



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, October 17, 2006****Members Present**

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

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, Members. Orders of the day. Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Point Of Privilege

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of personal privilege to correct what I believe are some misconceptions about the rules which I can appreciate must be mysterious to many members of the public who do not work with these rules on a day-to-day basis.

In particular, I refer to an editorial published in the October 4, 2006, Hub newspaper that included the phrase "conventions that conveniently give politicians an easy ride in reference to the sub judge rule that requires Members to refrain from discussing matters that are before the courts."

As I understand it, the sub judge convention is a voluntary restraint that Members have agreed to place on their freedom of speech for two very important reasons. The first is to avoid any interference or perception of interference with the independence of the courts. In Canada, the separation of the judicial branch from the executive and legislative branches is a cornerstone of our democracy which, although we often take it for granted, is the envy of many of our fellow Commonwealth countries who are struggling to create free and political and legal systems.

The independence of the judicial branch creates an expectation that politicians will not attempt to influence or even appear to attempt to influence the courts' decision-making.

The second reason for the sub judge rule is to protect the rights of parties to a fair trial free from prejudice that may arise as a result of public debate on the issues before the judge. Here I briefly quote your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, the former Speaker Michael Ballantyne who said in this matter: "In these circumstances, a Member's freedom of speech must give way to the importance of preserving the independence of the decision-making process. It is not enough for justice to be done; it must also appear to be done."

Mr. Speaker, I hope that my comments today will help shed some light on the purpose of the sub judge convention. More over, I hope that they affirm that we must take our rules and these important principles, particularly, that underly them very, very seriously. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Good afternoon, Members. It is, indeed, a pleasure to welcome you back to the Chamber for the continuation of the Fifth Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. It has been a very busy summer for all Members caring for constituency matters, as well as continuing in public debates, public hearings and ongoing government and committee work.

I would like to acknowledge, before we go on, the community elections that were held in many parts of the Territories yesterday. I can certainly appreciate the commitment, time and effort that anyone who runs for public office must exert and I applaud all who ran in these elections.

---Applause

As well, I want to extend the congratulations of all Members to the successful candidates. Members of this House look forward to working with all of you for the betterment of the citizens of the Northwest Territories.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Tonia Grannum, a table officer who is visiting us from the Ontario Legislature.

---Applause

Our staff is looking forward to a mutually beneficial information exchange and I want to thank you in advance, Ms. Grannum, for your willingness to assist us over the next few weeks.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. Gerald Gerrand, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner for the Northwest Territories, who is in the gallery today.

---Applause

Welcome, Mr. Gerrand. It is always a pleasure to have you here with us.

Finally, Members, before we begin, I know some of you have experienced tragic loss of constituents, families and friends over the past few months. I would like to extend the condolences of the House to the families, friends and communities who have been affected by tragedies over this past summer.

Before we proceed to the orders of the day, I wish to remind all Members of the rules you have established for debate in this House. The issues we deal with as Members are serious and important to the people we represent. We owe it to our constituents and to each other to carry out our business with dignity and respect. Also, I want to remind all Members to make statements, ask and respond to questions in such a manner that will

allow the maximum participation of all Members in our proceedings. Thank you for your attention, Members.

Orders of the day, Ministers' statements. The Honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 27-15(5): Sessional Statement

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome everyone in the gallery and all Members back to this Assembly after a busy and productive summer.

This summer I had the good fortune to be able to travel to a number of communities to meet with local councils, organizations and residents. In August, I was pleased to host Prime Minister Harper on his first visit to the Northwest Territories. We were also pleased to host a number of other federal Ministers as the new government begins to understand the issues and develop relationships in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, last night there was a very important election in the Northwest Territories as residents of Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik and Norman Wells went to the polls to elect municipal councils. On behalf of all the Members of the Legislative Assembly, I want to congratulate: His Worship Gordon Van Tighem on his acclamation as mayor of Yellowknife; His Worship Peter Martselos on his re-election as mayor in Fort Smith; John Pollard on his return to the mayor's seat in Hay River; and Derek Lindsay in Inuvik; and, Peter Guther in Norman Wells on their election as mayors in those communities.

---Applause

I would also like to congratulate all of those elected to serve as councillors and indeed everyone who put their name forward to serve their communities.

At the beginning of our term, the Members of the Legislative Assembly worked together to develop a strategic plan that set out our vision for the Northwest Territories. The strategic plan identified four priority areas for this Legislative Assembly. As the 15th Legislative Assembly enters its final year, it is an appropriate time to stop and take stock of our accomplishments and review the work we need to do on these priorities for the remainder of our term.

Mr. Speaker, the first priority area identified by this Assembly was helping people help themselves. To this end, we are providing programs and services that allow people to improve their education levels, live healthier lifestyles and meet their immediate housing needs, and support greater community autonomy.

Members of this Legislative Assembly have made it clear we need to do more to ensure our residents have access to educational training programs to allow them to take advantage of the tremendous opportunities in the Northwest Territories. I am pleased to highlight the significant progress we have made toward this priority.

At the high school level, the commitment of Members of the Legislative Assembly to increase investment in education is showing results, most notably in an increase in NWT graduation rates from 34 percent in 1995-1996 to 50 percent in 2004-2005.

---Applause

We are continuing this investment in education infrastructure, with more than \$160 million spent or committed to building new schools, undertaking major renovation projects and constructing new college housing.

Record numbers of our students are continuing on to post-secondary education. There are approximately 1,400 northerners who are now supported through the Student Financial Assistance Program to pursue post-secondary education in a variety of disciplines. We have over 300 apprentices registered in the North each year and we have issued certificates to 200 journeypersons in the past three years.

The Northwest Territories is working with industry, aboriginal organizations, the federal government through aboriginal skills and employment partnerships in the mining and oil and gas sectors. These partnerships are designed to assist territorial residents to improve education and skill levels to take advantage of opportunities in these sectors. To date, these programs have provided training to 209 participants in mining and 746 participants in oil and gas.

Mr. Speaker, to help encourage healthy lifestyles, the government is delivering a number of programs, including the very successful Don't Be a Butthead anti-smoking campaign and Get Active NWT challenges.

Health services to territorial residents has improved and expanded with the addition of the new aboriginal health liaison workers and public health workers by expanding dialysis services and cancer treatment programs. We have also undertaken a number of initiatives to reduce wait times, including expanding rehabilitation services such as speech and language therapy, audiology, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy. Our government has added new positions to help address addiction issues, including more mental health workers, community wellness workers, and clinical supervisors.

While much work remains to be done to improve territorial health and social conditions which continue to lag behind national averages, we're beginning to see some positive indicators, including declines in territorial smoking rates, declines in injury rates among children, and higher rates of physical activity among youth.

Mr. Speaker, we're working to meet the immediate housing needs in our communities. This government is investing \$100 million over a three-year period in partnership with the federal government as part of the affordable housing initiative. The funding will bring new energy efficient homes to all of our communities with plans for up to 530 new dwellings.

---Applause

To encourage greater community autonomy we are continuing to implement the New Deal for NWT community governments and to provide new revenue sources to communities. The New Deal transfers full authority for community public infrastructure to community governments and increases capital funding from an historical level of \$17 million annually to \$28 million annually. In addition to this funding, the Gas Tax Agreement with the federal government will provide \$37.5 million over five years to NWT communities.

This government also developed and implemented the \$35 million community capacity building fund based on an equitable base-plus-funding formula. The community capacity building fund encourages local governments to work together on priority capacity building projects. Because many communities are in the process of developing proposals, we are extending the deadline for proposals to March 2007.

Mr. Speaker, crime and violence have for too long plagued our communities. I want to highlight a number of important initiatives we are undertaking to deal with these problems.

To help deal with issues around family violence, our government has implemented the Protection Against Family Violence Act. Since this act came into effect in April 2005, over 150 emergency protection orders have been issued. The new Family Law Clinic in Yellowknife has been relocated to Centre Square Mall to make it more accessible to families. Recently we increased the tariff paid to private lawyers who take legal aid files to encourage more lawyers to do legal aid work and we're working closely with the Law Society to address the shortage of lawyers in this area.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking for new and innovative ways to deal with those people convicted of criminal offences. We support full-time adult wilderness camp programs near Fort Smith, an elder program has been piloted in the Sahtu, and we are working to develop a pilot wilderness camp in the Tlicho region. The adult male correctional facility in Fort Smith has been re-profiled as a special needs facility. This facility provides a secure setting for offenders with special needs such as FASD or other cognitive challenges to learn new skills to assist them to full reintegration into their communities and society.

Mr. Speaker, protecting our communities from criminal activity as a result of drugs or alcohol is an important priority for this government. I am pleased that we are embarking on a series of public consultations on a proposed Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act beginning during this current session.

---Applause

This legislation is similar to laws already in place in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon, and would allow for the eviction of people habitually disturbing the neighbourhood with the illegal sale or production of alcohol or drugs, the unsafe use of inhalants, or other non-potable substances, gaming or prostitution. As a first step, public meetings will be held in all regions to hear the views and receive advice from all residents.

Another area of focus has been negotiating fair deals with Canada and aboriginal governments. Mr. Speaker, while we have been pleased with the federal government's agreement to deliver on commitments in the last federal budget such as the Affordable Housing Strategy and Mackenzie gas project impact fund, we are concerned about some of the budget reductions recently announced, particularly in the areas of literacy and volunteerism.

The next six to 12 months will be critical in determining whether we are successful in negotiating fair deals with Canada. The number one priority for this government is pursuing a new territorial financing agreement that

adequately meets our needs. We've worked hard to aggressively advance territorial interests with the federal Expert Panel on Equalization and Territorial Financing, and with the advisory panel established by the Council of the Federation. In their final reports, both these groups supported the position taken by our government and we are now working to finalize new territorial formula financing arrangements.

We are pleased with the commitment by Prime Minister Harper and Finance Minister Flaherty to move forward with territorial formula financing on a separate track from the equalization negotiations. We expect that these negotiations can also be finalized independent of equalization negotiations and look forward to Minister Flaherty tabling a proposal on TFF this fall that will allow these negotiations to move forward quickly.

The potential of our territory is enormous. The key to unlocking this potential is an agreement with the federal government, the territorial government, aboriginal governments of the Northwest Territories that will finally see jurisdiction over our natural resources transferred to us along with a fair share of our resources they generate.

A devolution and resource revenue sharing agreement will allow northerners to control the pace and scope of development in their territory, facilitate the creation of a predictable regulatory impacts regime, and provide fairness and certainty to industry partners. With the appointment of a new federal negotiator we are optimistic that we can work towards an agreement-in-principle on devolution and resource revenue sharing with the federal government and aboriginal governments.

A final agreement on self-government is close in Deline and a framework agreement on self-government negotiations has been concluded in Tulita and is nearing completion in Norman Wells. We are hopeful that negotiations on self-government agreements in Fort Good Hope will begin shortly. New self-government process and schedule agreements for self-government negotiations with the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit are in the final review stages by the parties. Discussions with both the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit towards completing self-government agreements are underway.

Finally I want to make special note of the Silver Award for Innovative Management awarded to the Tlicho Community Services Agency by the Institute of Public Administration of Canada at the end of August. This is an example of a successful partnership between the GNWT and Tlicho government.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, recent growth in the territorial economy has been dramatic with our gross domestic product increasing by 71 percent in constant dollars between 1999 and 2005. To put this in perspective, the Alberta economy, which gets a great deal more attention nationally, grew by 24 percent over the same period. This tremendous economic growth is particularly apparent in smaller communities impacted by resource development where, for example, between 1994 and 2004 employment income rose by 124 percent in Gameti, 150 percent in Whati, 69 percent in Lutselk'e, and 89 percent in Fort Liard.

This Assembly has focused on the opportunities and challenges from our record economic growth to diversified

economy, improved transportation and community infrastructure, reduced the cost of living for our residents, and maximized benefits from the proposed Mackenzie gas project.

To grow our tourism sector the GNWT is investing significant funding in Tourism 2010, a five-year plan to develop and market tourism through the Northwest Territories.

We are also moving forward with two regional infrastructure projects: a heritage arts centre in Fort Simpson and the enhancement of the Midnight Sun Centre in Inuvik as premier conference destinations.

While large-scale resource development projects are important to the territory, we must also continue to foster and support the traditional economy that still supports many of our residents. For example, we developed the Trapper Training Program that funded 15 community projects with over 1,100 participants.

The 2005-2006 fur season was the best in terms of value seen in the Northwest Territories in at least 15 years. It is anticipated the fur market will remain strong for the upcoming fur season. Over the past 18 to 24 months especially, participants engaged in traditional economy have witnessed the very robust market in terms of fur prices evidenced by the 70 percent increase in sales.

As well, we are actively promoting GNWT-certified diamonds in the interest of the NWT's secondary and diamond tourism industries and taking a proactive approach to increase awareness of GNWT-certified diamonds through the Rare in Nature Retailers Club.

The improvement of our transportation and public infrastructure remains a priority to the Members of the Legislative Assembly. A total of \$130 million is being spent on highway infrastructure through the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund, including the recent completion of the last section of Highway No. 3 between Behchoko and Yellowknife. Work has also included improvement on the Mackenzie Valley winter road and other highway projects around the Territories. The Yellowknife Airport passenger terminal building expansion and the resurface of the runway, taxiways and apron at the Norman Wells Airport have been completed.

We also believe the time is right to begin focusing on much needed new infrastructure such as a road down the Mackenzie Valley. The timing for a road down the Mackenzie Valley -- "road to resources" as former Primer Minister Diefenbaker would say -- could not be better. Having year-round access to many of our communities will provide a major benefit to residents by reducing the costs of goods and services, allowing for greater travel to communities in the regions by our residents and people visiting our territory and would likely result in more exploration and development and more opportunity for the residents and businesses in our communities.

---Applause

The truth is, the current situation with respect to public infrastructure in the Northwest Territories is not sustainable. While we continue to make significant investment in infrastructure we are falling behind as we try to maintain and develop infrastructure resulting from our bustling economy. Limited infrastructure is one of the key

factors that affects the cost of living in our communities, restricts mobility and limits economic opportunities, including for the exploration, development and production of northern resources. Cost escalation for infrastructure projects also remains a significant challenge, particularly related to bridge projects. Both the Deh Cho Bridge and the Great Bear River Bridge are currently on hold pending additional funding.

Mr. Speaker, we need federal investment in infrastructure and we need new revenue sources that will allow us to make necessary investments.

To reduce the cost of living in our communities the GNWT is moving forward with key hydro initiatives with our partners, including examining small-scale hydro projects. Through the NWT Energy Corporation, the GNWT also continues to advance a project to expand the Taltson hydroelectric dam, which is nearing the environmental assessment phase.

We understand that the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight focused on cost of living issues during their recent pre-budget consultations and we look forward to hearing the results of this work during the current session.

As I have stated many times in this Legislative Assembly, the Mackenzie gas project can be the cornerstone of our future economic development in this territory. The pipeline represents a chance to provide lasting benefits to the Territories if we do it right. The pipeline can provide opportunities for self-reliance and the opportunity to provide a good standard of living and quality of life for northerners and their families. For many young people who are about to enter the workforce, the pipeline and the development it will bring provides the possibility of stable employment.

We have worked extensively to maximize benefits from the proposed Mackenzie gas project and have made excellent progress in negotiating a socio-economic agreement with the pipeline proponents. Aboriginal communities are also working to maximize the benefits from this project and I congratulate those who have successfully negotiated access and benefit agreements.

The GNWT has also worked with aboriginal organizations and the federal government to establish the \$500 million Mackenzie gas project impact fund. Planning is underway and it is hoped that initial distribution of this fund will begin in April 2007.

This Assembly's priority of environmental stewardship has also been central in this government's approach to the Mackenzie gas project. The GNWT has played a significant role in the regulatory review of the Mackenzie gas project through its participation in the National Energy Board review and Joint Review Panel hearings.

Our focus on environmental stewardship is reflected in the Beverage Container Recycling Program established last year. This program is a credit to the work of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. During the first seven months of its operation over 14 million containers have been diverted from community landfill sites.

---Applause

As well, this government is looking at ways to utilize energy in the most effective and efficient manner possible. A discussion paper entitled Energy for the Future was released this year and is the focus for consultations that will lead to the development of an energy plan. Through the energy conservation action plan and in partnership with the Arctic Energy Alliance the GNWT has helped to support approximately 20 projects with total budgets of over \$1 million.

Last year the GNWT signed a cooperation agreement with Canada to provide for the remediation of the Giant Mine site. The GNWT contribution is \$23.75 million over 10 years while the federal government contribution is between \$275 and \$300 million over the same time period. We are now beginning the work necessary to implement this plan.

We have also taken a proactive approach to stewardship by creating and implementing with partners initiatives to protect our natural heritage, such as the Protected Areas Strategy, a community and land claim driven partnership to identify and establish protected areas in the Northwest Territories. It is innovative and community driven and, most important, recognizes these decisions must and will be made and implemented by northerners and by people who will be directly impacted by the decisions made.

Mr. Speaker, later in this session I'll be tabling our annual progress report on the strategic plan. This report provides further detail on government activities to advance the priorities of the strategic plan and provide NWT-wide measures that describe overall progress towards the long-term goals identified in the strategic plan. These goals and the progress indicators reflect the shared responsibility of all governments, communities, families and individuals that work toward our vision and our strategic plan of self-reliant individuals and families sharing the rewards and responsibilities of healthy communities and a prosperous and unified Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly have been working diligently to ensure that a number of important initiatives...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Handley, your time for your Minister's statement has expired.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Members of this Legislative Assembly have been working diligently to ensure that a number of important legislative initiatives and issues are dealt with prior to the end of our term. Some of the most important of these initiatives include:

- as mentioned earlier, we will be moving forward with a new Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act to provide additional remedies not available under the Criminal Code of Canada;

---Applause

- a new Liquor Act to address numerous issues identified in the final report of the 2005 Liquor Act review that was completed last year.

---Applause

- a new Change of Name Act to establish a simpler process for changing of names and eliminating the requirements to go before the court. A new Workers' Compensation Act to conclude the legislative review process that began more than five years ago.

---Applause

- a new Species at Risk Act to provide NWT with its own legislative framework for protecting wildlife and habitats for future generations;

---Applause

- amendments to the Maintenance Orders Enforcement Act to provide officials with stronger enforcement tools;

- a new Public Health Act to establish a modern legislative framework for managing public health matters;

- a new Employment Standards Act to replace the existing Labour Standards Act and make a number of administrative improvements to the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Members of the Legislative Assembly have accomplished a great deal over the first three years of our mandate. We have worked hard to meet our commitment to building an open and transparent government, a government that works in partnership with aboriginal governments, stakeholder groups, and residents of this great territory.

By continuing along the path of partnership over the remainder of our term, we can realize the full promise and potential of this great territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Accountability Of Elected Officials

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, being elected to public office is something that we should not take lightly. A lot of people think being elected to public office is a popularity contest, but I don't agree with that. I think people now see a lot more to it than that. That being said, Mr. Speaker, when we are elected we should be held accountable to the very people that represent us. I always like to think that I am a reflection of the community that I represent. By the same token, Cabinet is a representative of this side of the House. We elect the Cabinet Members, we put them there, and if they say or do anything that we don't agree with, then we should hold them responsible and take them to task.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of people will complain about issues and very few people will put their names forward. We've had municipal elections going on last night in Inuvik and I want to take this opportunity, if I could, to extend my congratulations to mayor-elect Derek Lindsay, and councillors-elect Chris Larocque, Vince Brown, Terry Halifax, Grace Loreen, Brian MacDonald, Jim MacDonald, Clarence Wood, and George Doolittle. They've been given a very important task by the residents of Inuvik and I encourage them, Mr. Speaker, not to take it lightly. Like I said, being elected to public office is not a task that we should take very lightly. We should take the responsibility that we've been given very seriously and if we don't live up to these responsibilities or the trust that's put on us, then I think we should be held accountable for anything we do or say while we're in public office. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Support For A National Park Of Protected Area In The Tu Nedhe Region

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (English not provided) Mr. Speaker, I just want to say how nice it is to be back and I'm happy to see all my colleagues here back in the Leg and hopefully in good health and good spirits.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, I'm also glad because last Friday, October 13th, 2006, I was honoured to attend a milestone signing ceremony between the federal government and the Lutselk'e Dene Band in my Tu Nedhe riding of Lutselk'e. The memorandum of understanding was signed at a community feast hosted by the Lutselk'e Dene Band. It was signed by the chief, Adeline Jonasson, of the Lutselk'e Dene Band and the Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Environment and Canada Parks Agency.

Mr. Speaker, this MOU outlines the commitment and cooperation of both parties to research and study the viability and sustainability of establishing a national park or protected area in the Tu Nedhe region. This proposed park area will be called Thaydene Nene, the land of the ancestors. Mr. Speaker, I call this MOU a milestone for the fact that the Lutselk'e Dene Band has been working diligently on this initiative for the past four decades and I do have to commend the people of the community and the Lutselk'e working group for their perseverance and dedication toward this initiative that is ultimately aimed at protecting the wildlife as what people have relied on for thousands of years, and see this agreement as a very important step towards retaining their strong connection to the land.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage this government to fully support the residents and the chief and council of the Lutselk'e Dene Band, and northerners, and also all Canadians, to see this initiative develop into a reality so that people from all walks of life have an opportunity to experience and promote our "culture of conservation" and engages more Canadians in shared stewardship, collaboration and partnerships that will strengthen and enhance our rich heritage, our traditional knowledge and ecological integrity in a world that always seems to be

focused on development and ultimately the disturbance of our natural habitats. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Impact Of Federal Government Literacy Program Reductions

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Conservative government promised many things when they ran in the last election and, in fairness, they are delivering on many of the promises regardless of what political stripes you wear. The key platform they had was to stand up for Canadians and that resonated everywhere. At least it was the very theme of their campaign. But like all good advertisements and slogans, you have to read the fine print. Maybe they had a disclaimer as to which Canadians or issues they were standing up for, but as always the devil truly is in the details. The Conservative government describes the latest cuts in the words of the Finance Minister and Treasury Board president who make no apologies as cuts that reflect priorities of working families. They further go on to say they're about value for money. I believe they are neglecting those who need the literacy help money the most.

The problem is, these actions make no sense, Mr. Speaker. They are shameless cuts to literacy that overlook serious facts. Four out of 10 Canadian adults struggle with literacy. Some of those people are working Canadians. Literacy rates in the NWT aboriginal populations lag behind non-aboriginal people. For example, high school graduation rates for aboriginal residents is at a 42 percent low. Mr. Speaker, that is horrible.

Our knowledge society continues to need literacy skills to get basic jobs, Mr. Speaker. Those are important for working families. Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope Mr. Harper realizes these cuts were made in error and reinstates them. The Department of Education echoes many times about the necessity for adults to learn literacy skills to help them support their family, be productive members of the community, and to get employment ready because those big jobs are coming and you have to be able to read and write, Mr. Speaker. So we need entry-level opportunities for people who can read and write, but we're taking them away again from those who need these opportunities the most.

As a reminder to the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, people on income support, sorry...People who have low literacy skills are most likely to use income support, they have poor health, and they are constant users of our justice system. Mr. Speaker, I hope the Prime Minister wakes up and learns how to invest wisely. Yes, these programs cost a lot of money, but it's a lot better than us putting them back into our jails because that costs a lot of money too. It costs a lot of money to fund hospitals with people who have poor health, again because they have poor literacy skills.

Mr. Speaker, may I seek 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. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. The point I'm getting at is, we have to invest wisely, Mr. Speaker. Literacy funding in the NWT, in the words of the NWT Literacy Council, was cut by approximately \$600,000 and that affects basic education at the local level, Mr. Speaker. It affects Aurora College, it affects all working families in the NWT.

In closing Mr. Speaker, the national or federal literacy program cannot replace local learning. That's where literacy programs need to be delivered. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Member's Statement On Funding For Youth Centres In Small Communities

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to continue a discussion that we have had in this House before. The issue of funding for youth centres in smaller communities is a growing concern.

We all know the issues before us. Youth in the NWT face many challenges. They are torn between modern and traditional way of life. They are expected to succeed in school, at work, and become our future leaders. We also know that the mental, emotional and physical health of many NWT youth is poor, Mr. Speaker. We agree that we have to promote youth involvement in positive lifestyle choices. This will help our youth to have a vision for the future. It will also help them to stay in school instead of using drugs and alcohol as escapes. It will help them stay out of trouble, Mr. Speaker.

Several years ago, the social envelope department started an NWT youth initiative and recently, the Northern Youth Program. We now have a Minister responsible for Youth. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has three policies that are directed towards youth. None of these programs provide funding for youth centres, Mr. Speaker. All they do is construct and renovate buildings. How can that be? What use is a building if there is no program dollars attached to it or no money for a qualified person to run the programs, Mr. Speaker?

Even Minister McLeod has acknowledged that the lack of operating funds is a gap that is creating problems for our youth centres in the smaller communities. I am asking this government, what are we doing about this problem? For example, Behchoko is the capital of the Tlicho Government and region, the largest aboriginal community in the Northwest Territories. Many people from the Tlicho communities come to Behchoko to work or to use the central services provided to our population. There are approximately 3,000 people living in the community, half are 25 years of age.

Mr. Speaker, I seek 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. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, there is no youth centre in operation in my riding. There is a building, but there is no funding for the operation of the youth centre. Behchoko needs a youth centre with meaningful activities to engage our youth. It will be wise for this government to invest in these young people now. Funding for operation of the youth centre is cheaper than picking up the cost for when kids have gotten into trouble, Mr. Speaker. This is not only a question of money, it is a question of healthy choice to support our youth who are facing the challenges that surround them. We can give them a positive experience that can make them our leaders in the years to come. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Beluga Whales Feeding In Husky Lake

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by welcoming my colleagues on their safe return to Yellowknife for the Fifth Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, since late August and through the month of September 2006 and to this day, there are over 200 beluga whales feeding in our traditional territorial Husky Lakes. The Inuvialuit utilize Husky Lakes as a traditional lake for fishing and hunting ground in the spring, fall and winter for subsistence purposes. The Inuvialuit are known to respect all wildlife and marine mammals. The Tuktoyaktuk Hunters' and Trappers' Committee, as well as all Inuvialuit, are concerned about the well being of these beluga whales and would like the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to try and rescue these whales.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time the beluga whales have been spotted in Husky Lakes. About 10 years ago, there were a number of beluga whales trapped in Husky Lakes. At that time, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans assisted the Tuktoyaktuk Hunters' and Trappers' Committee by providing funding to harvest the beluga whales and distribute the muktuk and meat to the outlying communities. Presently, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans have indicated that they are monitoring the situation. However, if a position is not made to herd or harvest the whales, the survival of these beluga whales is diminishing.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of October 2006 and the Tuktoyaktuk Hunters' and Trappers' Committee is concerned that if the beluga whales do not find their way out, they will die because of the upcoming freeze-up. The concern raised to date by the Tuk Hunters' and Trappers' Committee is they need to find funding to either try and herd the whales out or to harvest them as they did 10 years ago. Why is the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans taking so long to find a solution to herd these beluga whales out of Husky Lakes?

In closing, Mr. Speaker, is the Department of Environment and Natural Resources speaking with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to find the solution to herd or harvest the beluga whales? If so, what are the plans? If not, how come? Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Renaming The Northwest Territories

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, why doesn't our land have a name that we can call our own? When I first got into office, it was under the premise that I would be striving for a new North, a prosperous North, a united North, a North that would be leading not only Canada but also the world in many areas. This can and must be initiated by a new image and a new name, a re-branding.

What is in a name? For most cultures, including aboriginals, a name symbolizes more than just an identification of a point on a map. It tells a story of our present and, most importantly, the past of the lands and its peoples. It conjures memories and continues traditions, cultures and legacies. This is why every community in the Northwest Territories has either changed their name or have discussed the possibility. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is about time our territory has done it as well.

As this jurisdiction becomes closer and closer to devolution, discussions with the Territories, name change becomes more and more important. Through these discussions, the unification of the region and the people can be strengthened. The Northwest Territories is a name from a long ago colonial past. Today people inhabiting these lands are much more than just a territory in a northwest location. We are a unique and dynamic people, multi-cultural communities. We have a distinctive past and an even more unique future.

It is time we begin to hear the call of a new North, a North that is stronger and more prosperous and liberated from the paternalistic policies of the past, said the Prime Minister during his most recent visit to our territory. According to our very honoured Senator as well, during the discussion with the Quebec Senator, Pierre Debane, the name of our territory exemplifies our paternal relationship to Ottawa. We are only northwest from the view of a south central Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I seek 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. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, honourable colleagues. In the past, these discussions became

frustrated by suggestions such as BOB. Although this has some serious undertones and undermines aboriginal contributions of this jurisdiction, we must nevertheless continue these discussions. Together we can change exclusivity of a territorial name that does not reflect the present people and land. Together we can honour the people of our past and diverse culture of the present through this initiative. It is time this Assembly is committed in uniting the communities and their leadership to discuss important issues for a new North.

As reverberated in the past, I believe the new North has arrived. We were on the right path several years ago when the territory began discussing these issues and we must return to these paths, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Personal Beliefs On Matters Of Child Abuse

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had a nice statement all prepared, a text all prepared today to stand up and congratulate the winners of the municipal elections, but, Mr. Speaker, I am going to deviate from that topic because I have something more important to talk about today. It would be somewhat untrue to my own conscience to sit here and just talk about the nice things, because there is another topic that is not so nice. The topic is the issue of the abuse and the legacy of abuse in the Northwest Territories. It is something that I would like to look away from. I would like to not have to deal with it, but it has come to the forefront in discussions, in media articles and amongst people in recent days. It is difficult to stand up here and talk about it because there are nicer things to talk about. You do so at some personal risk because I went home to my riding after taking a stand with some other MLAs in a press release. I had a constituent come up and say, why are you picking on the Premier? Mr. Speaker, I am not picking on the Premier. I have a lot of confidence that the Premier will remember the day he announced he was going to put his name forward. I shook his hand and I said I would support him, and I have supported him. This is not personal. This is something that is so pervasive and so far reaching in the Northwest Territories that we have to talk about it.

We have to know where the leader of our government stands on this issue of abuse and the very vulnerable situation that young children found themselves in in institutions at the hand of people who were in positions of trust and in positions of authority and what did we do as a government to protect them. In response to issues now that have been raised, we want to talk, as a government, about consent. We want to talk about age of moral majority. Were these children Inuit and therefore they had been out on the land and somehow were operating as adults? Are we going to talk about whether they are lying or not? Are we going to talk about 150 students going over to their teacher's house on a consensual basis to have sex with their teacher? I am sorry. These are ugly subjects, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that. But I just would be so not true to myself and to the people of the Northwest Territories if I sit here and do not say

something about this. So, Mr. Speaker, I have questions. I need answers.

MR. SPEAKER: Mrs. Groenewegen, your time for Member's statement is up.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The sessional statement that the Premier read this afternoon was a fine inventory of the accomplishments of the 15th Assembly so far. I am proud of these accomplishments, too, Mr. Speaker, but I think at this very critical point in the Northwest Territories development I want to say that I am frustrated that the truly essential goals that we need as a people and territory, resource revenue sharing, territorial formula financing and devolution continue to elude us. These are achievements, Mr. Speaker, that are long overdue as millions of dollars in resource taxation and royalties will not enter the communities and the programs of this government and the communities and aboriginal governments, but flow entirely into Ottawa's coffers.

Mr. Speaker, in his statement, the Premier told us that the number one priority is pursuing a new territorial financing agreement with Ottawa. He said we are pleased with the commitment of the Prime Minister and Finance Minister Flaherty to move forward. On devolution and resource revenue sharing, the Premier says we are optimistic and an agreement-in-principle with the federal government and aboriginal governments can be achieved in the life of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in July, the Prime Minister visited us in the hall just next door to us here and said some pretty impressive things. He said it is time we begin to hear the call of the new North, a North that is stronger, more prosperous and liberated from the paternalistic policies of the past. That is why I am here today, he said, Mr. Speaker, to begin championing your cause in Ottawa and across Canada, because I believe now at last the North's time has arrived.

Mr. Speaker, the message cannot be overstated that northerners expect no less than what the Prime Minister told us, but we have heard for years and decades the same lofty goals, commitments and optimism of politicians everywhere. It is time, Mr. Speaker, for us all to go beyond the speechifying and the rhetoric. It is time for results. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Economic Development And Migrant Workers

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be back in the Legislative Assembly here with

my colleagues as we continue to work on behalf of the residents of the Northwest Territories. I would like to begin with the issue of our economy. Mr. Speaker, our economy here in the Northwest Territories is growing. Since 1999, our economy has grown by 71 percent. Mr. Speaker, we have been dubbed by our Premier and other federal politicians as the future economic engine of this country. Interestingly enough, our economy last year grew only one percent. The questions that I have about this, Mr. Speaker, is how real is our economy? Who exactly is benefitting from all of this economic activity?

In my estimation today, there are over 2,000 migrant workers in the Northwest Territories. This would equate to well over \$200 million in wages that exit this territory annually. We have a problem, Mr. Speaker. We continue to sit by and let the jets fly workers in and out of the South. Now, they don't even have to stop anywhere; right over our heads, Mr. Speaker.

As if that is not bad enough that our resources continue to be taken from our soil without any revenue flowing through our northern governments, many of these people working to take these resources from our soil are taking with them over \$200 million that doesn't get into our economy or our local businesses, Mr. Speaker. To many, our government continues to be seen as the big loser in all of this.

In addition to the migrant worker concern, another issue I have with the reality of our economy is how much corporate revenue actually stays in the Northwest Territories. Joint ventures and other partnerships, out of convenience, are taking millions of dollars out of our economy. We have to do something to identify and protect true northern businesses and ensure that money, jobs and opportunity stay here at home. If it means strengthening the current business incentive policy, let's do something about it. There is a big difference between a company who has employees and infrastructure here in the Northwest Territories than a company with a phone, a fax machine and a warm body who, when they get a contract from this government, bring in workers from the South. As a government, we have to get a handle on what we are losing and take measures to stop the exodus of dollars from our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Members' statements. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Member's Statement On Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the words of the Premier's opening sessional statement, the next six to 12 months will be critical in determining whether we are successful in negotiating a fair deal with Canada. Mr. Speaker, we, as northerners, here in our communities, where is the beef? We have all of the resources, yet we are beggars in our own land.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency asked for critical, essential, basic services to happen in the Sahtu and other small communities; nurses who need to stay in our communities, youth centres need to be built, youth programs need to be run, taking care of our elders, providing them with some basic care services for our own

people, housing, having policing services like in Colville Lake and Sachs Harbour having the basic security services in our communities, proper infrastructure building, proper roads and bridges. We need some proper buildings in our communities, Mr. Speaker. My Christmas list can go on and on. However, Halloween is coming and I am scared of the boogey man in Ottawa who continues to scare us off with the tricks or treats of goodies.

Mr. Speaker, going back to the quote by our Premier, the next six to 12 months will be very critical for the people in the Northwest Territories. We need some time to gather all of the leaders down the Mackenzie Valley, the municipal and aboriginal leaders, land claim leaders, and we need to focus on some areas to get Ottawa's attention. The best way we need to do and show our people is to start acting our words. We have to put an action plan together, Mr. Speaker. We, as northerners, need to act. When we say to Ottawa, get your hands out of our pocket, as that commercial says on the TV, when will Ottawa cut the cord and let us make our own decisions? In closing, it has been said that to get to the Promised Land, you have to negotiate yourself out of the wilderness to the Promised Land.

Mr. Speaker, when will we, as northerners, stand up and say enough is enough? This is our land and we are calling right now. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Member's Statement On Impact Of Federal Government Funding Reductions For Non-Government Organizations

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to speak in this House to express my deep concern about the federal government's recent move to cut funding for very valuable NGO programs in the North. It is unthinkable to me, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government would cut \$17.7 million in literacy funding when 42 percent of Canadians struggle with basic reading and writing. It should be a great concern to all northerners that, between just four groups, NWT Literacy Council, Volunteers NWT, Smart Communities and the French Cultural Association, our community will lose or has lost \$1 million from these cuts. This is not including the cuts in the Smoking Cessation Program as something we know is a huge problem for us.

Mr. Speaker, ask anyone in the NWT community and they will tell you how unbelievably significant the large amount of dollars is in delivering programs at the community level and making differences in people's lives. Mr. Speaker, the cuts and the impact of this goes on and on. Mr. Speaker, I was there this summer when Prime Minister Harper spoke at the Great Hall. He suggested that we, the people of the NWT, have to show the rest of Canada and the rest of the world that we are ready for business and we can do so by approving the pipeline.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest that this relationship is supposed to be two-way. He needs to show that he understands the northern needs and northern communities if he wants to do business with us. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that he shows this by reversing

the cuts. If he wants us to do it ourselves, I would suggest to him that he gives us a viable, sensible and substantial deal on resource revenue sharing and devolution before he gets his pipeline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On National Aboriginal Role Model Award Recipient

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, presented 12 aboriginal youth from across Canada with the National Aboriginal Role Model Award during a ceremony at Rideau Hall yesterday.

Each year, the National Aboriginal Role Model Program celebrates the accomplishment of 12 aboriginal role models aged 13 to 30 from across Canada, the First Nations communities, Inuit and Metis communities. The role models are nominated by their parents and also selected for their accomplishment under leadership skills initiative through their communities. Through the year, the role models visit First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities and share their stories with other aboriginal youth and strive to meet their goals.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure to recognize Alisa Blake who is 28 years old from our home community of Fort McPherson in the Northwest Territories. Alisa's mixed ancestry of Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, Metis, she is inspired by her son, Justin. Alisa is currently enrolled in a professional pilot program outside of Red Deer, Alberta, and plans to return to Fort McPherson to become a pilot with a local airline industry. Alisa has served on the hamlet council, the youth council, involved with the Metis local and is employed as a program advisor for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation out of the Inuvik office and worked as a radio operator/communicator with the Fort McPherson Airport. At this time, I would like to congratulate Alisa on behalf of the people of the Mackenzie Delta and her home community of Fort McPherson and for the national achievement that she has made us all proud of. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Congratulations To Fort Smith Mayor And Councillors

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the mayor, Peter Martselos, who last night was elected to his fourth term as mayor of the community of Fort Smith. I believe this makes him currently the longest serving mayor in the Northwest Territories. Also re-elected on council were Pat Burke, Marion Berls, Beckie Linaker, and Tim MacDonald. Elected for the first time were Brenda Johnson and Fred Daniels. On behalf of the Metis president Ken Hudson, Chief Jimmy Schaeffer of the Salt

River First Nations and myself, I extend our congratulations. We look forward to working with the town council on the many issues that are before us as a community. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, I would like to recognize members from the UNW, Mr. Todd Parsons, Mr. Ken Woodley and Ms. Gayla Wick. I would also make special mention to David Wind, our newly elected city councillor just above me. Vivian Squires, YK Seniors; and Ed Jeske, one of our fine seniors in Yellowknife. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Ms. Arlene Hache, one of the great advocates of women and family rights and opportunities here in the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize, as well, a constituent from the Frame Lake constituency, a man with a long-time interest in politics and now a newly minted councillor, Mr. David Wind.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize the president of the NWTTA, Ms. Amanda Mallon.

---Applause

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize chief of the Yellowknives Dene, Mr. Peter Liske and former chief, Mr. Richard Edjericon. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize my constituent, Gayla Wick. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize Chief Peter Liske and former chief, Rick Edjericon, from the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and also I see one of my constituents, Aggie Brockman, here as well and other constituents. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize one of the Akaitcho chiefs, Chief Peter Liske and the former chief, Richard Edjericon. I think that is Joyce beside him. No? Okay.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for the Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize a former member from Tulita, Paul Andrew.

---Applause

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is good to see a lot of people in the gallery. As always, Mr. Speaker, I hope that I am not recognizing people who have already been recognized, but I would like to recognize one of my constituents, Ken Woodley, who is also with UNW. I would also like to recognize Arlene Hache and Carrie King. There are nurses in the gallery whose issues will be brought forward in the House in the days to come. Sorry, I don't want to get their names wrong, but they know who they are. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. I welcome everyone in the gallery today. If we missed anybody, welcome and it is always nice to have an audience. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 101-15(5): Personal Beliefs On Matters Of Child Abuse

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Member's statement, it is not a secret that I take exception and issue with some of the comments that have recently been made by our Premier in relation to the plight of many young northerners who were left in the care and were being taught by someone who turned out to be a convicted pedophile. I am concerned about these comments. It is not about politics, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter which is very personal. I believe that we have a right to know where the Premier stands on these issues. I can say the Premier has apologized. I do appreciate that very much. I was disappointed that he did not take the opportunity in his sessional statement again today to, for the record,

himself, not through a press release, but to reiterate his position on these things because I don't want there to be any doubt left about this. I have a couple of lingering questions, Mr. Speaker. In a letter that was sent to the reporter who initially reported this story in the national media, the Premier wrote a letter to Bob Weber. He circulated copies to the MLAs and, in one sentence in that, he indicated that these were not the views of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, these were his personal beliefs, and I quote those two words "personal beliefs." So I would like to give the Premier an opportunity today to tell this House and to tell the public if the comments that he made are in fact reflective of his personal beliefs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 101-15(5): Personal Beliefs On Matters Of Child Abuse

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say, first of all, that I have issued an apology for the comments that I made. I realize they were inappropriate and they may have hurt people, and I am sincerely sorry for that. Mr. Speaker, I always have to take ownership about any comments I make, whether they're taken out of context or not. Mr. Speaker, whether it's a phrase out of something I said or whatever, I hold myself responsible for those comments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 101-15(5): Personal Beliefs On Matters Of Child Abuse

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess the four areas of particular concern were speculation as to whether any of the alleged victims were consenting, whether they were lying, whether the abuse actually had any impact on their future life and whether or not their race or their culture had any overbearing facts and whether or not they were in a position to consent to anything. Those are the things I'm speaking to with respect to his personal beliefs and I would like for the Premier to clarify on those matters. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 101-15(5): Personal Beliefs On Matters Of Child Abuse

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Mrs. Groenewegen has said, those were speculation. I was having a discussion with the reporter by telephone and he was asking me questions, I was speculating on answers, Mr. Speaker. So they were very much, as I say, speculation. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 101-15(5): Personal Beliefs On Matters Of Child Abuse

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm still not exactly, I guess, getting to the point that I'm getting to, or that I'm trying to get to. Maybe I'm

not doing a very good job of asking the questions here, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is it the Premier's personal belief that persons who would come forward and disclose and self identify about abuse that they have experienced at the hand of a person of authority, is it the Premier's personal belief that these people could be lying, that they consented to the activity, that their race or their culture should be a factor in the consideration of their protection in the public interest? That's what I'm trying to ask the Premier. Is it his personal belief? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 101-15(5): Personal Beliefs On Matters Of Child Abuse

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, that is not my personal belief. I believe that when someone brings this kind of situation forward -- and I realize it is very difficult for them to bring it forward -- that we have to make assumptions that what they're bringing forward is valid. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 101-15(5): Personal Beliefs On Matters Of Child Abuse

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has made reference to, you know, due diligence and protecting the public interest, but certainly the Government of the Northwest Territories has an obligation to protect the interest of those people who have been affected by these abusive situations that they found themselves in. Recently there was a suggestion made that perhaps if this government doesn't in fact embrace the kind of defense that was put forward, that we should find an alternative way to resolve and bring some peace and some reconciliation to these people who are now adults who were affected by this abuse. Will the Premier today say whether this government has any appetite to settle this through some form of mediation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. I'm not going to allow that question. The matter of determining that is before the courts and I will withdraw that question. Oral questions, the honourable Member from Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 102-15(5): Operations Funding For Youth Centres

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker...(English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, we need to support our youth who face many challenges today. We need to help them to live up to their expectation that we have for them. We need to give youth positive experience that can make them our future leaders. Youth centres with meaningful activities and programs will be an important step towards that support.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Youth. The Minister recognizes that there is a problem that there is only money to build youth centres and no money to run or operate the centres. What will the

Minister do to solve these issues or problems that we're faced with? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Minister responsible for Youth, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 102-15(5): Operations Funding For Youth Centres

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years we've been working hard in the department to expand our youth programs. Last year we were able to expand our program funding by another half a million dollars to run a number of pilot projects. We have a number of projects that have been very successful. Over this last while, a lot of communities have been applying for the Community Initiatives Program, which has a budget of \$1 million to use towards building and constructing of infrastructure and these have included youth drop-in centres or youth centres. We've encouraged communities to do that and we've supported it because most of these communities have identified sources for operation and maintenance and the bulk of the money is coming from the federal government. We have, I think, six communities right now that are being currently funded through the Youth Centre Funding Program. The community that the honourable Member is mentioning has not applied for this funding. We'd gladly work with him to apply for these dollars. However, we do not, as a government, have a program dedicated towards the operation and maintenance of youth centres. We have identified it as something that there may be a need to address. We have scheduled a youth conference for January of this year. This is one of the subjects that we'd like to talk about, is some of the needs that communities across the North will be focused on. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 102-15(5): Operations Funding For Youth Centres

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker...(English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, I've outlined in my Member's statement that prevention is less costly than healing. Prevention also creates healthier communities and committed community members, eventually becoming the community leaders. At this point, Mr. Speaker, has the Minister made his point to the social envelop colleagues who are well aware of the cost of justice, health treatment programs, when we don't take steps to prevent youth crimes or encourage healthy lifestyle choices who could be faced with more major issues and problems in the communities? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 102-15(5): Operations Funding For Youth Centres

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if I heard a question in there. We have certainly agreed with some of the principles that were mentioned by the honourable Member regarding prevention. We have a number of programs that are earmarked towards the youth at risk. We are also looking at ways we could encourage our youth to become good leaders, good role

models. We've started a number of programs that encourage that and we continue to work with our youth in setting up conferences where they can speak up and have their voices heard. We've also embarked on setting up a Youth Ambassador Program that we'll be kick starting this year as the Canada Winter Games come forward. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 102-15(5): Operations Funding For Youth Centres

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker...(English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, I understand the fiscal circumstance of the GNWT, what we're faced with today. The GNWT has to stop using these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, as an excuse for not taking care of future generations. When it comes to these issues, there's always the money and the program dollars where there's a shortage. So, Mr. Speaker, if youth are a priority for this government, can the Minister commit to finding money within, or from the federal government, for the operation of youth centres in Behchoko and in other smaller communities for this coming fiscal year? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 102-15(5): Operations Funding For Youth Centres

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'd gladly work with the community of Behchoko to look at identifying the resources that that community needs. There is already some resources that we can, upfront, identify that has not been tapped into. There's a number of other program dollars that we have that are available for the community to apply for through the youth core for some youth at risk programs. We also have youth contributions. We also have a youth advisor. We have trapper training programs and this year we've launched a website that will be coming on stream this fall. That can be certainly a resource that can be used for referral. So, Mr. Speaker, we'll work with the community to identify the resources. We still continue to move forward in our discussions with the federal government to see what other commitments we can obtain from them to support youth centres. There are dollars currently in the federal budget for youth centres, but only through the National Association of Friendship Centres. So this causes concern in other communities that don't have a friendship centre. So we have to continue to do more work in that area. Thank you.

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

Question 103-15(5): Federal Reductions To Literacy Program Funding

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to come back to my earlier statement addressing the impact of funding cuts to literacy in the NWT. Mr. Speaker, investing in adult literacy is a key component to ensuring a healthy Canadian society and economy. So where opportunity is at its best for people in the Northwest

Territories, cutting back on literacy programs is the worst idea possible. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't agree with these cuts and I call them non-acceptable. So my question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment is, what exactly is he doing to stop these cuts? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 103-15(5): Federal Reductions To Literacy Program Funding

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have worked with my colleagues in the Council of Ministers of Education Canada to ensure that we are able to meet with Minister Finley from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to let her know personally of our disappointment with the approach. That meeting is, by the way, set up for next Tuesday. I have written to Minister Finley as well to outline our concerns for the impacts on the Northwest Territories that we will see from these cuts and to request from her their plan, the federal government's plan, to reinvest in literacy so that we can better understand and assure residents of the Northwest Territories what sort of response we're going to see to improve literacy here in the Northwest Territories.

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

Supplementary To Question 103-15(5): Federal Reductions To Literacy Program Funding

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because these, in my opinion, I'll say it that way, I see these cuts more like a butcher filling in for a surgeon, Mr. Speaker. I see them just being chop, chop, chop and where they fall they fall, Mr. Speaker. So what is this Minister doing to ensure that the speciality, localized programs are going to be restored, because that's where they really truly will have their effect? So what is the Minister going to do on a territorial level to ensure that the haemorrhaging of things like the NWT Literacy Council will not continue? Thank you.

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 103-15(5): Federal Reductions To Literacy Program Funding

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have met with the NWT Literacy Council. Our government continues to support and to fund the NWT Literacy Council and I have assured them that we will continue to look for ways to work with them to ensure that we can help them to provide literacy services across the Northwest Territories. I think it's important to remember that the Government of the Northwest Territories also invests heavily in literacy in the North. We provide \$2.4 million annually to the NWT Literacy Strategy and Aurora College receives more than \$4.1 million annually to support adult literacy and basic education. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping to see the federal government reinvest in literacy programs, particularly literacy programs aimed at the aboriginal population. I am hoping that they

will recognize that they have an important role to play in the Northwest Territories in that area.

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

Supplementary To Question 103-15(5): Federal Reductions To Literacy Program Funding

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know the Department of Education, Culture and Employment offers literacy programs to seniors, persons with disabilities, in our corrections centres and our workplace. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to be sure today in this House that are these programs going to be protected under these potential cuts or these cuts that already have been made by the Conservative government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 103-15(5): Federal Reductions To Literacy Program Funding

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Northwest Territories our government has no intention of cutting back what's there. So programs that are entirely funded by the Government of the Northwest Territories will definitely continue. The college is going to have some programs that they had hoped to expand this year that they're not going to be able to expand, but we will take a look at what we can do in the future budget to strengthen our literacy program in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 103-15(5): Federal Reductions To Literacy Program Funding

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've made it amply clear here today that I believe literacy is key to a person's success, both economically, socially, it goes a long way. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know today, the Minister is clear to me when he said he spoke to the NWT Literacy Council to ensure that we can be there to help. So I want to find out what the Minister has in his back pocket as a plan if the federal government does not reinstate these unnecessary, ridiculous cuts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 103-15(5): Federal Reductions To Literacy Program Funding

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make it clear that we were not consulted about these cuts. The federal government chose to make and announce these cuts arbitrarily. So we're not in a position where I can reach into my back pocket today and replace the money that has been lost. I do want to make the point, though, that this government is already putting, and continues to put, significantly more money into literacy than what the federal government has cut. I intend to keep working with the federal Minister, Diane Finley, and I will be encouraging her to ensure that the federal government finds some way to reinvest in literacy programming in the Northwest Territories, in particular in light of the federal responsibility for improving literacy

programming for aboriginal people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Oral questions. The honourable Member from Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 104-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my opening Member's statement I quoted the Premier talking about six to 12 months, very critical for people of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, it's well known in the House as the Northwest Territories that the North is leaving a lot of millions of dollars in Ottawa's pocket and staying on not leaving enough in the Northwest Territories. I want to ask the Premier what plans are in place in determining that Canada will give a fair deal to the people of the Northwest Territories so we won't have to keep going back to a kid's constituency and we say we're broke, we have no money and our lives are in shambles, buildings are down, and, you know, we keep coming back here saying we're broke. What plans are in place in terms of gathering, assembling some people in the Northwest Territories to get Ottawa here to say enough is enough, give us what is rightfully ours? What plans are in place for the North? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 104-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two main actions which we are taking. As the Member knows, the Prime Minister has committed that we should be the primary beneficiaries and, following that, there has been the two reports on fiscal imbalance; both of them sided with our government. Following that, Minister Flaherty has indicated that he's meeting with the Finance Ministers in December and at that time it is expected that he will be putting forward a proposal on territorial formula financing. So, Mr. Speaker, that will be the first action on that front.

Mr. Speaker, the other one has to do with devolution and resource revenue sharing. Clearly, these two are high. We cannot accept program responsibility without the revenues to be able to afford to pay for those programs. Mr. Speaker, we've made that known. The federal government have appointed a new federal negotiator for devolution. I have met with him and my indications from him is that he has a broader mandate than the previous federal negotiator, David Peterson, and his mandate will go into some of the areas regarding the fiscal side as well. So I expect our negotiators to be getting together soon. I don't have a date, but I know that they have talked. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 104-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Premier inform the House here, inform the people in our region in terms of the second issue talks about devolution and resource revenue sharing in terms of what

plans are in place to get the aboriginal governments, the businesspeople, the people in the Northwest Territories to say this is a good deal, it can't wait any longer, we have to do something? Because right now we are still, in the eyes of the federal government, I believe, wards of the state of the federal government and we're still little kids in the big ballgame here. So I would like to ask the Premier in terms of getting the support from the other people in the Northwest Territories to get a decent resource revenue sharing and devolution deal. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 104-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we have been working with the business community, with aboriginal governments, on both devolution and resource revenue sharing. I want to continue that. Mr. Speaker, I will be attending regional meetings with the regional leaders. I know the leaders for the Aboriginal Summit are meeting in November. This will be an issue on their agenda. Mr. Speaker, we have worked in the past with the Business Coalition and I intend to continue to work with the business community through that coalition and I don't have any specific plan on it, but we intend to work there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 104-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our communities, again, they're crying out for proper infrastructures, proper programming, proper services in our communities, the nurses, drug and alcohol centres, the youth, policing, yet we're still talking about this. You know, we're 30 years of devolution talks. We still come back and say we're broke. So I guess I want to know when the deal is going to get done, when we're going to have a good deal so we can have, like, province of the Northwest Territories, don't keep begging in Ottawa for additional dollars. Again, I want to ask the Premier in terms of his time frame in terms of the end of this life, the next government, when will we get it done? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 104-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the federal government have made it clear that they will be proceeding on devolution and resource revenue sharing discussions, that in December Minister Flaherty will be meeting. So, Mr. Speaker, I expect clearly that we will have the answers to this and the process in place this fall before the end of the calendar year. Mr. Speaker, I expect to see as part of the 2007-08 budget some relief for the Northwest Territories on both the financing formula and on resource revenue sharing. Mr. Speaker, I think that is as much detail as we can provide at this time. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 104-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal government has made other things very clear to us, they don't like our literacy program, they don't like our health programs, they made a bunch of huge cuts that affect the Northwest Territories. Shame on them for doing that. It's a crying shame in the Northwest Territories. All the resources that we have that they're making these types of cuts and then they turn around and say we're going to deal with you, we're going to give you a good deal here, trust us. So, Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. I want to ask the Premier what's a backup plan that we northern people can go to Ottawa and get our deal and bring it home and have some decent programs for our people? Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Bring it home.

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 104-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say, first of all, that I believe that we have to deal with these step by step, but I want to work with Minister Prentice and his people on the devolution and resource revenue sharing file. That is one that is doable. They have just appointed a negotiator. I intend to work with them on that one. The same on the Finance Minister's file. Our Minister of Finance will be working with Minister Flaherty on that one and we'll see where that goes. Mr. Speaker, if we're not able to make progress on these two files, then at that time we are going to have to look at some other option because, as I said in my statement, the current situation is just not sustainable. Mr. Speaker, I don't have a detailed plan B at this point and I would want to work with the Members in drafting whatever that might be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 105-15(5): Income Security Programs

MR. VILLENEUVE: Marci, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, we, all in this House, know the importance of the Income Security Program and other subsidy programs this government delivers to northern residents. I just wanted to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Charles Dent, if any review of these subsidy programs and the Income Security Program has been developed to date, because I think he mentioned six months ago that, oh well, we should have some proposed changes and recommendations in about six months or so. I got it in the Hansard from six months ago that he actually stated that. So I'm just wondering, are those reports done, reviews made, recommendations going to come forward? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 105-15(5): Income Security Programs

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have taken to the Standing Committee on Social Programs several times over the past few months some proposals for program changes. We've discussed where we're headed with this program. At this point, we're in the process of developing the costings for the different models that are under consideration that we're expecting to be able to take to the standing committee in November or December and the goal would be to look at implementing changes for April 1st, 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 105-15(5): Income Security Programs

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If there has been some recommendations and reviews done, and I'm sure if it's gone to the standing committee, but to my knowledge the standing committee is telling me there's nothing in the business plans. These business plans are five-year plans, Mr. Speaker, you know, and if you're reviewing and making recommendations on program changes and developments, maybe they should be included in the business plans for that year and the next five years to come. You know, the importance of these programs, I know over the last six months things are really quiet on the NWT front as far as people pounding on your door for income security because it's warm and they don't need the heat so bad, but in the wintertime it really gets heated up. People really get concerned. So I'm just wondering what proposed changes can the Minister provide to Members of this House and the general public that are going to be beneficial for people in the NWT over the next winter? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 105-15(5): Income Security Programs

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The program is constantly under review for ways in which it can be improved. In terms of adding money to the budget, at this point there hasn't been any plan to add money to the budget. We're looking for ways to change the program delivery so that we can use what we have in the program more efficiently. There may be some proposals for change and may be some requirement for adding money, but that's something that I would have to discuss after we come up with the program redesign, and that, Mr. Speaker, as I said, won't happen before sometime in November and December. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 105-15(5): Income Security Programs

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, these proposed changes and recommendations that this government has been working on over the past six

months seem to be really dragging on and I think in the last session people weren't looking for some major changes to the program, they're not too bad to say the least, but all Members were looking for is just some tweaking in the Income Security Program, the Seniors' Rent Subsidy Program, even the Rent Scale Program. All we were asking for is some small changes that make big difference for the people out in the smaller communities. So what's the big holdup here? Why does it take a year to tweak a program, you know? Like, we would like to see something on paper and be able to assure the general public that, yes, we are tweaking the program to better accommodate specific needs. Can the Minister give us something that we can provide the general public, the income security clients with and say hey, yes, it's going to get better for you. Is there anything like that, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

---Applause

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

Further Return To Question 105-15(5): Income Security Programs

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the reasons that it takes so much time to change a program like this is that it is so important to so many people in the Northwest Territories. Because of that, we've spent a lot of time consulting with northerners and people were consulted in every region of the Northwest Territories. A lot of people asked for some significant changes, not just little tweaks, but significant changes. People have asked us to look at changing the program from a program of last resort to a program that looks at what does a person need in order to be more successful, to be more self-sufficient. In other words, how can we better case manage the program so that perhaps we deal with people as individuals instead of just a group of people. To make that kind of change does take time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 105-15(5): Income Security Programs

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the importance of the program, as do a lot of clients and people in the NWT, but I just want to specify I think why it's so difficult to change or even tweak these programs is because they're so old. The bureaucracy is so used to delivering these programs there is just no appetite for change. You know, a lot of people in the public service do good work, but a lot of them don't want to change. You know, they've been there so long and they're so used to some programs and the way it's delivered, that there is just refusal in the regions, at the headquarters' offices, even at the local level to initiate any change. I think that any change should come from the top down. If there are some tough decisions that have to be made, then the Minister should make those decisions and say that's what we are going to do. We are just going to do it today, not in a year, in three years or five years. Let's do it today.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I didn't hear a question there. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 106-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Premier. As many of my colleagues have discussed already, it is in the area of negotiations for resource and finance arrangements here in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Harvie Andre is the latest federal emissary to the NWT from Ottawa to negotiate these deals. I want to express my hope that he will be able to advance this issue. Mr. Speaker, this Assembly, chiefs and mayors have for years now been very clearly on the record with the federal and provincial governments that this is our goal. Resources and wealth are flying out of the NWT at a rate of about three-quarters of a million dollars a day, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask now about the critical area, which the Premier has already acknowledged has been a difficulty in the past, and that is the mandate of the federal negotiator. Mr. Speaker, does Mr. Andre have the full authority of the federal government to negotiate the finance deal with us and with aboriginal governments? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 106-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen a written mandate for Mr. Andre but, in my discussions with him, it is clear that he understands our point when we link both resource revenue sharing and devolution. Mr. Speaker, he understands that relationship. Mr. Speaker, there is no indication that he has the authority to overrule the federal Finance Minister who has the ultimate authority in the federal Cabinet on finance issues, but he can certainly carry very strong messages back to Minister Prentice and then onto Mr. Flaherty. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 106-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier, in a news interview in the past few days, said it's his hope that this is something that could be done within four months. I guess I am assuming here that we might be looking at certain potential election processes that might engage in that time. Mr. Speaker, I would like to probe this a little bit. Is this four months' time frame something that has been agreed to or discussed with Mr. Andre and, of course, with the aboriginal governments who are party to these negotiations as well, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 106-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The four months past I am referring to is an agreement-in-principle, not a complete devolution and resource revenue sharing as was reported. I am talking about an agreement-in-principle. Mr. Speaker, yes, it has been discussed with Mr. Andre. It has also been discussed with Minister Prentice.

Mr. Speaker, let me point out, as Members may recall, in July 2005 or June 2005, we had an agreement. The aboriginal negotiator was ready to recommend to his principals the acceptance of an agreement-in-principle on devolution. We had issue with regard to some of the fiscal side, so we weren't ready at that point.

Mr. Speaker, I also raised with Mr. Andre the need to resolve those six outstanding financial or fiscal issues as a first task. Mr. Speaker, I believe the aboriginal leaders who were onsite in 2005 are still onsite. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 106-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, this deal really is no longer an option for the people of the NWT. It is time for results. What more can we do? The Speaker...I'm sorry, the Premier and his team, many politicians and other northern leaders have very consistently and strongly been on the record that it is time for results, it is time for action. What more can we do, Mr. Speaker, to convince Mr. Andre and his boss, Mr. Prentice, and everybody's boss, Mr. Harper, and Mr. Flaherty, to convince them that this is no longer an option, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 106-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is no longer an option for us, as I said in my sessional statement. The situation we have is not sustainable. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Prentice and Mr. Harper have made pretty firm commitments to us on what they think is the element of a good deal. We have told them what we expect to be done. We are entering negotiations with them. I want to work towards an agreement-in-principle within the next few months.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I expect that there is going to be a federal election coming up. We don't have a lot of levers here, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this is the most important issue in my mind for people of the Northwest Territories. If we don't have progress on this by the time the next federal election happens, and it could be as early as spring, I don't know when it would be, then I think we have a major lever at that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 107-15(5): Sessional Statement, Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are also on the sessional statement that the Premier made earlier today. Mr. Speaker, I was listening to it very closely and I noticed that the first six or seven pages or so are talking about the bread and butter programs that the government has been providing. I might add also that most of the money for those programs come from the previous federal programs like a New Deal for Canada, community capacity building, even \$500 million funding that comes from the previous government.

I think we have to be all concerned about the lack of progress we are making, not only on the devolution file because we have always said devolution without resources is no devolution at all. I would like to know from the Minister and the Premier, I get the sense that the federal government is spending more time and energy trying to get the pipeline deal through than any other issue. There is a lack of voice in this government to say the pipeline and the resource revenue sharing goes together. You can't have one without the other. I would like to know from the Premier what efforts he's made to get this heard and to get the outcome that we need. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 107-15(5): Sessional Statement, Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are all frustrated with the amount of time it's taken to achieve an agreement on devolution and on resource revenue sharing. It becomes more critical as we have more resource development.

Mr. Speaker, our government has had to work through two federal elections over the past three years. That has certainly made it difficult for us to show substantial progress. Mr. Speaker, I have made it very clear with the Prime Minister that we want a deal on resource revenue sharing before the pipeline goes ahead. The Prime Minister has heard that, Mr. Speaker. If one were to check his speech that he made in this building, the Great Hall, then he also links those two together. He did it the opposite way. He said we won't get resource revenue sharing without the pipeline, but I think the converse is true and it's been our point as well. So now it's how do we move ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we got the message to him. We have to figure out how we make progress on this. I think with the appointment of a negotiator that is a big piece. Hopefully we can move ahead. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a huge distinction with somebody saying, a Prime Minister saying, you have to show us that you are ready for business. You do that by approving a pipeline when there is no mention there whatsoever that he is ready to come to us with a resource revenue sharing deal. There is no mention of that whatsoever. There is no indication of this in the statement, Mr. Speaker, and that should concern us all.

Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians have learned that the Prime Minister is quite clear on what he wants to do and what he doesn't want to do. People like him for that, or people may not like him for what he does do.

I think we should be very concerned that he has shown no indication whatsoever because I think if he really wanted to, he could make that deal. I have a problem if the Premier starts interpreting...

MR. SPEAKER: Do you have a question, Ms. Lee?

Supplementary To Question 107-15(5): Sessional Statement, Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, how could he possibly think that the Prime Minister coming to our home saying you are not going to see anything until you approve the pipeline is a good deal for us? How does he interpret it that way? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 107-15(5): Sessional Statement, Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has always been very clear, as has Minister Prentice, that we have to work together on this thing. So when he says something, I take him at his word.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already moved this agenda ahead through Minister Prentice. As I said, Harvie Andre has been appointed as the new federal negotiator. They know that resource revenue sharing and devolution are together. That is moving ahead. As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already asked Minister Flaherty, Minister of Finance, to bring forward a proposal on financing in the Northwest Territories. Hopefully that is going to appear in December. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 107-15(5): Sessional Statement, Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you listen to the answer just given by the Premier, I think one has to notice how passive that answer is. It speaks about what the Prime Minister did or did not do, what Mr. Flaherty did or Mr. Prentice did. I see nowhere there what actions precisely the Premier has to take that shows that he understands that time is running out for the GNWT. The pipeline is going to go and we are going to have no deal and we are going to be sitting there like a loser. I would like to know exactly, in concrete terms, what can he show us that gives him any comfort that Mr. Harper has our interest in mind and not the oil companies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 107-15(5): Sessional Statement, Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say at this time that there is no assurance at this time that the pipeline will even move ahead. Imperial are doing their costing on that one. Mr. Speaker, in assurances, I can tell you that the federal government have indicated that they are going to respond to the fiscal imbalance situation. With regard to the Territories, they have said they will deal with territorial financing on a separate track. The Finance Minister of Canada has said he will put forward a proposal in December. Mr. Speaker, those are all commitments that the federal government have made. Mr. Speaker, we have made it known to them that we anticipate and we expect that it is possible to have an agreement-in-principle on devolution and resource revenue sharing within four months and certainly before a federal election. Mr. Speaker, that is going to be our biggest hammer to make sure the Prime Minister and the federal government follow through on the commitments that they have made so far. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 107-15(5): Sessional Statement, Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say again that this federal government has been very quick in doing things that they want to do. They have been very quick and they are operating on the assumption that they have a very limited time. We should be concerned that they have shown nothing, they have done nothing, indicated nothing that shows us that they are going to have this deal. So I would like to know and I can't go just by what the Premier is saying, so could he produce some evidence from the Premier, a transcript from the meeting, a letter from the Prime Minister, a letter from Prentice, somebody somewhere that shows that we are on the agenda, we are on the radar of this federal government on resource revenue sharing and devolution? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 107-15(5): Sessional Statement, Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will take a look at my files. I don't have a specific letter that comes to mind right now, but I will undertake to do what the Member is asking. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 108-15(5): Economic Development And Migrant Workers

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Premier, Mr. Handley. It gets back to my Member's statement that I made earlier in terms of what the real state of the economy here is in the Northwest Territories. For a territory of 42,000 people with an economy that's grown 71 percent in the last number of

years, to be losing people is very, very concerning to me and concerning to a lot of residents here in the Northwest Territories.

I would like to ask the Premier if the government has a strategy to deal with the migrant worker issue. The reason I ask this question is we are losing \$200 million. That's just an estimate on my base of about 2,000 migrant workers that we have here. I would like to ask the Premier that question, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 108-15(5): Economic Development And Migrant Workers

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of different reasons why our population is dropping. We haven't seen the analysis from Stats Canada, but I understand it's something like we have 700 people less than we had at the last census. Part of it is people having smaller families. Part of it, Mr. Speaker, has to do with cost of living. Those are issues we have to deal with as well. Some of that is availability of land and that's another issue we are dealing with. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of reasons why. There are a number of initiatives our departments are undertaking to keep the cost of living within reason, assuming that is one of the main reasons why people are choosing to live outside of the Territories in many cases and rotate back and forth.

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

Supplementary To Question 108-15(5): Economic Development And Migrant Workers

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is the government currently working with industry to try to find some ways to keep people here? There has been many of us on this side of the House over the past three years who have suggested ways and means to try to attract people and retain people here in the Northwest Territories. For instance, a tax-free zone north of 60 has been suggested, tax deductions have been suggested, we talked about putting the revenue from resource royalties in trust. That hasn't gone anywhere either. I would like to ask the Premier that question. Where is that at, Mr. Speaker? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member's question is with regard to what we are doing with industry and that falls within the responsibility of the Minister for ITI. I will refer it to him. I recognize that he also carried on with some discussion about fiscal issues as well. I will leave it to the Minister of ITI to respond. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 108-15(5): Economic Development And Migrant Workers

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, thank you and thank you to the Member for the question. Obviously, we are concerned about leakage from the economy. I have

had a number of discussions with the chambers of commerce around the Northwest Territories. As the Members opposite know, we had a proposal we were taking to some stakeholders with regard to the elimination of the BIP and the reduction of corporate taxes. There are a number of goals here that we had set with the interest of becoming more and more competitive. We have recognized, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to develop macroeconomic policy and do it in a way that's adequate, we're going to need some horsepower and some people on the ground who can do some of this work. The Minister of Finance is developing a unit. I think it's this kind of work that needs to be done if we're going to set a policy framework that helps us stop this leakage and keep the business in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 108-15(5): Economic Development And Migrant Workers

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a question, a group of questions that is paramount to the government in its totality. That's why I am asking the Premier those questions. I would expect that the Premier would be able to answer those questions that I am asking, Mr. Speaker. Again, my colleague, Ms. Lee, asked the Premier, produce some evidence that you have asked the federal government and the federal government has put us on the radar. Where is the proof? Where is the evidence? We have stood up here time and time again and asked the government to suggest things to the federal government. We never get any proof. Where is the proof that they have asked the federal government about a tax-free zone here, tax reductions? Where is the evidence of that, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 108-15(5): Economic Development And Migrant Workers

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I will provide the evidence that I have in terms of the questions that we have put forward, the commitments made by the federal government and I will provide that to all of the Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay. Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 109-15(5): Fort Simpson Ferry Hours Of Service

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation. Hopefully he hears my question, Mr. Speaker. It's with respect to the ferry situation in Fort Simpson. It has been on an hourly service for some time for a couple of years, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister if he can tell me why is the Fort Simpson ferry on an hourly service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 109-15(5): Fort Simpson Ferry Hours Of Service

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is correct; the ferry at Fort Simpson and other locations over the years have been put on a scheduled service. The intention was to see if it would result in some savings in terms of fuel. Over the last couple of months, I directed out staff to do an analysis of whether that is the case to see if there is any positive results of having scheduled service versus on-call and on-demand service. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 109-15(5): Fort Simpson Ferry Hours Of Service

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just with respect to the scheduled service for the ferries, the Minister can probably correct me if I am wrong, but I think Fort Simpson is the only one on scheduled service, so I don't know how the department is saving money on all the ferries when there is only one service being impacted here. So how much longer will the Minister keep Fort Simpson on a scheduled basis and keep us stranded on our island? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 109-15(5): Fort Simpson Ferry Hours Of Service

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in my response earlier, I have directed the staff to see if there is any benefit of having scheduled services. We will have those results over the winter and we will take direction from the results and move forward for the next season. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 109-15(5): Fort Simpson Ferry Hours Of Service

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister if he can provide me with current and ongoing analysis as it goes on and perhaps an indication of whether they are going to lift that scheduled service for Fort Simpson. Once again, I would like to stress that it's the only ferry that's on a scheduled service, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 109-15(5): Fort Simpson Ferry Hours Of Service

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would be glad to share that information with the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Question 110-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you can tell by the number of questions today regarding the royalty agreement, it's getting to be a big issue and something we have to work on very quickly. Along those lines, I would like to ask the Premier a couple of questions myself. In response to one of the questions, he mentioned six outstanding issues that they were dealing with. My question to the Premier is, who are these issues between? Is it between the territorial government and federal government, the territorial government and the aboriginal groups? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 110-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, all of the six questions are between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories. All of them are of interest to aboriginal organizations and governments as well, particularly the one that deals with how we will treat offshore resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 110-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Premier for the response. Years ago the leaders used to sit and discuss issues amongst themselves, but nowadays it seems like too much of that responsibility is passed on to bureaucrats or negotiators. I would like to ask the Premier if he, as the Premier, and the leaders of the aboriginal groups in the Northwest Territories, the grand chiefs, the chairs, the presidents, just the leaders themselves, have you ever sat in a room and tried to iron out some of these details? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 110-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, yes, in the last year and a half we have had regular meetings with myself and the regional leaders, the grand chiefs, the presidents and so on. Mr. Speaker, the last meeting we had was, I believe, in about June or so. At that meeting, the leaders agreed that they wanted to meet to decide who their membership was before we would get together again, and that meeting has been postponed a couple of times and I understand it's now going to be held in November. So following that, I will have another meeting with the regional leaders as a team if they choose to do that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 110-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Premier for that. I would encourage him to continue to

meet with the regional leaders because they are the leaders of all the regions of the NWT. I think it's the only way we are going to be able to get some progress done on this.

With the naming of the new negotiator for Canada, are we starting...How far back are we starting? Are we starting from scratch, or has some of the work been carried forward from the negotiations with the previous government? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 110-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of work done over the last 20 years. I think until a year ago, we had made a considerable amount of progress up to July 2005, in fact to the point where the aboriginal leaders were going to recommend or the negotiators were going to recommend to their leaders acceptance of an agreement-in-principle on devolution. That took us to the six issues. Mr. Speaker, I don't think the federal government should start from a clean slate. I think there is a lot of work out there that's been done and I think they should start with that. My recommendation to both Minister Prentice and to Mr. Andre is let's start with those six outstanding issues and get them resolved and that will bring us very close to an agreement-in-principle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 110-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a subject that we are starting to find quite frustrating and just keeps being put on the back burner. In response to another question from one of my colleagues, the Premier spoke about options. We may have other options. I would like to know what those options are. Do we have some drastic options for them to finally start paying attention to our demands? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 110-15(5): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, certainly lowering the flag would be an option. I think that one has been used already.

Mr. Speaker, I think the main option is we have to stay the course. There is a federal election coming soon, probably within the life of our government, and I think we get a very clear message that this is the main issue for us that the current situation is not sustainable. Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome any advice from any Members if there are other things we can do, whether it's turn the flag upside down or whatever it may be. My approach is that the federal government made a commitment to us. We give them time to deliver on that commitment. If they don't within the next few months here, then we have to begin to take other actions. Mr. Speaker, we are coming up to an election. I think we have a window. Let's use it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 111-15(5): Designated Parking Stalls At Yellowknife Airport

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on a somewhat lighter note today, I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. I recently had occasion to be at the Yellowknife Airport waiting for someone to arrive and couldn't help but notice these tall, bright, shiny signs that had "Minister" written on one and "Premier" on the other. I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation, in his very expensive expansion of \$12 million at the Yellowknife Airport, did he take it upon himself to ensure that he and the Premier would secure free parking at the airport? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Boo!

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

Return To Question 111-15(5): Designated Parking Stalls At Yellowknife Airport

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure which bright, shiny sign the Member is referring to. We have small, little signs...

---Laughter

...on a couple of parking stalls and one is for the Minister of Transportation and the other one is for the RCMP. We don't have one for the Premier. We have two parking stalls that are dedicated, one for the government and one for the RCMP.

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

Supplementary To Question 111-15(5): Designated Parking Stalls At Yellowknife Airport

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unless the head of the RCMP has been renamed the Premier, the sign on the parking stall says "Premier." I know how to read, and right beside it says "Minister." As I was searching for a parking place in the overcrowded parking lot at the airport, I saw those two empty spots and it was very tempting to take one of those, but, being as I am not the Premier or the Minister, I thought I had better not. But there is designated parking and we pay for our parking here, we come to work every month, it comes off our paycheque if we want a parking spot and I want to know if the Premier and the Minister have free parking at the airport. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 111-15(5): Designated Parking Stalls At Yellowknife Airport

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: The Member is correct; the Minister does have a parking stall there. We do a lot of business in the airport. We are responsible for the airport. The Premier does not have a parking stall, unless he's taken a nameplate and put it over the RCMP.

---Laughter

As far as I know, we'll have to go back and take a look, but as far as I know it's only the Minister of Transportation and the RCMP that have nameplates, along with rental vehicles and companies of that nature. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Time for question period has expired, however, I will allow the Member a supplementary. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 111-15(5): Designated Parking Stalls At Yellowknife Airport

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you. Now finding out the Premier doesn't know he had a parking stall, I won't have any guilt or hesitation to take that stall now when I go there. We could go for a drive, but it's there.

---Laughter

It says "Premier," it says "Minister," and if the travelling public is required to pay for parking at the airport and go through the parking booth, I would suggest it would be appropriate for the Minister and the Premier to do the same. So I would certainly encourage anybody that wants to go out. I could go take a picture for you, but we could just go for a drive. Will the Minister undertake to look into this and to clarify for this House what the provisions are for the Minister and the Premier at the airport? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 111-15(5): Designated Parking Stalls At Yellowknife Airport

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we'll have somebody go see if the signs have been changed, or, if I'm not correct, we will ensure that parking nameplates are in the proper places. The stall for the Minister is there because we do a lot of work and do a lot of business at the airport. If the travelling public spends as much time as I do there, maybe we'd have to take a look at that, but that's why we have a stall reserved for the Minister. We don't have one for the Premier; however, we do have one for the RCMP. We will go there and check to see if all the nameplates are in the proper places. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Time for oral questions has expired. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 5 on the orders of the day.

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

REVERT TO ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge and recognize Vital Manuel's parents, Thomas Manuel and Denise Manuel from Fort Good Hope. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Written Questions. Returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 8: RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Return To Written Question 2-15(5): Public Housing In Behchoko

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Lafferty on June 1, 2006, regarding public housing in Behchoko.

1. What is the total number of public housing units in Behchoko, and what is the number of each type of unit?

There are 182 public housing units in Behchoko, three of which are not operational as they are beyond economic repair. The configuration and number of each is as follows:

1-bedroom units - 28 units

2-bedroom units - 56 units

3-bedroom units - 52 units

4-bedroom units - 22 units

5-bedroom units - 1 unit

Seniors' complex - 9 bedrooms managed by Health and Social Services

Senior bachelor units - 14 units

2. How many of those units are occupied by:
 - a) 1-2 persons - 55 units
 - b) 3-4 persons - 55 units
 - c) 5-6 persons - 35 units
 - d) 7-8 persons - 5 units
 - e) 9 or more persons - 3 units
3. What is the maximum number of persons occupying any one of those units?

At present, the maximum number of persons occupying any one unit is 10. The unit in question is a four-bedroom unit.

4. How many of those units had a monthly rent, as of June 1, 2006?

As of April 1, 2006, LHOs are no longer responsible for assessing monthly rent. Tenants are charged the maximum unit rent for their unit. Through its Income Support Program, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment provides a subsidy to cover a percentage of the rent charged. The level of this subsidy is determined through income assessment.

The maximum rent charged for each unit size is as follows:

Bachelor unit	\$776
1-bedroom unit	\$903
2-bedroom unit	\$1,157
3-bedroom unit	\$1,411
4-bedroom unit	\$1,665
5-bedroom unit	\$1,919

5. What is the highest rent being paid?

The highest rent being charged for any unit in Behchoko is \$1,919.00 for a five-bedroom unit, which is the maximum unit rent for a unit of that size.

6. How many of those units have rent arrears owing by the current tenants of:

a) Under \$100	43 tenants
b) \$101 - \$1,000	17 tenants
c) \$1,001 - \$5,000	26 tenants
d) \$5,001 - \$10,000	19 tenants
e) \$10,001 - \$15,000	12 tenants
f) \$15,001 - \$20,000	11 tenants
g) \$20,000 - \$30,000	15 tenants
h) \$30,000 - \$40,000	1 tenant
i) \$40,000 - \$50,000	6 tenants
j) \$50,000 and over	4 tenants

7. What is the maximum amount of arrears owed on any one of those units?

The maximum amount of arrears owed by any individual or family is \$76,413.00 as of June 7, 2006.

8. Of all the units on which arrears are owed, what are the average and median amounts of the arrears?

The average amount of arrears in Behchoko is \$11,321.43. The median arrear amount is \$5,958.

9. How many of those units have had major repairs within the past five years, and what was the nature of those repairs?

Maintenance and improvement projects have been completed on 28 units in Behchoko within the last three years. Projects completed include improvements and repairs to plumbing, foundations, flooring, water and sewer, roofing, windows, appliances and painting.

10. As of June 1, 2006, of the current public housing tenants, how many have had their most recent household income assessment within?

Prior to the transfer of responsibility for income assessment to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment on April 1, 2006, officials at the Rae-Edzo Housing Authority had completed 130 income assessments in the past year. Twenty-one public housing

tenants had no income assessment completed between April 1, 2005, and April 1, 2006.

11. For each type of unit, what are the minimum, maximum, and average buy-out costs?

There is no minimum or maximum cost to purchase a public housing unit. The cost to purchase is determined based on an appraisal of the value of the unit. Interested purchases who qualify for Housing Corporation homeownership programs will receive assistance based on their income level.

12. As of June 1, 2006, how many of those public housing units had received at least one visit from a tenant relations officer within the last year?

In the last year, the tenant relations officer and other Housing Corporation staff have visited units to deal with administrative -- tenant check-in and out, review of repair requests, signing of rental agreements, et cetera -- and statutory requirements such as notice for rental officer hearings or orders, termination of agreements and court ordered evictions. The Rae-Edzo Housing Authority does not rely on client visits as part of routine administration. The administrative staff encourage tenants to come into the office regularly to pay rent, update documents and provide information on changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 3-15(5): Dene K'onia Facility Project

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Ramsay on June 2, 2006, regarding the Dene K'onia facility project.

Public Works and Services can dispose of public infrastructure without consulting affected Members of the Legislative Assembly and standing committee. PWS is responsible for administering the disposal of improved real property policy. The intent of this policy is to dispose of surplus property in a manner that maximizes public benefits. As the property -- the land -- was to be reused by Health and Social Services, the disposal of the building fell under the mandate of PWS. In accordance with the policy, the deputy minister of PWS can authorize the demolition of the building without notifying the affected MLAs and the standing committee.

PWS approved the publication of the tender to demolish the Dene K'onia facility as part of the usual process for such projects.

In collaboration with H&SS, subject to an independent consultant report on new construction versus renovation, PWS was advised to pursue the new construction option.

Return To Written Question 4-15(5): Statistical Information

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Braden on June 2, 2006, regarding statistical information.

Chronic pain disorder is a psychological disorder diagnosed according to the American Psychiatric Association criteria contained in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition; DSM IV. The DSM IV provides three categories of chronic pain disorder:

- 1) chronic pain primarily due to a medical disorder
- 2) chronic pain due to a medical and psychological disorder, and
- 3) chronic pain primarily due to a psychological disorder.

Those with chronic pain disorder associated with a medical disorder have an underlying physical explanation for the pain; however, the pain and dysfunction exceed what is considered normal for the physical injury. Those with the other categories of chronic pain disorder have complaints of pain lasting well beyond the expected healing time of their injury, and the pain and dysfunction is disproportionate to the injury or has no identifiable physical cause. These disorders do not respond well to medications and are resistant to most traditional therapies.

If WCB staff suspect that an injured worker is develop a pain disorder, they are obligated under policy to consult with the WCB medical advisor in the development of a preventative treatment plan. Treatment may include: pain clinics, multidisciplinary treatment facilities, and/or counseling services. This is a proactive approach and can be provided prior to a DSM IV diagnosis being established.

In the last five years, 39 WCB claimants have been diagnosed with chronic pain disorder. This disorder is in addition to the worker's primary injury, develops over time, and is, on average, diagnosed three years after the initial injury. Some of the claimants who were diagnosed with chronic pain disorder between 2001 and 2005 were injured as early as 1985.

Claimants with chronic pain disorder continue to receive the benefits they are entitled to for their original injury, and, if necessary, additional disability benefits are extended to cover participation in their chronic pain treatment plan. Benefits continue as long s the chronic pain is diagnosed.

Chronic pain disorder is an important and challenging issue for the WCB. In order for the WCB to award permanent benefits -- pensions -- a permanent medical impairment must first be determined according to the NWT and Nunavut Permanent Impairment Rating Guide. The WCB uses the American Medical Association's "Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment" 4th Edition to evaluate levels of impairment.

Permanent impairment is medically determined and is measured when there has been maximal medical recovery from a disease or injury. A state of permanent impairment is said to exist when there is a consistent measurable loss of a body part of functional ability, and when further medical treatment or the passage of time no longer results in improvement.

Those with chronic pain disorder have considerable variation and fluctuation in functional ability over time and because of this, chronic pain disorder does not have a measurable permanent impairment. However, chronic pain is recognized as compensable, and benefits can continue for as long as warranted. Although termed "temporary" benefits, chronic pain benefits would be in place as long as the condition exists, whether this is six weeks or the client's lifetime.

In the past five years, 39 WCB claimants were diagnosed with chronic pain disorder. All of them have received short-term benefits, 19 received permanent benefits for their original injury, and all of those claimants saw their benefits affected, via the extension of temporary disability benefits, when they were diagnosed as suffering from chronic pain disorder. It should also be noted that 23 claimants diagnosed with chronic pain disorder returned to work, and that 10 declined to be treated for chronic pain.

Challenges related to chronic pain disorder are not specific to our WCB, but are equally shared by every board in Canada, as well as the medical community. The WCB strives to provide the fairest compensation possible based on current medical evaluations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 5-15(5): Criminal Charges And Convictions Statistics For The Fort Simpson District

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Menicoche on June 5, 2006, regarding criminal charges and conviction statistics for the Fort Simpson district.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the report Criminal Charges and Convictions Statistics for the Fort Simpson District. This report provides yearly and monthly data for Nahendeh communities during 2002 to 2006, as requested by the Member.

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, the federal Department of Justice is responsible for Criminal Code and other serious prosecutions in the NWT. The judges and justices of the peace are responsible for determining the guilt or innocence of those charged with offences, and for sentencing those found guilty; they are independent of government.

The territorial Department of Justice has no involvement in the process other than to provide court facilities and staff. Convictions and the scheduling of court dates are entirely judicial matters, and the decision to charge individual offenders resides with the RCMP in consultation with independent federal prosecutors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 6-15(5): Comparative Analysis Of The Novel Housing Project

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Ms. Lee on June 7, 2006, regarding comparative analysis of the Novel housing project.

The GNWT is still in the planning stages on the convertible workforce housing -- CWH -- project. It is important to note that there are a number of key prerequisites to the CWH becoming a reality. First, the Mackenzie gas pipeline must receive approval to go ahead, both from the regulators and from the proponents. Secondly, the proponents must outline the scope and nature of the construction work of the pipeline; this process is under full-scale review by the proponents. Thirdly, the Novel concept must be accepted by the proponents for use as workforce housing through the competitive bid process. Fourthly, the federal government must agree to financially contribute to the project. Finally, the proponents must agree to hand over the dwellings

upon completion of the Mackenzie gas pipeline at no cost to the GNWT.

Although a great deal of progress has been made with the design of the Novel home to ensure it meets both the needs of the proponents for workforce housing and the GNWT for eventual use as affordable, energy-efficient homes, many items remain unresolved. The GNWT, although receiving strong support from the previous federal government, has not secured the support of the current government. As noted above, the proponent has yet to finalize how it will be tendering for workforce housing. Finally, the pipeline has yet to get its final go-ahead from either the regulators or the proponent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 7-15(5): Compliance With The Valic Decision

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Ms. Lee on June 6, 2006, regarding compliance with the Valic decision.

In September 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Nova Scotia workers' compensation regulations that limited injured workers suffering from chronic pain syndrome to only four weeks' treatment no matter the state of their condition was unconstitutional. The court determined that this discriminated against this specific class of workers because they were being denied benefits for treating their condition based simply on the nature of their condition. Other workers' entitlement to compensation was based upon the specifics of their individual situation.

In September 2004, the Governance Council of the WCB adopted Policy 03.10 - Pain Disorders to specifically address the provision of compensation for a number of pain disorders including chronic pain syndrome. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition, published by the American Psychiatric Association, chronic pain syndrome is a psychiatric injury. Chronic pain syndrome is a condition that can be cured; however, upon diagnosis of the condition, it is impossible to determine if the injured worker will suffer from it for 60 days or 60 years.

Generally speaking, the WCB provides benefits at two distinct stages of an injury. Temporary benefits are provided when the worker is in the recovery stage. These benefits are provided as long as the condition lasts. Permanent disability pensions are provided when the condition is determined to be irreversible. These benefits are provided until the worker dies.

Workers who receive a permanent disability pension receive bi-weekly payments for the rest of their lives based upon their pre-accident income and the irreversible impairment resulting from the injury. Generally, these pensioners have little future interaction with the WCB.

Workers who have temporary disability have their claims managed by the WCB to attempt to provide the appropriate treatment and financial compensation on an individual basis as long as the injury lasts. If a pain disorder lasts the rest of a worker's life, there is nothing in the policy that limits the duration of compensation. Compensation can be paid for the rest of their life, and the claim is assessed on an individual basis to determine the appropriate amount of compensation.

Justice Schuler rendered her decision in the Valic case in December 2005. Justice Schuler was concerned with the policies in place in 2000, the time the Appeals Tribunal heard his appeal. In 2000, the WCB did not have a specific policy document related to chronic pain syndrome. Justice Schuler found that the WCB's policy of not providing a permanent disability pension for chronic pain syndrome was unconstitutional.

Although the Valic decision was not concerned with the current policy, it did raise questions about its constitutionality. The Governance Council has decided that it should review its current policy in light of this decision. The review will involve an inter-jurisdictional comparison of how other workers' compensation boards are addressing this issue, consultation with medical and legal experts, injured workers, and employer and worker representatives.

In the interim, injured workers suffering from a work related pain disorder are receiving benefits based upon their individual needs as was directed by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Martin decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 8-15(5): Education Facility Plan

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Ms. Lee on June 7, 2006, regarding the education facility plan.

1. What is the total cost of the 10-year education facility plan for Yellowknife for years 2005-2015?

The cost of the consulting contract with FSC Architects and Engineers and Matrix Planning to produce the report was \$58,636.89.

2. What is the total cost paid to establish and administer the Yellowknife Educational Facilities Planning Committee meetings including the fees and expenses paid to the chair of the committee appointed by the Minister?

A contract with the committee chair, Mr. Hal Gerein, is in place from January 2006 to March 2007 for an estimated total cost of \$35,000. To date \$17,134.93 has been paid to Mr. Gerein.

3. Please provide a copy of the report of the Yellowknife Educational Facilities Planning Committee.

Ms. Lee and all other Yellowknife MLAs were provided with a copy of the report on August 11, 2006. Additional copies are available through my office

4. Please provide a full and comprehensive explanation of the department's position that 85 percent is optimum school occupancy.

Occupancy or utilization rates are a useful tool for education facility planning and can be used to indicate when an addition to a school might be required. In the event of steady growth in a community, the planning and design of an addition or a new school should begin when the 85 percent mark is reached. If the school age population in a community seems to be declining, however, additional space may not be required. Some judgment is needed in using the 85 percent indicator.

5. Please provide a list of all of the schools in the NWT, their enrollment and their capacity as of September 30, 2005. This data should show the number of students in the school; i.e., the Detah students attending school in Yellowknife should be counted in the school they attend, not the Detah school.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a document that lists all of the schools in the NWT showing capacities and enrolments as of September 30, 2005, including an adjusted total including students attending schools outside of their home community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 9-15(5): Housing Cost Analysis

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Ms. Lee on June 6, 2006, regarding housing cost analysis.

Comparing housing being built under the affordable housing initiative -- AHI -- to Novel housing is not a straight comparison. Novel housing will provide 830 stand-alone three or four-bedroom houses with floor plans of between 1144 square feet and 1378 square feet. Under the affordable housing initiative, the Housing Corporation will be constructing dwellings that are as little as one bedroom in a multiplex dwelling to four bedroom stand-alone homes. Similarly, the 530 dwellings targeted for AHI is an estimate of the number of dwellings to be built and may decrease should prices rise or other factors occur beyond the NWTHC's control. All analysis of the Novel proposal always assumes that all 830 homes will be built.

Financial Analysis

- 1) Novel costs have been estimated at \$206 million, not \$220 million as referenced in the written question.
- 2) With the building of 530 dwellings under the AHI over the three years, the supply of currently available developed lots in communities will be fully depleted. The AHI can draw on the existing developed lot inventories and lots that become available through the disposal of older public housing dwellings. However, the 830 dwellings under the Novel project would require the developing and budgeting of the entire 830 building lots at an additional cost of \$35 million.
- 3) When a financial commitment was made by the previous federal government, they expressed their desire to fund the Novel project at the end of the project. The cash flow impacts of back-ended federal funding and the sale of the homes results in estimated financing costs totaling \$22 million. AS the money is provided up front under AHI, similar financing costs were not incurred.
- 4) The Novel project, because of its magnitude and complexity, includes \$20 million in management costs that were not accounted for under AHI. The NWTHC has recently received approval for 16 term positions. However, these new positions, their benefits and accompanying O and M are not included in the \$100 million stated cost of AHI as they are part of the NWTHC's overall operating budget.

- 5) Finally, the Novel project includes \$17 million for contingency costs which is only prudent for a project of this magnitude. Contingency for unanticipated costs or price increases will be managed under AHI through the construction of fewer dwellings than the 530 estimated. There will not be an option under Novel to take less than 830 Novel dwellings once the tendering process is complete as outlined above.
- 6) When all these factors are taken into consideration, the Novel project dwellings are 30 to 40 percent less costly than traditional stick-built dwellings under AHI with the current estimated square foot costs for Novel being \$112 and for stick-build being \$195.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 10-15(5): Con And Giant Mines Remediation Plans

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Braden on June 7, 2006, regarding Con and Giant mines remediation plans. Mr. Braden was requesting a status report on the Government of the Northwest Territories responsibilities and progress in finalizing the mines remediation plans.

Mr. Speaker, in regards to Con Mine, representatives from the departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Municipal and Community Affairs, and Health and Social Services are actively participating on a working group established by the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board to review the draft closure and reclamation plan and provide recommendations on the plan to the MVLWB. Other active members on the working group include Miramar Con Mine Limited, the City of Yellowknife, several federal departments, the Chamber of Mines and the North Slave Metis Alliance.

The draft plan is comprised of eight sections, each focusing on a major component of the closure and abandonment activities. To date, the MVLWB has given conditional approval to five of the sections. The working group is waiting for submission of revisions by MCML to the three remaining sections.

Progress on finalization of the closure and reclamation plan was slowed and work on mine site cleanup stopped since winter because of the referral of Con's water licence renewal to environmental assessment by the City of Yellowknife. MCML's resources were subsequently focused to this end. On May 26, 2006, the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board ruled that Con's water licence is grandfathered and, therefore, not subject to environmental assessment. The MVLWB has recently sent the licence renewal to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for signature.

In regards to Giant Mine, the GNWT signed a cooperation agreement with INAC on March 15, 2005. The agreement establishes a partnership between the territorial and federal governments to coordinate and implement care, maintenance and reclamation activities at the Giant Mine site.

A proposed final draft closure and reclamation plan has recently been completed. ENR and MACA participated in the drafting of this plan with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, their technical consultants and the Independent Peer Review Panel. Approval to submit the draft final plan

to regulatory authorities is currently being sought from Cabinet and the federal Treasury Board. If approvals are obtained, the plan is expected to be submitted to regulatory authorities during the fall of 2006.

Closure planning and interim cleanup activities are continuing at the mine site as plan approval is sought. These activities include sediment testing and the partial realignment of Baker Creek, dismantling an older power substation, stabilization of the arsenic chambers, redesign of the mine dewatering system, removal of asbestos siding from buildings, removal of additional surface utilidor pipelines and the testing of cover systems for the tailings containment ponds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 11-15(5): Trespassing Legislation In Land Claim Areas

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Yakeleya on June 8, 2006, regarding trespassing legislation in land claim areas.

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement, Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, Sahtu Dene Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement and the Tlicho Agreement, generally speaking, provide aboriginal beneficiaries of those agreements the exclusive right to harvest furbearers and timber on lands granted to the respective aboriginal peoples.

Unfortunately, while these land claim agreements clearly contemplate that non-beneficiaries require permission from land claim organizations to carry out certain activities on privately owned aboriginal lands, enforcement of these provision is, as a practical matter, difficult.

The GNWT has jurisdiction over trespass within the Northwest Territories, however, this government has chosen not to develop territorial legislation with respect to trespass. In a jurisdiction as large and expansive as the NWT, implementing trespass legislation would become a very expensive proposition for the GNWT. Instead, as with many other provinces and territories in Canada, the GNWT chooses to allow the federal government's trespass legislation to be the statutory basis for dealing with issues of trespass within the NWT.

The GNWT does have control and administration over Commissioner's land. Section 5 of the Commissioner's Land Act describes how trespass should be handled in cases where the GNWT is the landowner. However, it should be noted that the GNWT does not have jurisdiction over settlement lands associated with a land claim agreement.

As a result of negotiations, the land claimant groups privately own settlement lands. For example, the settlement lands described in the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement are owned and administered by the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated.

Self-government agreements, currently under negotiation within the Sahtu region, will provide jurisdiction over trespass to the aboriginal self-governments. Should the future self-governments choose to drawdown this jurisdiction, they will then have the ability to develop and enforce their own laws over trespassers on settlement lands.

The intention of land, resource and self-government negotiations is to give aboriginal groups the tools to take control over their future and build a government that can better respond to the unique culture and needs of their people.

Lawmaking power over trespass, for example, can be an effective way to control which individuals can or cannot access settlement lands.

Through the negotiations process, the federal government, the GNWT and aboriginal leaders are taking steps to strengthen northern government. This will shape the future of the NWT in significant ways. This includes ensuring that self-governments within the Sahtu region will have the ability to enforce their own trespass legislation over their settlement lands.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Replies to opening address. Petitions. Reports of standing and special committees. Reports of committees on the review of bills. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

ITEM 12: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS

Bill 8: Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2006

Bill 10: Forgiveness Of Debts Act, 2006-2007

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has reviewed Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2006, and Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007, and wishes to report that Bills 8 and 10 are now ready for Committee of the Whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Reports of committees on the review of bills. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Bill 11: Tourism Act

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development as reviewed Bill 11, Tourism Act, and wishes to report that Bill 11 is now ready for Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Reports of committees on the review of bills. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Bill 6: Engineering And Geoscience Professions Act

Bill 7: Pharmacy Act

Bill 12: Garnishment Remedies Statutes Amendment 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 6, Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act; Bill 7, Pharmacy Act; and Bill 12, Garnishment Remedies Statutes Amendment Act, and wishes to report that Bills 6, 7 and 12 are now ready for 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. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 33-15(5): GNWT Response To Committee Report 1-15(5): Review Of 2004-2005 Human Rights Commission Annual Report

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled GNWT Response to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report 1-15(5) on the Review of the 2004-05 Report of the Human Rights Commission.

Tabled Document 34-15(5): GNWT Response To Committee Report 2-15(5): Review Of 2004-2005 Information And Privacy Commission Annual Report

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to table the following document entitled GNWT Response to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report 2-15(5) on the Review of the 2004-05 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabled Document 35-15(5): GNWT Response To Committee Report 3-15(5): Review Of 2004-2005 Languages Commissioner's Annual Report

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled GNWT Response to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report 3-15(5) on the Review of the 2004-05 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner.

Tabled Document 36-15(5): School Enrolments September 2005

Mr. Speaker, further to my Return to Written Question 8-15(5), I wish to table the following document entitled School Enrolments 2005. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Tabled Document 37-15(5): Package Of Documents Regarding The Premier's Comments On Civil Suit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a package of documents, in chronological order, on the Premier's comments on the civil suit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Bell.

Tabled Document 38-15(5): Criminal Charges And Conviction Statistics For The Fort Simpson District

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, further to my Return to Written Question 5-15(5), I wish to table the following document entitled Criminal Charges and

Convictions Statistics for the Fort Simpson District. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabled Document 39-15(5): Annual Report Of The Conflict Of Interest Commissioner For 2005

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Tabling of documents. Pursuant to section 99 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I hereby table the Annual Report for the calendar year 2005 of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner of the Northwest Territories.

Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 15: NOTICES OF MOTION FOR FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 13: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2006-2007

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, October 19, 2006, I will move that Bill 13, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2006-2007, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Bill 14: An Act To Amend The Legislative Assembly And Executive Council Act, No. 2

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, October 19, 2006, I will move that Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Motions. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Before I go on to orders of the day, I'd just like to remind Members that you're invited to the Members' Lounge after for a short ceremony. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, October 18, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

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

10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9, Write-off of Assets Act, 2006-2007
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, October 18, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 15:51 p.m.