danger to themselves or to society, to an assessment or a continuum of care that looks at an individual's competence and capacity. So there is now a much greater emphasis on the individual's own autonomy and ability to be a functioning member of society, than one of protection and control. This is one of the major faults now in our Mental Health Act.

Mr. Speaker, many clinical aspects of mental illness are viewed differently today than when this legislation was created. For instance, illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are now recognized along with diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

With the impact, Mr. Speaker, of alcohol on a society and the recognition especially manifested in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder and the ever-increasing number of mind-altering drugs that are readily available in our society, the question is coming up more and more: Are we dealing with a mental health situation or a psychiatric issue? Is it a behavioural and police issue? Who is best suited and most appropriate to deal with these circumstances when they come up? This is where our Mental Health Act, Mr. Speaker, needs to be revised, addressed, and it needs to be done so on, I believe, an urgent basis.

I am going to be asking the Minister of Health what can be done to bring this very necessary part of our health legislation into modern context. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Tribute To Lynette Storoz

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to pay tribute to a member of the community of Hay River who recently passed away. Lynette Storoz and her three-year struggle with cancer ended on January 1st. Lynette is sadly missed by her

husband, Dennis, and her sons, Jason and Kevin. Lynette was a vivacious, vibrant, outgoing, attractive woman. There are so many adjectives that one could use to describe Lynette. She was so full of life. It seemed almost unbelievable when we first learned that Lynette had cancer. She was young, fit, and was a role model for healthy living.

True to her nature in every challenge that she encountered, she approached her diagnosis and recovery head on with positive energy and meticulous attention to detail. In spite of this, this insidious disease took her.

One story about Lynette's irrepressible spirit is a few years before she was diagnosed with cancer, she woke up one morning and a virus that causes Bell's Palsy had smitten her and nerves had been affected in her face. It caused complete paralysis on one side of her face. I think most women would have wanted to pull the covers over their head and stay home for a few days. But a few days after that, I was at an oil and gas conference in Calgary and there was Lynette going table to table greeting people and doing her job. I was so impressed with that.

Lynette was good at everything she did. She worked most recently for several years as the director of marketing for Northern Transportation. She loved her work, her coworkers, her network of customers, but she made time for her priorities: her family and many friends. She kept a beautiful home and she loved to entertain her friends. She loved sports and she was an avid golfer.

As her long-time friend and colleague Cameron Clement said at her memorial service recently in Edmonton, she was fun and she was sassy, and anyone who met Lynette Storoz would never forget her.

Mr. Speaker, the many people whom she came in contact with, and the many lives that she touched, and the many people who loved Lynette, will never forget her. I would ask the House to join me in sending our condolences to Lynette's family in Hay River, and may she rest in peace. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement On Recognition Of The Achievements Of Father Pochat

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I first met Father Pochat, who was an oblate priest back in the early '60s when I had the good fortune to go to Grandin College. At that time, he was instrumental...He ran the program. As I went through that program, so did many esteemed northerners whom we all know: former Premiers Kakfwi, Sibbeston, Antoine; former Member of Parliament, Ethel Blondin-Andrew. There are hundreds of people who have gone on to very productive careers: chiefs; businesspeople; good, strong government leaders; our secretary to Cabinet. He was tremendously instrumental in the lives of many young people. When he left Grandin, he moved to the Tlicho region where he has been since that time and has devoted his life to the people of the Tlicho. He is fluently trilingual; French, English and the Tlicho language. He has now become an esteemed elder in our society in the North.

The reason I am taking the time to mention this today is I just got the good news yesterday that he has been recognized and will be honoured with the Order of Canada in the coming weeks and will be inducted as an officer to the Order of Canada. I would just like to take this opportunity to recognize that very great achievement and recognition for all his lifetime of work for the people of the North. I would ask that we take time to honour that achievement today. It's a great one. It's good for him and it reflects the lifetime he has devoted to all of us. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Local Health Organizations In Remote Communities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, health and social services, as we all know, is a very important and sensitive issue in our smaller communities. When a community's concerns on health are brought to the attention of a health authority that is not directly involved with the dynamics of the community on a day-to-day basis, sometimes these issues lose some credibility and their sense of importance.

When issues are brought up in a boardroom that comprises of a majority of members who have not lived in a small, remote, aboriginal community and are not aboriginals themselves, many of these unresolved issues seem to gravitate towards the question of stereotyping and unfair treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that I do support our local health organizations and I am grateful for a lot of the good work that many of these health authorities have done, given the many challenges that they are up against.

I also want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that it is very noticeable to people in these outlying, remote communities when issues as important as health, issues that affect the whole community, are not dealt with in a manner that is acceptable, efficient, effective and, most importantly, desirable by the community, people start to lose confidence and trust in the system. Therefore, the system has to change, Mr. Speaker. It is these changes that I will be asking the Minister about later in today's proceedings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Non-Profit Day Care Facilities In The Northwest Territories

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week, I spoke about the Government of the Northwest Territories' support for day care facilities and the government's involvement in the provision of childcare.

The focal point of my concerns is that it is very obvious and clear to me that the Government of the Northwest Territories does not treat non-profit day cares equitably. Case in point, Mr. Speaker, is a day care in my riding that

continues to have financial difficulties while the government just sits by and continues to allow inequities to exist. This non-profit day care is Northern Tikes, formerly known as Neshda. When their former building downtown could not be brought up to code to meet new fire regulations, the decision was made to relocate. The day care was denied government space, denied start-up grants because they were already in operation, and left to fend for themselves. Mr. Speaker, this day care spends over \$100,000 per year just on rent for the space they occupy.

The Government of the Northwest Territories provides rent free, all maintenance costs paid, space to other day cares. I have seen the operating budget for Northern Tikes and there just is no room in it for them to replace toys, books, carpets, games or furniture to provide a better environment for the children to be in. They just continue to try and do their best with what they have and for this, they should be commended. Staff turnover continues to be incredibly high and they just can't afford to pay workers competitive wages.

I asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment questions the other day on why inequities of the magnitude of \$100,000 per year are allowed to exist. I was not satisfied with his answers and I believe the government should clearly explain its position on assistance for non-profit day cares. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions today for both the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and the Minister of Public Works, the Minister responsible for charity leases to some of these day cares. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Recognition Of NWT Arctic Winter Games Athletes

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I read the list of participants chosen to represent the Northwest Territories at Arctic Winter Games in Alaska. Today, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the athletes from the riding of Nunakput. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to list them individually.

In arctic sports, from Paulatuk - Marion Green, Arlin Ruben, Jonathan Dillon; from Tuktoyaktuk - Jenne Kotokak, Matthew Anikina, Craig Gruben, Steven Kotokak; from Ulukhaktok - Tyler Inuktalik, Joey Kunana.

The alternates in arctic sports, Mr. Speaker, from Ulukhaktok - Shane Alikamik, Adrienne Kagyut, Gary Okheena, Tony Alanak; from Sachs Harbour - Vanessa Anikina.

In badminton, Mr. Speaker, from Ulukhaktok - Susie Memogana, Dale Nigiyok, Eric Kagyut, and alternate Curtis Banksland.

In basketball, the alternates from Tuktoyaktuk - Kristy Anderson and Brent Wolki.

In the Dene games, amazing or not, from Tuktoyaktuk - John Stuart, Jr.

In hockey, from Paulatuk - Elton Ruben.

Mr. Speaker, these athletes will represent our territory with the dignity, respect, but, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, they will represent the Northwest Territories to the best of their ability. Mr. Speaker, I wish all these athletes well, play safe, but, more importantly, have fun. Good luck because we are behind you all the way.

Finally, to the host community in the state of Alaska, we know you will treat our athletes with respect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Member Attendance At Session And Committee Meetings Of The Legislative Assembly

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to follow up on the statement made by my colleague from Hay River yesterday. There is no question that it's not a good reflection on the House when the presence or absence of Members in the Chamber or in committees take up media time, not what we get done here in the House.

Nevertheless, this has been a problem for the last long while and it's now public, and the onus is on all of us to work together to improve this situation.

Mr. Speaker, we may have to look at going back to the system where we get paid by meetings we attend...

---Applause

...I personally don't like that because I believe the work we are doing encompasses much more than what we do in this House. Nevertheless, the work here and in our committees is absolutely vital to our work. Being such a small group, one or two of us not being here could really bring the proceedings to a halt.

Perhaps we should look at posting a presence and absence of MLAs at committees meetings, and reasons for them, on the Legislative Assembly web site daily; and during sessions, the reasons for absence could be stated for the record, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the people have to ask these questions, and the constituency of Range Lake, I want to tell them that it's been a long-standing practice of mine to tell them my schedules and the goings on in my office on the web site throughout the year. During session, I have updates daily in the House about what I am saying and, obviously, if I am not here, I can't be saying those things.

Mr. Speaker, I have been here everyday. I want to communicate to my constituents that I have been here everyday during this session, and these past two weeks have been especially busy as we have been operating under extended hours. I can also tell them that this week has been an especially busy week with the long-standing hours. I have been here until at least 10:00 every night....

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh!

MS. LEE: I worked until 10:00 last Sunday, and I believe that record is for the public at the security desk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Member's Statement On Relevant Cultural Programs In Schools Of The NWT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During AOC committee's pre-budget consultation last year, an issue came up across the NWT and it was the need for more relevant programming in schools for our northern students. This includes northern aboriginal language, culture, land claim agreements, traditional skills and history of the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, this only makes sense that our youth be taught, in a coordinated way, our culture, history and current events of the North that they live in. Learning about southern Canada and other parts of the globe is very important too, Mr. Speaker, but it should not take such a priority over northern history that northern issues get left behind.

I have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, if making the educational curriculum more relevant to the students' day-to-day experiences if they would get more involved, be more excited in attendance, and maybe that would be reflected in graduation rates.

For some students, Mr. Speaker, I can only assume an assignment in self-government or maybe even pipeline issues would be more exciting to them in the North than maybe the history of the war of 1812 or of the House of Tudor, not that they are any less important.

Mr. Speaker, in the past, this government has not shied away from making bold policy statements. The Education Act, for example, demanded inclusive schooling. That was a bold step that needs to be recognized, so we don't need to stop there. We need to keep going with strong messages.

Mr. Speaker, maybe it's time that this Legislature require that a minimum level of NWT culture, history, event programming is written into legislation. Whatever efforts this government can make to direct policies and overall education councils to scribe such a program would only be beneficial to all parents and constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I can say that some schools and school boards make every effort to embrace northern culture, and I have to point out that in my riding of Yellowknife Centre, Mildred Hall embraces it with every bit of recognition it deserves. It takes changes in laws to sometimes deliver these messages, Mr. Speaker, and I expect that we require and deserve to give it the respect it deserves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Member's Statement On Tribute To Elders Albertine Rohdes And Alfred Lennie

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to pay tribute to Albertine Rohdes. Albertine has given a lot to the people of the Northwest Territories, especially her wisdom and her knowledge and the struggle for aboriginal rights in the Northwest Territories.

Albertine was very active with the Metis Nation of the Northwest Territories. She was involved in the Dene/Metis process. She was involved in devolution and where we are today with aboriginal rights.

Albertine would always be the one at the meeting that everyone would want to hear from. She was the person who spoke from the heart and when she spoke, she spoke honestly. She made us all feel that we also had to realize that we had to respect not only our elders, but ourselves and other people around the table.

She provided us with a lot of history and knowledge of the Northwest Territories and how we devolved and struggled over the years to achieve the recognition that we have today as First Nations people.

Albertine was involved with the Fort Simpson Metis local for years. I had the privilege of serving with Albertine as vice-president of the Metis Nation of the Northwest Territories and also was involved with the Dene/Metis claims process through the Dene/Metis Secretariat. It was people like Albertine who gave us the knowledge and put us on the path of how to deal with our issues, how to go forward and find solutions to our problems.

With that, I would like to thank Albertine's family for sharing such a beautiful woman, grandmother and someone who gave so much to the Northwest Territories.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to send condolences to the Lennie family of Tulita on the passing of Alfred Lennie, an uncle to a Member in this House, Mr. Norman Yakeleya.

I would also like to thank the Lennie family for offering Alfred's wisdom and knowledge. Alfred was also instrumental in helping me help the Sahtu negotiate their land claim. Alfred provided a lot of information and knowledge to the claims negotiators. Mr. Speaker, I would like unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, Alfred Lennie was a person who said it as it was and was straight to the point. One thing Alfred always had is, he had a way of just approaching anyone he went to and he was so easy to get along with, yet Alfred had a way of saying things that we, in most cases, were reluctant to say, but he said it anyhow.

Alfred will be greatly missed. Again, I would like to thank the Lennie family for sharing such a wonderful person. Again, I send my condolences to the family. I encourage the people in those communities to support the families

through their tough time. More importantly, know that these people have done their job and have shared their wisdom with us. That's the jewel that we can be grateful for. With that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not very often I get people from back home to come down to the Assembly here in the gallery. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my brother, Ernest Pokiak. Mr. Pokiak is the regional airport manager for Tuktoyaktuk, Ulukhaktok, Sachs Harbour and Paulatuk. He's also a board member of the Arctic College Board of Governors. I would like to welcome him today.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Recognitions of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know Mr. Pokiak has been recognized already, but he certainly is the owner of one of the most beautiful houses in the Northwest Territories where I had the privilege of staying when I was there, but he wasn't there, so I would like to welcome him to the gallery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Oral questions. Honourable Member from Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 375-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've got a number of questions. I guess I'm going to start with questions for the Minister responsible for Public Works and Services, the Honourable Floyd Roland, and it gets back to the issue of leases for non-profit day cares. I'd like to, first of all, ask the Minister if he's aware of the lease that he has with non-profit day cares here in the city of Yellowknife, and the inequities that are at play with the operation of other non-profit day cares here in the city of Yellowknife. I guess the first question would be if he's aware of the charity lease and the benefit that that provides to operating non-profit day cares here in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for Public Works, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 375-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I am aware that we do have a number of charity leases throughout the government. It's not a standing policy; it's

something that's developed over time when a unit has become available and an organization would put in a request to take over that facility. So, yes, I'm aware of our leases. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 375-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Public Works and Services if Public Works and Services is in the business of providing charity leases to certain day cares, I'm wondering how they can do it for one day care and not do it for the other day care. I'm wonder if there's even been a discussion between Public Works and Services and the Department of Education on this inequity that exists and how we might be able to overcome that.

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

Further Return To Question 375-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, overall, it's a policy of government not to interrupt the business environment. But being that a lot of these organizations are charitable organizations or societies trying to fill a basic need in a community, it was developed almost as a case-by-case scenario. There is no set policy in place. It is, again as I stated earlier, as one facility comes up for surplus, we would approach communities, our leadership, our other government departments, for potential uses. From time to time, as we have found, there's a number of them out there, not only to day care associations but to other associations, as well. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 375-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think we have a serious situation on our hands with the possibility of non-profit day cares not being able to operate because they're not on the same level playing field that I believe that they should be on, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of Public Works and Services if they've ever had discussions regarding whether or not Public Works and Services and the Department of Education could look at providing something like rent subsidies, or something to that effect, so that all non-profit day cares are on the same page, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 375-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just for the record, as well, the charity leases that we have in place are to non-profit organizations, whether it's the day cares or day care facilities, or women's associations, things of that...preschools. I'd be willing to have that discussion about the government's role in trying to do these things. As I said, we don't have a

policy in place, but it is probably coming to the time where we do need to look at the environment that we're operating in. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 375-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Final question, I guess. I'd like to ask, is it fair that one non-profit day care is provided maintenance costs, rent-free environment which totals over \$80,000, while the other day care is left to pay their own operating cost, their own rent and their own maintenance costs? Is that fair, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 375-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Member's seeking my personal opinion on that basis, I mean everybody asks for the same field to be on, I guess, or the same level to be operating under. So we understand there's a difficulty there. As I stated earlier, initially when these things first came in place, it is a case-by-case scenario, and we're going to have to review that and how we become involved, probably, and whether it's a small community or a large centre. So I guess all I can say to this is we will look at the way we've structured our charity leases and how we will continue to either support them or work around that issue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 376-15(4): Injuries From Snowmobile Accidents

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Justice and it's in regards to an issue that's been in the media a lot, and that has to do with the injuries from snowmobile accidents, Mr. Speaker. We live in a winter country and snowmobiling is something that a lot of people consider as an essential, as well as sports and recreation. But it is an area of activity that does see casualties and injuries and fatalities every year, Mr. Speaker. The national studies show that snowmobile injuries constitute at least 40 percent of all sports and recreation injuries, and half of those admitted for severe trauma, half of those accidents are also alcohol related. So I'd like to know, as a Minister of Justice, whether he's looked into this issue to see what, if anything, we can do as a territorial Legislature to change this situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 376-15(4): Injuries From Snowmobile Accidents

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a very serious and concerning problem not only across the North, but, indeed, in the entire country. More and more people are being hurt in snowmobile accidents, ATV accidents, and there is some merit in getting the word out to people so that they recognize they probably need to

slow down and drive more safely, and be aware that at all times they need to be wearing helmets. Mr. Speaker, one of the things our government is doing, the Department of Transportation and the Department of MACA are working together to put together an education campaign and get out to the communities with this messaging, and talk to people about how we can be safer and reduce accidents on snow machines and ATVs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 376-15(4): Injuries From Snowmobile Accidents

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, education might be one thing that can be done, but I'm not sure if that's enough. I think that is something that requires some legislative action, and it's definitely an area that is cross-jurisdictional because a snowmobile could travel from a municipality to a territorial land to federal land, and it is something that I think would require cooperation from three levels of government. Mr. Speaker, I walk my dogs everyday at Range Lake and the speed is just out of control, and I need to see that the Minister does something about that. Would the Minister consider looking at this and see what legislative action we can take? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Minister Bell.

Further Return To Question 376-15(4): Injuries From Snowmobile Accidents

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are already laws on the roads and there are laws in municipalities. Enforcement, obviously, is a problem, very difficult, and there are more and more snow machines out there. So it's something that we can have some discussion around. But the Member is right; it crosses a number of jurisdictions: ours and municipal. I think the most important thing is to get out there and make sure people recognize the dangers. I'm not sure especially young people have a good sense of exactly how powerful these machines are and how much at risk they can be when they're speeding, even on open lakes which seem fairly smooth. There have been lots of cases where there are heaves in the ice and people have serious, serious accidents. So we are doing something. Transportation and MACA are working on this education campaign. We can talk to the various law enforcement agencies, but I would acknowledge, right now, that enforcement is a problem and it is difficult. Obviously not as easy as it is on roads for vehicles.

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

Supplementary To Question 376-15(4): Injuries From Snowmobile Accidents

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, like I stated, I don't think education is enough. I don't think there's anybody who doesn't know that going on a snowmobile at 130 kilometres is not a good thing. It's not the right thing; it's not the legal thing. But I have watched enforcement officers coming and their equipment can't catch up with the speed of some of these distant snowmobilers. Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to have some legislative teeth, and I would asks the Minister to

work with the municipal organizations and federal government, and take a lead on looking at what sort of areas we can make judicial action on. I think it takes legislative intervention, not just education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 376-15(4): Injuries From Snowmobile Accidents

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do know that the Department of Transportation staff have met with the trail riders group from Great Slave Snowmobile Association. Those folks have endorsed this public education campaign, but they've also said that they'd be willing to be involved in an interagency working group that DOT plans to establish. In the longer term, there are a number of initiatives planned, but a discussion around legislation is certainly on the list and it is something that they are contemplating and want to discuss. So I do know that DOT plans to go out to the other snowmobile associations in the Northwest Territories, and I can assure the Member that legislation and legislative options are not something we're ignoring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 376-15(4): Injuries From Snowmobile Accidents

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the legislative agenda of this Assembly is very, very thin, and I think I might have given the Minister of Justice something really chewy to work on for the remainder of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I agree; the snowmobile association is one of the stakeholders, but there's a lot more stakeholders that he should consult and that includes the federal Minister of Justice and the City of Yellowknife, from my point of view. So could he make the commitment to consult with them and come back with an action paper by the spring session? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 376-15(4): Injuries From Snowmobile Accidents

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think even probably before we start talking about the federal government, I'd be interested in making sure hunters and trappers are involved in this discussion because this is part of their livelihood and I think very important for them. DOT does plan to sit down with MACA; I mentioned that. They are going to bring in the RCMP, municipal enforcement, coroner's office, the chief medical officer, other snowmobile associations. They think they can have this group up and running by the end of the month, or next month. If we need the federal government involved, we can certainly bring them in. But I think as a starting point, we obviously need to bring in the hunters and trappers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Question 377-15(4): Review Of Local Health Organizations

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. As I talked about in my Member's statement, I've got a couple questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Just in respect to the last session when the Minister committed to completing a community health review by January of 2006, which is passed already. I'm just wondering, I want to ask the Minister, has this review been done yet? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 377-15(4): Review Of Local Health Organizations

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this work has been done and they're in the final report writing stages. I've been informed, since I queried them on the status, that we should have the report by the end of this month, and we'll be able to see what the recommendations are and share those with the community and with the Member. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 377-15(4): Review Of Local Health Organizations

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to seeing the recommendations of that report. They probably deal with a lot of board representation and community health services, medical travel and stuff for the smaller communities. I just want to make a point to the Minister that I know the authority my communities deal with, the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority has a very big plate and a lot of the small community issues get lost amongst this big banquet of issues that they have to address on a daily and a monthly basis. I just want to ask the Minister if this report, when it does get tabled in this House, does it include any extra funding requirements for smaller communities, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 377-15(4): Review Of Local Health Organizations

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have yet to see the report, so I have no idea what the specific recommendations are. But I can tell the Member that as we plan in our budget that's before this House, for example, to deal with all the program issues as they affect communities, we build in forced growth. If we have a new initiative, we try to account for all the needs and requirements of communities. But I have yet to see the consultant's report or the specific recommendations. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 377-15(4): Review Of Local Health Organizations

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just ask the Minister a question about the report itself. I didn't see the terms of reference for the report, but I want to ask the Minister, does the report, is it a territorial-wide community report, or is this more specific to my constituency which raises the issue of getting the report in the first place? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 377-15(4): Review Of Local Health Organizations

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this report was done at the request of the community, but, as well, three years ago or four years ago now when there was a change in the governance arrangement and Fort Resolution started sitting at the Yellowknife health and social service table, one of the agreements was after three years, or two years, to take a look at how things have gone in relation to the MOU. So the memorandum of understanding between the community and the department was the basis of the review. It's very specific, focussed on the issues to the people of Fort Resolution, and the work's been done within the community to look at those services and the services provided as support out of Yellowknife. So it would be very specific to the community. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 378-15(4): Policing Services To Smaller Communities

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister responsible for Justice. I read in the news I think it was just before Christmas about a nice little program to service the needs of Gameti where they would put two police officers, I think, for a couple of months because of the winter road opening. I kind of prided the uniqueness of this, of having an alternate program to offer policing service to the smaller communities. I just want to know, if it has begun, is it a pilot, and can we look at branching it out to other communities, as well, Mr. Speaker? Thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 378-15(4): Policing Services To Smaller Communities

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't tell the Member if in fact the RCMP officers have already taken up their posts in Gameti. I do understand they will be serviced and will be from the Yellowknife detachment, and it will be on a roving basis. So a number of different officers will be involved. Obviously the communities had some concerns about access to the community, increased alcohol in the community, and drugs, because of the winter road. This is something that the RCMP agreed that they would try this year and see how it goes. The idea was to really keep the presence in the community for the length of the winter road season. I could check, but I'm

not sure if the winter road is, in fact, open yet. I could provide that information to the Member, though. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 378-15(4): Policing Services To Smaller Communities

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'll be interested in monitoring the outcome of this particular program, because when I first read about it I said, well, that's a pretty unique way of doing things of increasing service in the small communities. In fact, Wrigley, one of my communities, have always been asking for an increased presence of, actually, medical service. But the barrier there was that there had to be like a police presence, as well. Then if you get one police presence, then you need, like, another officer because there's another rule or guideline saying that they're not going to put in one-police detachments anymore for safety reasons. So just the fact that we're looking at putting RCMP officers in for a couple of months, it might have implications for Wrigley that we can have an at least increased service with regard to providing health care services. So if the Minister will provide me updates as we go along. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 378-15(4): Policing Services To Smaller Communities

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We can certainly provide updates. We do have a working group with the RCMP and Justice officials talking about the provision of service to small communities. There are, I think, 13 communities in the NWT without detachments. The Member is right; the days of single-officer detachments are gone, so we have to be more creative and look at ways that we can provide service to some of our smaller communities. Probably the smallest ones we will be hard pressed to ever see detachments, or for awhile anyway, because of cost pressures in the smallest detachments. But I still believe, and I've had this discussion with Member Pokiak about a detachment in Sachs Harbour. I think Wrigley is another obvious one where we could use a detachment. I think the pressures from development are going to increase. But is a matter, as Members know, of getting it into the federal government's capital plan. It is the federal government that pays for detachments; we share the O and M costs. So really it's about convincing the federal Minister. That is something I want to sit down and talk to the federal Minister about, and we'll do that. But I'll keep the Member updated on the progress that we see in Gameti. I do understand that the winter road is not open yet, but we will follow that for the couple-month period that it is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 378-15(4): Policing Services To Smaller Communities

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to that, as well. The other component is, of course, to begin discussions with the Department of

Health to see if there can be a concerted effort of providing the policing services as well as the health services. If we pilot in the Nahendeh region, as well, I would suggest the community of Wrigley to increase the health services. So while the Minister also begins discussions with Health and Social Services, just to pre-plan it so we can do something maybe next year, Mr. Speaker. Thanks.

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

Further Return To Question 378-15(4): Policing Services To Smaller Communities

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will take the concerns about the provision of health services back to my department for discussions with health officials. Obviously, the Minister of Health has heard the concerns, and that's something that I'm prepared to have a discussion with him about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Question 379-15(4): Water Treatment Plant In Sachs Harbour

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I did a Member's statement in regard to the water treatment plant in Sachs Harbour. I understand that early last week they had major problems again with the treatment plant freezing up in Sachs. Mr. Speaker, the project started in the summer of 2004, and we're in 2006 now and they're still encountering the same problems of freezing up at the water plant and also the pipeline intake. My question is for the Minister of Public Works and Services. Can he give us an update from last week in regard to what the department has done to rectify the problem? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The honourable Minister responsible for Public Works, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 379-15(4): Water Treatment Plant In Sachs Harbour

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the latest information I received, we had a contractor go up there again to thaw out the line and look at why it froze up again. As I stated last week, between the designer of the water treatment plant, Public Works and Services, and Municipal and Community Affairs, we're working on looking at what needs to be changed. The feeling is that the long piping going from the treatment plant into the water lake is probably the reason why the insulation on the piping has deteriorated, and we're putting a project together to look at replacing that whole length of line. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 379-15(4): Water Treatment Plant In Sachs Harbour

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of Public Works and Services indicate exactly when that problem will be rectified? He mentioned that they're looking at maybe changing the pipeline. I'm just wondering, when can the people of Sachs Harbour have

the water treatment plant running in correct order? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 379-15(4): Water Treatment Plant In Sachs Harbour

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Public Works and Services, along with Municipal and Community Affairs, are going to have to come up with what the actual project will be to get this system repaired and fully operational so that we don't have any more freeze-ups. We're going to have to work with the other department and come up with the budget line, and then put it into the process for review. So I don't have an actual time, but we're working with Municipal and Community Affairs. Obviously we're going to have to come forward with something in a supplementary appropriation at a future date because it's a continuing problem; we need to repair it. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 379-15(4): Water Treatment Plant In Sachs Harbour

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering, I know last week I asked the Minister in regard to if the contract was given out. I'm just wondering, this is 2004, the summer of 2004. It's been very costly finding the contractor, the freezing up of the problem. When I made a visit to Sachs Harbour in early January, Mr. Speaker, you know, I talked with the Minister about this on my return visit back to Yellowknife and it appears that early January to now, and I don't know how much longer it's going to take to rectify the problem. I'm just wondering, what more can the department do? The people in Sachs are having a hard time trying to...They drill holes in the lake. Will the problem actually be done? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 379-15(4): Water Treatment Plant In Sachs Harbour

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the situation that we face right now in Sachs Harbour, along with our problems with the water line itself, as I understand, the water trucks in the community actually had problems as the garage up in Sachs Harbour, I understand the furnace ran out of fuel, froze up the unit. There was a team that went up there to do the repairs, I believe on the 6th or the 7th of this last week to make those types of repairs. So my understanding is that that is now either underway or been repaired, as well as looking at the water treatment plant itself. But as for coming up with a plan to date as to what's the actual fix, right now our discussions with the designer, Public Workers and Services, Municipal and Community Affairs is that it's to do with the length of the line, and we're going to have to look at replacing that length of line. We have to come up with a project itself, a new design and a costing of that. So I can't give the Member an actual date. We're working on it with Municipal and Community Affairs to come up with something as soon as we can, understanding that the community can't be left in a position of having to drill holes in the lake to get their water. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Question 380-15(4): Status Of The Business Incentive Policy

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today will be for the Minister of Industry, Tourist and Investment. This morning I received an e-mail regarding the potential dropping of the BIP, Mr. Speaker, and it appears several small businesses are concerned, in the e-mail that I received. It looks like it may be replaced by a two percent reduction, from this e-mail that I have before me. So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister is, how is this idea being floated out to northern businesses about the potential dropping of the BIP and replacing it with a small two percent reduction in taxes? How is it being floated out there for their discussion? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 380-15(4): Status Of The Business Incentive Policy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is something we've been in discussion with committee about. Governance and Economic Development committee was floated the idea first, initially, and they were at least intrigued enough with the idea to suggest that we needed to get out and talk to businesses and get their sense. The premise, Mr. Speaker, really is that the BIP, which was created a number of years ago, we think is not as useful as it once was, not as effective as it once was. It really speaks only to GNWT procurement. I think the last numbers we had, on \$200 million worth of procurement, there were premiums paid to BIP registered businesses somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$200,000. If you remember back to the initial impetus for this, it was about levelling the playing field for northern business as compared to southern. What I think happens, for the most part now that our market is a little more mature, is that you have BIP businesses bidding against BIP businesses and it ends up being a wash. So we felt that the administrative burden on our department, but spread right across all departments and on small business and larger business to comply and register, to have us monitor the BIP, was onerous compared to the value. So we've started this discussion. I've met with the NWT Chamber. They are putting out a survey to their membership over the next month, and we will have ongoing discussions around this.

But I want to clarify that it's not a small decrease to the small business tax rates. It's, in fact, a 50 percent reduction in small business tax rates, from four percent to two percent, that we're proposing would fill the gap. So we would, instead of having the BIP program, we would take the money and use that to provide a 50 percent tax break for small business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 380-15(4): Status Of The Business Incentive Policy

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll definitely say anything that helps small business is certainly a good step. But, Mr. Speaker, there is a concern out there that this dropping of the BIP may be steamrolled and consultation may be just for formality. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out a couple of things. The Minister's tabled documents in this House have pointed out that Health and Social Services sole sources 77 percent of their contracts. A letter from Minister Miltenberger, which I tabled in this House, pointed out that 92 percent of their business at Stanton Territorial Hospital goes south. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to hear how this Minister is, yes, helping northern small business with a two percent tax reduction, but how is he going to help and protect and promote northern businesses by dropping one of our wonderful flagship programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 380-15(4): Status Of The Business Incentive Policy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For specific procurement concerns that are taken up by departments, arm's length agencies or boards, you would have to speak to the Minister involved in that, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we run the contract registry which provides the information. We think it has added a real element of transparency. I think the Member would appreciate that. The kind of information he has at his fingertips allows us to go back and look at procurement practices. That is what we are doing.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, after surveying NWT businesses, came up with a list of priorities and reducing regulatory burden and red tape was near the top, Mr. Speaker. That is what we think we are doing. Another one was competitive taxation regimes and reducing taxes. We think we are doing two things here. We are reducing regulatory burden and providing a tax break. We think that is to the benefit of all small businesses, not just the ones, I would add, that do business with the GNWT. Obviously, the non-renewable resource sector has had huge impacts. There are many businesses making their prime business in dealing with these companies. They would now benefit. All businesses across the North making income would benefit from a small tax break. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 380-15(4): Status Of The Business Incentive Policy

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while reducing the taxes to small business, again I say, a darn good thing, but, Mr. Speaker, we have to make a solid point on this. You have to be getting contracts in order to have something to deduct in order to make that two percent reduction worth anything.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have to go through the statistics I said the other day, as well as just earlier, that the Minister does monitor through the registry of the sole sourcing and the sourcing that goes south at 92 percent for Stanton. Would

the Minister consider options such as maybe replacing the BIP, or modifying it so any business that is a northern business that files their taxes in the Northwest Territories are the only ones who qualify for BIP? At least that would squeeze out big corporations such as Wal-Mart or large box stores from competing with small businesspeople who are trying to make a living and promote our North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 380-15(4): Status Of The Business Incentive Policy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, we have been down this road a number of times. I think past governments' experience would tell you that tinkering with the BIP is not the answer. Let's either be done with it and recognize that it is not relevant anymore, and we will consult businesses to find out if, in fact, that is their feeling, or let's leave it as is. But if we start to make changes to this, we can undertake a great deal of consultation. I can assure the Member there are ways businesses want to be creative and find a way, if they are motivated, to work around the regulations. You are going to have southern businesses able to register a storefront in the North and comply. Wal-Mart is just an example. It is well within the regulations and the policies that we have in place and does qualify as a BIP registered business. They are registered to be able to provide a whole range of products.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that the real answer here is about levelling the playing field for all northern businesses, making sure we reduce our regulatory burden and our tax burden. The issue of sole sourcing of contracts, really BIP becomes irrelevant. It is sole sourced. It doesn't matter. It wouldn't matter if the BIP is in place or not in place. If there is a sole source that takes place, that is exactly what is going to happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 380-15(4): Status Of The Business Incentive Policy

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respectfully think that the Minister missed the point on the sole sourcing, because what I am saying is 92 percent of the business in Stanton Territorial Hospital went south. That took away any opportunity that these northern businesses had to tender or the opportunity to tender, I should say, on those contracts. That just flew right over them, Mr. Speaker. That is why I drew that comparison. Yes, BIP doesn't apply to that, but BIP is about establishing solid grounds where northern businesses can be competitive. Mr. Speaker, I still go back to what I said on the third question which I just never got the answer. So I will ask it maybe this way, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister look at re-evaluating the BIP? I know he doesn't want to tinker with it, but would he look at re-evaluating the BIP that it only applies to companies and businesses that file their taxes only in the Northwest Territories, not these multi-nationals that partner? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 380-15(4): Status Of The Business Incentive Policy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, no. What the Member is asking me to do is to put in place some sort of change to the BIP that would require immense auditing, policing, would add to the regulatory burden. What we would be asking small businesses to do is essentially share private tax filing information with us. I am not even sure we have the ability to do that. I could consult with the Minister of Finance, but you are adding layers of complexity, bureaucratic red tape, and I can assure the Member that is not what small business wants. What we have to do is find a way to help small business be more competitive. It is not about coming up with onerous protection schemes. It is about reducing regulatory burden and reducing the tax burden for northern businesses. That is what we are going to do. We are going to get out of the way so that businesses can do what they do, which is make money, employ people and create economic development. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Question 381-15(4): Mental Health Act And Related Services In The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this morning will be for Mr. Miltenberger as the Minister of Health and Social Services. They relate to the field of mental health services and legislation in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, the Social Programs committee, in its report to the Assembly, referred to the pre-budget consultations that were held last fall in a number of communities. I will paraphrase, Mr. Speaker. The report told us that there is not a lot of buy-in at the local level for the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Anecdotally, Members were told there is a real disconnect between residents and what we heard were primarily southern-hired mental health workers. The communities were pleading that if they were given the dollars and the mandate, they felt they could do a much better job of this.

Mr. Speaker, we have dozens of workers engaged in mental health, community wellness and addictions services, but, given the response that the communities have told us, it just doesn't seem to be working. What is the Minister's response to this really quite disturbing report that we are not making much headway? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 381-15(4): Mental Health Act And Related Services In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we will be sharing with the Members the document done by Dr. Chalmers which was a review of the work that has been taking place over the last number of years, based on her initial assessment of the addictions and mental health services in the North back in 2001, which was called, A State of Emergency. From that document, we came up with an action plan that

committed us to a course of action across the North that saw us do a much better job in terms of bringing addictions workers on stream, setting up mental health workers, supervisors, all based on the fundamental principle that it is best to put resources at the community level. We put in over 77 positions. That document by Dr. Chalmers will be, as I said, shared to the Members and made public next week.

The title for her report is called Stay the Course, and Building and Keeping the Foundation That We Have Set Up Over the Last Number of Years is the basic title. I am always interested in the feedback that the committee provides us, but when this document comes out, the committee has a chance to look at it. Then we can sit down and have an informed discussion about how we intend to move forward. We will also be coming forward with a response from the department on how we intend to respond to those recommendations. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 381-15(4): Mental Health Act And Related Services In The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Thank you. I guess I will take that one as notice, then, until the report comes out, Mr. Speaker.

On the clinical side of this question, my colleague from Hay River South told us, when she addressed this issue a couple of days ago, that 36 percent of our hospital admissions are for mental health and addictions related causes. Mr. Speaker, are we adequately resourced in our hospitals and clinics to deal with this disturbing and substantial problem in admissions and care in our hospital system? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 381-15(4): Mental Health Act And Related Services In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, doctors would confirm that, in fact, a significant amount of their practice is tied to mental health issues and related circumstances, as are most other health practitioners. We have a significant amount of resources. We have a \$265 million budget. A lot of it is focussed on nurses, doctors, social workers, wellness workers and mental health workers. There will always be more problems than we have resources for. The issue is to make sure that, I think, the resources we have are put to the most effective use and that our plan for the future reflects the required changes. When I put the Chalmers' report before the committee, they will be able to give us their feedback in terms of what they think of Dr. Chalmers' assessment. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 381-15(4): Mental Health Act And Related Services In The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Well, we have been put on notice again to the Chalmers report. Mr. Speaker, our Mental Health Act is, I discussed in my Member's statement, a piece of legislation that is badly out of date in accordance with

professional, legal and administrative standards. An impression that I have been given is if we can modernize this, we are not only going to be able to give people better care and do it quicker, we are also going to be saving a lot of human resources and money. Would the Minister advise that we will see the modernization and updating of our mental health legislation during the life of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 381-15(4): Mental Health Act And Related Services In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the rewriting of the Mental Health Act is on our legislative to-do list, but I don't anticipate that it will make it on to the doable legislative agenda. We are focussing right now before the House on the Tobacco Act, but the two major pieces that we now have to get done in this Assembly are the rewrite of the Public Health Act as well as the Pharmacy Act. We have dozens of other pieces of legislation that have to be updated, one of which is the Mental Health Act. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 381-15(4): Mental Health Act And Related Services In The NWT

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am well aware that Health and Social Services is the department with the single most pieces of legislation under its watch. The modernization of this act is not a small piece of work. It is going to require a lot of consultation across a lot of fields. It is important that we start this work, even if it is not something that is going to be achievable in the length of this Assembly. Would the Minister commit to at least considering starting the consultation process, working toward the rewrite of this act perhaps in the next Assembly, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 381-15(4): Mental Health Act And Related Services In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been work done looking at what would be required to modernize and rewrite this legislation. We are going to continue to pay as much attention as we can to that issue as we try to conclude with major pieces of legislation currently underway. It comes down to a capacity and resource issue. The Member's points are all accurate and valid. This is an outdated piece of legislation. We will make our best efforts to make sure that we have as much work done so that, at the start of the next Assembly, it can be picked up and moved forward. Thank you.

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

Question 382-15(4): Cancer Rates In The NWT

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are a relatively small territory with a small

population. As I related in my Member's statement today, so many of us have had people who have been close to us who have been touched with cancer. One of the questions that I often get as an MLA is whether or not the rates of cancer are actually higher in the Northwest Territories than they are in the rest of this country. My understanding has been that they are not. Perhaps it is just that the closeness with which our small community here operates that we just tend to hear about it more often.

For the record, and for people who have made this inquiry of me many times, I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, do we have a higher than national average in our rates of cancer? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 382-15(4): Cancer Rates In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member, for the most part, is correct. Historically, cancer rates in the Northwest Territories have been lower than the national average. They are, however, on the increase and moving towards the national average. I don't have the specific statistics right before me, but if my memory serves me correctly, for example, the issue of colorectal cancer is not at, or slightly above the national average. For the most part, a lot of the cancers are still below the national average but moving up. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 382-15(4): Cancer Rates In The NWT

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are a small territory, but do we have any kind of in house capacity to do an analysis of why those rates are moving higher? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 382-15(4): Cancer Rates In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work done on what causes the various cancers. Very clearly, in many cases, the cancers come back to some very fundamental basic issues that I have raised in this House before. They come back to the diet, exercise, smoking and drinking as things that are very significant in causing heart and lung problems, kidney problems, liver problems, all sorts of circulatory problems. So there are some very fundamental basic issues there that contribute to the cancers and diabetes. That evidence is clear. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 382-15(4): Cancer Rates In The NWT

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it is just the age that I am at and the fact that I am a female, but one type of cancer that seems to be very noticeable and prevalent in the North here is breast cancer. Almost in every kind of cancer, including breast cancer, early diagnosis seems to be the key to being cured and having a good chance of a good outcome and prognosis for survival. Mr. Speaker, where are we with our mobile mammogram program and access for women in the Northwest Territories to detection through mammograms? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 382-15(4): Cancer Rates In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member raises a very good point. Mammography services are available in Yellowknife. Women get referred here. As well, in the South Slave area, there have been arrangements made with Alberta with their mobile mammography equipment to come through the communities. That is, as well, still available. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 382-15(4): Cancer Rates In The NWT

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister describe any other initiatives that are underway out there in the communities creating awareness about signs and early diagnosis of breast cancer? South Slave and Yellowknife, that is great. We have mammography services, but there are a whole lot of remote communities out there where people are a long ways away from there. We need to create awareness. What is being done on that front? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 382-15(4): Cancer Rates In The NWT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a considerable amount of work being done with the nurses and the public health through the authorities to make individuals aware of the benefits of regular checkups which is one of the fundamental first steps not only in the case of breast cancer, but for others as well to get the regular checkups to check out specific concerns. As well, there are posters and such that are out there to encourage ladies to get checked and go to their local health station. If there are any signs of issues, they will make arrangements for referrals. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Oral questions. The honourable Member for the Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Question 383-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. It gets back again to the issue of fairness and equity in the government's providing funding to non-profit day cares. Just the other day, the Minister stated that by providing, in essence, free rent and free maintenance to some operators, they have a bit of a leg up he guesses. But, Mr. Speaker, that leg up might as well be Godzilla's leg up for some of these other operators, which amounts to \$100,000. That, Mr. Speaker, is definitely a bit of a leg up, if I could say so.

The first question I would like to pose to the Minister, and he didn't answer this question the other day, is, what are the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's plans to deal with the inequities that are in place here in Yellowknife? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 383-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I doubt that the benefit is \$100,000. It is a very old building that we are talking about. The cost of utilities is probably a lot higher than what would be the case in a more modern facility. That facility is operated out of that building since far before my term as Minister. It is a situation that has developed over time where this one operator was in a facility. The government had a spare facility at the time and offered it to a non-profit organization to run a day care out of. In the intervening years, there have been a number of other operators that have come and started up. We can certainly have a look at the issue. Obviously, if we are talking about having to charge rents to everybody, we will have to take a look at phasing in a rental increase. We would also have to take a look at the other operations across the Northwest Territories. There are, Mr. Speaker, a substantial number of operations across the Territories using space in either government-owned schools or college facilities. We could certainly take a look at what the impacts might be of ensuring that the government is absolutely equitable to everybody. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 383-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find it hard to believe that the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment could stand up in this House and say that we are going to start to charge rent to the other operators that are in charity leases so that the other ones will feel better. I take exception to that, Mr. Speaker. I think the government should be challenged with trying to come up with a way that is fair and equitable to all of the non-profit day cares. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister again. I don't want him to paint me as the bad guy pointing fingers at other operators, but I want to ask him if the government could look at wage subsidies for the staff and/or maybe rent subsidies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 383-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we are going to provide subsidies to one, we have to provide to subsidies to all if we want to make sure that there is equity. I think that there are only two ways to accomplish the equity, but I would certainly be happy to take a look at what we could do. I would be happy to put more money into child day care. I think that it is an area that we need to invest in. It is an area that I am planning to bring forward some investment plans in. I think we have to be careful. We are not just talking about profit or non-profit things here. All of the centres in the Northwest Territories are non-profit. So there isn't a competition between somebody who is making a profit and somebody who is not making a profit. All of our centre-based programs are non-profit. We have not just one in Yellowknife that is in a subsidized space; there are a number. So there are a whole bunch of people who will be impacted by this.

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

Supplementary To Question 383-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, free rent is a subsidy. I don't care how you add it up. Free rent absolutely is a subsidy. I think the Minister does have a problem on his hands. I don't know how they propose to address that problem. Again, I know the Minister said that he was going to have a look at this, but what type of solution can the Minister provide us with? There is a problem here. At the day care in my riding, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about 40 full-time spaces. We are talking about 20 part-time spaces. We can't afford to lose any more day care spaces, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 383-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Member is right; we do have a problem. I have had other Members telling me that we should look for space in government facilities and make them available for day cares to operate, because it is such an important service in the North. I am getting competing advice here. Yes, I will take a look at the situation. I will take into account the suggestions of the Members. But for me to say what the response will be, would be, right now, premature. So I can't answer Mr. Ramsay's direct question as to what the solution might be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 383-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess, as a final supplementary, I would just like to ask the Minister if he will commit to at least trying to put, without jeopardizing the agreements that are in place currently with non-profits, some kind of program that would put non-profit day cares on an equal footing. Will

he commit to some type of a sit-down discussion that would allow that to happen? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 383-15(4): Non-Profit Day Cares In The NWT

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have already committed to Mr. Ramsay that I will examine the situation. To put everybody on the same footing means that everybody gets the same subsidy. I only have a certain number of dollars to work with, so that may impact on what we can provide everybody. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Question 384-15(4): Review Of Community Justice Programs

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Brendan Bell. I have a couple of questions that I asked him in the last session with some community concerns with the Community Justice Program. I know that the funding, or the lack of funding, for community justice workers and justice committees is seriously inadequate in a lot of the communities. With the rollout of the Youth Justice Act, it has put an extra strain on these committees because some of the caseloads have doubled because, in the Act, it clearly states that the youth cases have to be directed to the local justice committees. Has the funding, or the lack of funding, for these workers and the committees been addressed in this latest budget and been customized to meet the needs of communities? Different communities have different needs and different caseloads. Is that the case, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 384-15(4): Review Of Community Justice Programs

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is right; different communities have different needs and caseloads. On top of it, it can fluctuate quite dramatically from year to year. It is something that is a concern for us. We are currently looking at the funding to justice committees. I have asked the department to undertake a review. One of the things that I think we know, anecdotally though, is that some of the communities that receive funding have very active community justice committees, and others receiving funding, as well, have ones that are not so active. We are trying to better understand why. It doesn't just seem to be about the money, Mr. Speaker. It seems to be about the involvement of the community in the justice committee. So I think we need to understand and look at best practices, understand why some are working better than others. That is the nature of this review. I am hoping to have some results for committee shortly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 384-15(4): Review Of Community Justice Programs

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to top up what the Minister was actually alluding to, I realize that there are different caseloads in the communities and should be addressed as such, and funding should go to the communities that are very busy. Just to let the Minister know, different communities have different crime rates. Some communities have low crime rates. Therefore, their justice committees just don't have the work cut out for them as a lot of my communities do with high crime rates and high unemployment and stuff. What is the rationale in this department's way of thinking? Why do we want to build fancy new jails and \$41 million courthouses and renovate old jails? How is that rationale going to address the problem of crime rates at the community level? Where is the rationale on that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 384-15(4): Review Of Community Justice Programs

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, different communities have different crime rates. How active community justice committees are really does tend to depend on the willingness of the community, the local RCMP to divert to these community justice committees. I think the community has to be comfortable with that approach. You mentioned the YCJA and the new philosophy. In the transition from the old Young Offenders Act, that has played an important role. But, Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that keeping our facilities adequate and up to date reduces the crime rate, but it is part of the overall justice system. We have to recognize the pressure on courts has really exploded over the last five years. We do have a lot of issues that we need to deal with. I am not trying at all to diminish the fact that our community justice committees need to be adequately supported. Those workers need to have adequate training. As a department, we need to work hand in hand with them to make sure that it is an effective piece of our correction system. I am committed to doing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 384-15(4): Review Of Community Justice Programs

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When is his department going to review and overhaul the Community Justice Program? I know that it is something that has been brought to his attention over the last couple of years. It is steadily coming to my office by our community justice workers. It seems to be an issue that seems to be talked about quite often, but nothing really seems to come out of it. When is the Minister going to commit to actually getting something going? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 384-15(4): Review Of Community Justice Programs

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly commit to coming back to committee with some

timelines for this review of justice committees. I know the Member is well aware, but he and his community leadership in Fort Res petitioned the community to talk about the increase of not only crime, but the number of probation cases. We have responded and provided some funding for a probation worker in that community because it hasn't been adequate to receive a service from Hay River. There is too much of a workload there, so we are working with the leadership. We are working with the Member to respond. We recognized that this was urgent and have moved to fill that void. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Time for question period has expired. Written questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 25-15(4): GNWT Diamond Strategy

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have written questions for two Ministers. The first set, Mr. Speaker, is for Minister Bell as the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Investment and they relate to the Diamond Strategy of this government.

- 1) Is the newly announced marketing venture with the diamond cutting/polishing/jewellery manufacturers a partnership, and how much money will each party contribute?
- 2) What are the objectives and tasks of this strategy, and will the department be reporting results to the Assembly on a regular basis?
- 3) How much revenue will the Diamond Certification Program generate?

Written Question 26-15(4): Diamond Certification Revenue

Mr. Speaker, my second set of written questions is for the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Floyd Roland. They also relate in part to this area.

- 1) The Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment has advised that revenue from government diamond certification is being "ploughed back into a marketing fund" used for diamond promotion. Does this mean that diamond certification is no longer subject to appropriation by this Assembly?
- 2) Is the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment's decision about diamond certificate fees in compliance with rules of our Financial Administration Act?
- 3) Could the Minister advise whether there are other types of revenues directly channelled into spending?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to opening address. Replies to budget address. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 10: REPLIES TO BUDGET ADDRESS

Mr. Braden's Reply

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under this order of the day last year, I talked about the way this Assembly had been conducting its budgetary business up to that point. Something that was a problem for me, and I wanted to see how we could address it, was the relative secrecy by which this Assembly goes about building its budgetary plans, business plans for the departments. I say relative secrecy compared to the way most other jurisdictions in Canada do this, Mr. Speaker, especially through the committee process.

Our committees here in our Legislature, and this is by our collective consensus, have largely been, and continue to largely be, behind closed doors. But I was very pleased to see that with the particular budget process that we're engaged in right now, there has been a change in the way we do business; that the Members on the regular side and the standing committees engaged in a very extensive pre-budget consultation not in every community of the NWT, Mr. Speaker, but in quite a number of them, in September and that was a widely accepted, and very much appreciated, and very useful and relevant to the kind of work we want to do.

The way the public, the non-government organizations, the communities regarded our request, we were looking for input, ideas on where our priorities and our spending should be. We got good feedback and I think this is going to be a regular part of the way we do business, at least for the budget, Mr. Speaker.

We've also changed in this Assembly -- we just started it this week -- the number of hours that we put into budget process. We've changed the orders and the way we manage some of our other processes and procedures, Mr. Speaker. I know in a number of areas these changes to our routine have not come easily. Certainly change is never easy anywhere, but I do hope that we will continue to try these new processes for the balance of this budget session because of one very significant aspect to it and it goes back to why we are doing these pre-budget consultations. Why do we want to open up our committee process? It's to make the business of this Assembly, the kind of discussion, deliberation and debate that we have more accessible, more open, and more transparent to the voters and to the constituents. By changing at least the hours of the way we do business, more people are able to see what we have, what we do, and how we do it. I think this is going to make for better government, better decision-making and better accountability by us for our constituents and for the Members of Cabinet and the stewards of our budgetary process.

Mr. Speaker, one other point I wanted to make with regard to the budget address itself that Mr. Roland gave us last week, relates to the brevity of the address compared to other years. Mr. Speaker, the address this session was only 10 pages in the book. It took a little under half-an-hour to read. In my time in this Assembly, the budget address has been at least twice as long and contained a lot more detail on various departments, initiatives, priorities and results, the whole context of what we do.

The budget address is a significant communication tool for this Assembly, for this government. While Mr. Roland declared that it was his intent this year to make the budget

address more of a political message to the newly elected federal government -- and indeed he did so -- I haven't counted it up here, but there are numerous references to Mr Harper and the new Tory government -- it fell far short of, as I say, one of the main communication tools that we should be using to help our people understand and know what's going on.

In that address, there is lots of attention focussed on delivering a political message. The gallery is full here, Mr. Speaker, as you know. A lot tune into the broadcasts to see what is on our agenda. When we miss the opportunity to inform them of that, when we have their ear and we have their attention, I think we have let our people down to some extent.

At the risk of being accused of being old fashioned, Mr. Speaker, I would say please, next time around, I would very much like to welcome the return by the Finance Minister of a full and detailed budget address, because that is when we do have people's attention and what they are anticipating. Let's make it less a political messenger than a communicator of information to our people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Replies to the budget address. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Ms. Lee's Reply

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to do a brief reply to the budget address, as well. Let me just make one general comment about the budget, Mr. Speaker, first.

I do share Mr. Braden's point that there has been quite a bit of feedback from the people out there on not only on what is in the budget, but what is not in the budget. I think for future references, the Minister of Finance should be mindful of the fact that the budget document is not just a communication tool for him to speak to the Minister of Finance in Ottawa. It is a document for everyone in the North. Everyone in the North needs to feel like they are included and reflected in the budget.

I know for a fact that there are lots of new initiatives and spending in social and health and many different areas that we are going through line by line, but on that important budget day, when the Minister of Finance gets up and reads the statement, that was not there. I think the Minister of Finance has taken that to heart and I am sure that he will not do that brief thing again next year.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take this opportunity to highlight the important issues surrounding the pipeline workforce conversion mentioned on page 5 of the budget, also known as the concept of ATCO Novel housing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important for the people out there to know that we are not dealing with the situation here as reported in the media where Imperial Oil has decided that it will leave behind 1,400 used mobile homes at the end of the pipeline construction and the government is being asked to pick them up at the bargain basement price and sell them to interested buyers or to those in need of social housing and make headway into our social housing issues. That is not as simple as that. If it were, I wouldn't

have as much trouble as I do with this concept, Mr. Speaker.

What we are dealing with here is a situation where if this 15th Assembly does not do its job well of making sure that this housing Minister, this Finance Minister and the Cabinet does its due diligence, instead of leaving 1,400 nice homes all over the North, we could very well leave the 17th and 18th assemblies of this government with a \$300 million plus housing boondoggle, Mr. Speaker. Already, the cost of this project has gone up from \$220 million the last time we talked about it in November to \$297 million in this session.

A large part of that cost increase is estimated to be for the interest to be charged to the federal government -- and get this -- because the federal government is not yet willing to come into this project at the front end. The positive response the Minister is talking about amounts to the former Housing Minister Fontana's verbal commitment, and a reasonable mind has to wonder why the federal government is not willing to come to the front end and make the kind of investment that this government is looking for in order for this project to happen.

Mr. Speaker, for the \$500 million to come under the socio-economic impact fund to 22 affected communities, there have already been community workshops and discussions in communities about how the money will be spent. Yet, when we are talking about something as big as almost \$300 million for this housing project, there is no such discussion taking place, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that I am personally offended when the Ministers and MLAs suggest that asking questions and having a critical view on this project amounts to not supporting or caring about bringing more social housing to small communities. This reminds me of a time when I opposed the hotel tax for every hotel room in the North because I thought that would do more harm for our hotel and tourism industry than good. I was then accused of not supporting the hotel industry because I wouldn't tax them. Well, we don't have that tax now and thank goodness for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I am even more personally offended when my repeated questions about this multi-million project results in a letter from the Minister of Housing with an invitation for an all-expense paid trip to the ATCO Novel plant in Calgary, and to have him tell me how so many leaders have travelled there and how impressed they have been with them. Mr. Speaker, I am offended with this because this tells me more clearly than anything else that the Minister is totally missing the point about getting the information out about a project as big as what he's talking about. He could do this, but he needs to get the information out.

Mr. Speaker, he should stop being the tour guide to the ATCO plant and really concentrate on a cost-benefit analysis of this project...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MS. LEE: ...because my questions, Mr. Speaker, of this project have nothing to do with the capacity of ATCO to build these Novel trailers or any other trailers they build. ATCO is a well-established company in the North. They

employ a lot of people and I have no problem accepting that that company can do the job. The question here we have to ask is, if we have a \$300 million project with social housing, how do we best spend that? We need to do the due diligence test that takes us at the end of that analysis that, in fact, ATCO Novel is the best way to go. We are not there yet. To say, whenever we are asking questions, don't you care about 1,400 new homes in the North, that is not a good argument. That is not a responsible debate and that is not doing the Minister's job, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, as I stated, this may be that this is the project to go with. Let me state this again. It may be that the Novel idea is the best way to go.

---Applause

AN HON. MEMBER: May be!

MS. LEE: But, Mr. Speaker, this government has already stated that the viability of ATCO project depends on the pipeline going ahead and Imperial Oil using the ATCO project. But, Mr. Speaker, that is not up to the government to decide. It's up to Imperial Oil. If they decide to go with the pipeline, who are they going to buy their housing from?

Mr. Speaker, I believe that I need to ask questions like has the government looked to see what housing building options are available other than this idea? They need to do that test. With \$300 million, can we do a stick-built house? Those are questions that need to be asked. All I get from them is, there is no way we could do that, no way, no way, no way. I have no evidence that suggests that they have asked these questions.

Mr. Speaker, if we decide that we should go with the mobile home way -- and I understand there are great opportunities in mobile homes -- what options are out there? Ask them. He's in the driver's seat. He's got to get his blinders off and stop focussing on Novel. He's got to look beyond one company and say what are other ideas? What companies are out there who could do this job?

Mr. Speaker, another thing that I have a real problem with, and there is no information we have that suggests that the Minister has talked to any of the regional governments, or even aboriginal governments, or even the construction industry. I would like to see a letter from them that says we have been asked to see what we can do in terms of building housing and this is my information. Mr. Speaker, when the Minister was asked questions about what sort of training opportunities we have available on this social housing initiative, Mr. Speaker, he says people can go and get trained at ATCO in Calgary. What are they studying? Are they going to get a degree out of the University of ATCO? The housing units are going to be done in three years. Why, when we are spending \$30 million at Aurora College at the Fort Smith campus, \$30 million in Yellowknife...That could be the total budget, sorry. When we have Aurora College and we have an Apprenticeship Program, we have a skilled program, we are trying to train our local labour, why can't we expect...Why should we not expect that the Minister of Housing work with the Minister of Education and Minister of ITI and say this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the government to do something good.

There is a possibility of money coming and how do we maximize our potential in this area? Is putting all the money and all the eggs in one company the best way, the best thing we can do, Mr. Speaker? That is the kind of due diligence test that must be asked, that has not been asked, and I insist that this Cabinet ask it.

Mr. Speaker, I could tell you that I have...Let's talk about tenancy issue. The Minister states that before this session, in the last session, the Minister said the project was about \$220 million and most of it was going to come from the federal government and territorial government, and very little of that from the industry. Now the scenario has changed, Mr. Speaker. The cost of it has gone up to \$300 million and now he's expecting a lot more will come from private industry. Well, it could be that once the mobile homes go into Inuvik or wherever that there will be private sector who wants to do that. Well, why shouldn't the private sector do that? Why is this government interfering on private sector development, Mr. Speaker?

I tell you, we have an example already in the last example where the Housing Corporation went into a market initiative, wanted to bring 24 mobile homes and none of them have to be converted or anything. They were bought and they found out that people said they didn't want them. I am saying there is a need for that, but I could not trust that this government has done enough due diligence test to get us into a \$300 million deal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am going to keep this issue alive. I think there's a question to be asked about how this government, you know, if ATCO is the best company to do this job, the contract deal is between the ATCO and the Imperial Oil. It's up to Imperial Oil how they're going to spend their money buying housing. So I don't know why this government is spending all this money lobbying for one idea by one company who should be lining up with everybody else to do their work, Mr. Speaker.

So I think I've stated enough about some of the concerns I have. I believe the Minister is going to provide this...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Krutko, you're rising on a point of order.

Point Of Privilege

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege that the Member's insinuating that we, as Ministers, are spending all this money. There has not been any money spent, and the Member is insinuating that I had made a decision to spend this money. We have not made any decisions on this. This is a business deal between ATCO and the Mackenzie Pipeline Group. It's got nothing to do with us. So I think the Member is misleading this House and she's insinuating that I have expended this money in which there has been no money expended on this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Chair does not find that the Member has a point of privilege; possibly more in line of a point of order, but the Chair will rule against a point of privilege. Go ahead, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do believe that...Well, let me just finish this statement. If the

Minister wants, I could...At least he has already stated many times in this House that he has gone to Calgary, and I could make that information available about how many trips he's taken to the ATCO plant in Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, let me just finish by saying that it is incumbent on all 19 of us here on a project this big that we provide enough analysis and enough information about what it is that this government is undertaking. These are legitimate questions, and I think the Minister has to remember that he's a Cabinet Member of this government. We're talking about committing 300 million public dollars, and that warrants a very thorough analysis and answers. I'm simply asking for those questions and I wish that he would operate from a more neutral point of view and a more objective point of view, and if he can't do that, we will have no choice but to ask a third party to come into this project and see whether, indeed, this is the best way to go. I'm totally prepared to accept the view that people who know better how to crunch numbers, how to do market analysis, who understand the requirements of workforce conversion, to do that analysis and tell us. Surely, a \$300 million project requires, at minimum, that sort of scrutiny. So, you know, Mr. Speaker, I will be continuing to ask questions in this area. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Replies to the budget address. Petitions. Reports of standing and special committees. Reports of committees on the review of bills. The honourable Member from Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

ITEM 13: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS

Bill 12: An Act To Amend The Territorial Court Act

Bill 15: Court Security Act

Bill 16: Tobacco Control Act

Bill 17: An Act To Amend The Public Colleges Act

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Social Programs has reviewed Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act; Bill 15, Court Security Act; Bill 16, Tobacco Control Act; and Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Public Colleges Act, and wishes to report that bills 12 and 15 are ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole, and that bills 16 and 17 are ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole, as amended and reprinted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motions for the first reading of bills. Motions. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and other matters: Bill 18, committee reports 5, 6 and 7, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 20: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I'll call Committee of the Whole to order. We are Bill 18. We're on the Department of Health and Social Services, general comments. There was a number of people who still wanted to speak to general comments from yesterday,

so will continue with that after we have a break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'll call Committee of the Whole back to order. We're on Health and Social Services. Would the Minister like to bring witnesses into the chamber?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please bring in the witnesses?

We'd like to welcome back deputy minister David Murray and Mr. St. Germaine. I can never remember his title, but welcome back. We are still on general comments for Health and Social Services. General comments. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Madam Chair, thank you. A bit earlier in this current fiscal year, 2004-5, 2005-06, we were able to flow \$1 million, which came from the federal government, into the planning for a dementia facility here in Yellowknife. This was in cooperation with the Yellowknife Association of Concerned Citizens for Seniors. It was a very welcome bit of funding work. Now, there has been also quite a bit of work going on to look into the state of facilities, of care facilities for seniors in other parts of the territory, as well, Madam Chair, in the last few months. This was all with the expectation that we've had, here in committee, that this was going to come together in a more or less consolidated plan of how we are going to manage what is inevitably the increasing occurrence of dementia and cognitive illness in our citizens.

Madam Chair, I wanted to ask specific to the \$1 million planning project for the facility here in Yellowknife, what is the status of this? Is the department contemplating that this fiscal year, or when we will be able to make the major commitments to see this facility become a reality here, Madam Chair?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we are expecting that before the end of summer, or by the end of summer, early fall, the design work that's currently underway will be done and that we will be building, as per Cabinet direction, this particular item into the upcoming capital planning process for '07-08. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you. I'm pleased to see that commitment is there and on track. In tandem with this, Madam Chair, is the additional obligation, commitment, that is required for the O and M of this facility. I'm wondering if the Minister has any sense, at this time, of

what that commitment may be, and can we expect to see that incorporated into the base for the department in future years? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the O and M requirements will go ahead concurrently with the capital project. It will be identified in the business plans and the budget for that year. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. That's all for now.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Very good. Thank you. Next on the list I have Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of quick general comments in regard to...(inaudible)...department. I'd just like to say a few things in regard to what's been happening in the smaller communities, Madam Chair. The first comment I'd like to make is, as we all know, there's a shortage of nurses in the small communities. Plus we get a lot of information from the department with regard to the reduction of services, especially in the small communities.

Having said that, I'd like to refer to page 2 of page 5 of the Minister's opening comments. They estimate that \$4 million in new initiatives is made possible. It goes on further to say that including additional frontline nursing positions for small communities. I'd just like to ensure that the Minister follows up with some of the nurse resources we have in the communities. It's been on a number of occasions that it happened anyway. I do have a record of especially what happened in Tuk in the Nunakput riding.

So the other one, Madam Chair, I'd like to touch briefly on, is the one that was raised by some of the MLAs over here on this side. It is in regard to the escort service that the department presently has, and including translation services for the elders that are travelling outside of their home communities. I say this, Madam Chair, because I know of incidents in Tuk where there was an elder that needed to come down to Yellowknife, but she didn't want to go because the department didn't allow to have an escort. This is an elder I'm talking about. Whereas, in another instance where there was a younger person in the late 40s who was actually well-spoken in English, the wife was able to come down to Yellowknife to do some data. So I don't know where the differences are in terms of who can be escorted to the departments, into Yellowknife or to Edmonton for that fact.

Madam Chair, another comment I'd like to make is, on my return trip down here, I was approached by another resident from Tuk. They gave me a scenario where there was one client along with an escort that went to Edmonton for a major operation. Subsequently, Madam Speaker, is that when they arrived in Inuvik rather than flying on a local airline sched, they were on a transport that takes them back by the ice road. That makes it difficult for a patient, especially when you have an operation, that kind of operation. But apparently the people were forceful

enough to talk the department into flying back home. That's just one scenario.

Another incident that I became aware of -- I don't think it was the first time because I know it happened to my mother a long time ago -- was the issuance of the wrong medication to elders. It did happen again, Madam Chair, so I don't know what the health services are doing to ensure that the elders are taken care of in the right manner that they should be.

These are just some of the general comments I'd like to make, Madam Chair. Like I say, a lot of my Members here, you know, as I was watching the proceedings yesterday, that I've been asked. So these are just some of the major questions that I have. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Member is correct that this is a concern that has been raised by other Members, but, very quickly, I will touch on the issues that I've noted. We are, as I've told the Member the last time he raised this issue in the House, we are continuing to struggle with getting adequate nursing and nurses in small communities. I did talk yesterday about things we're working on with corporate human resources and the department in terms of setting up our own permanent float pools that we could establish, having one out of Inuvik and one out of Yellowknife.

In terms of the medical travel escort services, I would like to submit that we have, for the most part, a very high level of service in terms of medical travel and escort services, that would probably not be replicated in any other jurisdiction. I do recognize, however, that there are always exceptions and we are very concerned about those, especially when they involve elders. If there are translation issues, then we would like to deal with the exceptions on a case-by-case basis, trying to make sure that while we may not be able to change what happened, we can take steps to try to improve the quality of service. I know the Member has brought issues like this to my attention before and I appreciate his vigilance and perseverance in doing that and will continue to work with him on that.

In regards to, the same applies to the issuance of medication, that there are very strict protocols and standards and policies as to how medications are handed out. When situations arise that there is wrong medication handed out and we become aware of that, we backtrack the situation to make sure that we can ensure, find out what happened, and address those circumstances that caused that to happen. But once again, for the most part, we hand out probably thousands of different types of medication every day across the Northwest Territories and we are still concerned about those exceptions.

So once again, I appreciate the Member for raising that issue and if there are some specifics he cares to share with us on that issue outside of this forum, we'd be happy and very interested in finding out what those circumstances were. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a few things I'd like to bring up. They are specific to Hay River. That's kind of the way I've looked at this topic of Health and Social Services in relationship to the budget. With respect to the doctors, Hay River is the second largest community in the Northwest Territories. It has a population of about 4,000 people. We have quite an expansive health care facility in Hay River. At this time, we do not have one single permanent doctor. Right now, we're completely relying on locum doctors to take care of the people in Hay River. I'd like to ask the Minister if he has any sense of why Hay River has struggled the way they have to recruit and retain physicians and what he sees as the solution to this going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we're in close contact, especially through the deputy and the other officials in the department with Hay River, working with them and human resources trying to recruit doctors for Hay River. This is not an unusual circumstance, unfortunately. Other communities have still, at this point, the benefit of some doctors, though not enough that are permanent or there for awhile.

In terms of why this is the case, I think a lot of it just pertains that there's a national shortage and there's some circumstances, obviously, in Hay River where individual doctors have chosen to go or leave the department. We have met specifically with the board. Some of the things that were being contemplated are looking at making exceptions to the locum contract, as well as there was an interest in possibly seeing if fee-for-service would be a way to in some cases revert or entice doctors to return or come to Hay River.

As well, we're looking at trying to offset with some nurse practitioners. However, with the indulgence of the chair, I'd ask the deputy to maybe speak a bit more about the contact with Hay River and some of those assists that we're trying to provide. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Murray, I'm sorry.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not much to add. Just to say that I have been talking with the CEO in Hay River on this and he knows that if he needs to make some exceptions to the standardized locum contract, that we're more than able to work with him very quickly to accommodate things like that. Other things are being done. I know that Yellowknife, on a number of occasions, some of the doctors from this community have gone down to Hay River to assist, either with clinics or work at the hospital. So other authorities are trying to pitch in, as well, as best they can, with Hay River. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do know it's a difficult situation, it just seems that the problem has existed for awhile and with the turnover that we've seen, it almost makes you wonder if there's something that's evading us in terms of a cause because there's been such a high turnover.

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to ask the Minister if he could please update me, then, on the status of the capital for either renovations or upgrades or replacement of the hospital in Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as I indicated in this House initially, yesterday when the question came up about the Stanton renovations, there's a link with the three projects, Stanton, Hay River and Smith, in terms of trying to have the work being done in terms of the master plan and design done in a coordinated way. The money is still in the budget. The last time I met with the board, there was a concern to see -- given the fact that in some people's mind it may be better value for money -- to look at building new versus renovating. When the final assessment was done of the health centre and the physical infrastructure, that determination would be made. But the money in the budget is there for, there's been \$1.2 million in prior years and there's \$500,000 for this year, and then we start into the major expenditures in '07-08 with \$4.3 million, \$3.8 million in '08-09, and then finishing it off with another \$3.8 million to a total of, at this juncture, about \$14 million. So as the planning work is done, a determination will be made as to what is the best course of action in terms of the value for money in terms of renovation versus the potential, possible rebuilding of a new facility. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, to the issue of doctors as is related in Hay River, for a number of years now we have not had delivery for babies available in Hay River. So expectant moms are required to travel south or travel north and spend at least three weeks out of Hay River, sometimes away from their families and other children, in order to await the arrival of their newborn. This is something that different patients deal with in different ways. Some do go south where they have family they can stay with. Some do come north. Some are able to stay at the boarding home in N'dilo and have a place to stay there for three weeks. Others are kind of falling between the cracks, so to speak. I know some companies have made arrangements for staff that are on their payroll, or on maternity leave, to have accommodation here in Yellowknife. It's kind of all over the map. Given the number of births originating from Hay River and, like I said, this kind of hit-and-miss approach to their accommodations while they're here in Yellowknife, I would like to ask the Minister if he would support the Hay River Community Health Board in securing or renting, perhaps, a townhouse or three-bedroom apartment or some place that would be fairly economical where expectant mothers, families, could stay when they're in Yellowknife awaiting the arrival of a baby? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am interested in working with Hay River, as I have indicated this in the past as well, to provide them the sufficient comfort where they would be prepared firstly to entertain the alternatives that are out there to have birthing in Hay River. That being the use of

midwifery to tie into a birthing team that would be there with midwives, nurses and doctors that would deal with what are characterized or determined to be normal births, which would probably be about half or more of the babies born in Hay River. We're fully prepared to look at getting the resources in there to do that, to make use of all the protocols and all the regulatory issues that were already hashed out in Fort Smith to allow that to happen. If that was done, it would put, I believe, a different complexion on the issue of having to come to Yellowknife and those circumstances would be a lot less. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I know there were some obstacles to getting the midwifery program off the ground in Hay River and that is, in my opinion, unfortunate. But I don't speak for the health board or the physicians or however that decision was arrived at, and I don't want to second guess their reasons. I'm sure they had their reasons. Right now, under the assistance that is provided to expectant mothers, unless you're staying in the boarding home, I believe the rate that they can receive for their accommodation and meals and so on here in Yellowknife is \$50 a day, which, obviously, isn't enough. It would just be a lot more efficient and a lot more economical if there was a place designated that could be used for people that are waiting. I'm thinking that if the health board did come forward with a proposal -- and it's probably something that's already identified in the Hay River health board budget -- would the Minister be supportive of such a proposal? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we'll, of course, look at any proposal that's brought forward, but I would indicate here that I will engage in the initial discussion of the clear way to deal with this initially is to try to provide the comfort and support necessary to get the alternative services there for birthing so they can have the majority of their babies born in the community. We will look at what is being proposed by Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, but I will continue to make my best case to the board and community that birthing services involving midwifery is a very, very good service that they should access themselves, too. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. I don't have anybody further for general comments. General comments. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Well, thank you. I didn't get all the way through my list, Mr. Chairman, so I appreciate this. I understand what the Minister is saying with respect to getting birthing services available in Hay River, but it has been a number of years now since that has been available. So in the interim and in the short term, I do think we need to find some way to make it easier for the young moms or, for that matter, any mom that needs to spend three weeks or more in Yellowknife waiting for the arrival of a baby.

Mr. Chairman, there's been a case recently in the media quite extensively, it's actually happening in British Columbia, where a child in foster care, a toddler, lost their life. They had been placed in the care of relatives and I

understand that the principle behind this was to consider it a priority to place a child with family, even extended family, rather than in a home who didn't know the child or was not culturally similar to the home that the child had been apprehended from. I'm sure that we have, in the Northwest Territories, a family reunification program and probably a priority that would be placed on relatives who would be willing to take a child into care, as opposed to any others that would be in a group of foster homes. It raises the question, though, Mr. Chairman, as to the kind of home study that takes place when people apply to be foster parents. My question is, when a child is placed in the home of a relative, is the same due diligence undertaken in terms of assessing that home as they would assess any other home, or is that process somewhat circumvented because of the fact that the receiving home would be relatives to the child being apprehended? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the process of home assessments has to have the same rigour in all circumstances that once a child is, for due reasons, deemed to be in need of protection or not being able to stay in their family home, that it should be checked out. Every potential placement should be checked out with the same thoroughness. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So that is the stated policy of this government? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there is no double standard that I'm aware of, that there is one standard for assessments and that social workers and child welfare workers are to follow. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is good to hear because that is certainly an unfortunate set of circumstances which lead to the death of this child in care in British Columbia.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to just touch, for a moment, on the volunteer fire and ambulance service in Hay River. I know I raised this with the Minister last week in the House here.

---Applause

But I just wanted to say again, I didn't get a chance to say it then, that I think that the fire and ambulance volunteer service in Hay River is of extraordinary value to not only Hay River, but to the surrounding area. If the Government of the Northwest Territories had to pay for those services at realistic cost, we would be looking at a very considerable amount of money. That being said, the Minister is aware that the Hay River volunteer fire department and ambulance service does receive a

\$25,000 contribution through the Hay River Community Health Board for their operations. The rest of the costs are absorbed by the Town of Hay River. So this service has been provided for quite a number of years. We need some assistance to assess the service, what's available now, what's going to be anticipated to be needed for the future, and I had asked the Minister about some funding in order to put together a document identifying the relevant details with respect to what is needed going forward. I got a sort of a favourable response, but I didn't really get an answer. I wanted to put it in the context of what that service is worth and what we'd have to pay for it if that was not being done by volunteers. So I think the request of the Hay River fire department for \$10,000 in order to do this good work that needs to be done anyway is a very small amount of money and I wanted to put it in the context of what they do. So I don't know if the Minister wants to respond to that again, or if he's had a chance even since last week to give this any more thought. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I don't disagree at all with the Member's assessment of the value of the volunteer firefighting and ambulance services in Hay River. The same can be said in every community that has volunteers, that without volunteers, we would be unable to provide many services. I will honour the commitment I made in the House, which is we will sit down and we will look with the other departments that the Member mentioned in her statement, it was being MACA I believe, and ITI, and we will work with community of Hay River and volunteer firefighting and ambulance services to get that information put together in a way that will allow planning to be done. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One last thing that I have on my list, and I don't know if I will think of anything else or not, but the last thing I have on my list is, I'd like to ask the Minister to update the House and me on where we are in terms of bringing the Hay River health board employees and operations into the fold, so to speak, so that we're not a one-off in Hay River in terms of pay and benefits, union, and so on. When this initial discussion started, the request of the workers in Hay River was that they would be on par and have equity with their counterparts who work for every other health board in the Northwest Territories. I'm not sure how much we've actually closed that gap or what any of the obstacles are now to standardizing that, but I'd like to ask the Minister for an update because we haven't talked about it for a while. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, this is an outstanding issue, as the Member has noted, and we have engaged the services of the HR department as it's newly structured. They've had one of their senior people who came over, in fact, from Health and Social Services, spearheading the work. I understand that we're expecting a document to be

available for our review by about the middle of next month. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: That is really good news. I am happy to have that on the record. That is all I can think of for right now. I do want to say that I recognize the challenges of the size of this department, the magnitude of the challenges and certainly the scope of the various issues this department deals with. I just want to commend the Minister for his attention to all of those. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. We are moving on to Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Pokiak, general comments.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a quick question for the Minister in regard to page 4 of 5 of his opening remarks. I am just going to refer to the toll-free health line. In 2005, they indicated there were 5,000 calls. Can the Minister just quickly explain what the actual cost was for the toll-free line and give an example of what kind of nature of call it was? Was it just for a cold or something more serious? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We spent \$850,000 for the line last year. The nature of the calls -- and we made a point of trying to publicize this as far and wide as we can -- are not for what would be seen as a medical emergency. It is for advice. It could range from a young mother calling because their baby has sniffles, to somebody that may have a question to do with a medication or a potential side effect that they think they may be suffering. There is a wide range, but the intent is to be able to give access to northerners to ask the questions that would not make it necessary for them to have to travel all the way down to their emergency ward or to the nursing station to get the answer when they can pick up the phone and be reassured, potentially, and be given the information they need to make the right decision. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Next on the list I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a lot of issues here. I do want to save most of them for detailed discussions, but I do want to raise one issue about homecare. I speak in favour of the program. I do appreciate that we are working on a whole spectrum of services to take care of those in need of varying degrees of intervention and care. I know that, in the city of Yellowknife, homecare is one that is very appreciated. It is oversubscribed. I think there is a bit of an issue with homecare when we know that homecare is supposed to be used to promote independent living. It is to care for those who could stay at home and have a reasonably independent living, if they get some help from homecare, rather than them spending their time at the hospital. People could need homecare for all sorts of different reasons, but that is different than assisted living which requires more intervention. The sense I get is that there is not enough distinction being made there so that these programs are delivered differently and people who need

them are provided with that distinctive level of service. I think we still need more resources on homecare needs and respite care needs, which is the temporary and little break kind of idea, and then there is the assisted living facilities which I don't think we have enough of, especially in terms of seniors.

The homecare issue I wanted to talk about that takes us outside of the city is, during our pre-budget consultation, we were visiting small communities. I learned from those visits that in communities the homecare workers are sometimes half-time positions and small towns, being what they are and especially if they do visits to seniors, I am sure that seniors want to talk to homecare about all sorts of issues, not just particularly about the issues that homecare workers are supposed to be responsible for. I felt a lot of sympathy to these half-time workers that are kind of the only game in town and all of the seniors come to her. I am just wondering if there is any way to make sure that we don't have half-time workers. I could just see that, in order to attract good people, we need reasonable job security. Is it not possible when this department, or the government as a whole, provides so many different programs, is it not possible to work with other departments or other sections to combine two half-time positions and make them into one full-time position?

My point of raising this issue is to speak in favour of this program and it is one that I want to see strengthened. I want to see it refined so that it is provided to those who really need it. In communities, I think there is a lot more room to move in this one, especially where there is not more sophisticated care that can be given. I think homecare workers right there could help people like seniors and people with disabilities who need them. Could I ask the Minister where he sees this program going under his mandate? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We, at this point, between our own funding and available federal funding, invest in the neighbourhood of about \$7 million for homecare. We see this as an area of continued investment that is identified across Canada as a service that has tremendous benefits that can keep people in their own homes and out of facilities that are very expensive to run. We are working to expand the support we can provide in the communities to work with the individuals, to help them stay in their own homes as long as possible to provide respite care services to adults. There is a whole range, but the homecare pieces need to be very critical. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Another issue I want to bring up is about some of the changes being done to clinics in Yellowknife. I know the Minister has mentioned it and this has been in the books for awhile. There is a consolidation and amalgamation of clinics going on in Yellowknife. I only go to one myself, obviously, so I don't know what it is like in other places. I am assuming that the work is being done in a coordinated way. I see the changes being made at the Great Slave Clinic there. I think it is being used as a pilot model of sort. This is being done with some of the federal funding. There is a walk-in clinic at the YK Women's Centre which, I think, is working

really well. They are serving a lot more people for a lot less money. It is really filling the niche of needs there. I would like to see that expanded. Also, the Great Slave Clinic is testing a new electronic system. That is another initiative that the Minister started. I would like to just get a quick update on where we are with all that and how that fits in to the master plan for the Stanton. These are all linked with emergency responsiveness and such. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I attempted to lay out the packages that were in the component pieces yesterday where, before we can move on to Stanton, we wanted to do the facilities review that would help us look at rationalizing our over-capacity on acute care beds to make some clear decisions on the types of programs that are going to be available. Before we could do any further work on Stanton as well, we wanted...an emergency where there was \$6 million in the budget, it became clear that studies tell us that over 50 percent of the people coming into emergency for care are non-emergent care patients, that they could get a service in another setting less expensive and less time consuming which gets us to the issue of clinics with better hours, capacity for services, testing ability, waiting rooms, reception, which got us to the case of before we do any of those, we should look at trying to consolidate the old, inefficiently-laid-out, expensive-to-run, fragmented service provided by the current clinics downtown.

We pulled together and we are still working on rationalizing a plan that would allow us to do that and bring that proposal forward. It is not currently on the capital plan, but it is a piece that came up as we did our assessment of how do we improve the services, and it all was initiating when we started looking at Stanton. So we are going to be moving on the clinic piece. We are going to look at doing some improvements to the emergency, but we are still committed to, now that we finished the facilities review, working and finalizing the master development plan for Stanton to allow us to do the improvements that are necessary there.

As well, we want to be able to do some adjusting to budgets to assist us to make the case for the consolidating clinic piece, things like if we can do land exchanges in Yellowknife that won't necessitate us to spend \$3 million on land, that will be a tremendous benefit to making a project viable. We are looking at all those different pieces. They are underway. The work in the Great Slave Clinic was under the primary health care transition fund going back almost three or four years now. That is giving us an idea of how we can actually demonstrate and work together on this integrated service delivery model with teams of people, of health professionals that work together, doctors, nurse practitioners, midwives and those types of folks with patients. We are going to take that experience, what we learn from there, and, as well, the work that has been done on electronic health records to allow us to expand, eventually, to electronic health record capacity throughout the North. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I asked for that when I listed all of those items, but we only have one more budget left in this Assembly. I think this is the Minister's fifth year mandate. There are a lot of things in the books. Are we to expect some results on what his concrete proposals are on all of these areas in the next business plan cycle? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the consolidated clinic piece, we are working towards bringing forward that plan in time for the 2007-08 budget. The intent, of course, is as well everything falls to the new Legislature. They will make the decisions. As a system, we are going to have a plan in place, a strategic action plan, that is going to take us at least to 2010. These key pieces will be built in. My assumption is that they will make such good sense to the 16th Legislature that they will be carried on with and the work will continue. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the most difficult times that I have experienced in this Legislature occurred in the matter under this department and this Minister's jurisdiction, and that was the surprise decision to move the Territorial Treatment Centre from Yellowknife to another community. Mr. Chair, this one hurt because it was something of great significance in my riding and to this city. It was an action that the government, after considerable review and investigation, went ahead with, by its own admission, for political purposes, against the clinical program, psychological and professional advice of a number of different agencies in this community. The impact of that, I think, continues to be felt, even though the facility is still physically here. According to a schedule that I have seen, if I recall it, Mr. Chair, the transfer is due to be enacted sometime next year in 2007. There are consequences, Mr. Chair, especially to the existing contractor and the ability that they are having, as I understand, to retain staff, knowing that they have to let them go in a short period of time. So that is impacting the level of teamwork and the level of care that is given to the children who are in this facility.

Mr. Chair, even in light of this decision I will forever oppose and argue against, what is the status of the existing service and the ability of the contractor to maintain its level of care as contractor?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I will say that planning is proceeding in pace, as has been laid out for the committee. I will ask, with your indulgence, Mr. Chair, that Mr. Murray speak to the detail of how things are proceeding. Thank you.

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

MR. MURRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are working with the present contractor, Bosco Homes, on the planning and the programming for the move of the facility to Hay River. We are willing to sit down and work with

them, as the contractor for the Hay River facility, to provide that continuity between what is offered today there. We have also been, I believe the Member is aware, looking at what services from the South could be repatriated back to the North. We believe, on an annual basis, anywhere from 10 to 20 of the young people that we do send south, children and youth, could be provided services within the NWT. We have been in discussion with Bosco to see if they are interested in providing some services to us with some of those repatriated individuals. The individuals who change, we are looking at some kind of a program that would be potentially providing some group home assistance and those kinds of things, as well. Those discussions are ongoing. In fact, I am expecting a proposal from Bosco soon.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Murray. One of the big challenges that agencies which are familiar with performing or delivering this service here in Yellowknife have indicated, that to expect a similar level or calibre of service can also be delivered in Hay River is quite an expectation. This is not a slight at all against Hay River, Mr. Chair. It is simply a matter of looking at the different scales of economy, the size of communities, the levels of professional caregivers that are here in this city, and other duties that could not be supported in a much smaller community such as Hay River. I guess where I am going with this, Mr. Chair, and assuming from what Mr. Murray said, Bosco has already been awarded the contract to continue services in Hay River. How do they see being able to continue to deliver the calibre, the range and the sophistication of services as at least we know it here in Yellowknife? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in my opinion, we will be able to provide the same level of service that the calibre of staff that work on the floor with the kids is available in Hay River. It is available now in Fort Smith and Inuvik. We also invest in training northerners. Yellowknife is not the only jurisdiction or community that has the capacity to look after children; children, many of which, don't come from Yellowknife. The quality of education in Hay River, I would suggest, is as good as it is in Yellowknife. The access to specialist services is the one difference, and it's about 20 minutes or half-an-hour farther away than it is for the children in Yellowknife. So I categorically state, and I have enough experience in this business having run the facilities for a number of years myself, that you can train northerners, that you have very skilled, compassionate, caring people in the communities that can deliver this service under the expert direction provided by Bosco Homes.

So I'll restate that this program will be delivered. It will be delivered very well in Hay River and that's what we're intending to do. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'm very familiar with the Minister's confidence, and I share with him the confidence of a large majority of the people who are

needed, and trained and committed to the care of children. But the exception, as the Minister pointed out, is amongst the more sophisticated, if you will, psychological and medical and clinical services. Yes, the Minister is quite right; it is potentially only a half-hour plane ride from Yellowknife, but there's a lot more involved than sort of transporting people back and forth on airplanes.

So let's park that one there. We're hoping and I'm entirely supportive of trying to achieve some repatriation, Madam Chair, and anticipating that we are going to be undertaking more of the cost in order to do this. I look at information that the department supplied in response to a question from me in October of last year, Madam Chair, and the response indicates that for the eight clients or beds that are presently provided for children at the Territorial Treatment Centre, there's a cost assessed here of about \$145,000 per year per bed, or per client if all those beds are full. Madam Chair, the letter then indicates that providing specialized services for children that are not available in the NWT, we had 27 clients in care for a cost that amounted to \$45,000 per client. So we have \$145,000 to deliver a service here with the arrangements as we know it under the TTC, and \$45,000 in the South. That is a major, major difference in cost. I'm wondering if the department can give some sort of reconciliation of how the economies of scale are going to shift. I don't want to assume here that I'm an advocate of keeping all these kids in the South, not at all. But there is a \$100,000 difference per client of the service between the South and the North. Are we going to be able to reduce that? How much? When, Madam Chair?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I don't have the letter before me. Once again, I can only assume that it's an average, because I do know that we spend significant amounts of money down south, as well. It is, on a dollar basis, in most cases cheaper to have children down south, but oftentimes we send children down south because they have a complexity of need that's not able to be met in the North.

I guess the other value that I would suggest is it's hard to put a dollar figure on them when you have children treated in the North, as the value of having them close to home within an environment and culture that they know and that their families can access in a somewhat easier way, but, very clearly, we think there's a value to looking at repatriation. I can only assume that the \$45,000 per child is an average. I know that last year we spent down south on children about \$4.7 million for a total of 41 children. So those are the stats for '04-05. So it's a very expensive business no matter where you do it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Next on the list, general comments, I have Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to thank the Minister for his opening comments. I think this year's health budget is basically going to deliver a lot of good changes that people were asking for and have been asking for for a long time.

I just want to mention something about the medical travel concerns that seems like everybody has got an issue with.

First off, I know we had the telehealth line and the toll-free nursing line available on a 24-hour basis. I know it's been mentioned to the department before, of whether they're going to establish a medical travel toll-free line that people can phone from anywhere, anytime. It seems to me that every time I'm picking up people from the airport or bringing them to the airport, that people at the airport who don't know who to contact in the government that takes care of travel, and the people that are travelling don't know who they were talking to, because it seems like there's different people at the end of the line all the time. So I'm just wondering, just to alleviate the stress that these patients are going through while travelling, to alleviate the travel stress, is there any review or consultation been done within the department to setting up a medical travel toll-free line?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Member's correct; this issue has been raised before, and I've just had discussion in the department. But of great importance to us is looking at the system and the exceptions that happen that cause concerns to be raised, or MLAs to be approached so that they have to come either to myself or to the deputy to resolve issues, and we're trying to eliminate those. So as I indicated to the Member from Nunakput, we're constantly trying to improve the service. We know that this is a very critical time in person's lives, when they're on their way for medical treatment, and we tend to hear about the exceptions. We do our best to resolve them. We haven't made a final decision about how we could possibly move ahead on a toll-free medical line. It would be much different than the line we have to phone nurses. This would be talking about very specific circumstances, policy interpretation, sort of online adjudication in trying to sort out the information so that you could, in fact, make that kind of determination which would be very difficult when you're, for example, on the phone with a distraught individual from the Hay River Airport on their way to Edmonton and things haven't fallen into place and it's 4:00 on a Saturday. We tend to respond to these on an emergency basis, and as the best way to deal with those circumstances, and then try to sort out what happened after that, make sure that the immediate need is met, and then we try to adjust to make sure it doesn't happen again. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just having a problem seeing the big problem with having a medical travel toll-free line, and just for the fact that medical travel is basically pretty cut and dried, as far as I can tell. When people get the authorization to travel somewhere, it's just as easy to phone a travel agent and make those arrangements themselves, where as they have the Stanton travel and authority to do that for them. There are many instances where people wind up at the airports with no information on travel arrangements, and the agents at the airport don't have any information themselves and nobody has a number that they can call.

So is there a possibility that we can set up a 1-800 line that people can phone in and the person at the other end of the line will have access to a computer system that I am sure will be able to handle all bookings that Stanton works

with or makes for any individual in the NWT, to find out whether or not their travel has been confirmed, who it's been confirmed with, and by whom and when? If it hasn't been confirmed, the person at the other end of the line or some authorization to issue a ticket, be it over the line, through a credit card or through whatever means that they might have at their disposal. Just something that might be a little more instant than having to go running to the Minister's office every time somebody gets stranded at the airport. I just don't know why that is such a difficult area to build on. We have telehealth lines and nursing lines and we have experts at the end of those. We are just looking for a travel agent at the end of this one, somebody who knows how to make the change, and make the necessary adjustments, and do the necessary billing arrangements and invoicing. Is that something that the department is considering now, or are they just going to research more into why? How is it so difficult? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I can appreciate the Member's concern and frustration because it is an issue that, as I have indicated, gets a lot of traffic with MLAs through the Minister of Health's office. The circumstance is as the Member said, it provokes a response and it's not always as cut and dried as it would seem, that's why we end up with these calls that something hasn't worked. What I will commit to the Member to do is we will layout what we are doing, what we are going to do to improve the service. As well, we will come back with our assessment, a specific written assessment on what we think is the validity and the aptitude of using a 1-800 number. Does it make sense? We'll give the Member and this House and the Social Programs committee our best advice. If there is a way to do that, we will give it a serious look. If not, we will be looking at other ways to try to give people some way to get basic information, as the Member indicated, about flights being reserved and confirming travel arrangements. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Lee): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am glad I got a commitment from the Minister for that. I look forward to seeing what gets presented to Social Programs.

Still sticking with the medical travel issue, the issue with medical travel escorts has always come to my attention, also. I know the patients themselves don't really have much say in whether they want an escort or not. It's basically up to the nurse practitioner or the community health representative to make the call on the escort and then people are coming here, travelling, they are distraught, they don't know how to handle a lot of the inquiries if the tickets aren't there. I don't think the escort is just there for emotional support, but I think a lot of them help the patients to move along and to carry their luggage and bring them to the hospital and make sure they are eating and everything else. I don't think it's just for some emotional or psychological support, or just to overcome the language barrier are the only reasons an escort should be allowed to travel with the patient. Is there any movement on the department's side to be a little more flexible on the escort rules? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the escort provision of the service we provide is geared around a medical determination of whether an escort is required. As the Member indicated, that assessment is made by the doctor, the nurse, or the nurse practitioner who is with the patient. We are working constantly with the authorities and with the various facilities and the staff to make them aware that there is some flexibility required; that a medical escort may include being able to make sure, for example, that there's adequate interpretation services, or that if the person may not be very sick but is infirm and has difficulty walking, those types of assessments and that it is not a rigid assessment. There are always extenuating circumstances. But there has been no move towards going back to what used to be called compassionate travel, which became a prohibitively expensive service. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. General comments. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one question about the new Chalmers Report. I know that the report has come out and the Minister offered to give us a briefing, but we could just not put that on the agenda. I just want to know if this new budget reflects any recommendations coming out of that report. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the recommendations in the Chalmers Report haven't been fully assessed and we are working on our response of how we are going to incorporate those. What is in the budget, though, is the third year funding for the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, which we haven't fully implemented yet pending the outcome of the Chalmers Report, which will give us some flexibility to be able to respond to some of the recommendations. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the Social Programs committee will have an opportunity to deal with that, then, because I wasn't sure if it was incorporated here. Sorry. I will look into that later.

Just on the Nurse Practitioner Program, Madam Chair, I just want to comment on this program because I didn't get a chance to do that when I was commenting on all the other things the Minister is working on in health care delivery in Yellowknife and downtown clinics. I have to say that I think that is one addition in the clinics that is working well, and I know that the Minister is planning on spreading that as much as possible, but I would like to know what the level of training is and how that's going along. The question comes up often when we are travelling to communities and talking to Members from outside of Yellowknife, whether or not it is expected that the nurse in charge or senior nurses will be the ones that would be taken away as nurse practitioners, or they would be the better suited candidates to take the Nurse Practitioner Program, which may produce more nurse practitioners,

but it may have the effect of creating a vacancy for senior nurses in communities that are vital. I just want to get a quick update on what the latest is on this Nurse Practitioner Program. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we have 15 nurses currently in the Nurse Practitioner Program. It's being done in conjunction with the University of Victoria. The intention is not to take away any resources but to train them better. The intent in what we are doing is adding positions that are going to be staffed at the nurse practitioner level. They will be incorporated fully into the operation of the community of health centre where they will be working. As with the other program that we do, we are looking at ways of improving this. Eventually we are going to move, over time, to a master's program, which it isn't right now. It's a certificate program, but we intend to do that.

We are pleased with the number of nurses in the program and the budget contains money, as well, for nurse practitioners, two to be added to Inuvik for regional travel; two to be added to the Sahtu; two to the Deh Cho; two to the Tlicho; and two to Yellowknife to give better service. So we are fully committed to this particular initiative. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that information. I think the important thing that the Minister and we all need to keep in mind in dealing with health care professionals, especially nurses, is that while working to bring professionals like nurse practitioners and we are training them, they have a unique role to play in the whole health care delivery system, but we need to make sure that we are increasing the human resource capacity and not replacing one with another, with an end effect that we end up with the same load. That's not going to address the need for nurses and health care professionals that we are trying to get.

A case in point, Madam Chair, is that I am hearing murmurs that in Stanton -- and the Minister indicated this yesterday and the DM commented -- they say they are willing and able and prepared to hire all the new nurses who are coming up, which is a great thing, because that's what the Minister has been planning for and we are looking at that as an avenue for increasing our nurse workforce. What I also heard was a lot of positions are being left vacant to have room ready for the new grads. There is an implication to that because what we are trying to get at is to make sure that these newly graduated nurses get into the system and then add to the whole, but they will be the ones who are starting at the beginning. We are still going to need a pool of nurses with varying degrees of skill set and years of practice, so we have a complete spectrum of nursing and health care provider service that we need.

I just want to ask the Minister to be mindful of that. In fact, I would like to get some reports back from the Minister as to what the projected makeup is of the nurses and allied health care providers spectrum. What are we looking at for a workforce? How many positions are we looking at in each region? What is the expected new nursing grads

expected to come in and the new nurse practitioners? How does that address our nursing needs and health care? Maybe we could do the same for other allied health care professionals, so we can have a clear picture of what we are dealing with in terms of needs. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Could I get the Minister to make a commitment on that?

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

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I would just like to clarify a number of issues. There was the equivalent of 14 positions a number of years ago put into Stanton that were to be held as supernumerary positions, as the deputy minister characterized them yesterday, so that new graduating students and those on preceptorships and requiring mentoring would have those positions without taking away from on-the-floor nurses. So very clearly, we have tried to allow for that fact. I just want to repeat, we are not just better training the staff we have, these are all new positions that we are adding; a total of 17.5 for 2006-07 in terms of nurse practitioners across the Northwest Territories. Those are all new positions. We haven't taken those people out of the field.

I would just need some clarification. The Member listed off a lengthy string of information. She would like to know the current staffing of every facility we have, as well as all the new positions we are planning that are laid out in the budget. Is that correct?

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me zero in on the question I have here. I want to know the manpower or womanpower requirement for essential health care services, nursing and allied health care workers, nurses, doctors, therapists, rehab teams. I just want to get a picture of what needs we have for the next few years to implement all the initiatives the Minister is talking about. What do we have in place now? That would include new nurses coming out, nurse practitioners. What is our outstanding need for this workforce and what does the Minister plan to do to fill them? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am assuming that universal numbers are going to be sufficient. We can give to the Member the number of allied health professionals, as well as doctors and nurses and such that we currently have on staff, or that we are funded for, as well as lay out from this budget what is currently before this House for 2006-2007.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. With 25 seconds left on the clock, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that's a good restatement of what I was looking for on the part of the Minister. I would like, at this time, to make a motion to report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The

motion is in order. It's not debatable. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

Thank you, Mr. St. Germaine, Mr. Murray, Mr. Miltenberger.

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

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Is there a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Before we go on to orders of the day, colleagues, I would just like to acknowledge the Pages we had working for us this week. Earlier this week, we had Pages from Mildred Hall School and, as of late, we've had students from William McDonald and students from Monfwi. I would especially like to thank two members from Diamond Jenness School in Hay River and constituents of mine, Kenny McBryan and Nelson Bassett.

---Applause

I would like to thank all the Pages for doing an excellent job for us this week.

---Applause

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK ASSISTANT (Mr. Ouellette): Orders of the day for Monday, February 13, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Petitions
10. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

11. Tabling of Documents

12. Notices of Motion

13. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

14. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 19, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2005-2006

15. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Bill 18, Appropriation Act, 2006-2007

- Committee Report 5-15(4), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process

- Committee Report 6-15(4), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process

- Committee Report 7-15(4), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the 2006-2007 Pre-Budget Review Process

17. Report of Committee of the Whole

18. Third Reading of Bills

19. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ouellette. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, February 13, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 14:01 p.m.

