



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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**15<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

## **HANSARD**

**Friday, October 20, 2006**

Pages 363 - 386

**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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### Speaker

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*Minister of Industry, Tourism*  
*and Investment*

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(Great Slave)

**Hon. Charles Dent**  
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*Minister of Education, Culture and*  
*Employment*  
*Minister responsible for the*  
*Status of Women*  
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*NWT Housing Corporation*  
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**Ms. Sandy Lee**  
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*Minister of Municipal and Community*  
*Affairs*  
*Minister responsible for the*  
*Public Utilities Board*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*

**Mr. Robert McLeod**  
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Kevin Menicoche**  
(Nahendeh)

**Mr. J. Michael Miltenberger**  
(Thebacha)

**Mr. Calvin Pokiak**  
(Nunakput)

**Mr. David Ramsay**  
(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Floyd Roland**  
(Inuvik Boot Lake)  
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*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister responsible for the Financial*  
*Management Board Secretariat*  
*Minister of Health and Social Services*  
*Minister of Human Resources*  
*Minister of Public Works and Services*  
*Minister responsible for Persons*  
*with Disabilities*  
*Minister responsible for Seniors*

**Mr. Robert Villeneuve**  
(Tu Nedhe)

**Mr. Norman Yakeleya**  
(Sahtu)

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Friday, October 20, 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):** Please be seated. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

**ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS****Minister's Statement 35-15(5): Assignment Of Portfolio Responsibilities**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have assigned the following portfolio responsibilities until such time as this Legislative Assembly appoints a new Member to the Executive Council.

The Deputy Premier, the honourable Floyd Roland, will take responsibility for Health and Social Services and will be the Minister responsible for Seniors, the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities and will assume lead responsibility for the homeless. I will assume responsibility for Environment and Natural Resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

**Minister's Statement 36-15(5): Workers' Compensation Board - Reflections, Summer 2006**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. Mr. Speaker, later today, I will table the Workers' Compensation Board of the Northwest Territories' and Nunavut's 2006 summer issue of the magazine Reflections. This publication is intended to provide both employers and workers with an overview and deeper understanding of the various activities the WCB has undertaken in the last year.

The cover story of this magazine features the inspirational journey of Les Rohac, a man who came from Czechoslovakia to Canada seeking a better life, but who instead found himself faced with the challenge of overcoming a serious work-related back injury. His story chronicles the struggle to understand and overcome his injury and it reveals how sheer determination helped him return to work and fulfill his dream of making a better life for himself and his family in the North.

Mr. Speaker, this issue of Reflections also contains a number of articles outlining the upcoming Go Safe Program for northern businesses, how assessment rates are set, how employers can invest in safety instead of paying the price for accidents, the general process behind an injury claim, how social marketing is being used to

heighten safety awareness in the North, and the importance of getting employees back to work.

This publication is more than a means of publicity, it's a safety tool. I believe that employers will find a number of useful ideas on how they can better incorporate safety into their day-to-day affairs. As part of the effort to focus on workplace safety, the WCB intends to release Reflections twice a year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

**ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS****Member's Statement On High Cost Of Living For Seniors**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement is on the high cost of living for seniors. Throughout the Northwest Territories, there are seniors on a fixed incomes living in their homes struggling to make ends meet. For those elders living in smaller communities who do not live in free social housing, their standards of living is decreasing with each passing day and year. Mr. Speaker, I know of elders in the Sahtu that are forced to save \$250 from each of their pension cheques just so that they can afford the cost of heating fuel and electricity in the cold winter months. There is no money left, Mr. Speaker, for any comfort or to spend on their grandchildren. So much for freedom 55.

Many of the elders I am speaking of have served the people of the Northwest Territories as teachers, community health representatives, tradespersons or even just keeping the local schools clean and safe for the children. Now it's time for us to serve them.

Those government programs like seniors' home heating fuel subsidy and the repair programs offered by the Housing Corporation are sometimes tested and there are very little funds to serve them and are not always available to our elders. I would just like to ask the Members of this Assembly to consider the day when you are retired from public life in the wage economy and are forced to live off your savings and fixed pension. Do you want to be scrimping and saving throughout the years just so that you can make it through the next winter with a roof over your head and heat in your home? Probably not.

Mr. Speaker, this government has acknowledged the development of a Home Care Program, the Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Program and the Seniors' Housing Program, the value and the economy of helping seniors be independent and remain in their own home for as long as they are able to, as a matter of respect. Putting money into programs to support independent living for seniors is cheaper for the

government in the long run. We need to do more for the elders to live in their homes and be dignity free from the stress and worry about whether they can afford electricity and heat. I will have follow-up questions at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Medically Prescribed Supplies**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This morning I would like to speak about health care plans, Mr. Speaker. It's something that every employer, including this government, counts on very heavily to be a major benefit and a part of recruiting and keeping people and helping them through their lives.

Mr. Speaker, up until this summer, when employees of this government needed doctor-prescribed medical supplies, there are things like materials that help them manage diabetes or perhaps walkers or mobility assists or specialized dressings, they were able to get good service through our life insurance or our medical insurance provider and pharmacies. In other words, they paid 20 percent upfront and the rest of the bill was looked after through direct billing. However, a change in service this summer, Mr. Speaker, has caused considerable inconvenience for some employees and their families who need these medically prescribed supplies. It's a large inconvenience for some of them when the cost of these supplies runs into several hundred dollars a month. They have to front this cost and then apply to our Inuvik office for reimbursement. All of this takes time, Mr. Speaker, and adds a considerable new paper load on our own health care system.

So I wanted to bring this to the attention of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, because our health care plans are something we value very highly and when we get this kind of interference or inconvenience, it's something we need to put our attention to because it does have such an impact on some families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Member's Statement On Safe Communities And Neighbourhoods Act**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last June I urged Justice Minister Bell to follow the lead of other Canadian jurisdictions and bring forward a Safe Communities and Neighbourhood Act for the NWT, along with effective enforcement tools.

I proposed this new initiative so we could bring community empowerment back to folks and take it away from those drug dealers and crack houses from trying to take over our communities. Mr. Speaker, I asked the Justice Minister to move quickly on this discussion paper and to bring a bill with the hope that new legislation could be implemented in this Assembly in a timely way. I, therefore, welcomed the Premier's announcement in the sessional statement given a few days ago that the GNWT

will embark immediately on public consultations bringing forward this issue during this session. The legislation is needed because it gets drug dealers out of our community. It empowers the neighbourhood to say we belong here, get out of our community, quit trying to destroy our good, lawful livelihood, Mr. Speaker.

This is a new law, Mr. Speaker, that will improve our community's safety by targeting and, when necessary, shutting down residential and commercial buildings and lands that are habitually used for illegal drug activity as producing, selling or using illegal drugs, prostitution, solvents and other unlawful sales and consumption of alcohol, Mr. Speaker. This is a law that will do something.

I will continue my full support for the government on this initiative and I want to send a heartfelt congratulations to this government for recognizing the sense of urgency that citizens need action from this government. When Mr. Handley stood up on Tuesday and said this would be a lead initiative in this government, it was well received in my community by my constituents. They could see that this government is doing something innovative. So, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions later for the Minister of Justice and I appreciate this government's attitude to dealing with public safety first. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Member's Statement On Community Co-Management Agreement**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would just like to talk about the community co-management agreement that the government, Municipal and Community Affairs, signed with the Deninu Kue Community Council two years ago. Mr. Speaker, this agreement has definitely lead to better financial management and better financial stability of the municipality as a whole. I commend the government on that, which was the true intention of the agreement in the first place, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what has been overlooked, I feel, is the human resource aspect of this agreement. What I would like to see from this government is the responsibility which the government inherited by agreeing and signing this co-management initiative be followed up on. By this I mean, Mr. Speaker, that this government has responsibility to ensure that all aspects of municipal management are addressed on a regular basis, preferably on a monthly basis in conjunction with council meetings.

The government has the responsibility to hear what community members are concerned about and act accordingly. Areas of concern that are often overlooked are often those that are sensitive in nature, such as personnel, staffing and employment issues. I feel that the overall success of such co-management agreements are often overshadowed by the lack of attention to concerns related to staff or government officials. If this government investigates all inquiries into government actions or lack thereof towards some of the conditions of this agreement from an objective, mutual standpoint and take the appropriate measures to mitigate or resolve, residents would begin to trust the government- of-the-day and have more confidence in these agreements that ultimately are intended to build better working relationships between

municipal and territorial governments and build community capacity and also build a practice of fair community governance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Member's Statement On GNWT Long-Service Award Recipients**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (English not provided) Mr. Speaker, last week, the Government of the Northwest Territories gave out service awards in recognition of long-term employment. I correct myself; I believe that was a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. They gave out service awards in recognition of long-term employment with the various organizations and ministries. These contributions throughout the Territories from large and small communities enhance our communities to make them safer and healthier.

I am proud to have two 35-year long-term service employees from the Nahendeh; Ms. Diane Edwards and Mr. Alex Gargan.

---Applause

The experience, consistency and knowledge they contribute is truly remarkable. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I wish to take the time to acknowledge all of the workers in all of the communities all over the Northwest Territories in private industries, everyone who does anything for our communities and for the work they have done. As well, the awards that we give out are important because they build a culture of recognition which is critical to the capacity building of the communities and ensures progressive development in our territory. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to convey to all of our workers that their contribution and hard work has not gone unnoticed. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Aboriginal Community Policing Programs**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (English not provided) Today I rise in the House to address the need for aboriginal bylaw or community officers in the community of Behchoko. Mr. Speaker, in 2004, the Department of Justice, in partnership with the federal government, had a two-year agreement in which 1.24 was given to the NWT as part of the Government of Canada/First Nation policing funding.

In Behchoko, we had two officers who were successful in training through this initiative in partnership with our government and the RCMP. These officers maintain a healthy relationship with our community members and reduce disturbance, which in turn created a better living environment for all the people of Behchoko. Since this funding was terminated, the officers have moved into other careers. Community members have expressed over and over that overriding crime rates, disturbances within

the community and a lack of police to address these issues, Mr. Speaker.

The heavy RCMP workload is impacting on the service levels in our communities. Employing people from the community to enforce local laws will be ensuring a proactive role in community policing. An aboriginal community officer will change the way policing is thought of within the community of Behchoko. By increasing the number of aboriginal members and working with the RCMP, this will reflect and respond to the needs of our community.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the community of Behchoko want to work with the Department of Justice, Municipal and Community Affairs and the RCMP to start a community bylaw officer program that was established before.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, aboriginal community officers are much needed in the community of Behchoko. Together, with the support of the GNWT, in partnership with the RCMP, the Behchoko community government can work towards a safe and peaceful community. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Transfer Of Public Housing Rental Assessment Responsibilities**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about the government's decision to transfer rent payments from the housing authority to ECE. Before I came down here, I made some rounds in Inuvik and talked to a lot of people there because I have been hearing some concerns about how this program is not working. I hear from tenants who have never been in arrears in their life being in arrears now because it's taken too long. They bring their assessments and their pay stubs over to ECE and they do their assessment and say we'll mail it to you.

When the local housing authorities used to do it, they would go in there once a month with their pay stubs and have their rent assessed and they would be able to pay their rent on the spot. This saved a lot of people from going into arrears. It was good for the LHOs. They got their money on a quarterly basis and they were able to look after all their bills. Now you have LHOs having to wait for their money from ECE, which has taken awhile to get there. Some well run LHOs are potentially running deficits because of this whole program. It's become a real concern up in the communities.

They used to assess your rent two months prior and that didn't work for tenants either. A lot of tenants, as we well know, are back pocket bankers. In two months, they won't have the rent money. So this is a system that worked and, for some reason, they decided to streamline the system and they streamlined it real good, so it doesn't seem to be working anymore. I know they say there are bugs that have to be ironed out...

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Bugs!

**MR. MCLEOD:** ...but, Mr. Speaker, let's just squash the bugs and go back to something that was working before. If you have something that works, stay with it and it benefits everybody. It benefits the tenants that have never run arrears in their life. They are going to do their payments and they are told you have credit, come back in a month. Mr. Speaker, we have a system that works and works fine and works for the people, then the government should stick with it instead of just transferring money back and forth. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE at the appropriate time. Thank you.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Notable Events In The Nunakput Constituency**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to extend condolences to families who had people who passed away in my riding from late August to early September.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to send condolences to Clarence Mangelana's family, Bernadette Capotblanc, Robert Jacobson and Persis Gruben from Tuktoyaktuk.

Also to Keith Dodge and the Wolki family in Paulatuk and the late Sam Oliktoak from Ulukhaktok. On behalf of the people of Nunakput, I send my condolences.

On the brighter side, Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a belated birthday greeting to Joseph David Pokiak who turned 87 on September 14<sup>th</sup>.

---Applause

And also to Persis Gruben of Tuktoyaktuk who turns 88 today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Student Financial Assistance Application Deadline**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has set an arbitrary application deadline of about six weeks prior to the program that you would like to be sponsored for by student financial assistance. It is clear that the NWT Student Financial Assistance Program and the arbitrary application deadlines do not have the flexibility to meet the needs of our students. It is also clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that this system has had a negative effect on post-secondary education for several northern students.

Some students have had to take summer upgrading in order to meet the entrance requirements for post-secondary education. Some of these students missed the application deadline because they had not yet been accepted for their post-secondary schooling. Once notified that they were accepted to their course, it was too late to apply. In many cases, they are disqualified for a full

semester for their student financial assistance simply because of the deadline date for the application. Some of these potential students then abandon their pursuit of their post-secondary education because of this delay.

I have a constituent who missed the application deadline by two weeks because of a family loss, and even on appeal the student was denied the financial assistance program for the first semester for her second year of post-secondary education.

Government programs like the Student Financial Assistance Program need to respond to the varied personal circumstances and situations of the applicant. Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming majority of Canadian jurisdictions have flexibility in their SFA application process to allow students the ability to access the program without an arbitrary deadline that limits their options. Mr. speaker, in British Columbia, they actually allow students to apply six weeks prior to the end of their program and still qualify for student financial assistance.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the application process for the Student Financial Assistance Program, it is necessary for the department to take a client-based approach that meets the needs of northerners and do away with the arbitrary deadline approach which only appears to meet the needs of the Department of ECE. I will have questions today for the Minister of Education on this matter.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Impact Of Federal Budget Reductions**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to weigh in on the issue of the recent federal cuts and how they impact the residents here in the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

The federal government makes across-the-board cuts and it impacts various parts of the country in different ways, Mr. Speaker. Here in the Northwest Territories where we receive \$800 million of our \$1.1 billion directly from the federal government, these cuts hit us even harder because we have no ability to replace those funds with any type of own-source revenue. We are a territory, much like a person on a fixed income.

Provinces, Mr. Speaker, are a different story. Sure, the cuts will hurt them too, but they have revenue from other sources like resource revenue, sales taxes and other available tax avenues. We have a very limited means and, of course, we only have 42,000 people. Again, it amounts to us being on a fixed income with the inability to replace these dollars.

The impact of cuts on our territory is magnified because of our small population and again our inability as a government to replace these cuts. One-third of the total budget for the NWT Literacy Council, or approximately \$300,000, will be lost. We have absolutely no wherewithal to replace that money. To me the recent cuts and the



impacts to literacy, volunteerism, tourism and other programs is just an example of the arrogant approach that Ottawa takes when dealing with its three northern territories and specific to my concern, the Northwest Territories.

Resource revenue, devolution and formula financing are such key pieces to our future and integral to our future success as a territory, yet we have no movement in these areas. We can only have, and continue to have, hopes and dreams of them being concluded. We need some leadership, Mr. Speaker, and to step up our fight with Ottawa. We need a vision, we need to focus first and we need all of our people to come together and work together so that we can afford to look after our own programs without the fear of federal cuts. Mr. Speaker, the impact on our territory will be severe because of these cuts, and our residents deserve better and will obviously pay the price because of these cuts.

Mr. Speaker, we have to do more for our residents and we have to take up the fight with Ottawa. These cuts and their impact cannot continue to be allowed to happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Whistle-Blower Legislation**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of late, one of the debates around the House has been about the important value and the need for the Members to be able to speak without the fear of intimidation on behalf of the people we represent. We showed our resolve in that regard yesterday. But I have been thinking about what we have been doing to make such capacity available to people in our communities who are afraid to speak out against the government because of their fear about losing their jobs, their businesses or their contracts. As I stated two days ago in this House, Mr. Speaker, in a small jurisdiction like the NWT in terms of population, we are really connected by no more than two degrees of separation. We pride ourselves by our close community connection, but sometimes it works against the public transparency and accountability required to maintain a healthy democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I am constantly dealing with constituents and residents who are afraid about speaking out about inefficiency, incompetency and abuse even by the government. This is why I believe we need to have made-in-the-North whistle-blower legislation. Mr. Speaker, we need a legislative protection for those people which would make them feel safe to speak about the inefficiency or unethical behaviour at all levels of government, or perhaps even about the abuse of power by elected officials, or simply for the employees of the government to speak about the possibility of improving our program and service delivery without feeling like they will be penalized for speaking out.

Mr. Speaker, of course, such legislation would have to have a balance where an ombudsman-like figure or an office would investigate, and look objectively and in a neutral manner, at the merit and the details of each case and recommend an appropriate course of action.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I've raised this issue many times within my time here and I have seen no action so far from the government. But this week I heard the Premier confirming that this is, in fact, in the works, and I would urge the Premier to bring this forward ASAP so that we can make this into a reality within the life of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

#### **ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY**

Members, it gives me great pleasure to recognize a constituent from Hay River North. Mr. Wilbert Bouchard is visiting us today.

---Applause

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would like to recognize a former Tulita resident, Mr. Paul Andrew, now residing in Yellowknife and working for CBC.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** I'd like to recognize I believe it's Cathy Frankie in the audience, a mother of one of the Pages here. Welcome.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we've missed anybody in the gallery today, welcome to the House. It's always a pleasure to have an audience. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

#### **ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Question 145-15(5): Fuel Subsidies For Seniors**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today in my Member's statement I spoke about the hardships facing some of the elders living independently on fixed incomes. It is clear that our policies and programs require adjustments to ensure that elders can live out their lives independently and in the comfort of their own homes. My question today is to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Can the Minister tell me, and the House, whether his department is considering adjusting the Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Program to ensure that it captures all the elders who need such a subsidy? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

**Return To Question 145-15(5): Fuel Subsidies For Seniors**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this point we're not planning any changes for this winter's season. There may be changes that would be proposed as part of the income security review.

Just to let Members know that although we had a budget figure of \$525,000 in last year's budget, actually expenditures for the program were over \$1.1 million. We deliver the program no matter what the budget is, to make sure that the seniors are getting the same amount of fuel each year, no matter what it costs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 145-15(5): Fuel Subsidies For Seniors**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. However, fall is setting in and winter is just around the corner, and I'm somewhat surprised and shocked that even though the program is being delivered that it has no changes yet for an increase in fuel for the small communities. Elders are getting their fuel I think by November until the end of April, so it's not enough for all the elders and the elders are struggling right now with the high cost of living in these small communities. Mr. Speaker, we do have a surplus. I wonder why the Minister's not going to the Finance Minister to knock on his door, like other Ministers are for their projects to go through. We should be taking care of our elders, and this is critical. So I will ask the Minister again if he would go back and ask and score one for the elders. Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 145-15(5): Fuel Subsidies For Seniors**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that we can point with pride to our seniors' programs here in the Northwest Territories. I think the programs that we offer seniors right now are if not the best in North America, they're at least the best in Canada. So we already have a very good program. I think it's important to remember that we call this program a subsidy. No matter what the cost of oil or propane or wood goes to, we provide the same amount to seniors each year. So we're prepared to help seniors, to assist them to stay in their own homes. We're hoping that the communities and families will be able to join with us to ensure that can happen. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 145-15(5): Fuel Subsidies For Seniors**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do acknowledge the support that this government is giving to our seniors, but when I go back into the Sahtu communities and other communities, I hear the elders are not getting enough of a fuel subsidy. There is a discretion there. Some of the elders are getting it and some are not getting it. I'm asking to look at the recent increase of fuel in our communities and the increase in the cost of living.

The fuel subsidies are still the same; there's no increase. So it's not going very far. We do have the program; let's give our elders a break this year and treat the elders the same. Give them the cost of fuel so that they stay nice and comfy and warm this winter season, instead of worrying.

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

**MR. YAKELEYA:** You know, they are saving their money for it. So I'll ask the Minister again if he would consider looking at this cost of fuel in the communities for the elders. Thank you.

--Applause

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

**Further Return To Question 145-15(5): Fuel Subsidies For Seniors**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite prepared to look at the subsidy program as part of the income security review. That won't mean that it will happen this year, but it could perhaps happen in future years if Members of this House agree that that's where we should put our money. We have to keep reminding ourselves, though, that this program is not suffering because the cost of oil is going up. I mean, the people are not suffering because the cost of oil is going up. The program still provides them with the same amount of fuel no matter what the oil cost is. We provide the same number of litres each year, no matter what the cost is, to seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Supplementary To Question 145-15(5): Fuel Subsidies For Seniors**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to again ask the Minister, the Fuel Subsidy Program, it's not enough. I'm telling you right now I'm speaking on behalf of the elders who have spoken to me. The fuel there, the need, and we're not taking this as a real important issue to take care of elders. We're going against a lot of our values in terms of how we're to look after the elders. So, Mr. Speaker, to my question here. Can the Minister look at the program this year? Look at the program this year and treat the elders all the same in terms of the fuel subsidy and give them what they deserve in terms of taking care of our elders. Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 145-15(5): Fuel Subsidies For Seniors**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're in a process of constantly reviewing our programs. I'm not confident that I'm going to be able to find any extra money to put into this program this year, given the fact that we only have a limited budget and we know that we're going to spend more than twice what's in the budget already. The strain is already pretty severe on the department to try and just cover the actual cost because of the fuel price increases. But I will certainly do as the Member directs and discuss whether or not there are any changes that we could make, and I'll be prepared to come and discuss this

with committee when we review the proposed changes for the Income Security Program. Thank you.

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

**Question 146-15(5): Transfer Of Public Housing Rental Assessments**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I spoke on the transfer of rental assessments and that from Housing to ECE. I'd like to ask the Minister of ECE, there's been a lot of concerns brought to my attention, and I'm sure other Members on this side of the House as he heard yesterday, so I'd like to ask the Minister, one of the reasons that they gave was they wanted one-stop shopping; you have to have the shops set up, the shopkeepers have to be trained properly, so I'd like to ask the Minister if they have a review of whether this program is working or not. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

**Return To Question 146-15(5): Transfer Of Public Housing Rental Assessments**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in the House yesterday, we have a very senior committee set up to take a look at this and it includes Mr. Polakoff who's the president of the Housing Corporation, and the deputy minister of ECE. They meet on a regular basis. We have brought together regional people from both the housing authorities, the Housing Corporation and ECE. When we find areas where there are problems, for instance on a recent tour through Mr. Pokiak's riding some problems came to light in Ulukhaktok. We sent a team in from both agencies to deal with the issues and try and resolve them. So, yes, we recognize that with any transition there's going to be some problems, and we are working to resolve those. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 146-15(5): Transfer Of Public Housing Rental Assessments**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Transitions, there are problems, but sometimes the transitions weren't needed in the first place so we wouldn't be bringing up this concern. You have a committee working group of senior officials. We're talking tenants; what's good for the tenants, what's good for the local housing authorities, not getting their money on time. So I'd like to ask the Minister -- and I don't know if this is a question for the Minister of ECE -- if he's hearing back from all the LHOs and tenants to see if this program is working. Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 146-15(5): Transfer Of Public Housing Rental Assessments**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do work very closely with LHOs. ECE and the regional people with the LHOs are working closely together. We've agreed that we're going to set up focus groups, so it will involve tenants throughout the Northwest Territories, in order to make sure that we're hearing from tenants, what

the problems are and how we can address them. So, yes, Mr. Speaker, we're doing that.

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

**Supplementary To Question 146-15(5): Transfer Of Public Housing Rental Assessments**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have our own focus groups and I call them constituents.

---Laughter

---Applause

They do call us and they do tell us that this program is absolutely not working. It's affecting the LHOs; it's affecting their flow of funding. Some of them may go into deficit because of this. So I would like to ask the Minister if he would commit his department into revisiting this whole transfer and if it's not working, let's go back to the way it was. It was working for the tenants. I don't know how well it was working for headquarters, but I do know it was working for the tenants and I've heard from tenants and they've said they do not like this program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 146-15(5): Transfer Of Public Housing Rental Assessments**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we're constantly prepared to review our programs. This was not put together because anybody said it wasn't working before. The reason for it was that this government has \$125 million in direct subsidies to the residents of the Northwest Territories being delivered by a number of different departments. As part of the process to try and realign how our subsidy programs are offered to the public, we agreed, early on, that we would try and bring the programs together, and this is the first step and the first time that we've tried to do this. What we're trying to do is make sure that we have a comprehensive, cohesive approach to this, and that's why the income security review is underway. We're trying to make sure that each of the programs we have deliver the services to the public in a way that doesn't penalize them, but is designed to help people become more independent. We have programs now that don't work together; we're trying to make them work together. Yes, there may be some hiccups, but we're working to improve them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

**Question 147-15(5): Aboriginal Community Policing Program**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker...(English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, community bylaw officers have proven beneficial in the past in the community of Behchoko. These officers dealt with issues within our community, such as vandalism, littering and break and enters. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice tell me if there are

any plans to re-establish the aboriginal community bylaw officers program in the communities? Mahsi.

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

**Return To Question 147-15(5): Aboriginal Community Policing Program**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not familiar with the specific program that the Member is referring to, but I will say that obviously we have an RCMP detachment in Behchoko. We are working very closely with the community to improve community policing in the entire region. I also am aware and know that MACA provides core operational funding to communities. Some of them have chosen to establish bylaw officer positions. I believe there are about 19 across the territory. So some communities are using funding from MACA in that regard, and I'm not sure if that avenue is open to Behchoko but that would likely be a question better put to the MACA Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 147-15(5): Aboriginal Community Policing Program**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the community of Behchoko in the past has trained a couple members from the community of Behchoko. I do believe it was under the Special Constable Program through MACA, Municipal and Community Affairs, but it was in partnership with the RCMP, as well, under the RCMP guidance. It was a very successful program, but, unfortunately, the funding was cut. So I guess my question to either Justice or MACA, would the Minister direct the RCMP and the Tlicho leadership in Behchoko to create a partnership that will sustain or reinstate the Aboriginal Policing Program that was very successful in the community? Mahsi.

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

**Further Return To Question 147-15(5): Aboriginal Community Policing Program**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of things going on. We do have an Aboriginal Community Constable Program in the RCMP and there are four positions across the territory that have been earmarked, and that essentially is additional funding provided for positions where can have aboriginal officers trained and then take positions in communities. I believe there is one such position in Behchoko. The former Special Constable Program that the RCMP had, the Member's right, has expired. We have had a number of meetings and lobbied the RCMP to restart a program of this nature. The federal government is talking about setting up something called a Community Safety Officer Program. We're in consultation with them now. We've had some preliminary discussions. We're very supportive of this, except that, as I mentioned to the Member for Sahtu, we want to ensure that this program is relevant for our smallest communities, and so we're working to make sure that it will be. But I do expect a new program coming forward. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 147-15(5): Aboriginal Community Policing Program**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that there's a program that's forthcoming. At the same time, I'd like to ask the Minister if he's willing to work with his counterpart, the MACA Minister, Mr. McLeod, on specifically dealing with this particular issue, re-establishing the program. I realize there's program dollars that may be forthcoming from the federal counterparts that was highlighted earlier. But there again, can the Minister work with his colleague, Minister McLeod, on re-establishing the program to the community? Mahsi.

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

**Further Return To Question 147-15(5): Aboriginal Community Policing Program**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I thank the Member for the question. I do know that this is a priority for the community of Behchoko. I think the Member remembers about six months back we met with his community, the RCMP and with the leadership, Chief Lafferty, to discuss policing issues generally. At that point there were some questions about bylaw. I will certainly sit down again with the MACA Minister. We'd be prepared to talk again with the community leadership and the Member to discuss how we can best provide policing and bylaw services in that community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Your final supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

**Supplementary To Question 147-15(5): Aboriginal Community Policing Program**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear from the Minister that he's willing to work with his colleague. I guess my next question would be how soon can we expect the Ministers to come out to the community? Mr. Speaker, the sooner the better. Mahsi.

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

**Further Return To Question 147-15(5): Aboriginal Community Policing Program**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Mr. Speaker, I recognize the urgency. I know it's a priority for the community, and as soon as our schedules can be coordinated, we will look to do that. So I'll have my office speak with the community. Some help from the Member will be wonderful and we'll make sure the two of us can do that. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**Question 148-15(5): Safe Communities And Neighbourhoods Act**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have to first start off by saying I am so excited to hear that the government is responding to demands from MLAs in fighting the crime, Mr. Speaker. So on the heels of my Member's statement today, I'm quite taken aback because sometimes Members bring forward discussion ideas and proposals and I was so pleased that the Premier brought forward the safe communities initiative in his opening statement. So my question, then, to the Minister of

Justice would be, Mr. Speaker, what are some of the details and timelines of a proposed new bill on Safe Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

**Return To Question 148-15(5): Safe Communities And Neighbourhoods Act**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me thank the Member for his questions here today and his questions in the House in the past. This is something we're very interested in pursuing and I appreciate the impetus from Members on the other side of the House. I think it is a fine example of how consensus government can work effectively, Mr. Speaker. We are developing a consultation program. We will go out to communities to explain what safer communities legislation is all about. It really is about moving unwanted activity from our communities and shutting down operations; illegal gaming, prostitution, drug activity. Sometimes the RCMP now are able to lay charges and stop one individual, but it requires compiling a lot of evidence. If we have continued complaints from a community, we would be able to do something with safer communities legislation to shut down these illegal operations. So it's certainly something we're excited about. We're talking with other jurisdictions. We'll be out to consult with communities and be back to the Social Programs committee with a legislative proposal I believe, I think we can do it probably in November. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 148-15(5): Safe Communities And Neighbourhoods Act**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate that answer from the Justice Minister. Mr. Speaker, the Minister did talk about bringing forward a proposal to the Social Programs committee. My next question would be, although he sort of answered it just for clarity of course, can the good Minister foresee that new legislation or a new act would be brought forward in the life of this Assembly to deal with this crime problem? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 148-15(5): Safe Communities And Neighbourhoods Act**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** The answer is yes, Mr. Speaker, we're going to do everything we can to make sure we can pass this legislation in the life of this government. Obviously we're interested to hear what the Regular Members think about this. I'm sure they'll want to talk to their constituents. I think it's going to be a very positive and well received piece of legislation, which should enjoy the support of the House. So we think we can do it in this government. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 148-15(5): Safe Communities And Neighbourhoods Act**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this is an initiative that's welcomed by my constituents. When the Premier had mentioned it the other day, I actually got a couple phone calls yesterday. The concern is that we've got these cockroach drug dealers in our communities and we have to get that infestation out, and by putting the light on it, they scurry away. So we're dealing with them, Mr. Speaker. To me, it's finally putting the light on crime and we're cracking down. So my last question, I think, to the Minister of Justice, is what type of consultation in the sense of partnership is he building, or has he built yet, that he can talk about? Has he had a chance to work with the RCMP on this? Will this dovetail with some of the programs they're dealing with in dealing with crime? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 148-15(5): Safe Communities And Neighbourhoods Act**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We first went to a couple of other jurisdictions that have similar legislation to understand how it works and talk about whether or not it could be adapted for our smaller northern communities. They believe it can. We've talked a number of times now with the RCMP. As the Member, I think, and Members would understand, we need the RCMP to endorse and support this kind of legislation. There has to be a cooperation agreement. I was very pleased to hear from them that they were excited about this, as well, and very supportive. So we'll work very closely with the RCMP. They are our first and best partners in fighting crime, obviously, and we'll continue to work with them. Thank you.

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

**Question 149-15(5): Application Deadlines For Student Financial Assistance**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. In my Member's statement today, I spoke of the hardships that are being faced by students that are unable, for various valid reasons, to meet arbitrary application deadlines imposed under the Student Financial Assistance Program. I also spoke of the fact that the vast majority of Canadian SFA programs either have no deadline or allow students to apply for SFA after they have already started their semester. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister today, could he outline, for this Assembly, the reasons why the department has the policy of setting this arbitrary application deadline? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 149-15(5): Application Deadlines For Student Financial Assistance**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that previous Ministers were bombarded by

Members when their constituents didn't get their SFA on time for the start of school, and so the deadline was imposed in order to make sure that SFA could be delivered before school started if people applied before that. But I'm not sure; this was something that was imposed some time ago and I can't speak for why the rule might have come into play. But I can advise the Member that I have given direction that the regulations for the deadline be changed.

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

**Supplementary To Question 149-15(5): Application Deadlines For Student Financial Assistance**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Well, that sort of takes the wind out of my sails now for the rest of my questioning here, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

Okay, I have a good question. How long will it take the new regulation to be put in place? First of all, I want to thank the Minister for this. We need to do everything we can to encourage our students to seek post-secondary education and avail themselves of every opportunity to enhance their life.

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

---Applause

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** So hats off to the Minister for changing the regulations, but when will the regulations be changed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 149-15(5): Application Deadlines For Student Financial Assistance**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would agree with the Member that we need to do all that we can to encourage our students to pursue post-secondary. I was having trouble understanding why we had the arbitrary time limit in there when I first had it brought to my attention by Members and constituents in this House. So in August I asked the department to contact Justice about getting the regulation changed. As I understand it, it is in the process right now of being translated in Justice, so it's very close to finally being changed; probably within the next week or two.

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

**Supplementary To Question 149-15(5): Application Deadlines For Student Financial Assistance**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** This is just so much good news. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that there are a number of students who are already enrolled in their classes for this semester, as we speak now, who did miss the previously imposed deadline. They have gone to school; they're there. I want to know about retroactivity. Once the regulation goes in place, will the Minister consider those who had missed the deadline, had to enrol anyway, and are facing financial hardship? Can we have

a retroactivity, a period of grace, for those who are enrolled at this time? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 149-15(5): Application Deadlines For Student Financial Assistance**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're aware that there were 23 this year who applied after the deadline and the current regulation doesn't allow any consideration past that deadline, but the new regulation will allow it and as long as the regulation gets changed before the end of this semester, a person will be able to apply for consideration.

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

**Supplementary To Question 149-15(5): Application Deadlines For Student Financial Assistance**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So just to clarify then, the 23 students who filed their applications late who are enrolled in post-secondary education right now, with the time frame and the anticipation the Minister has of getting the regulation in place, they need to know that there may be an opportunity for them to apply for financial assistance for this semester they are currently enrolled in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 149-15(5): Application Deadlines For Student Financial Assistance**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've just been assured by the Minister of Justice that he will ensure that we have the regulation in time for students to get consideration this semester.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

**Question 150-15(5): Lack Of Staff Housing In Communities**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today my question is with respect...will be directed to the honourable Premier. Yesterday I spoke about housing issues in the Nahendeh riding, particularly Fort Liard where this particular fall season, when the teachers came they actually had nowhere to go. It just speaks to some of the things that we did hear, too, Mr. Speaker, in our pre-budget consultations; particularly not so much housing for staff, but staff housing. How do we address that? Is the government looking at it and what kind of program would they have for that, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

**Return To Question 150-15(5): Lack Of Staff Housing In Communities**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very aware of some of these issues that appear in some

communities, and certainly the issues in Liard have been brought to our attention. Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of things we want to do. One of them, of course, is to give the local leaders in the community more authority to be able to determine how the houses are to be allocated, the sequence for repairing, for replacing and so on. Mr. Speaker, I think it doesn't matter if it's a teacher's house or a house for someone else who's in need of accommodation. We need to have the maximum amount of input from local leaders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 150-15(5): Lack Of Staff Housing In Communities**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I addressed it in writing; I think the government did say that we're not in the business of providing housing for staff, and I can see that there may be some difficulties if they have to provide housing for all staff. But I think one of the ways that other jurisdictions, particularly like B.C., got around it, Mr. Speaker, is they provided temporary housing for staff accommodations. Is that something this government is prepared to look at, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Further Return To Question 150-15(5): Lack Of Staff Housing In Communities**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Mr. Speaker, certainly one way of dealing with the shortage of housing for teachers and for other staff is to bring in more market housing. We have two units, I think, in Fort Liard. We're prepared to bring more market housing units in if there's demand for it. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, what we would like to see would be to have, in the community, a housing board and we're working on that with the local leadership. If there's a housing board and teachers need temporary accommodation when they first arrive in a community, then we would like to work that through the local leaderships so they have a say on how the teachers that they need in their communities will be housed even on a temporary basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 150-15(5): Lack Of Staff Housing In Communities**

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just in terms of market housing, there was a commitment made by our government to provide a duplex for October delivery in Fort Liard. Is that still underway for the community of Fort Liard, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 150-15(5): Lack Of Staff Housing In Communities**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Mr. Speaker, yes, that is still our intention to have that unit delivered this fall; hopefully in November.

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

**Question 151-15(5): Whistle-Blower Legislation**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are in following up to my Member's statement with regard to the whistle-blower legislation, Mr. Speaker. I believe my question will be directed to the Minister of Justice. Yesterday, I believe, in the House, the Premier confirmed that there is a discussion paper in the works. Well, I guess it could be either Minister Bell or the Premier, whoever wants to answer. But I was a little taken aback, in a good way, that in fact this legislation is in the works, and I have to reiterate, once again, how many times during the course of my work that I get calls from constituents or whoever that has a concern, and without fail, every person is afraid of speaking out for whatever reason, rightly or wrongly, whether it's about their job, or their contract, their business, government policy or whatever. In a free and democratic society like Canada, which is supposed to be one of the most advanced, I don't think we should be tolerating that and we should do all we can to improve that situation. So I am encouraged by the Premier's statement that this is in the works, but he stated that it's in the works for the fall and this is already the middle of October. So I'd like to know if he could give us better information on the timing of it. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Honourable Minister of Justice. Honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for the discussion paper and whistle-blower legislation rests with the Minister of Human Resources, so, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that be referred to him.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. Honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Roland.

**Return To Question 151-15(5): Whistle-Blower Legislation**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Premier stated and comments raised in this House by Members, the whistle-blower legislation portion has been discussed a number of times. The Member for Range Lake has made this an issue on a number of occasions, and we have taken that and begun to work on it. I'm, very shortly, going to be presenting my Cabinet colleagues with the beginnings of a discussion paper and then if I get approval at that stage, I'll be coming to the Members with that discussion paper and see from there if we go out for public discussion on that basis, and then, from there, begin preparation on legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 151-15(5): Whistle-Blower Legislation**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would presume that the end result of this process would be that there will be legislation required. But as it is, it's in a very preliminary discussion period so I would think that you don't have to have all the t's crossed and i's dotted before people could

participate and really engage in the discussion about something I think that's more important for the North in the small communities. So would the Minister be encouraged to hurry up, and could we possibly see this within the next month or so, so that we can engage our people into full discussion? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 151-15(5): Whistle-Blower Legislation**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of working in a consensus-style government, yes, we are prepared. I believe we can have something to committee probably within the next month. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Supplementary, Ms. Lee. Thank you, Ms. Lee. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

**Question 152-15(5): Change In Billing Procedure From GNWT Health Care Services Provider**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this morning is for Mr. Roland as the Minister responsible for Human Resources. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my Member's statement, due to a change in billing procedure from our health care insurance provider, employees and their families are inconvenienced, in some cases considerably, because they have to pay up front for doctor-prescribed supplies; whereas before, this was all handled through the pharmacist and direct billing. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister what kind of notice and what kind of reasons were provided by the health care insurer for this change in our billing procedure? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Roland.

**Return To Question 152-15(5): Change In Billing Procedure From GNWT Health Care Services Provider**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this issue we were made aware of recently as the members of the public and our employees were contacted, human resources as well as Members, regarding the change that was put in place by the public service health care plan administration. We became aware just early this fall with regard to changes. They were posted on their website, of the changes effective. The notice went out on their website in April to become effective in August. We became aware of it recently. We're paying much closer attention to that website of any further changes coming up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 152-15(5): Change In Billing Procedure From GNWT Health Care Services Provider**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a mystery, I guess, as to why this change in billing procedure is happening. Constituents of mine brought it to my attention, I think it was either very late in July or early in August just as this came into effect. So it came as a surprise. I made enquiries at that time and still haven't got

any answers. So I guess the question that I'd like to see if the Minister can help me with is why this change in billing procedure. Why are our employees and their families being inconvenienced this way?

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

**Further Return To Question 152-15(5): Change In Billing Procedure From GNWT Health Care Services Provider**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in checking into this and having the department contact the administration for the public service health care plan, we've not come up with any satisfactory responses in that area. We have notified them that we are not happy with the changes that were made and would prefer to have it as it was, and at this time we've been informed they're not willing to go back to it. It references the drug identification numbers, I believe, as a way of how they work it through their programs and have payments put out and established, and it's on that basis what we're informed of. Unfortunately, we're not, again, getting a favourable response at this time. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 152-15(5): Change In Billing Procedure From GNWT Health Care Services Provider**

**MR. BRADEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate, too, it has something to do with supplies and medically described items that have this DIN, or drug insurance number. So there's obviously some administration or bureaucracy that is falling through the cracks here. I would like to ask the Minister what kind of direct appeal has been made to the health care insurance provider to sit down and fix this, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 152-15(5): Change In Billing Procedure From GNWT Health Care Services Provider**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the public service health care plan deals with about 1,600 pharmacies across the country and deals with other organizations as well as ourselves. We've made contact with administration for the public service health care plan. We've informed them of our displeasure in this area in the changes and that it's not satisfactory, and trying to see if they would be willing to reconsider going back to the method done previously. At this point, we are still not getting very much response in that area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 152-15(5): Change In Billing Procedure From GNWT Health Care Services Provider**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, considering that there's been, for those families and employees affected, considerable reduction in the level of service, considerable increase in inconvenience, and to our own government because we've got more paperwork to



process now, is the premium that we're paying, the cost that we're paying for this health care coverage, is that at least being reduced, considering the impact on the level service to us, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Further Return To Question 152-15(5): Change In Billing Procedure From GNWT Health Care Services Provider**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any changes to the premiums, but I will look into that. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Oral Questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

**Question 153-15(5): Federal Government Budget Reductions**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Premier and it gets back to my Member's statement from today in terms of intergovernmental relations between our territorial government and Ottawa, the federal government. I want to say quite clearly that I find what happened with the recent raft of federal cuts quite disturbing from an NWT perspective that is, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe it's fair that Ottawa continues to take our resources day in and day out, and it's at about the present tally about \$400 million a year and if the pipeline happens \$9 billion later it's going to be over a billion dollars a year that the federal government is going to take from the residents and the territory. Mr. Speaker, I do find this quite disturbing because we are on a fixed income here in the NWT. We get \$800 million from the federal government every year. We have not got the means nor the ability to replace the dollars like a province could. I don't understand why we weren't consulted. I don't understand why our government didn't take a position, or if they did take a position how come they didn't communicate it with us, the Regular Members? Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier, what has the Premier done to communicate to the federal government that the recent round of cuts, and for a variety of very solid reasons, should not have included the dollars that are flowing into the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 153-15(5): Federal Government Budget Reductions**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the Member; all of us were offended by having these cuts just announced. The federal government told us that this was treated like a budget, that it was all done in secret, and we weren't the only jurisdiction. All jurisdictions across Canada were not given any information on it. It was a surprise to everybody the day it happened.

Mr. Speaker, since that time we have been trying to get clarification on all of the different budget cuts and some of it we still don't know because there's no detail when it comes to things like cutting departmental efficiencies in DIAND. We don't know what that means and we're still

seeking information. Some other areas we have a little more information.

Since that time, Mr. Speaker, we have expressed our concern. I've done it personally with the Minister of DIAND. The Minister of ECE has written with regard to literacy cutting and the Minister of MACA has talked to his counterpart. Mr. Speaker, I am sending a letter to both Minister Prentice and to the Prime Minister emphasizing our concern about these budget cuts.

The Member is right; we are on almost like an allowance, but the big issue is that we don't get our fair share of the resource revenues. While the cuts are important, it's the big picture of resource revenues that we need to get our share of money from our resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 153-15(5): Federal Government Budget Reductions**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if when the Premier spoke to...And I thank him for his response. Can we use what has happened to us with these cuts as a leverage or another example to the federal government of why the Northwest Territories is different? We're not a province; we're a territory. We're being treated unfairly. We're being taken advantage of on a daily basis and until we're treated fairly, we should be treated differently at the very least. Again, we're not a province. We're on a fixed income. I know the Premier had mentioned that he's going to communicate that in writing and I'd like for the Regular Members on this side of the House to get a copy of that letter. I'd like to see it and I'd like to see that letter state quite clearly that we are not going to accept these types of things happening to us until we're dealt with fairly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 153-15(5): Federal Government Budget Reductions**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Mr. Speaker, I will commit to making a copy of the letters that I'm sending both to Minister Prentice and to Minister Harper available to the Members. Mr. Speaker, Ottawa's a long ways away and they sometimes just don't understand that the situation is different for us. I find it frustrating when I hear the Minister of DIAND talking about the per capita amounts that Ottawa gives us at \$17,000 compared to \$8000 in Newfoundland, as if our costs were the same across the country. We know, and I'm sure that he knows very well, that our costs are much different here given our big geography, the challenges we have in the Northwest Territories. So there's a lot of these kinds of issues that we'll continue to push away at, but, Mr. Speaker, I don't want us to get caught in just talking about the cuts. I want to keep our eye on that big picture because that's what's going to make the difference, is we get our fair share of money through the resource revenues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 153-15(5): Federal Government Budget Reductions**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier, in that letter perhaps he could include something to the effect that we want to see all the money that was cut from programs here in the Northwest Territories reinstated. And I'm talking every last dollar reinstated until our government gets a deal with the federal government in terms of resource revenue sharing. I think that is fair and that is what's fair to the residents here in the Northwest Territories, and that's what they're asking us to do and to represent them and I think that's fair and that has to be in that letter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 153-15(5): Federal Government Budget Reductions**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Mr. Speaker, I will certainly do that. I'm not sure of the exact wording we'll use, but we will do it and make the point that we don't have adequate funding. As I mentioned in the sessional statement, the current situation just simply is not sustainable and we have to get that message to the federal government, whether it's through reinstating this money or a combination of this plus, as I say, the resource revenues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Question 154-15(5): Rent Scale Policy For Public Housing**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to ask some of the same questions that I was asking the Minister of Education yesterday, but my questions are going to be directed to the Minister of Housing. The rent scale policy that we have in place, the old rent scale policy, I just want to ask the Minister, can he put something on the record to indicate that the Housing Corporation is going to possibly review the rent scale policy that touches a lot of people here in the NWT; a policy which creates a disincentive to seek employment for public housing clients, creates dissension towards the LHOs, the staff, government employees, and it develops a lack of respect for public housing stock by people who are in public housing? In other words, they just don't care about wrecking the place because they don't pay rent on it anyway. A lot of them don't pay their fair share, anyway. So I'm just wondering if the Minister can let people know that, yes, his department is going to review the rent scale policy, one that is perhaps based on net income or based on annual income, taxable income, but not one that's based on bingo winnings and card game winnings and based on hearsay, what people think the neighbours make? Can he do that for our public housing clients? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 154-15(5): Rent Scale Policy For Public Housing**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department is looking at the rental rate review in which we are hoping to have something come forward in conjunction with what's happening with the transfer of the social housing subsidy and also realizing that we do have to be open, transparent and fair to all our clients across the territory. So we are looking at it in conjunction of a universal review of the whole program throughout the territory. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 154-15(5): Rent Scale Policy For Public Housing**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good. That's good news, I think. At least they are reviewing this policy, which has been under a lot of scrutiny for a number of years. I just don't think that it has worked and it's definitely not working today, especially in the small communities where public housing accommodates a large majority of the communities. I just want to ask the Minister, when can we expect perhaps a draft of the changes or some recommendations, or how far are we along with seeing some substantive change? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 154-15(5): Rent Scale Policy For Public Housing**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with ECE and ourselves in regards to how we are laying out the whole idea of the household subsidy and also looking at the whole rental scale systems that we use, I think we are looking at arrangements that have been done in Nunavut, other places in the country, and also realizing that we are similar in nature to other jurisdictions. Seeing what's happening in those other jurisdictions and ensuring that we have a system that is either consistent with other jurisdictions, but it's fair to our tenants and the residents in the Northwest Territories. I think right now, from the issues that we've heard in this House, the concerns I've heard going into communities, we do have a system that we have to revisit. I think we are looking at that. I'm hoping to have something ready within the next number of weeks so I can take it to committee and possibly have a chance to review it then. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 154-15(5): Rent Scale Policy For Public Housing**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to know that they are reviewing other jurisdictions, because I myself have done some reviews of other jurisdictions and they seem to have kind of tossed this whole rent policy out the door and went on something like their taxable income for people, which would alleviate their level of anxiety of how much their rent is going to be from one month to the next. At least they don't have to file their monthly rental claims every month and people are more in tune to seek

meaningful employment for a given year given the fact that they know what they're rent is going to be in the next six months as opposed to what it's going to be in the next month. So I just want to inform the Minister, I guess let the Minister know, that there is a lot of ideas and a lot of options out there and I think that it's prudent that his department do a thorough review of the old policy and hopefully we'll have something in place in the next six months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 154-15(5): Rent Scale Policy For Public Housing**

**HON. DAVID KRUTKO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are looking at the whole area of who do we calculate rent from gross income versus another system that we use looking at the...I think it's important that whatever we do we are going to have to...Any rent that we change we have to ensure that we follow the tenants act that is in place by notifying our clients that there is going to be a change, and also whatever we do here has to conform with how we are able to not only look at the policies that we have within the government, but also ensuring that we have a system that's working in conjunction with other programs. One of them is the subsidy that presently is in place with regards to ECE, how that's going to be worked into the program so that we don't have people that are treated unfairly. But more importantly, that we look at all aspects of it from gross income to looking at a new formula of how people pay, what's the percentages. I think at the end of the day it has to pan out that we have the ability to continue to operate the corporation but, more importantly, do it in a fair system that it meets the residents' needs. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Oral Questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Question 155-15(5): Elders' Fuel Subsidy Programs**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to continue these questions to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment in regards to the Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Program. Mr. Speaker, in the communities there are some elders who receive this subsidy and some of the elders that don't receive this subsidy. In some of the communities, it causes conflict between the elders. Some of the elders who say they should also be receiving because of the hard work they have done and the pensions that now they're receiving from the jobs that they worked at. They don't have any subsidies, and yet they're still struggling with other elders who are on this fuel subsidy. So I want to ask the Minister in terms of adjusting the threshold for all elders to be eligible in some sense for this subsidy. There's some elders that work hard, that are said they make too much money. They can't give you the subsidy. Elders just shake their head. So they get conflict with their neighbours. They say all elders should be treated the same. Maybe some levels some elders should get more subsidy, but that's what they're saying and it's causing a lot of friction and a lot of conflict in the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 155-15(5): Elders' Fuel Subsidy Programs**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whether or not all of our seniors' programs should be universal or whether or not they should be income tested is part of the process that we're going through as we review our income security programs. I intend to discuss that sort of approach with the Standing Committee on Social Programs and Members of this Legislative Assembly as we come up with program design. The important thing to keep in mind will, of course, be the cost. We're going to have to take a look at what we can do for program change with an existing cost and what we might be able to do if we're able to spend a little more money or take some money out of one program to put into another. But this is going to take a lot of work to try to figure out where we can find extra money to put into the program like the Member's asking me to do right now. So I've committed that I will work with the committee to examine just exactly how we should handle this sort of program. I can't promise that it's going to be resolved before this winter heating season, but it is something that we expect to have resolved before the next winter heating season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 155-15(5): Elders' Fuel Subsidy Programs**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know it's going to be a costly initiative. I know the existing dollars are not right now in this government. But there's got to be some creative solution from this side and from the House here. We can't go back to the elders in Colville Lake, Deline, Fort Good Hope and say to them listen, we have to wait another year. Sorry, but we don't have enough money. That's unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, we have to go back to the communities and tell the elders this is what we can do, this is emergency funding, this is what we're doing with it. Oil companies are doing it with the other agencies to get fuel into the communities, either be it wood or diesel fuel. So we have to come back. So I'm going to ask again to this Minister, can he go back to this Cabinet, ask his Cabinet members to think about doing something so that we can give the elders a break in terms of this program for this winter? I understand where he's coming from, but it's unacceptable. Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 155-15(5): Elders' Fuel Subsidy Programs**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government respects and honours the seniors in the Northwest Territories. We're probably the only government in Canada that provides this kind of fuel subsidy to our residents, but we don't have money right now to make this a universal program and there are a lot of seniors who can afford to pay for their own fuel.

There are seniors who have had government jobs and have pensions. So not everybody is going to be treated exactly the same right now. The program is set up that we have to live within the money that was budgeted. It was approved by Members of this House in February of this year. I'm prepared to look at all of the options. But you

know, as Mr. Ramsay said earlier today, we don't have a lot of money to respond to last-minute issues. So when prices go up all of a sudden, it hurts us. When the federal government cuts us all of a sudden, it hurts us. We don't have the flexibility to all of a sudden just start adding to our programs halfway through the year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Supplementary To Question 155-15(5): Elders' Fuel Subsidy Programs**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize to the Minister. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the Minister if he would conduct, do a sweep or a survey of all the communities that have elders that are living independently that need help there. He'll have unanimous support by the elders in terms of this is what we need. It's not much. We have money. We're putting our money to other priorities. We're talking about priorities and there is money in this government. Shift them to the elders first. Do the basic thing. Do the right thing. Help them out for this year. That would eliminate all the stress and conflict with our elders in the communities. Put the money in the people, not in the buildings. Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 155-15(5): Elders' Fuel Subsidy Programs**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, this government does respect and honour its elders. We don't charge rent for seniors in social housing. We have increased, in this year's budget, the pension amount that we provide to seniors. We do provide a heating subsidy to seniors who are in need and our income support, as a means of last resort for seniors who need help. So, Mr. Speaker, I will continue to look at the program and see what we can do, but I don't want to give the Members false hope that I have a lot of room to move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Supplementary To Question 155-15(5): Elders' Fuel Subsidy Programs**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not giving myself here false hope. It's giving false hope to the elders. We have to take care of them. We have to do something out of the extraordinary to take care of them. Give them the fuel. They are complaining to me in Colville Lake. So will the Minister do the honourable thing and respect the elders, give them the fuel that they need this year, talk to your Cabinet Ministers and give them a break? Don't break the elders. Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 155-15(5): Elders' Fuel Subsidy Programs**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard the honourable Member from the other side and we'll look at what our options are. Thank you.

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

**Question 156-15(5): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project Profits**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to use the remainder of the question period to pose one more question to the Premier and it's in regards to what I heard this morning from the study that was done by Alternatives North, which suggests that the potential income, or revenue, or profit, from the pipeline development for industry could be as high as \$17 billion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Wow!

**MS. LEE:** I think we understand that this is a mega, mega project, and the latest figure I've heard was a \$7 billion investment required by the consortium and the cost is going up. But even at \$10 billion, a \$17 billion profit is quite healthy. It's an 80 to 100 percent return. I think anybody would go for that.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Take care of the elders.

**MS. LEE:** I think what we are looking at is what portion of \$17 billion or any relation to that does this government stand to gain from that. Could the Premier enlighten the House as to what his response is to that?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

**Return To Question 156-15(5): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project Profits**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a copy of the presentation that was made; we've seen some media reports on it. We're doing a review of it now to try to figure out how they arrived at the numbers they have. If it is \$17 billion profit, I agree with the Member, that is a lot of profit. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 156-15(5): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project Profits**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to be clear that I don't have a problem with people making a profit. I mean that's what makes the markets go around. Good on them if the companies can come and make profits. I'm interested in what is the GNWT getting in this development project. I think it is the resources of our territory; it has a lot to do with our future economic prosperity. Good on the aboriginal governments for working hard to get what is beneficial to them, but I have to tell you that we have to be very concerned that in the whole mix of things we've got nothing so far...

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Nothing.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Nothing. Zip.

**MS. LEE:** ...for the territorial government. So what is the Premier going to do, in light of this new information, to stand up for the NWT and for this government? Thank you.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Stand up.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Time for question period has expired; however, I'll allow the Premier to answer the question. Mr. Handley.

**Further Return To Question 156-15(5): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project Profits**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we will look at it. We want to know, we want to try and figure out ourselves what is the profit on this project. If there is huge profit, then we need our fair share of it. Mr. Speaker, I don't have a quarrel either with companies making a lot of money on these projects, but we do want our share and right now we have no commitment to have our share and it becomes increasingly difficult to support these kinds of projects if we're not getting a fair share of the resource revenues.

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

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** If all we're getting is a little bit of corporate tax, a little bit of property tax and some payroll tax, and a lot of people may be getting jobs, that is still not enough. We know there's resource revenues that the federal government will benefit from on this project for a long, long time, and we need to get that share. I have stayed adamant with the federal government that any support for these kind of projects has to be tied to a fair share for us. The Prime Minister, in fact, has said that; now he's got to act on it.

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

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Handley. I'll allow one more supplementary question, Ms. Lee.

**Supplementary To Question 156-15(5): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project Profits**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not an economist, but I don't think it takes...I mean this new report just says what I think we already have known. These consortiums of these mega companies who have projects around the world would not be spending the kind of money and the time they are if they weren't going to make money. I mean that should not come to us as a surprise.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Short question, Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Mr. Speaker, I think that this government, and this Legislature, and the Premier, and the Cabinet, will be judged on how we come out in terms of benefits for the people of the Northwest Territories. I need to hear from the Premier very precisely what is it exactly he's asking the Prime Minister and how he's about to get that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 156-15(5): Mackenzie Valley Gas Project Profits**

**HON. JOE HANDLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are negotiating with the federal government and with Imperial. No doubt, Imperial, or Exxon who owns most of them, make profits. That's what those businesses do. But, Mr. Speaker, we are insisting with the federal government that they work with us to conclude an agreement-in-principle on devolution and resource revenue sharing within a

matter of months. Mr. Speaker, we need their commitment to do that, otherwise, as I said, our support for these kind of big projects is questionable why we're doing it. Mr. Speaker, on resource revenues we're saying agree to an agreement-in-principle, then start working on a final agreement. The Prime Minister has said that the northerners should be the primary beneficiaries of resource revenues. That to me sounds like 50 percent plus, and that is where we are negotiating with the federal government on resource revenues. Of course, there's other areas in terms of socioeconomic impact and so on that we're negotiating as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

**Written Question 17-15(5): Sale Of Public Housing Initiative**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation.

1. Under the sale of the public housing initiative, how many units have been sold to public housing clients over the past three years?
2. Under the sale of public housing initiative, how many units which have been sold have been repossessed or have outstanding arrears owed to the government?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Written questions. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

**Written Question 18-15(5): Behchoko Local Housing Authority**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation.

With the recent letter from the chairperson of the housing authority in Behchoko, I would like to request the following:

1. Has there been layoffs at the local housing authority in Behchoko since September until present? If there was, how many?
2. How many more layoffs are we expecting within the local housing authority in Behchoko?
3. With these proposed layoffs, are there any impacts on the local members living in the community, those that speak the Tlicho language? How many are impacted?
4. Was there any consultation between the Housing Corporation and the local housing authority of Behchoko on these proposed changes? When and how many meetings took place?

Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to

opening address. Petitions. Reports of standing and special committees. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

### ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

#### Tabled Document 47-15(5): Workers' Compensation Board - Reflections (Summer 2006)

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled Reflections Magazine, Summer 2006. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Dent. Tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

#### Tabled Document 48-15(5): Maps Of The Proposed Electoral Districts As Described In Bill 14

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling maps of the proposed electoral districts described in Bill 14. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

#### Tabled Document 49-15(5): Letter To The Editor Regarding Literacy Funding Reductions, Yellowknifer Newspaper, October 20, 2006

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to table a document on the literacy cuts that have impact in the community. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

#### Tabled Document 50-15(5): Letter From The Dehcho Divisional Education Council Regarding Staff Housing

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter from the Dehcho Divisional Education Council with regard to housing issues in the Deh Cho. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The Chair apologizes; I may have missed an item on the Order Paper. I don't know if I called reports of committees on the review of bills, but I will call it anyway. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Motions. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

### ITEM 18: SECOND READING OF BILLS

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

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to revise the current electoral

districts. The bill comes into force on the polling day for the general election that follows the dissolution of the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. A motion is on the floor. Motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 14 has had second reading. Honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

**MR. POKIAK:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2) and have Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2, moved into Committee of the Whole for Monday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2) and have Bill 14 moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Bill 14 has had second reading and will be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration on Monday.

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bills 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12, with Mr. Ramsay in the chair.

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

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, colleagues. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Committee would like to consider Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2006, and Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi, Mr. Menicoche. We will do that. Does the committee agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Agreed. Thank you, committee. We will do that after a brief recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order and we are dealing with Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2006. I'd like to now ask the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Brendan Bell, if he'd like to introduce the bill. Mr. Bell.

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The purpose of Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2006, is to amend various statutes of the Northwest Territories for which minor changes are proposed or errors or inconsistencies have been identified.

Each amendment included in the bill had to meet the following criteria:

- a) It must not be controversial;
- b) It must not involve the spending of public funds;
- c) It must not prejudicially affect the rights of persons; and,
- d) It must not create a new offence or subject a new class of persons to an existing offence.

Departments responsible for the various statutes being amended have reviewed and approved the changes.

Most amendments proposed in Bill 8 are minor in nature and many consistent of technical corrections to a statute. Other changes have the effect of repealing certain statutory provisions that have expired or have otherwise ceased to have effect. The amendments are of such a nature that the preparation and legislative consideration of individual bills to correct each statute would be time consuming for the government and the Legislative Assembly.

We will be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Bell. I will now ask the deputy chairman of Accountability and Oversight, Mr. Braden, to provide the committee's comments on the bill. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight conducted its public review of Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006, and October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Following the committee's review, Mr. Chairman, a motion was carried to report Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, to the Assembly as ready for Committee of the Whole. This concludes the committee's opening comments on Bill 8. Individual Members may have additional questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. I'd now like to ask Minister Bell if he has any witnesses he'd like to introduce.

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Agreed. Thank you, committee. So moved. The witnesses please, Mr. Bell.

Thank you. Minister Bell, if you could, for the record, please introduce the witness. Thank you.

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Mr. Chairman, thank you. With me today, Mark Aitken is the director of legislation, Department of Justice. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Bell. We'll now move on to general comments on the bill. Are there any general comments on Bill 8? Does committee agree there are no general comments?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Clause by clause.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause by clause. Alright, we will start clause by clause. Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2006, clause 1.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 2.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 3.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 4.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 5.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 6.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 7.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 8.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 9.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 10.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Back to the bill as a whole.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you. Does the committee agree that Bill 8 is ready for third reading?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Agreed. Thank you. Bill 8 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, committee. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Mr. Aitken.

Thank you, colleagues. We will now look at consideration of Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007. Does the Minister wish to bring in witnesses?

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am here to introduce Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007. This bill requests authority for the forgiveness of certain debts listed in the schedule of the act.

Pursuant to section 25(1) of the Financial Administration Act, the forgiveness of a debt or obligation to the government exceeding \$1,000 must receive Legislative Assembly approval.

When a debt is forgiven, no further collection action shall be pursued.

The forgiveness of certain debts being proposed in this act will not require a new appropriation. Allowances for doubtful accounts were charged to an appropriation at the time it was determined that collection of the debts was considered unlikely.

The accounts being recommended for forgiveness are the result of bankruptcy, compromise settlements and/or are in the public interest.

In cases where a compromise settlement is reached, the following factors have been considered:

- the possibility of future recoveries;
- the cost to continue legal actions; and,
- the value of security. For example, do the personal guarantees hold a realizable worth.

That concludes my opening remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions Members may have. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. I'll now go to the deputy chair of the Accountability and Oversight committee, Mr. Braden, for committee's comments on Bill 10. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight reviewed Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007, at a meeting on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006. This concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 10. Mr. Chairman, individual Members may have comments or questions as we proceed. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Does the Minister wish to bring in witnesses?

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Agreed. Please, Minister Roland and Sergeant-at-Arms, we'll entertain the witnesses.

Thank you. Mr. Roland, if you could, please indicate your witness, for the record.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me at the table is the secretary to the FMB, Mr. Mark Cleveland.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. Welcome, Mr. Cleveland. General comments from committee on Bill 10. General comments. Mr. McLeod.

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to declare a potential conflict of interest in relation to a person's name in the schedule to Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007. I will withdraw my discussion on this item and remove myself from this House.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Moving on to general comments. Mr. Yakeleya.

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the question I had somewhat was answered, and I'd like to follow up with Minister Roland on this specific bill here, more in line with the debt counselling in terms of how or what type of system process we have in terms of helping people with debt counselling. I know there are many steps to go in terms of trying to get these debts collected. I know some people are good, honest, hard-working people who want to work on this and sometimes there's a blockage or barriers for whatever reason. Does the Government of the Northwest Territories have any form of unit or an office where debt counselling, financial planning can be used by the people of the Northwest Territories to resolve some of these debts that we are going to see in this bill here? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as we find ourselves at this stage of coming forward with a bill of forgiveness of debts, many things have occurred before we get to this stage. These all originate within departments, and departments initially would work with individuals. For example, if there's a debt with student financial assistance, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and that section would work with students initially, trying to set a program up or a plan to recover that debt. Beyond that, then it goes to the next stage when the government then goes into a more formal process of debt collection. Some accounts are sent to the private sector for collection; at least in the past we've done that. As well, our...(inaudible)...within FMBS would look at that. So there are a number of ways counselling does happen, but it's normally initially done through departments at the initial stage when they recognize a problem is growing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly support the departments going through their own debt counselling process in terms of retrieving some of the debts that they would like to have paid back. Maybe I could be a little more specific, Mr. Chair. Is the core need under one department to have all these debts? I know this is the last stage of the debt efforts and it's going through this bill here. I'm leading up to a framework that all the departments go there and say this is how we'll handle it. Is there one shop, I'm asking, that people in the communities and people in the Northwest Territories can call, rather than call the housing? It has a different debt collection process. Student financial has another process where they collect their debts, and other departments. Is there one unit within the government that people can call and say this is what we have? One unit can give them basic information and this is the way they can help them.

I know we're at the end of the stage on this bill here. I certainly support the Minister on this process here in terms of the forgiveness of this bill here. I'm just looking at ways that the people in the North can make one phone call and then they can be directed to...they know the framework of...(inaudible)...up their debt. Because this debt here will hurt people in the long run, in terms of their credit rating, credit base. So I'm just working out a scenario here, Mr. Chair. Thank you.



**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Member's correct; at this stage it does hurt individuals for credit rating as we find ourselves at this stage, because it's already gone through the collections process and was not recovered. As I stated earlier, there are a number of factors that come in, but it is primarily done...The initial counselling or discussion of trying to set up prepayment plans is done within departments and boards and agencies. Because it's such a broad spectrum of groups that are involved, whether it's specifically with departments or agencies, there are a number of different factors that do come into play. It does get much more formal when it comes to our stage, and that's government accounting. When we come to this stage, it is much more formal because we are now in the stage of collecting the money and trying to recover any potential loss. For more detail on some of the specifics, Mr. Cleveland will get into that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Cleveland.

**MR. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member's quite correct; that for the vast majority of individuals accessing funding, debt collection isn't a problem. Most people do pay on time.

When the individual departments do counsel individuals who have debts, they tend to work out something that will work for the individual. We do the same thing once it comes to government accounting. All of the debts from across the government get consolidated there, except for those that are with boards and agencies. So all of the government's debts are with the government accounting, and the staff in government accounting then do try to contact the individual and work with the individual to establish a reasonable payment plan that matches their income as well as their debt. Generally speaking, we're successful in that. If we cannot, we then continue to pursue it. If the debt is under \$5,000 and we're unsuccessful in setting up a repayment plan, it is referred to a collection agency. If it's a larger amount, more than \$5,000, then we actually do that work ourselves over time.

So to answer the Member's questions, the debts are consolidated within government accounting. The staff in government accounting do work with individuals to set up a repayment plan that meet the individual's needs and reflect the debt. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Minister and deputy minister, in terms of the process. This process here, what you just explained to me, it's so simple that, you know, it could be communicated to the people in the regions in the communities. I know people in the communities in the regions, from the goodness of their heart, uncertainty sometimes comes with seasonal work or things that come up in their lives that they sometimes have to cause a delay in their payment for whatever reason. I guess what I'm asking is that they understand the process well. It does come to a consolidated unit and sometimes, because of the amount of debts that the government is trying to collect in all the Northwest Territories, it's more on the paper than the

numbers and hearing what the people's situations are. You know, it works both sides, it works both sides. Everybody has to take responsibility for it, so I guess that's what I'm looking at in terms of the forgiveness of this debt here.

I guess I wanted to ask in terms of the Minister must be doing a good job because the amount of debts are going down. We see a decrease over the years and the numbers are showing that we are being fairly successful in collecting debts. Mr. Chair, that's what I have here. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What we're in the process of doing is trying to clear off our older files from the books. We realize that we're not going to be collecting on these ones and haven't been doing so for a while. Hopefully as we proceed down the path working with departments and now with regional directors put in place, that will be another avenue on providing information to regions and communities regarding some of the services. We'll also communicate with departments that are in the business of lending money or providing grants to individuals, that information be passed on to those who are receiving funds from our government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask the Minister in terms of their being diligent about their debt collection and the prevention, or are they just lending less money out to the public in the Northwest Territories as there were no write-offs for this year or last year. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. Minister Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's a number of factors that play a role here. Year by year it would fluctuate. With our stronger economy in the Northwest Territories, the job market being as robust as it is, more people employed and being able to meet their payment plans and so on has been good in that sense. So it would fluctuate from year to year. Yes, over the last number of years, the government has tightened up on its collection side to ensure that we clean up that section of area and government accounting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. Next on the list I have Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a quick question with regard to the total amount of debts that the government wants forgiven in this act. After these debts are forgiven, does the government continue to pursue payment of these debts? I think we just write them off here in the House for government accounting procedures. I know other government organizations that do forgive debts, like LHOs, for instance, after they are forgiven and taken off the books, they still continue to pursue payment of some of these debts. Is that what the government does today? Thank you.

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

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, with our process that we have in place within government, our system is set up in two stages. The first one would be the Write-off of Debts Act that would come forward. That would stop the collection or the interest from continuing to grow. It clearly establishes a doubtful account. At that point, we still go after trying to collect the funds.

At this stage here, forgiveness of debts, we are actually forgiving the debt and no further collection process is undertaken from this point on. Thank you.

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

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister just tell me, is it just due to the lack of resources that we don't continue to pursue...Some of these debts are pretty big. Is it just because of human resources reasons that we don't do that? Is it the workload? What are the reasons that we don't continue to collect? Thank you.

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

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we undertake a number of avenues of trying to collect funds from those who owe money to the Government of the Northwest Territories through a number of initiatives, but there are a number of factors that we do have to live by as well as the Government of the Northwest Territories. Some of these accounts or loans, grants that were put in place had attached to them guarantees and so on in place, or a business that was established would shut down and go out of business and all assets may have been sold, but not enough to repay the full debt.

At times, we also run out of time. It's what is called statute barred that we would not be able to continue to pursue. That comes into play as well. When we have someone that would cease, that also sets this into action. When we reach what we would call a compromised settlement where we have looked at the situation realizing we aren't going to get the full amount that is owed and come up with a settlement on what we are able to come back with and collect. So there are a number of factors that do come into play here.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. Next I will go for more general comments. Any further general comments? There are no further general comments, so we will move into consideration of Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007. Committee, we will stand down consideration of the clause-by-clause review and deal with the schedule of the bill to begin our review process. If I could direct committee's attention to please turn to page 3, schedule, debts forgiveness, items one to 15 are found on page 3. Are there any questions or comments on page 3?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Let's now turn to page 5, item 16 to 32. Are there any questions on those items?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you. On page 7, items 33 to 49. Are there any questions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Moving right along, we will turn to page 9, items 50 to 67.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** The final page on the schedule is page 11, item 68 to 72. Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a quick question on the debt on the workers' compensation assessment for Northern American Tungsten Corporation for \$101,871.80. Could the Minister provide some clarification on what that debt was for and why it's being written off? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Mahsi, Mr. Villeneuve. Minister Roland.

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, that debt is being forgiven as a result of a court settlement. Thank you.

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

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess the government lost the court settlement. I just wanted more clarification of why we are writing off \$100,000 for a company that seems to me is still in operation here in the NWT. Thank you.

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

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as I stated, we tried a number of avenues to collect the money that is due to ourselves in a number of areas. This initially came out of the Workers' Compensation Board of NWT and Nunavut and the amount that was owed to them. The company itself reopened in 2001 and at the end of 2003 was forced to apply to the British Columbia Supreme Court for protection under the Companies Creditors Arrangement Act. That was received in December of that year. So that's what kicked this off. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. Anything further, Mr. Villeneuve?

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for my own understanding, are we following a court order from the province of B.C. in writing off this debt? Thank you.

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

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The company would have been registered in that province and filed in that province. The portion we received was applied to that account and that would be directed by the courts what creditors would be given with what's available. In this case, this is the amount we were not able to recover and hence we are coming forward for a write-off. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. Next I have Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, have an inquiry about item 72, North American Tungsten Corporation, a debt to the Workers' Compensation Board for almost \$102,000. The question I guess I have, Mr. Chairman is jurisdiction. Why is this item before this committee? We don't typically, in fact at all, does this Assembly approve anything to do with the Workers' Compensation Board, not a penny. They are an independent organization with their own administration and I guess I can't recall when something like this has come before us. Why is it that we are asked to sign off on something that the compensation board, from my understanding, should have jurisdiction, Mr. Chairman?

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

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, presently the way the Financial Administration Act is worded, it does identify that all write-offs have to flow through this process. It is something that we've recognized as an issue. In the re-workings of coming forward with a new FAA, that will be taken into account. Thank you.

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

**MR. BRADEN:** While we are on a technicality here, this is a shared Workers' Compensation Board. Does Nunavut have to go through a similar clunkety-clunk, Mr. Chair?

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

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would have to get that detail. I am unsure if Nunavut has to follow the same process. It is a joint coverage. I am not sure if their FAA is written identical to ours. Thank you.

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

**MR. BRADEN:** So in other cases, Mr. Chairman, with the Workers' Compensation Board where forgiveness is the logical thing to do, is the Workers' Compensation Board actually involved in going through that process and making that decision, or do they punt their bad debts over to us for management? Who looks after bad accounts on the part of the WCB, Mr. Chairman?

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

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. WCB is directly involved with this process. They go through their own process of taking this into account. In fact, the majority of information provided to us is as a result of WCB's work they provided to us because they recognize the act in place and follow that process through. So they have developed it. They have taken it into account and put it into their doubtful accounts, but because of our act, the way it's written, have provided us with that information. In a sense, it's a final clearance. Thank you.

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

**MR. BRADEN:** Finally, Mr. Chairman, just for clarification. The WCB then has full responsibility and accountability for its own debts and its own books. The GNWT does not get involved in it in any way except for this administrative situation here with managing or handling or deciding on their debt portfolio, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Yes, that's correct. The WCB is fully involved in their own process. It comes to our table again just because of the Financial Administration Act and we put it through this final stage. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Minister Roland. We are still on page 11, the final page, and that is page 11 to the schedule, item 68 to 72. Any further questions on that page?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, committee. The total of debts forgiven is \$655,035.55. Are there any questions to that amount?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Okay. We will return to page 1 of the bill of the clause-by-clause review. Clause 1.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Clause 2.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you. To the bill as a whole.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Does committee agree that Bill 10 is ready for third reading?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, committee. Bill 10 is now ready for third reading. I would like to thank Minister Roland and Mr. Cleveland and ask committee what is the wish of committee. Mr. Menicoche.

**MR. MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we report progress.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. I will rise and report progress. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Could I have the report of Committee of the Whole? Mr. Ramsay.

#### ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 8,

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2006, and Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007, and would like to report that Bills 8 and 10 are ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

#### ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte):** Mr. Speaker, orders of the day for Monday, October 23, 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
  - Bill 13, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2006-2007
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 6, Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act
  - Bill 7, Pharmacy Act
  - Bill 11, Tourism Act

- Bill 12, Garnishment Remedies Statutes Amendment Act
- Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2

20. Report of Committee of the Whole

21. Third Reading of Bills

- Bill 8, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2006
- Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2006-2007

22. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 23, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

