



# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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

## **HANSARD**

**Monday, October 30, 2006**

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**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Monday, October 30, 2006****Members Present**

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

**ITEM 1: PRAYER**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey):** Please be seated. Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Ministers' statements. The honourable Deputy Premier, Mr. Roland.

**ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS****Minister's Statement 47-15(5): Premier Absent From The House**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the Honourable Joe Handley will be absent from the House today to attend the Council of the Federation Energy Committee meeting in Montreal, Quebec. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Ministers' statements.

**Minister's Statement 48-15(5): Water Treatment Circuit Rider Training Program**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** The health of our residents and our environment depend on the effective management and protection of our natural resources such as our water. Communities, non-government agencies and all levels of government must work together to ensure that a safe drinking water system is in place and operating effectively.

The Government of the Northwest Territories' Drinking Water Quality Framework and Strategy has been developed collaboratively by the departments of Municipal and Community Affairs, Public Works and Services, Environment and Natural Resources and Health and Social Services, with a mandate to protect drinking water quality in Northwest Territories communities.

Key goals contained within the framework include enhancing community capacity and providing effective monitoring and assessments of local water systems. To address this objective, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, in partnership with the Department of Public Works and Services, has initiated a Northwest Territories Circuit Rider Training Program to support water treatment plant operators.

The Circuit Rider Training Program provides an experienced water system operator, or circuit rider, onsite in the community to support the water treatment plant operator. The circuit rider works with the local community operator to improve the operational efficiency of the water system by providing assessment and ongoing training to help build knowledge, skills and competencies.

The ultimate goal of the Circuit Rider Training Program is to work with communities to provide safe drinking water by improving operational efficiency of water treatment plants and water supply systems, as well as enhancing the skills of water treatment plant operators. The Circuit Rider

Training Program will result in community-specific operational and maintenance plans as well as customized training plans in participating communities.

In 2006-2007, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is working with eight communities who will benefit from the first year of this Northwest Territories customized plan. The eight communities are Whati, Gameti, Wekweeti, Wrigley, Trout Lake, Lutsel'k'e, Deline and Paulatuk.

Initial assessments will be completed with the communities to identify operational issues and competency levels of local operators, after which a plan for support will be developed and implemented.

The Circuit Rider Program will result in improved operations at community water treatment plants and increased skills among operators.

We look forward to continued success in our partnerships with communities to help ensure the health of our communities and safe drinking water for all residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

**Minister's Statement 49-15(5): Career And Skills Development**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. Mr. Speaker, this week, October 29<sup>th</sup> to November 4<sup>th</sup>, is Canada Career Week. The theme of Canada Career Week this year is: "Find the Work You Love...Build the Life You Want." The career each of us chooses determines how we spend much of our lives. That is one reason it is important to develop a career that is rewarding and fulfilling. A rewarding career takes careful planning. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has a role to play in helping NWT residents to realize their career goals.

In the NWT, we celebrate Career Week with a series of events taking place in communities throughout the NWT that are designed to increase awareness about the range of programs available to support NWT residents in their efforts to find and keep work, to make career changes or to acquire additional skills.

This week is an opportunity to showcase the valuable work being done in our career centres across the Northwest Territories, which provide career planning programs and services. These centres have a wealth of information to help people plan and pursue a career. I encourage everyone to drop into their local career centre and check out Canada Career Week activities.

As we celebrate Canada Career Week, I would also like to draw attention to several new initiatives to promote and improve the career and skills development of our people.

As this House is aware, the NWT economy and other hot Western Canadian economies have resulted in significant skilled labour shortages.

As part of the response to this challenge, this government works with industry to assist in meaningful and relevant training. The Building Trades Helper Program has been designed to meet industry needs in one of the largest and busiest sectors of our economy, the construction industry. This program provides individuals with construction-specific knowledge and skills to become occupationally certified as a building trades helper.

Collaborative partnerships were integral to this initiative. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment worked with the NWT Construction Association and over 50 industry experts who volunteered their time and expertise in the development of standards that provided the foundation for the design of this program. I would like to take this opportunity to commend their efforts.

The standards, curriculum and resource materials have been designed and packaged so that the program can be delivered in a variety of venues and communities with ease. Mr. Speaker, over the next year, these resources are also being offered to schools throughout the NWT in support of trades awareness and career and technology studies programming. This program serves as an example of how we are preparing and developing our workforce.

Further, in order to serve northerners and our changing economy, the NWT Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Program must provide a responsive system, supported by appropriate legislation, able to meet the needs of northerners and the demands of industry. To this end, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has commissioned a comprehensive review, that will include regional consultations, to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of NWT apprenticeship and occupational certification. The review will define the benchmarks that will allow for continuous program evaluation and delivery, ensuring our program meets both the needs of northerners and national standards.

One of the main challenges our government faces is to transform this tremendous economic boom we are experiencing into real sustainability. By using this unprecedented economic growth to invest in the career and skills development of our people, we are promoting self-reliance and securing long-term benefits for our people and communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

### ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Member's Statement On Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sadly the Northwest Territories has one of the highest rates of persons with addictions related to drug and alcohol in this country. We have only one Territorial Treatment Centre for adults who are looking for help with recovery from alcohol and drug addictions. That is the Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre on the Hay River Reserve. The centre is operated under a third-party contract with the Deh Cho Health and Social Services Authority. Recently we were saddened to hear that the clients attending Nats'ejee K'eh had to be transferred to a treatment centre in northern Alberta. All 22 workers at the centre were locked out by their employer.

The workers at Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre are northerners, many of them indigenous aboriginal northerners. The treatment at the centre incorporates cultural and traditional values and has been operating for 13 years. The workers have been without a contract for the past three and half years. The conditions of their employment follow a previous contract. However, when negotiation or ratification of a new contract or any question of clarification of existing terms are questioned the employer uses the opportunity to, in essence, threaten the continuation of the benefits that they now have.

Without a contract in place for the past three and a half years there have been no pay increases. When inflation is factored in, we all know that the effect of this is a decrease in pay. The credentials of many of the workers are directly comparable to employees in the public service. The comparison of the wages clearly indicates that the workers at Nats'ejee K'eh are not at wage parity with their counterparts in the public service.

Quite apart from economic issues, though, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this is an institution funded through a GNWT contract. It is a very necessary and needed service for northerners. The alternative for treatment is to ship our residents to placements in Alberta and pay even more for the services. We have long discussed the desire for the Members of this House to be repatriating northerners who now have to seek specialized treatment in the South and I could go on at length about the benefits of providing this treatment in the North. We talk about building capacity for northerners to deal with northern issues and challenges, yet we have a group of 22 workers, a unique and necessary service with a proven track record for helping those most in need, and as a government we lack the power or the will to deal with a labour issue which would see our workers locked out and our northern clients shipped to Alberta.

Of course I am not privy to all the details of what has taken place to date and I don't hold myself up as an expert in labour relations, however, Mr. Speaker, I do know that there is an obligation on the part of the employer to act in good faith. I know that workers deserve a collective agreement that is current, fair and equitable.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, colleagues, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also know that even though this is a third-party contract, the GNWT has an obligation to be involved. They need to ensure that this service that we have invested in, the treatment that the workers have invested in, the help that northern clients desperately need, is not tossed away because of unfair labour practices. The GNWT cannot hide behind third-party contract status. On behalf of Nats'ejee K'eh workers, I request that the GNWT do anything in its power to see the situation resolved. Mr. Speaker, later today I will be asking the Minister of Health and Social Services questions about the contract for the operation of Nats'ejee K'eh and I will be tabling a petition asking the GNWT to do anything that they can to bring about a resolution of the circumstances which have led to this lockout. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause.

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

**Member's Statement On Immigrant Settlement Program In Yellowknife**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as an immigrant to this great city of Yellowknife, from the beginning I was blessed with great teachers at the school and great family friends we met through church and other activities who helped us a lot and made it possible to get on with our life here and become contributing members of our society. Over the last 30 years I have seen Yellowknife change and become not only the biggest aboriginal community in the North, but one of the most multi-cultural cities in Canada. The vibrant aurora tourism and diamond industry and other economic opportunities have brought more and more newcomers to the city from every corner of the globe. We have welcomed them, but I have to tell you that the programs and services necessary to help them adapt and integrate into the mainstream society have not kept pace with these influxes at all. In fact, the services are about the same as what it was back in 1978 when there were very few immigrants in the city.

The English as a Second Language Program available at Aurora College serves the needs of only a part of this population, but there is no other English language assistance program, and anyone who has helped with or gone through immigration experience knows there is a million things that individuals and families need to know and get help with to settle in Canada; everything from how to shop in our stores, get a job, fill out government forms, learn different cultures and ways of life. For most families, they rely on their families and friends and their church groups.

But there is a volunteer group in Yellowknife operating out of the Centre for Northern Families who applied for funding to set up an immigration settlement program in Yellowknife and I was so disappointed, Mr. Speaker, to learn that the federal government has rejected this proposal. Shame on them, Mr. Speaker, because I have to tell you that the needs are enormous and the federal government has to recognize that it has an obligation to help provinces and territories look after and integrate the immigrant population it brings in, especially if it wants to see the immigrants settle in places away from the main cities of Vancouver and Toronto. There are currently no programs and services available at the municipal and territorial government level, but it is not our mandate to be the significant provider of these kinds of programs. This is completely within the mandate of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and I call upon the federal government to once again step up to the plate and do the right thing by these immigrants. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

**Member's Statement On Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was home for the weekend and I was talking to some of the people in my community. I ran into a young little girl in Northern Store and I waved to her so she'll know it's me waving to her. Said she sees me on TV and all the other Members and she was quite happy. When I was home and had a constituent meeting with some of the people

from Deline and people from Tulita and they were talking about the Nats'ejee K'eh healing, alcohol and drug treatment centre and what was going on with the centre being closed and what was happening. People didn't quite understand what the rationale was for having that treatment centre closed down. They said it was our only treatment centre in the Northwest Territories, now where are we going to send our people? One of the elders said if we had to send them to High Level or other centres outside the Northwest Territories in Alberta, how are the families going to visit them now? They have to drive farther and they have to see them and it's far away. They were quite concerned about the only treatment centre in the Northwest Territories, as you heard and Members have heard, Fort McPherson, Ulukhaktok, are also looking at dealing with issues of alcohol in the communities. They're asking for certain conditions to be put on the communities to look at alcohol. Alcohol is the number one issue in our communities under development, resource, impacts on our communities that the social issues of alcoholism has always come up very strong. We have to really seriously look at this one treatment centre and keep it open. It's our only lighthouse in the Northwest Territories in terms of treatment centres, and having clients come there.

Mr. Speaker, the Nats'ejee K'eh was built on northern values and aboriginal values in terms of it being a unique treatment centre for people in the Northwest Territories and that these counsellors that work there work very hard. They put a lot of value and effort and work into their life and to give clients out there the hope that they will stay sober. We all want that in our communities. So it's the clients and counsellors that are all suffering by having Nats'ejee K'eh closed. So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say that we need to have this government open the doors. We have to pay the counsellors what they're worth, because what they're getting right now is not very much. So I want to say, open the doors for Nats'ejee K'eh. Let's do it for our clients. Thank you.

---Applause

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

**Member's Statement On Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Unchecked global warming will devastate the global economy on the scale of the world wars and the Great Depression, according to a major British report released today that seeks to quantify the costs and benefits of action as well as inaction. British Prime Minister Tony Blair said of the report, it is not in doubt that if the science is right that consequences for our planet are literally disastrous. This disaster is not set to happen in some science fiction future many years ahead, but in our lifetime. Unless we act now, these consequences, disastrous as they are, will be irreversible.

Mr. Speaker, closer to home the proposed Mackenzie gas project will mean a huge boom in the oil and gas industry throughout the Mackenzie Valley. We've all talked about the jobs and opportunities that we anticipate will come with this boom, but we have to keep firmly before us the costs that will be imposed from this project on our communities and our environment.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT needs a comprehensive environmental regulatory regime before the Mackenzie gas pipeline is built. Recent Joint Review Panel hearings

on greenhouse gas emissions and air quality reveal, Mr. Speaker, that no one agency will be responsible for regulating the oil and gas industry in the NWT. We have federal lands, Commissioner's lands, aboriginal lands, municipal lands, and, Mr. Speaker, monitoring and enforcing air quality standards on these lands is going to be a regulatory jumble.

Environment Canada, in a recent report to the joint technical panel on air quality, stated that provincial, territorial and municipal regulations generally do not apply to federal operations and activities on federal and aboriginal lands. As a result, there is a regulatory gap for managing air emissions on federal lands in the NWT. Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada and the National Energy Board will be conferring to do this.

But what about those jurisdictions on other levels of our lands, Mr. Speaker? Air quality in the NWT is going to be a regulatory football, with agencies passing responsibilities back and forth and blaming each other when the football is dropped. When all are responsible, Mr. Speaker, no one is responsible or accountable. We need a clearly defined regulatory authority for the enforcement of air quality standards in the NWT, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last three years I have been pursuing funding in the budget to construct an access road from Tuktoyaktuk granular source No. 177. Mr. Speaker, I have indicated on numerous occasions, source 177 is only 22 kilometres southeast of town and it is the closest source that will address the gravel needs for Tuktoyaktuk.

Mr. Speaker, the Tuk Highway Working Group met with Premier Handley and the Minister of Transportation and the working group was able to receive \$25,000 to conduct a survey of the access route. I appreciate the funding from the Department of Transportation. In order to gain access to source 177, this government needs to identify funds in the 2007-2008 budget. I believe this can be addressed through the access road funding under MACA.

Mr. Speaker, by allowing funding to build an access road to source 177 it will bring economic employment and business opportunities to the Beaufort-Delta. Many small business in the Beaufort-Delta will benefit if this access road can be constructed this winter.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the Premier met with the mayor, the deputy mayor and businessmen from Tuktoyaktuk on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006, in Norman Wells. My understanding from this meeting there was a commitment from the previous Minister of Transportation, Michael McLeod, to have someone from the department assist the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk in preparing an application for source 177. Has this been done to date?

I understand, also, that the Department of Transportation is organizing an Inuvik to Tuk road committee stakeholders meeting in the near future. When will this meeting take place?

At the same time, at the same meeting, the Premier indicated he would set up a meeting with Minister Prentice

to discuss the further funding source for 177. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like the Minister of Transportation to work with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and identify funding in the budget to include an access road to source 177 so that granular requirements of Tuktoyaktuk can be accessed for long-term use. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the affirmative action policy was developed in the late '80s to help the Government of the Northwest Territories develop a representative workforce that is representative of the people that it serves.

Mr. Speaker, that program has had its detractors and supporters from the very start. It has been studied excessively for the last 10 years by the government. In fact, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly I was part of a committee of MLAs that did a report to government suggesting changes to the affirmative action policy, one of them being a change of name to employment equity. We now, as well, have our own human rights legislation.

We're in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the statistics have shown us very clearly that the affirmative action policy is one that needs work; that it hasn't been able to achieve the goals that were set out for it; that it's too broad; that it doesn't allow you to focus on those areas of our occupations and professions where there is a true shortage. It has been very successful at the entry-level positions with the officer and clerical positions, but with limited success elsewhere. Some geographical areas like Yellowknife continue to have a very poor representative workforce compared to the rest of the Northwest Territories.

I know that this Assembly of this Legislature and this government have been looking at that for this particular program now for the last three years and I believe it's high time to do the overhaul that's required. I know that there's going to be discussion on what are the roles of P1s, P2s and P3s, especially in light of mobility legislation, our own human rights legislation. But it is a discussion that has to be undertaken. This is a very important program and one that we cannot keep studying and avoid dealing with.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as we look at this, I would like to point out to everybody and the people of the Northwest Territories, that truly the best affirmative action program is a good education. You can show by our statistics that everybody who gets a diploma or a degree or post-graduate studies or a trade are highly employable -- in the 90 percentile range -- and we have to continue to invest in that particular part of this process. But the actual affirmative action program is ready to be overhauled and I fully support and will have questions later today for the Minister of Human Resources. I fully support moving the employment equity program forward into the discussion stage at the very least with the public. Thank you.

---Applause

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



### **Member's Statement On Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

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

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk on an issue that's very important to the continued survival of the Tlicho and other First Nation languages and cultures. That is the proper funding of a full-time Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructor Program, also known as the ALCIP program, to be delivered through Aurora College.

Mr. Speaker, as it stands right now, the ALCIP program is delivered on a piecemeal basis through either distance learning or individual courses being taught by instructors in the communities. In other cases the students taking the courses are not eligible for student financial assistance to help defray the cost of living expenses because it is not offered as a full-time program, Mr. Speaker.

This is an important program, coupled with the fact that the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment has clearly clarified through the ministerial directive the importance of using funds provided for aboriginal language and cultural programs properly, I believe there is a clear need to ensure there are qualified aboriginal language and cultural instructors in every school of the Northwest Territories. I know of many people who are interested in taking this program and learning how to share their traditional knowledge and language in the classrooms for the next generation of northerners, but these same people are not able to take time away from their employment and their families, take a part-time course delivered on an intermittent basis, Mr. Speaker.

However, Mr. Speaker, I do know these people would be prepared to attend a full-time program at a college and work towards their diploma if they were able to access benefits under the Student Financial Assistance Program and support their families.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

### **Member's Statement On Condolence To The Families Of Helen Toby And Ross Cardinal**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is a sad day for me and many Dene people in and around Yellowknife, especially for Deninu Kue constituents and a lot of people from Detah. Mr. Speaker, this morning I just attended the funeral of the late Ms. Helen Toby. Ms. Toby was a very well-respected Dene elder who lived in Detah and she passed away after a long battle with cancer. I just want to send out my sincere condolences from everyone here in the Legislative Assembly to all the family, friends and relatives and the many, many, many friends of Helen Toby. Our prayers go out to them all.

Mr. Speaker, only a week ago I mentioned in the House the passing away of one of my constituents, Ms. Lorna Norn of Deninu Kue, who was just laid to rest in Fort Resolution just this past Saturday. I was deeply saddened to hear on that same morning the passing away of yet another of my Deninu Kue constituents, Mr. Ross Cardinal. Ross died as a result of a single motor vehicle

accident on Highway No. 5 on early Saturday morning. Ross is survived by his elderly mother, Ms. Dora Cardinal, his three brothers, his two sisters, his two sons, his two daughters, and his two grandchildren. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to send my deepest condolences again from this House to the families and relatives of the late Mr. Ross Cardinal, who will be very sadly missed by all residents of Deninu Kue and the people who knew him. Our prayers are with them also. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

### **Member's Statement On Infrastructure Requirements Of The Inuvik Children First Society**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we stand in here all the time and we speak on the resources of the Northwest Territories, and we are a territory rich in resources. But, Mr. Speaker, I think one of our most precious resources in the Northwest Territories are the children in the Northwest Territories. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I've stood in this Chamber before and I'll stand here again and argue the point that the Children First Society in Inuvik needs to have a centre built as part of the new school.

It's a proven fact, Mr. Speaker, that children who get a good start in their schooling and in their teaching make better citizens, more useful. We talk so much about the vandalism and all the trouble that's been going on in the Northwest Territories with regards to young people, and having a centre, I believe, would help with some of them. They'll learn to respect property, they'll learn to respect each other, and they'll integrate into the school a lot easier because they have a good head start. We have a chance here, Mr. Speaker, to shape some of the future leaders.

There's an old saying, Mr. Speaker, that you reap what you sow and I firmly believe that if we plant the seeds now, years from now we're going to have a fruitful harvest and we're going to have some useful children in the Northwest Territories become good contributing adults. As it stands right now, a lot of people across the Northwest Territories have lost a lot of parenting skills and this is something that we desperately need to work on again.

We expect these people to continue to try and raise money and I really think, Mr. Speaker, that it's time this government starts putting some of its priorities in the proper places. One of those priorities should be an investment into the children of the NWT. Thank you.

---Applause

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

### **Member's Statement On Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about the health care workers at Stanton regarding fairness, a stress-free, and safe working environment. As of late, this weekend I had spoken to a constituent in regards to this important issue; their concern that a staff survey is being done, but want to know if the staff survey is independent. Who's writing the questions? Are they yes's and no's? Are there any interviews being done? Are they really drilling down to what the problems are and are they part of the solution? There are concerns out there,

Mr. Speaker, and that needs to be answered. Is the hospital administration running this survey, or is it a complete and fair, open process?

Money may be spent by moving it out of the hospital administration, but I can guarantee the Minister in charge that there will be buy-in. Is there whistle-blower legislation coming forward so workers feel comfortable bringing forward their concerns without pressures that they're not putting their heads on the chopping block when they bring forward issues? Are there pressures or fairness being done to ensure that worker safety and comfort are there?

We have fairness, Mr. Speaker, in some areas. We have some places you can have 150 hours of overtime where others you're only allowed to have 100, and that's being reduced next year down to 75 because of operational requirements. But the fact is, people need to be happy and feel good in their environment. Have we created a two-tier overtime system? We have workers working side by side, shoulder by shoulder.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes you need to do things to make sure everyone is happy. Although reasons will tell us we shouldn't, we still need to find ways to make them happy. Let's make it refillable, Mr. Speaker, for at least the shift workers. Have we done things to start off by creating anti-harassment training and legislation to work within our hospitals by both union and non-union, Mr. Speaker? What strides have we made there? Are we pitting friend against friend? Sometimes we forget about that because, at the end of the day, we have to work as a family to build morale and strength within our working environment.

I have to tell you, I hear about people working to exhaustion on their holidays, expected to work overtime. Our health care workers can't be worked to the bone, Mr. Speaker, because if they're sick, stressed and burned out, how are they going to care for our loved ones when they have to? We have no one else to turn to. Do we have better solutions out there, such as using agency nurses? They come with a different pay level, Mr. Speaker, but they create different types of pressures.

Mr. Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent at this time to conclude my statement? Thank you.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Hiring agency nursing, Mr. Speaker, may help with the short-term pressures, but the question is, do we have the right staff levels there in the first place? Fixing the Public Service Act constantly gets raised about finding solutions. I say it's time we be innovative and lead Canada rather than someone else coming up with a solution. Let's find a made-in-the-north solution that recognizes seniorities. Sometimes we need to put the rules aside and look for solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you a flag has been raised at that hospital. It's not a crisis flag, but it's the white flag of stressed workers, Mr. Speaker. Areas such as OB, X-ray, lab, just to name a few, and I don't have the time to list them all today, but people are being overworked.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, our senior staff are there to help us, but if they're leaving, where is our mentorship and our experience? If patient safety is priority number one, then we need to make sure that our health care workers are

provided the best and most supportive work environment we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

#### **Member's Statement On Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak today about day cares and what our government is doing to address the need for more spaces for our children; the inequities that continue to be allowed to exist amongst day care providers, the low number of trained childcare workers, and options that the government should be exploring in addressing the issue.

In February, during our budget session, I asked the Minister of ECE a number of questions regarding the government's role in addressing the need for more space and the fact that inequities are allowed to exist via charity leases and that some day cares are operating in government-owned premises. Yellowknife and other communities here in the NWT are very expensive places to live. Most families here have to rely on the income of both parents to make ends meet. This government has an obligation to parents to ensure that there is an adequate space and a level playing field when it comes to day cares.

Currently, there is a shortage of available spaces and a shortage of childcare workers. The GNWT has to recognize that we need more trained childcare workers. Are we doing everything we can? I don't think so. We need more things, such as wage subsidies, incentives for persons to take early childhood courses, and other beneficial programs to grow and retain our childcare workers.

Mr. Speaker, just to put it all in perspective for this government, as a government we spend about \$32 million per year in the area of corrections. Do you want to know what we spend in the area of early childhood programming? Four point seven million dollars. This, to me, is a travesty and this government should be ashamed of itself for not making early childhood development more of a priority.

Mr. Speaker, our children are our future and the responsibility for day care and early childhood programming has to be shared with parents, the government, both territorially and federally, and employers. In such a small jurisdiction, maybe we should explore the establishment of government-run day cares. The GNWT is an employer of roughly 4,500 persons and we should also be looking at subsidies for our employees requiring day care. Something must be done, Mr. Speaker. If we can't rely totally on the federal government, then we must look at our own operation and come up with a better solution than we currently have. Mahsi.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

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

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with yourself from our community of Hay River, it's a

pleasure today to welcome here in the gallery. I will call out the names and you can quickly stand if you like, but I won't look up again because I know we have a limited time; Cecile Bonnetrouge, Misty Bourdages, Faye Duval, Margaret Elleze, Phillip Fabian, Eloise Fineday, Mary Gardiner, Tracy Hoff, Angela Jones, Crystal King, Lucille Lafferty, Ruth Lafferty, Angus McKay, Linda McBeth, Brandon McKay, Harriet McKay, Robert McKay, Bill Plunkett, David Poitras, Marlene Villebrun and John Young.

With the UNW president Todd Parsons, first vice-president Gayla Wick. From the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Jean Francois Des Lauriers. I also see two Mr. Coutourelles, both Roy and Ed in the gallery today. Also, I notice Ann Juneau's name on the list. Welcome to the Assembly. Thank you.

---Applause

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

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize the Nats'ejee K'eh workers today in the gallery and a constituent of Great Slave, an ally of these workers, Mr. Todd Parsons, the president of the Union of Northern Workers, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome the representatives from Nats'ejee K'eh and the UNW and PSAC. At the same time I would like to especially welcome a family friend who was helping my family get our foot into our new life in Canada. She's visiting the North from Ponoka for the second time in 20 years. I would like to welcome Mrs. Campbell who is with my mother. Welcome, Mrs. Campbell. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not very often I get to recognize visitors from my riding into the House. I would like to welcome a number of people from the Hay River Reserve; Phillip Fabian, Robert McKay, Angus McKay, Harriet McKay, Brendan McKay and there are also a couple of people who are here who live on the reserve but are formally from my home town of Fort Providence. I would like to say welcome to them. Margaret Elleze is here and also Cecile Bonnetrouge. They are both from Fort Providence. Thank you.

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

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome also people from Nats'ejee K'eh, Dave Poitras, my sister-in-law Cecile Bonnetrouge, Phillip Fabian, Margaret Elleze and Tracy Hoff. I would also like to welcome the members from the union also for being with the membership. Thank you.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Assembly. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in here. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

#### ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Question 215-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Honourable Floyd Roland, Minister of Health and Social Services. Mr. Speaker, it was almost 18 years ago that I was involved as a part of a lobby along with the Hay River Reserve and many others who felt it necessary that we have a residential treatment program for drug and alcohol addictions in the Northwest Territories. You can imagine how pleased we were when this government decided to invest the money in capital and to build a treatment centre on the Hay River Reserve. That facility has been operating for the last 13 years, but, as you can see by the presence of the employees here in the gallery today, they aren't at work because they have been locked out of their workplace and the valuable work that they do there.

The workers and the treatment centre helps residents from right across the Northwest Territories and there are many success stories to be told. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister what he can do in this regard. I know there has been correspondence that has gone to employer and to the union. The Minister has said that he hopes they can get back to the table. Is that the extent of what we can do, and what influence we have as a government on this situation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

##### Return To Question 215-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is the first stage we are at with the situation that is happening on the reserve, is to encourage both parties to get back to the negotiation table and bring a successful conclusion to this process. Thank you.

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

##### Supplementary To Question 215-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that time is of the essence. We have our residents who are now having to receive treatment in Alberta. Also we have 22 people who are out of work. Mr. Speaker, this is a third-party contract, but it is this government's contract. It is taxpayers' money that is paying for this contract to receive these services. I would like to ask the Minister, is there adequate funding being provided to this third party to perform this contract that would see these employees paid on a wage and benefit parity with other similar workers in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 215-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services' budget was prepared with the allocations available and the forced growth that was agreed to in a previous budget cycle for this fiscal year. For the upcoming fiscal year, I have not been provided any details if there are any changes to that. Of course, when you are speaking from one union to another, the comparability of benefits can be quite significantly different and that's something that always has to be taken into consideration when we enter into these discussions. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 215-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister mentioned forced growth. Forced growth often relates to increases in salaries and benefits for workers in the public service. I would like to ask the Minister when he talks about the increase in the amount of the contract to address forced growth, does that forced growth include incremental increases for the workers at the Nats'ejee K'eh? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 215-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the process we have entered into for organizations that deliver programs outside of our own staffing situation, there is a process that is used by each department that would look at the services being delivered and if they fit our definition of forced growth and if they would be included, that's department by department. I am not clear as to the process that was just implemented, if in fact they would fall into it. I know, for example, there was no inclusion for higher wages at this point because there was no agreement in place. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 215-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister if there are any other third-party contracts similar to this that would see the employment of unionized workers where they would actually have been without a contract for three and a half years. This seems like a long time and I would imagine it is fairly unprecedented. Also, would the Minister be prepared to table a copy of the contract with the Deh Cho Health and Social Services Board in this House? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 215-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any situation where we've had a group of employees working that are represented by a union that does not have an agreement in place. I don't have any of that information available. As for the tabling of

the contract, I would have to work with the department to see if we could do that. So I will have a look at it, but I can't make that commitment at this point.

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

**Question 216-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement also talked about Nats'ejee K'eh and the issue over there. I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, at what point did the GNWT become aware that the parties were without an agreement? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

**Return To Question 216-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been aware for some time, as in the previous question, that it's been recognized that they have been working without a union since 2003. They have always been encouraged to come together and come to a conclusion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 216-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's been three years that these workers have not had any type of agreement on security. It's been three years. So what did the government do in the three years to get the parties back on the road and not have our clients shut out and have people go down to other treatment centres? What have they done in three years and not just now when it comes down to the crunch when we are having this discussion? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 216-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a contract is in place with the Deh Cho Health and Social Services Authority and the board that is the employer. That's been in place and that has been honoured. They've waited for a conclusion to this. Of course, we are dealing with a separate employer dealing with their employees. From my standpoint, it's to honour the initial contract with the society that's delivering that service. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 216-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this situation here, because we are at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of this agreement, it's the only treatment centre in the Northwest Territories that shut down for a lot of issues that came from alcohol, and our communities are suffering terribly. I wonder if the Minister or GNWT would consider bringing the facilities or the parties, workers, into the public service so we have some security for our people. You have to think about the people in the community and

the clients. Would the Minister consider bringing these workers into the public service? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 216-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of bringing employees into the public service has been considered by this government in the past and can be reconsidered. Ultimately, part of the issue is here when we are dealing with one union to another, there are issues that have to be dealt with. It's not just straightforward taking on employees and bringing them in. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 216-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more with the Minister. It's the same with alcohol and drugs. With alcohol and drugs, you have to negotiate. I would encourage the Minister to reconsider bringing the workers into the public service where there is some security and benefits. Pay them for what they are worth in dealing with this serious issue of alcoholism in the Northwest Territories. I would again ask the Minister to really strongly consider bringing these workers into the public service where they are honoured and respected for the work they are doing in our communities in saving the lives of our people. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

**Further Return To Question 216-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fact is, right now we do have a contract with the society who is the employer and that has to be taken into consideration as we proceed. That's why, at this time, the encouragement is for the employer and employees to sit down and conclude a successful negotiation. Ultimately I think one has to look at the Government of the Northwest Territories which is no longer considered the choice employer of the Northwest Territories as we have, for quite some years, gotten away from some of the benefit levels that past employees were accustomed to. That should be considered as well. At this time, we are encouraging both parties to get back to the negotiation table, hopefully come up with a successful conclusion. During the meantime, we will be dealing with those individuals who are requesting help in the area of drug and addictions and help them receive that at this time. That would be going through alternate sources. At this time, that is going further south than our own border. Thank you.

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

**Question 217-15(5): Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during my Member's statement, I raised a number of concerns at Stanton Hospital that I feel very strongly should be addressed. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell this House today that the survey we

are talking about will be shown and guided with keen leadership? Will the Minister show that it will be an independent, open, fair discussion with all employees, both union and management, and be considered to be done at arm's length to ensure there is full buy-in to ensure workers are happy and safe? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

**Return To Question 217-15(5): Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the previous Minister committed to and I followed up with the commitment, I will be working the Members of the Social Programs committee and I will be coming forward to committee in the very near future with the terms of reference and how we can move forward on this. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 217-15(5): Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the issues that had been highlighted to me is the fairness of bringing issues forward without feeling the pressures of other people looking at you or implying things that aren't right. We would all be well and good if we had whistle-blower legislation or an ombudsman for someone to complain to. So what is the Minister doing to ensure that we have anti-harassment training done and used, and to ensure that all employees feel safe to bring issues forward to management if there are problems, without any fear of reprisal? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 217-15(5): Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Government of the Northwest Territories, what we have used for some time now as well as adapting those in southern Canada, the federal government, their legislation and through our own negotiation process in dealing with employees over the years, we do have a system in place that would allow for those who feel they are in unsafe conditions or rules aren't being followed to address those. Of course, we have to use our existing system that is in place and the chain of command, as hard as that may sound, is something that is used. If there are concerns raised, you go to your immediate supervisor and forward. Of course, as the Government of the Northwest Territories, in my previous role here, we are looking at a discussion paper coming forward on whistle-blower legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 217-15(5): Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that that whistle-blower legislation will be well received, because there are people out there who feel that their jobs are at risk when they put issues on the line by putting their name forward and saying I believe this is a problem. So, Mr. Speaker, the next problem I highlighted in my Member's statement was lieu time. There is an unfair

balance of how lieu time is orchestrated out there. It's about fairness and morale and the fact that many people feel that this is an imposed change without any consultation. Can the Minister agree to go back and look at some type of consultation that can help build back a refillable bank of lieu time so people will feel that they are part of the system and not being imposed by it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 217-15(5): Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of lieu time within our government service operations throughout the Northwest Territories has been looked at. We have worked with all departments. All departments are treating this somewhat differently. It goes to show, once again, that the need for a clearer human resource plan was required. We have now tried to bring some consistency back to the table looking at operational requirements, and the funding available to ourselves as a government came up with what we felt at this time was the best solution. So although the Member is requesting that we go back to a refillable lieu time package, right now, as we have moved this first step, I am not prepared to go back on that. I would rather like to see how it would work instead as we have put it in place. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 217-15(5): Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I rebut that, I won't be able to ask my fourth question. Mr. Speaker, I raised another serious concern in my Member's statement about relief workers and agency workers and the fact that there are many staff employees at Stanton who feel that they are losing their senior staff. They are getting new ones as good as they are, but the problem is we don't have the experience and the seniority that that has. Our senior staff can get jobs in the Yukon or elsewhere at these great bonuses. There is no incentive. Would the Minister take on this problem and show some leadership by saying maybe we need to open up the Public Service Act or maybe we have to find new and innovative ways to ensure that our senior staff are appreciated through whatever mechanisms? Would the Minister go back and rework this problem? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 217-15(5): Stanton Territorial Hospital Human Resource Survey**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think, as the Government of the Northwest Territories, we can show the commitment we've made to try to secure our nursing workforce and make sure the environment they work under is a productive one, a healthy one and is satisfactory. Of course, the demand for services by the people of the Northwest Territories also has to be met. That's why we have looked at a number of different options. In looking at the file now and working with the department, I believe we are trying to take the necessary steps to ensure we have a competent nursing force in place and we will continue to work with all the parties to try to ensure that that is the case. Thank you.

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

**Question 218-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question again is to the Minister responsible for Human Resources, the Honourable Floyd Roland just about with the Nats'ejee K'eh clients. I guess Health pays the bill. Just with the government having notification of the lockout prior to it actually coming through, but efforts were taken to notify the clients and their families of the move to ensure that as little as possible interruption of their treatment would happen. What efforts were made to notify families and clients that they would be moving south? Were they given advance notice? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Roland.

**Return To Question 218-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we were given notice that the strike action could possibly be taking place, the department made the decision to move the existing clients out. It was discussed with the clients if they wanted to travel back to their home communities or continue on in another location with their programming. All of the clients that were in the facility chose to continue with their programming. That is what we did. So the notice was very short. We felt that it was in their best interest at that time. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 218-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ironically enough, from October 29<sup>th</sup> to November 4<sup>th</sup> is Canada Career Week. You find the work you love and build a life you want, and here we have a gallery full of 22 people that obviously found the work they love and are building a life that they want and a lot of northerners want their clients to have. They are here today dealing with this lockout. What assurances can the Minister provide to the current clients that are down south, and their families, that they will again have access to treatment here in the NWT in the near future? When might that be? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 218-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I had stated earlier, I have signed off a letter going to the parties involved and urging them to get back to the negotiations. I can't give a commitment in this House, as right now we are monitoring the situation hoping that a successful conclusion can be reached. So giving a timeline at this point is not something that I can commit to. Just for the record, as we have looked at the situation, I don't believe it is a lockout. It is an arrangement that the employer has made with his existing workload. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 218-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As far as I know, the employees did get locked out prior to their strike deadline that was issued to the employer. Can the Minister's department do more than just monitor at this point in time? Of course, time is of the essence in this whole issue. We have people who want to come home and want to get treatment here in the NWT by people that they know and have received treatment from in the past, I am sure. What can the department offer besides just monitoring? Can we provide some mentoring, perhaps, Mr. Speaker; anything besides just sitting back and monitoring the situation? I don't think that would suffice for clients and families of Nats'ejee K'eh. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 218-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I have tried to state earlier, the situation we find ourselves in is a difficult one. Our goal is to ensure those that were receiving services continue to receive those services and people who request services around the addiction area can get support. We are looking at that. We will continue to help them out. As for the facility in the Northwest Territories, we are going to work with them to the extent we can, encouraging them to get back to the table. Ultimately, we have a number of things that have to be looked at. The fact is that there is an existing contract in place for delivery of that service. As well, there are other unions involved. So those are things that do come into play when we review this any further. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 218-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me ask the Minister if the added cost that the GNWT or the Department of Health is incurring because we have to send these clients down south, is that cost over and above what we are providing in terms of what contracts are in place to the treatment centre today? If they are, why doesn't the government just provide that additional funding to the centre so they can meet the terms and conditions that maybe some of the employees are demanding? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 218-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the existing cost of providing that level of service in the Northwest Territories with the existing contract in place. Ultimately, if the department is to continue this, we would have to look at other areas where we can come up with our savings or with additional money to continue this. That will have an effect on how we proceed with this as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Question 219-15(5): Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today, I spoke of a need to fund a full-time Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructor Program so that those people that were interested in pursuing this as a career will be able to access the Student Financial Assistance Program. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, can the Minister inform this Assembly of the department's plan to offer a full-time ALCIP program through Aurora College? Mahsi.

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

**Return To Question 219-15(5): Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an area that is extremely important to our department. As the Member pointed out in his statement, we have brought in a directive requiring schools to use the aboriginal language and culture funding for that purpose. We know that some schools are having trouble finding enough qualified instructors, so we have expanded the program. The program design work has been done so that the curriculum now goes for two full years. I would allow it to be a certificate program. It could be brought in. So we are ready to move to that. But, Mr. Speaker, at this point, the funds have not been identified to bring the program in as a full-time program. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 219-15(5): Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in light of the ministerial directive clarifying the use of funding provided to deliver aboriginal and language programming in our schools as Minister Dent had identified, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell this Assembly how any schools in the NWT can be expected to employ a qualified ALCIP instructor when it takes them five years or more without funding or support to achieve this goal? Mahsi.

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

**Further Return To Question 219-15(5): Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We think it would be ideal if all of the people who were teaching language and culture in the schools had the ALCIP instructor course. That is not a requirement. We understand and recognize that elders in our communities are very able to transmit the knowledge of language and culture to students, so we believe that it is possible for schools to provide this training now. But I agree with the Member, that it would be ideal if we could expand the programming. That is the goal. I talked to the college. We are looking to identify funds and would hope to be able to bring this program forward as a two-year certificate program in the near future.

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

**Supplementary To Question 219-15(5): Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Just focussing on the expansion of the department's vision and focus, would the Minister consider instructing the Aurora College to deliver a full-time ALCIP program in Behchoko as well as all communities in the North so that these communities can offer aboriginal language programming as set out by our own directive? Mahsi.

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

**Further Return To Question 219-15(5): Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The intention, now that we have the curriculum and as soon as we can find the money or identify the funding to offer this program, is to offer the program in various locations on a rotating basis. So it isn't going to be offered every year in every community. We don't think that there would be enough uptake to be able to do that. We want to make sure we have the critical mass of students and instructors. We are only planning to offer it in one community for two years and then move it around the North in that way to make sure that everybody has access to it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 219-15(5): Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to see action results focussing on the expansion from the department's perspective. Can the Minister commit in this House that this can be implemented in the fall time of 2007? Mahsi.

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

**Further Return To Question 219-15(5): Aboriginal Language And Culture Instructor Program Funding**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't make a commitment on next year's budget until we have that budget in the House. I hope that we are going to be able to implement the program next year. We will do all that we can to ensure that we can see it happen. Thank you.

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

**Question 220-15(5): Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are addressed to the Minister of Human Resources in regard to the long-awaited overhaul of the affirmative action policy and the employment equity policy that has been drafted in its place. What are the government's plans, considering they have been working on this now for over three years and we have about eight or nine months left in our term? Is there a plan to bring this forward so that the people can see the fruit of all of this hard work? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

**Return To Question 220-15(5): Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has completed quite a bit of work on this and

has some ideas for how to move forward with employment equity. We are at the point now where we are ready to discuss it with Members of the Legislative Assembly and the standing committees and then see if there is a willingness to move forward. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 220-15(5): Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, has the document been circulated outside of this Assembly so that the other stakeholders as well could get a sense of what is to transpire, what is being proposed, or is everything dependent on feedback from AOC? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 220-15(5): Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As is the tradition with how we do business in this House, we have offered to brief the committee. We have shared the information with the committee. We are prepared to have a discussion with members of the standing committee. That would be the first step before any document would be shared outside. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 220-15(5): Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the time left in the life of this Assembly, is the government of the opinion that they would be able to roll it out, or are we looking at a policy decision that is now going to be made by the next Assembly? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 220-15(5): Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government believes that this policy could be brought into place. So the affirmative action policy fairly quickly and it could happen during the life of this Assembly, depending on how our discussions go with Members and other stakeholders. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 220-15(5): Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**MR. MILTENBERGER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister indicate to this House and to the people listening, whether the current classification of P1, P2, and P3 would be retained, or in light of the human rights legislation and other legislation that has been enacted over the years since this policy was developed whether there would be a change that would be reflected in the new policy? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 220-15(5): Revisions To The Affirmative Action Policy**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, the definitions now, the P1, P2, and P3 would disappear, but the employment equity program would involve the



identification and removal of systemic barriers as well as the identification of groups that might be underrepresented and then specific targeted actions to work to bring the representation in various parts of government up to the standards that it should be. So it is in many ways similar. Employment equity is similar to affirmative action, but it is a more active process of identifying where the problems lie and then trying to find ways, whether it is through bursaries, training or other targeted employment measures, to rectify the situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Question 221-15(5): Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for Mr. McLeod, the Minister of the Environment, related to our regulatory regime for environmental management, Mr. Speaker. As we well know, mega development means mega consequences. Just look at Alberta and its tar sands. I believe they are the single largest contributor to greenhouse gasses in the country. Here in the NWT, we are on the cusp of something of a similar size. The government can do many things when it comes to environmental management. One of them is having a sound process to make sure that everybody plays by the rules, and that is the regulatory regime.

Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada and the National Energy Board have jurisdiction in this area over federal lands but we have a number of other kinds of lands and jurisdictions here in the NWT. When it comes to managing the impacts of a pipeline on these lands, Mr. Speaker, what is the GNWT's plan for ensuring a comprehensive regulatory framework for the Mackenzie gas pipeline?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. McLeod.

**Return To Question 221-15(5): Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of work that has been done in the area of greenhouse gasses. We have looked at a number of the other issues that are facing us in terms of air quality standards and resource development, pollution and climate change, and looked at some of the documents that have been used as our guide. We have our Greenhouse Gas Strategy that was developed some time ago and recognize that we need to have some update. That is in the works right now. We expect to have that document as part of the Energy Strategy. The greenhouse gasses will be addressed. As to some of the points that the Member has made in terms of the pipeline project, air quality standards is addressed through the JRP and that is the process that is being utilized to do that. In some cases, when industry moves into an area, there is some requirement for baseline assessments to be produced by the proponent. That is handled and done through that process also. So there are a number of different things that are out there. Whether or not we are going to be doing a comprehensive environmental assessment or review, as the Member has indicated in his statement, is something that we haven't determined yet. We are, however, participating in a summit that will be held in January. It is being hosted by Ecology North and

the Dene Nation. We expect that will bring a number of issues to the forefront. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 221-15(5): Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you for the answer, Mr. Speaker. Where I would like to go with this is in getting some assurance that there is adequate jurisdiction on the various kinds of lands in the Northwest Territories -- federal, municipal, Commissioner's lands, aboriginal lands -- and the regulatory framework that is assigned to each of them. Is there a comprehensive and a cohesive regulatory framework that will enable this project to be properly regulated as it goes through these various types of lands and has various types of impacts, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Further Return To Question 221-15(5): Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly all have to take responsibility when it comes to air quality and environmental issues across the board. At this point, we have shared responsibility with the federal government. We are looking at more than just our lands. We want to ensure that all lands in the NWT are covered. That is my position on where we are going with this. I will continue to monitor the situation. We have regulatory bodies out there that are in charge of ensuring that this happens. We will look to see if there are any areas that are not covered and certainly ensure that we have something in place. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 221-15(5): Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada recently pointed out to the Joint Review Panel that there is indeed a regulatory gap for the jurisdiction and the management of the project on these lands. Is the Minister's department or some agency of the GNWT actively working this file with municipal, aboriginal and federal agencies to close this regulatory gap, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Further Return To Question 221-15(5): Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to get back to the Member on whether or not the gaps that he has referenced are being covered and if we are consolidating our efforts to ensure that happens. We are a partner on some of the files that are moving forward in terms of resource development. At this point, I would have to make the commitment that I need to find out more about the issue in order to answer that question.

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

**Supplementary To Question 221-15(5): Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, good regulation means that we have to have good legislation to back it up. Is the Minister aware of anything that this Assembly should be considering to enable the highest possible standard of regulatory monitoring and control of this project, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Further Return To Question 221-15(5): Regulatory Authority For The Enforcement Of Air Quality Standards**

**HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to take that question as notice. I am not familiar right now. Thank you.

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

**Question 222-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask some questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services in regards to the labour situation at Nats'ejee K'eh. Mr. Speaker, I am not clear. Certainly, I sense that it is a great deal of concern to all of us that the valuable program being offered at that centre is no longer being offered, that the clients are outside of the NWT jurisdiction getting their treatment and that 22 of our employees or our residents are off the job. I do not understand exactly how we could accept the situation that looks a lot like a replacement worker situation. Although we don't have workers coming into this facility and doing the job, certainly by moving the clients elsewhere the effect is the same. I think it is a situation that really considerably weakens the workers' and union's position in this labour dispute. It is a situation that this government as a third party or the outside party, as the government likes to see itself, should allow to continue. I would like to know whether or not this government has looked into the situation to see if this is in breach of any contract revision to have moved these programs to outside of the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 222-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ultimately the Department of Health and Social Services has to take very highly into consideration the clients who are seeking the help, the situation that is over at Nats'ejee K'eh on the Hay River Reserve is not one that we like to see continue for very long. That is why I have written a letter to both parties to hopefully encourage them to get back to the negotiation process. Ultimately, this process falls outside of our own union process. It falls under the Canada Labour Code. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 222-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest, though, by allowing...The Minister hasn't

answered whether or not there are any provisions in the contract with this board of this treatment centre that would prohibit the services to be placed elsewhere the way it is now. He hasn't answered that. If the government continues to let this go on, is the government not complicit in letting the situation continue on, because it so seriously weakens the bargaining position of the workers and the union thereby not making it necessary for the employer to go back to the table? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 222-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the process that is used is maybe I should have gone into a little more detail. Under the Canada Labour Code, certain actions are allowed for where, in this situation, ensuring that the clients themselves get the services they need, that takes priority for us. That is why we moved the clients that were in that facility to another location to continue with their programming. That is where we are at, at this point, and trying to encourage the parties to come together. Ultimately, from the Department of Health and Social Services' point of view, we are going to ensure the clients get the services they require. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 222-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, the Minister is stating that there is a provision on the clients affected in a situation like this, but I would think that it has something to say also about what the government in this kind of situation has to do to not interfere in getting employees and employers back together. I am suggesting that allowing these clients to be treated elsewhere and not checking to see if that is in breach of any contract is prolonging this delay. So I would like to know if the Minister could comment on what he is prepared to do, further than writing a letter, to bring these two parties together. I believe, as is the case in any labour dispute situation, if the two parties are not talking and they are not made to and there is no need for it, they will not talk. This will just keep on going. I would like to know what the Minister is prepared to do. Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 222-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess, for clarity, it should be pointed out that as this originally came about with the existing action being taken, discussions were held and parties were encouraged. I believe there were even parties brought in to try to have both sides come to an agreement. Unfortunately, that couldn't happen so they are back at the stage they are. For ourselves, we contracted the Deh Cho Health and Social Services Authority to provide that service. From my understanding, there is no contravention of that agreement in place for delivery of services. Ultimately, as I have stated earlier, the Department of Health and Social Services want to ensure the clients did receive programming that was required. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 222-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister indicate whether this is a governmental plan to let this situation continue in that it would allow these treatment contracts to continue on indefinitely and thereby really making it less urgent for the parties to get back together? Does the government not see a huge problem in that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 222-15(5): Disruption Of Service At Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to go into details of what options are available. It would be almost like negotiating around the parties that are directly involved. That is not something I intend to do. We are, as a government, looking at all of our other options and the contract that is in place. As well, we are very aware that this involves another union that is at the table. They have agreed to, in the past, a different standard than what we have in place for our own employees. So all of these things have to be weighed very carefully as we proceed. Thank you.

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

**Question 223-15(5): Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in February, I had asked a number of questions to the Minister of ECE in regards to day care spaces and inequities that exist amongst day care providers. Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out in my Member's statement, the government spends roughly \$32 million a year on corrections and just under \$5 million on early childhood development. This is a ratio or something that just shouldn't be allowed to happen. I would say that if we tried to get those numbers a little bit closer in the next 20 years, we wouldn't be spending as much in the area of corrections, Mr. Speaker. What exactly has the Minister's department done since February in regard to addressing the inequities that exist amongst day care providers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Return To Question 223-15(5): Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to Mr. Ramsay in February, I did indicate that the department was willing to talk to day care operators about the inequities in the subsidies. The instructions to the department were to ensure that discussion took place with operators when they were discussing the new regulations that we have been working on. I expect to have some results from that here very shortly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 223-15(5): Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to that taking place and the fallout of what that might be after the discussions take place with the day care

providers. Mr. Speaker, the federal government has developed a program that pays each family \$100 per month for each child under six. I am wondering what the intent of the Government of the Northwest Territories is to work in conjunction with that federal program to offer how we might augment that program with something we could offer here in the Northwest Territories to parents looking for day care space and some help. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 223-15(5): Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd certainly enjoy an opportunity to look at changing our subsidy program so that parents could see more support through this government as well. However, we need to identify more revenues. As Members around this table know, we are challenged to meet our current obligations and are running into what the Minister of Finance has called a debt wall not too far off in the future if we don't get more money from Ottawa. So it is certainly something we have plans for, but to be able to deliver that kind of program, we need to have more revenues. This government needs to have more income to be able to put it into families' pockets. Thank you.

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

**Supplementary To Question 223-15(5): Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it gets back to priorities and setting priorities in the government. I could tell the Minister right off the top of my head where \$2 million could be easily found, and that's repatriating the jobs from his department back to the Housing Corporation and scraping the macroeconomic policy shop that's planned.

But, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the Minister, given the fact that there's a shortage of trained childcare workers here in the Northwest Territories, what strategy or plans does the Minister have to help us get more trained childcare workers here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 223-15(5): Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The importance of trained childcare workers can't be understated. It is an area that we need to concentrate on. Aurora College has an ongoing program of training. They offer continuous courses through either distance education or by workshop every year to help people achieve their certificate. There are going to be four courses offered this winter to help people across the North get closer to achieving their certificate, and the college will continue to offer that kind of programming. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 223-15(5): Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess it's quite obvious, given my line of questioning here and my Member's statement today, that I don't think we're

doing enough as a government to address the area of day care and the space that's provided, the training for childcare workers and whatnot, and I'd like to ask the Minister, given the fact that all these problems are evident, can he come up with a research method or some kind of strategy or if he needs more help I think we need to explore all of our options here in this area and I'd like the Minister to commit today to doing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 223-15(5): Shortage Of Day Care Spaces And Childcare Workers**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to work with Members to identify ways in which we can improve our support. As I said earlier, I have already got the plans for an improved subsidy. I would dearly love to be able to offer improved capital grants to operators, but that's going to take more money that this government doesn't have. We need to find ways to improve our income as a government in order to be able to get those subsidies to people in the North. I'm quite prepared to work with Members and to see if we can find ways to achieve betterment. Thank you.

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

**Question 224-15(5): Infrastructure Requirements Of The Inuvik Children First Society**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement I spoke to the need for an early childhood learning centre in Inuvik. I say need, Mr. Speaker. It's not a want, it's a need. There is a difference. This is an issue that's specific to Inuvik at this particular moment because we have a new school that's going up, but this may be an issue that's specific to the other communities when their turn comes for a new school or renovations. I'd like to ask the Minister of ECE if his department has had discussions with Public Works, and in this case the new Minister; and, no, Novel won't do. I wonder if he can have discussions with the Minister of Public Works about the feasibility of adding the childhood learning centre into the construction of the new school in Inuvik. Thank you.

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

**Return To Question 224-15(5): Infrastructure Requirements Of The Inuvik Children First Society**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that it makes tremendous good sense to have childcare centres in schools. It's something that I think in the long run we need to try and move towards. That said, I think Members around this table know that we are hard pressed even to live up to the requirements in our current capital plan. We have schools that have to be replaced because their foundations are in trouble. We have other capital programs that we can't deliver on. It's not a question of talking to the Minister responsible for Public Works. We need to find -- and it comes back to what I was saying to Mr. Ramsay -- we need to get resource revenue sharing. We need to get a share of the wealth that leaves our territory on a daily basis in order to have adequate funds to be able to make some of these wise choices ourselves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 224-15(5): Infrastructure Requirements Of The Inuvik Children First Society**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I totally agree with the Minister that this is another good argument for getting resource royalty, but that's something that's still in the works and this is something that we need to do right away. My colleague from Kam Lake spoke to \$32 million going into corrections, \$4.5 million into childcare. I mean, there's something wrong with this picture, Mr. Speaker. Why, besides money, is this government so reluctant to consider putting the childhood development centre as part of the new school in Inuvik? The budget is big enough. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

**Further Return To Question 224-15(5): Infrastructure Requirements Of The Inuvik Children First Society**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure that you can say that the budget is big enough if it's been planned already without that space there. The community has been involved intimately in the plans for the school. The space has been set aside for it, but there is a requirement for the community to get involved. It's worth pointing out that the community itself has a number of options right now. The municipality will have access to gas tax funds, MRIF funds, and improved capital funding that my colleague, the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, spoke about just last week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 224-15(5): Infrastructure Requirements Of The Inuvik Children First Society**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is true, they do have other options up in Inuvik and the Children First Society has been trying to explore all the options. But I firmly believe that it's this government's responsibility to help with this. What do we have to do as an Assembly to add these costs into the capital program for the construction of new schools? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 224-15(5): Infrastructure Requirements Of The Inuvik Children First Society**

**HON. CHARLES DENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it would take more money in the capital plan. That's what it would take. It's fairly simple. So if we win the argument with the federal government, if we are successful at pressing home that we need resource revenue sharing, that we need a reasonable deal with Ottawa, then we have a chance to do that. But this is an issue that's important not just to Inuvik. We have other communities that within the next couple of years, are going to lose the space that their childcare centres are in and they don't have new schools planned. So this is a pressing issue across the Territories and one that we would dearly love to deal with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Question 225-15(5): Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my Member's statement today, for the last three years I've been working very hard to try to get the all-weather road from Tuktoyaktuk to Inuvik. However, Mr. Speaker, recently I've been trying to get an access road to source 177, which is 22 kilometres away from Tuk. I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Kevin Menicoche...Mr. Speaker, like I indicated, for the past three years I've been working with the previous Minister of Transportation with regard to trying to get access to the gravel source. I'm just wondering, can the Minister of Transportation indicate whether he will work with MACA to access funding to go to source 177? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Menicoche.

**Return To Question 225-15(5): Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ:** Good afternoon and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

I would like to, first of all, just indicate to the honourable Member that the Inuvik to Tuk road and access to source 177 is a long-standing priority of this government and the Member is also aware that at the conclusion of this session, officials from the Department of Transportation will be going up to Tuk to meet with the Inuvik/Tuk committee and discuss some of the issues surrounding getting to the source 177.

Further to that, a lot of the cost that's included in the whole Inuvik to Tuk highway, the access to source 177, is wrapped up with the federal government once again, Mr. Speaker. Right now we're kind of hampered. We're waiting on some decisions for some funding through the highways and borders infrastructure funding from the federal ministry. I hope that's helpful to the Member at this time, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Supplementary To Question 225-15(5): Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask the Minister, back a couple years ago there was Corridors for Canada and there was money identified in that document. Also, I understand that right now they're looking at Corridors for Canada II and Connecting Canada from Coast to Coast to Coast. Can the Minister indicate on whether the federal government has identified those documents and put money to it? Thank you.

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

**Further Return To Question 225-15(5): Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All these submissions were made to the federal government on Corridors for Canada II and connecting to Canada, and the indications of that Inuvik to Tuk highway are in those documents and we're waiting once again for federal commitment. There's been nothing said to this point and previous discussions. There was actually no uptake. The Member spoke about our Premier meeting with the federal government to that respect. It was

discussed, but there was actually, there were non-responsive indications of a program specifically for Tuk highway there, Mr. Speaker. However, I'll reiterate that it is a priority of this government and committee to continue to stress with the federal departments that this is one of the priorities that we'd like to pursue. Mahsi cho.

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

**Supplementary To Question 225-15(5): Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can I ask the Minister, he indicated that the federal government is non-responsive to the highway to Tuk at the present time. I guess I'd like to ask the Minister, how strong is the Department of Transportation trying to work with the federal Minister of Transportation to get these type of documents identified? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Further Return To Question 225-15(5): Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A lot of the discussion that happens with the federal government we can look to the past to kind of see how they treat our submissions in Corridors to Canada I when we applied to the strategic infrastructure fund. What they had done, once they had given us one percent of the \$2 billion they had announced, and that's a kind of similar level of funding that we'd been looking at there, Mr. Speaker. There will be that as well as the new highway borders infrastructure fund that the Minister had indicated in his budget statement. That still hasn't been decided. All indications are saying that there's going to be a fall announcement for this new infrastructure funding for the North, but that hasn't yet even materialized at all. So further information will be forthcoming on this matter, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Final supplementary, Mr. Pokiak.

**Supplementary To Question 225-15(5): Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister, he indicated that after the session is over he'll be going down to Tuk and Inuvik to discuss the all-weather road and the access to source 177. Will the Minister come down with any funding or will he bring down lip service? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The time for Members' oral questions has expired; however, I will allow the Minister to answer. Mr. Menicoche.

**Further Return To Question 225-15(5): Access Road To Tuktoyaktuk Granular Source 177**

**HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Right now, there was an offer of \$25,000 that has all indications showing it's unexpended yet for the purpose of conducting initial surveys to access the gravel at source 177 and that's going to be part of the discussions that's going to occur with the Inuvik/Tuk committee with the officials from the Department of Transportation. Mahsi cho.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Time for oral questions has expired. Item 7, written questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

**ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS****Written Question 28-15(5): WCB Chronic Pain Policy**

**MR. BRADEN:** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I have two written questions. One is for the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board.

Will the Minister table the specific policy he referred to which provides for permanent disability benefits for chronic pain?

**Written Question 29-15(5): Offshore Tour Packages - GST Advantages**

Mr. Speaker, my written question is for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

What steps has this government taken to urge the federal government to retain the GST advantages provided to offshore tour packages?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to the opening address. Item 10, petitions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**ITEM 10: PETITIONS****Petition 3-15(5): Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre**

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to table a petition, 650 letters asking this government to do what they can to expedite and resolve the labour issue at Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

**ITEM 11: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES****Committee Report 6-15(5): Report On Pre-Budget Consultations - 2006****Introduction**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is pleased to present its second report on pre-budget consultations.

The committee held hearings in Aklavik, Fort Liard, Fort Resolution, Fort Simpson, Katlodeeche First Nation, Sachs Harbour, Wekweeti and Yellowknife between August 17<sup>th</sup> and September 5, 2006. Following the initial Yellowknife hearings, the committee members split into northern NWT and southern NWT groups in order to visit as many communities as possible within the time available.

The committee recognizes that the timing of the consultations in late summer made it difficult for many people and organizations to participate, and is considering other options for the future. However, the low turnout at some of our community hearings did not prevent us from having stimulating and productive discussions with those people who did attend. We also received a number of written submissions from people who were not able to attend in person. The committee is satisfied that we have heard a broad and representative range of views and strongly believes that the pre-budget consultations continue to be a relevant and worthwhile exercise which will continue to improve with time.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to make presentations to us or to send us written comments. A list of their names and organizations is attached to this report.

As MLAs, having the chance to see other communities and meet each others' constituents helps us to do a better job when we make decisions that affect people across the territory. We would, therefore, also like to thank all the communities we visited for making us feel welcome and for helping us get to know them better.

**Why Pre-Budget Consultations?**

From the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly, our committee has looked for ways to give members of the public a meaningful opportunity to influence the government's business plans and budget. In the past, we do not think enough people and organizations have had a chance to tell MLAs about their priorities and views of how government should spend its money, Mr. Speaker.

The government's budgets are not made public until February. By this time, it is too late to make major changes, and even minor adjustments can be difficult to fit in. However, the work on the budget begins several months earlier. Standing committees get their first opportunity to see and to question potential cuts, new spending and other budget changes when they review the government's draft three-year business plans. This takes place over a two-week period in September when there is some possibility of making changes, Mr. Speaker. Committees use this time to discuss government-wide issues with the Premier and Minister of Finance, and then meet with the Minister and senior staff of each department to go over the draft plans in detail.

Governments are often compared to large ships that take a long time to change course. As we did in last year's report, we would like to caution that many of the issues raised demand long-term solutions and are far beyond what can be addressed in one year's budget and business plans. However, Mr. Speaker, we would like to assure the public that the course is slowly changing and that participation in pre-budget consultations is helping to make that happen.

As Finance Minister Roland advised us, "the results of last year's consultation process were useful in identifying a number of specific areas of concern, not simply with respect to budget development, but also in terms of program and service delivery."

In September 2005, Members had the opportunity to ask the questions and raise the issues we heard during our first pre-budget consultations as we reviewed individual departmental business plans with the Ministers and senior staff. In the following months, Members continued to raise issues such as support for front-line organizations and workers, the need for affordable, accessible, adequate housing, and energy conservation. The timing did not allow for major changes to be made for the 2006-2007 budget, however, we expect to see more of an impact on the 2007-2008 budget that will be introduced next February.

As we went through the September 2006 draft business plan review, we were able to use what we heard this year to reinforce with Ministers positions we have taken earlier, and to introduce new ideas. The issues raised during the consultations will continue to be reflected in statements and questions by individual Members during upcoming sessions of the Legislative Assembly, in future reports by

standing committees, and in the debate on the budget that will happen next February and March, Mr. Speaker.

As committee members, we will continue to do what we can to influence the government to align its plans more closely with what the public is telling us, and to encourage the government to keep going where it is already heading in the right direction. We look forward to working with the government over the remainder of our mandate on longer-term approaches and strategic investments toward addressing the issues identified and achieving the goals set for us.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to pass on the report to Mr. Braden. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Mr. Lafferty. What we heard - committee's general comments to the report, Mr. Speaker.

#### **What We Heard - General Comments**

The focus of our second annual pre-budget consultations was the cost of living. The high cost of living was one of the concerns we heard about the most during our 2005 hearings. It includes the cost of essentials such as housing, food, childcare, electricity, and fuel.

The GNWT already spends about \$128 million, or roughly 13 percent of its total budget, on subsidies to help reduce the cost of living, including public housing, income assistance, and fuel and power subsidies. The GNWT has said that while subsidies may be a necessary interim measure to manage the cost of living, they will not be sustainable in the long run and do not encourage the efficient use of resources.

The GNWT has suggested that longer-term solutions are reducing energy, utility, transportation and communication costs; increasing market development and competition; increasing employment and income levels; and reducing government program costs.

To get the discussion started, Mr. Speaker, we asked people the following questions:

- What are people in your community doing to lower their own energy and utility costs by conserving? What would help them use less fuel and power? Have they heard about the Arctic Energy Alliance and its programs?
- Do you support government investment in more highways and bridges, hydroelectric projects and high speed Internet to lower costs?
- Would people in your community be willing to harvest or grow more of their own food, and, if so, what government support would help?
- What businesses are available in your community? What, if anything, should the government do to help start up local businesses and/or cooperatives? Are the business development programs the government has now working? Why or why not?
- What could the government do to lower its own costs?

The committee agrees that simply continuing to expand subsidies is not a sustainable way of helping people to manage the cost of living. We are also aware that until the government is able to secure a fair funding arrangement with Ottawa and establish new revenue

sources, its ability to increase overall spending will be severely limited.

During our consultations, Mr. Speaker, we did hear many requests for more program dollars. However, we also heard ideas that would not necessarily require more spending by the GNWT, but that might, for example, require the GNWT to play a coordinating or lobbying role on behalf of residents and communities. People also brought forward several suggestions for modest strategic investments that would help people to help themselves and pay off in the medium to long term. The committee believes it should be possible to follow up on at least some of these ideas within the current fiscal climate.

Mr. Speaker, the committee also heard that the government can free up more program money and make better use of the resources it has by looking for savings and efficiencies in its own administration and by ensuring that the programs and subsidies we do have are fair and are getting to the right people. The committee is especially concerned that the GNWT is failing some of our small communities, Mr. Speaker, by not ensuring that critical programs are delivered as intended to the people who need them most.

Although the cost of living was the primary focus of the 2006 consultations, the committee also heard from people on a number of other issues, many of which were also raised in 2005. In particular, front-line organizations told us they continue to have serious concerns with their funding arrangements and relationships with the GNWT. Other topics of discussion included health, family violence, education, and economic development. These issues are outlined in a later section of this report.

#### **Motion That Committee Report 6-15(5) Be Deemed Read And Printed In Hansard In Its Entirety, Carried**

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the introductory portion of our committee report. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that the Report on Pre-Budget Consultations - 2006 of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The motion is on the floor. Motion is in order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

#### **Committee Report 6-15(5): Report On Pre-Budget Consultations - 2006**

##### **What We Heard - Cost Of Living**

##### **Housing**

It should come as no surprise to anyone that housing is a serious concern across the Northwest Territories. The demand continues to increase as the economy grows and more workers relocate to the NWT, and as more seniors choose to retire in the North. The committee heard from individuals, business, labour, and frontline organizations about the impact the lack of adequate, affordable housing is having on the well being of our residents and the viability of our communities and businesses. As the Union of Northern Workers wrote, "some individuals have been offered jobs, accepted the position only to subsequently change their mind about joining the NWT workforce when

they become aware of the cost and limited availability of suitable housing." Other groups reiterated the same concern from employers' point of view. The extent of the crisis was apparent in Fort Liard, where we were saddened to hear that kindergarten and primary students, eager to start a new school year, had been sent home earlier that week because they had no teachers. Their newly hired teachers had promptly left the community on realizing there was nowhere for them to stay.

While many communities suffer from a shortage of housing units, the reasons vary. In some communities, including Yellowknife, the shortage of land is a major factor. The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and the Union of Northern Workers both encouraged the GNWT to continue working to resolve land claims and free up more land for housing.

In many other communities, the shortage is at least partly attributable to ill-thought-out and poorly executed initiatives of the NWT Housing Corporation. Members saw firsthand housing packages from 2003 still sitting in their crates, boarded up houses that we were told required only a few repairs, and houses that had never been occupied. One Aklavik resident asked, "if they build two more houses here in the community, are they going to get boarded up too, or what's the intent? It would be kind of sad to see that."

With the limited funding available to build new housing, it is critical that the NWT Housing Corporation do a better job of matching community and clients' needs with its units and of ensuring contractors live up to their obligations and standards of good workmanship. People expressed many concerns about the quality and suitability of even newer housing stock. A Fort Liard resident recently arrived from Newfoundland said, "I have never seen the poor quality of stuff currently being built here in the Northwest Territories. They are mould factories." Another individual told us about market housing units being sent to Tulita that had no place for water tanks. In Fort Liard we heard the market housing units had remained vacant for a year until some "desperate out-of-towners" were able to negotiate lower rent. A Sachs Harbour resident voiced frustrations with the Housing Corporation's current initiatives, as "just another example of 'government knows what's best for us,' because we never had any input in the design of even the public housing. ... I bought a house, privately owned, I had no input in the design of that house. ... I lived in public housing before and they're not good houses. Now trailers? My own opinion of trailers is that in about 10 years from now they'll deteriorate so bad that it's going to cost a fortune to fix them up." Referring to the new affordable housing dollars, Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington asked, "are we doing enough with that housing to make sure that northerners are going to end up with houses that they can afford to heat and light?"

It is no wonder that the Housing Corporation has boarded-up units across the territory that no one wants to live in. Considering the need for adequate housing and our limited resources to achieve this, this situation is unacceptable.

The concerns point to the need for the long overdue Housing Corporation mandate to guide program design and priority setting. The committee was disturbed to hear that the NWT Seniors' Society had not been approached to provide their input into the mandate, and is concerned other key stakeholders also may have been left out. As the Seniors' Society told us, the mandate needs to be

finalized with input from the stakeholders who "know firsthand some of the challenges when trying to deal with policy and procedures at headquarters level, which do not seem to transfer down to local housing staff and boards at the community levels."

The committee also heard concerns about the fairness of public housing programs. Some people suggested a means test should be required to ensure those most in need have access to public housing units.

Housing for seniors has been an especially controversial topic in recent months. As the Yellowknife Seniors' Society pointed out, the current programs create a gap between seniors living in their own homes and those living in public housing.

We heard from the NWT Seniors' Society that seniors don't mind paying rent if they have the ability. Yet one presenter told us, "we had seniors living here in Hay River years ago in the seniors' complex that wanted to pay rent for their rooms and the Housing Corporation wouldn't let them. That's crazy."

At the same time, many seniors who live in their own homes struggle to make ends meet either because assistance is not available, or because they are not aware of the programs out there. The committee heard directly from a Fort Resolution elder about his difficulty getting the help he needs to make necessary repairs to his home to make it more heat efficient. He is so frustrated that he told us he might just abandon his house this winter once he runs out of fuel and let it freeze up. We were told in Aklavik that elders who own their own homes are discouraged by the increasing costs of power and fuel, and some have had to go to public housing, which takes away their feeling of pride.

In fairness to all seniors, it is essential that the Housing Corporation and the government, which administers social housing and the Seniors' Home Heating Subsidy, have clear, principled, sustainable, equitable and well-publicized policies about what assistance it will provide and to whom. As the NWT Seniors' Society said, "there needs to be a level playing field and there needs to be discussion around equality. I don't think we have got there yet. I don't think we need to bite the seniors over policies that haven't really worked. ... We need to see fair treatment and respect and dignity for the seniors."

The committee heard again this year that the new rent scales are turning out to be a disincentive for people to go to work because their rents remain low as long as they are unemployed. In the words of a Sachs Harbour resident, "we have just a few jobs in the community and a lot of the members don't want to work. The reason is as soon as they get a job their rent goes sky high." One Aklavik resident spoke about the importance of getting people into homeownership when they are young so they do not become dependent on public housing in the first place.

Many people spoke about the difficulties both renters and private homeowners face in managing the increasing costs of operating a household. Heating and electricity are two of the largest expenses driving this trend, and are discussed in the next section of this report. Several people told us that we need to do more to educate clients about housing programs, their responsibilities as homeowners or tenants, household budgeting, preventive maintenance and minor repairs.

Maintenance is a responsibility that some homeowners have difficulty managing, as we also heard during last year's pre-budget consultations. Poor maintenance adds



to the cost of living as it often results in higher utility bills, for example, when leaky faucets are not fixed or when furnaces are not regularly serviced. In larger centres, and in communities with all-weather road access to those centres, homeowners can purchase basic supplies and equipment, and trades people are available locally. In small, isolated communities, such as Wekweeti, a homeowner whose hot water tank stops working is faced with having one flown in unless the breakdown happens to occur during the brief winter road season. We were also told that in Wekweeti, the Housing Corporation will not allow people who have taken community courses, but who do not have their trades certificates, to carry out maintenance on houses. This inflexibility only adds to homeowners' difficulties.

The senior administrative officer for Wekweeti suggested that with some program support from Municipal and Community Affairs, local community governments, which have more flexibility than the Housing Corporation, could stock commonly needed parts which could be brought over during the short ice road season. The committee believes this may be a workable approach for isolated communities with brief or no road access to larger centres, and suggests the government give it serious consideration.

#### **Energy And Conservation**

While the cost of fuel and electricity remains very high, there is still much that can be done to save money by conserving energy. As the Union of Northern Workers pointed out in its submission, there are still many homes around with single pane windows, sawdust insulation, inefficient appliances and/or 20-year-old furnaces. Individuals and groups, including the NWT Seniors' Society, spoke in support of education programs about conservation and preserving our resources. Although the GNWT and Arctic Energy Alliance provide some information and assistance, we spoke to people in smaller communities who were unaware of the existing programs. More education and promotion efforts need to be directed to those communities.

Many people told us they are already doing things on their own to conserve and reduce their energy costs, for example by buying front-load washers, turning down the thermostat, and turning off lights. The City of Yellowknife provided a presentation on its own energy planning work, which is well underway. However, the committee heard that there are some areas where the territorial government needs to step in with its size and influence to help make energy conservation and alternative energies more accessible and affordable. We received suggestions that the GNWT could:

- establish a low interest financing program for residents and small business to retrofit houses and buildings;
- provide subsidies and/or financing programs for people to service and/or replace inefficient furnaces, install more efficient appliances such as front-load washers, purchase low-watt light bulbs, and install woodstoves or pellet stoves;
- support pilot projects to try out new technologies such as geothermal, and be a source of seed money and/or information for people who want to try out new technologies on their own;
- in communities with diesel generators, use the waste heat for public facilities;

- use the excess power from the Taltson hydro facility for heat in the South Slave;
- lobby industry to build a refinery in the NWT to process northern hydrocarbons and reduce the cost of the products to local residents and businesses by eliminating the need to transport them back from the South;
- expand the Snare hydro facility in order to continue to meet the demand for electricity in Yellowknife, and to make running ground thermal pumps for geothermal heating affordable;
- ensure the NWT Power Corporation completes its interconnection standards as ordered by the Public Utilities Board so that alternative energy systems can tie into the grid;
- provide incentives to builders for more energy-efficient housing and/or encourage municipal governments to adopt a building code standard such as EGH80;
- take advantage of new technologies, such as wood pellet boilers, for the GNWT's own infrastructure, which, by creating a market for the product, would in turn help to make the technology affordable for local residents and businesses.

The committee believes the suggestion for a financing program to assist homeowners with upgrades is especially workable and could be accomplished in the near future, as it would require minimal government expenditure and still help many northerners achieve significant cost savings while reducing their energy consumption.

#### **Recommendation**

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends the government bring forward as soon as possible a proposal for an energy efficiency loan program to provide interest-free loans on a non-means-tested basis to assist homeowners to finance upgrades aimed at reducing their energy consumption costs, including, but not limited to: woodstoves, pellet stoves, high efficiency oil heaters, solar panels, improved insulation and siding, and more energy-efficient windows.

#### **Food And Necessities**

People in several communities raised concerns about the cost of nutritious food, especially fruit and vegetables, and its impact on children and seniors especially. High fuel costs are not only contributing to grocery store prices, but are also making it difficult for people to go on the land to harvest their own food. People who live close to the NWT's southern border are able to save some money by shopping in Alberta and British Columbia. In Sachs Harbour, where a litre of milk costs \$6.36, this is not an option.

To some extent, competition between businesses can help to lower prices. Unfortunately, the government may be working against this in some cases. In one community, we heard that the income support office makes a practice of issuing clients' cheques directly to the Northmart store, although there is a competing store also doing business in the same community. The individual who brought this to our attention suggested that where there is more than one grocery store in a community, income support should work with both rather than working with one exclusively.

The committee heard again this year that we are missing opportunities to save money by producing more of our own food. The Territorial Farmers' Association estimates that 25 percent of our food requirements could be produced in the NWT. As they stated, "the GNWT must consider the health and well-being of the people of the NWT and our reliance on other parts of Canada and the world for our basic requirements." The economic development section of this report includes more discussion of what the GNWT could do in support of a territorial agricultural industry.

In Wekweeti, where a can of beans costs \$4.50, people suggested that the diamond mines might be able to put fresh food on the flights they send into the community to pick up and drop off workers, as often the plane arrives with only one person on it. This is an idea the committee would encourage the community to pursue, with the help of their MLA and the GNWT if necessary.

The NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities also brought to our attention the high costs of specialized necessities such as vehicles with hand controls, which, because of the relatively low demand in the territory, often have to be brought in by special order and at exceptional expense. It is also very difficult for individuals to get equipment like wheelchairs and hearing aids repaired in smaller communities. The council advised us of one case where a vehicle sat for five years waiting to be fixed and may still be sitting. The result is that a person has been deprived of the ability to get around their community for years. In the council's words, "the high cost of living with a disability in the NWT and remaining in the NWT is paid through inappropriate living conditions relating to accidents, lack of health, social issues including abuse, and the lack of psychological health."

#### Transportation

The committee heard support for more investment in transportation infrastructure as a way to lower costs. We heard cautious support for the Mackenzie Valley Highway and Deh Cho Bridge, provided the federal government pays its fair share. We also heard support for the Tuktoyaktuk to Inuvik highway, and for chipsealing the highway between Fort Liard and the British Columbia border. Wekweeti residents expressed concerns about what will happen to their winter road when the Colomac Mine cleanup is complete, and suggested the GNWT build a more direct road from the community to Yellowknife.

In terms of local transportation, the City of Yellowknife and Arctic Energy Alliance suggested some costs could be saved by promoting smaller vehicles, hybrid taxis, and active transportation such as walking and biking.

#### Childcare

Childcare is a significant expense for many NWT families. Alternatives North and the Status of Women Council both made the case to the committee that the GNWT needs to invest in this area to meet the demand for spaces, to ensure that parents are able to participate in education and employment opportunities, and to improve the situation of childcare workers, who are severely underpaid and have limited access to training opportunities.

Specific recommendations we heard are for the GNWT to:

- increase start-up and operating grants, with a portion of increases going to staff salaries;
- end the practice of tying operations' funding to attendance, and reduce delays in paying the subsidy;

- set targets for the creation of new spaces and undertake a major initiative to improve access, including allowing day homes in public housing and establishing a capital grants program for communities where no infrastructure is available;
- raise the eligibility ceiling for the subsidy;
- provide support for staff to attend education and training opportunities, and funding to cover costs for temporary replacements;
- gather more information about the need for childcare during irregular hours, and provide additional funding to meet this need in centres that require it;
- support an NWT Child Care Association; and
- review the childcare program, including an assessment of the impact of lack of access on women leaving education and employment.

#### Taxation

Both the Union of Northern Workers and MP Dennis Bevington advocated for an increase to the northern residency deduction, which would have the effect of reducing the income tax burden for NWT and other northern Canadian residents. MP Bevington also spoke in support of lobbying the federal government to eliminate the GST in the three territories.

The Legislative Assembly passed a motion on February 9, 2006, calling for the Premier and Minister of Finance to immediately begin work with their counterparts in the other territories and affected provinces, as well as northern Members of Parliament, to collectively make the case to the federal government to increase the northern residency deduction. Committee members continue to support this motion and look forward to an update on the efforts to advance this issue in the Government's response to this report.

#### Income Support Review

Several organizations inquired about the status of the income support review. Although we heard that generally people were pleased with the consultation process, the lack of recent news on the review's status is creating some anxiety. As the NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities said, "a great deal of time went into this review and, more importantly, a lot of trust and hopes." The NWT Seniors' Society expressed concerns about possible reductions: "We do not support lower incomes for the vulnerable and the people on fixed incomes like the seniors when it costs \$17 for a four-litre jug of milk and \$4 for an orange. ... We do not want to see (seniors' benefits) taken away due to budget cuts over which they have no control in communities where the government is not recognizing the cost of living is increasing at an outstanding rate."

Alternatives North presented several specific recommendations:

- stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit and maintenance payments;
- increase amounts for food, personal household items, transportation, telephone and school activities;
- gradually decrease benefits with increased income, but do not make a blanket statement that people who work are better off than those receiving income security;
- develop a poverty reduction strategy.

The committee also received the following specific recommendations from the NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities:

- Create a separate stream for persons with disabilities apart from the general income assistance stream, as their reasons for requiring support are different and are not transient, and productive choices will not lead them back to employment. Persons with disabilities could possibly be grouped with seniors.
- Remove the funding to assist parents of children with disabilities from under the Child and Family Services Act regime. Parents object to having to sign a Voluntary Service Agreement with child protection services in order to receive this assistance.

#### **Future Trends**

As difficult as the cost of living is in the NWT today, the committee heard about factors that are likely to make it worse in the future.

The first is resource development. Although many northerners will benefit through jobs and business opportunities, other individuals and families will be left behind by the pipeline and other developments. As we heard again during this year's consultations, the separation between haves and have-nots is already apparent in communities like Wekweeti, which are impacted by employment in the diamond mines. Alternatives North spoke to the need for the GNWT to have a strategy and programs for dealing with these people, possibly including increases to the minimum wage, income security rates, and more public or cooperative housing. The strategy would also allow for documenting and tracking poverty in the NWT as the economy grows. Alternatives North also urged the government to take the position that conditions be put on the pipeline to ensure it either benefits the North, or does not go ahead. As one Katlodeeche First Nation member said, recalling past experience with the Pine Point mine, "if they want to do business here, we should get the breaks, not them."

The second factor that will exacerbate the high cost of living is climate change. The committee heard that already in Sachs Harbour, the permafrost is melting to the extent that gravel pads where houses used to be cannot support new structures because water is seeping up to the surface. Communities like Wekweeti that depend on winter roads for their resupply are finding the season shorter and shorter and are concerned that eventually winter roads will no longer be feasible. All communities face less reliable air travel due to the fog and conditions associated with warmer winters. The GNWT needs to prepare for the impact climate change will have on construction and transportation costs, which will in turn raise prices of basic necessities.

#### **What We Heard - Other Issues**

##### **Support For Front-Line Organizations**

One of the main themes of last year's pre-budget consultations was the need for better funding arrangements and improved partnerships with front-line organizations. The committee was disappointed to hear from several groups, including Volunteer NWT, the NWT Seniors' Society, the Federation franco-tenoise, the Status of Women Council, the Yellowknife Association of Concerned Citizens for Seniors, and the Yellowknife Association for Community Living, that the situation has not improved much since last year.

As we heard from Volunteer NWT, "while being experts at stretching every dollar as far as it goes, there does come a time when a group can't do the same, let alone more, with less." Front-line organizations continue to struggle with insufficient project funds, lack of forced growth funding, lack of funding to provide wage parity, training and adequate supervision and support for staff, inadequate project administration and core funds, delayed receipt of signed contracts and contribution agreements and attached funding, the need to submit multiple proposals to fund programs, short-term project funding which results in programming being interrupted to the detriment of clients, and lack of multi-year funding resulting in insecurity and the inability to do longer-range planning such as committing to long-term leases for space and equipment.

The Federation franco-tenoise captured the frustration of many groups in its submission, writing that rising operating costs make "the delivery of our services difficult, and even puts it in jeopardy, because, while our costs are increasing, the territorial government's contribution has stayed at the same level for almost a decade. ...having us deliver services to the francophone community is an excellent way to lower the government's costs, since we manage to deliver services at less cost, although this is no justification for keeping the contribution at the same level for so many years." The committee was most alarmed by concerns from service providers that insufficient funding is in some situations putting clients' well-being and safety at risk, and could have very serious consequences. For example, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living warned that staff/client ratios are too high, resulting in "inadequate supervision of vulnerable adults, poor case management practices, and stress as staff is unable to complete reports and contribute to client program planning."

Hiring and keeping staff and volunteers continue to be a challenge for front-line organizations. In the words of Volunteer NWT, "funding arrangements which don't allow a group to attract, train and retain staff not only threaten the sustainability of services, they destroy morale and, in some cases, the organizations themselves." Inadequate funding is demoralizing not only for staff, but also for volunteers who may end up having to focus their efforts on fundraising, which often is not what they signed up for. This is a serious concern, as there are already other factors that make volunteer recruitment difficult. For example, one Wekweeti resident told us, "the economic climate has killed volunteerism."

As a specific example, the committee heard that the Community Justice Committee Program, which saves the government a great deal of money by diverting cases from the courts, is in trouble. Many communities have recently lost coordinators to higher paying jobs, and program funding has not kept up with demand. Yellowknife's justice committee coordinator advised us that their caseload has increased sharply, from 13 in all of 2004-2005 to 13 per month in each of June and July 2006. As she stated, this is "a very, very good program that, because it is not being adequately resourced, is at risk of failing today."

The GNWT's demands for applying and accounting for funding, especially where multiple sources (and multiple reporting formats and requirements) are involved, also continues to be a major concern. While accountability is important, there is clearly room for the GNWT to be more flexible in its expectations.

An example brought forward by the NWT Seniors' Society provides a case in point. The Society's major funder, the Department of Health and Social Services, ordinarily requires a report by the end of June. The society was advised by its auditor that if they could wait until July, August or September, the cost would be one-third of what it would be earlier in the year during the peak demand. What happened next? In the society's words, "we went back to our major funder and said, can the rules be changed? Can we, for instance, wait until August to report to you people and save ourselves two-thirds of that money? ... The ruling from FMB is no, the rule is the rule. You have to report in 90 days. Everybody has to do the same. That is just a small area where you go, hmmm, this doesn't make any sense to do it this way."

As Volunteer NWT stated, "voluntary groups want to be accountable to the community, their directors and government for the public money they receive to do their work. The issue is the clarity and reasonableness of accountability requirements, and of course a group must have trained staff to do the reporting, which can be quite onerous." This leads to one of Volunteer NWT's specific recommendations, which is for the GNWT to provide a standard 12 percent program and project administration fee across the board.

Some front-line agencies also voiced concerns about communications and their overall relationship with the GNWT. Complaints included lack of current information about funding and policy development, lack of opportunities to participate in policy and program development, and failure to listen to community input. One organization expressed a concern that increasingly the GNWT seems to expect leadership from them and does not recognize they are already overwhelmed with day-to-day responsibilities and have minimal time for strategizing or for anything else. As the Yellowknife Association for Community Living said, "Government departments have an expectation that voluntary sector organizations be involved in consultations and these organizations want to be involved. Lack of 'core' funding reduces our ability to participate and places increased strain on already stretched resources."

Volunteer NWT indicated it is in discussions with the GNWT about striking a working group to discuss and resolve the funding and relationship issues between the GNWT and front-line organizations. In their view, the response has been receptive, although the GNWT has indicated to them that it wishes to conduct an internal review of its policies and procedures before the working group is established. While Volunteer NWT supports the GNWT's intent to do this internal work in advance, it urged the GNWT to set firm timelines for this work to be completed, and to ensure that these issues remain a priority.

The committee cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of front-line agencies and workers, and urges the GNWT to act quickly to end the crisis and ensure they continue to be a viable part of our society. In the words of the NWT Seniors' Society, "many groups have laboured and enhanced community by their spirit and devotion to many causes over the years." What a tragedy it would be if this social infrastructure that took decades to build were to collapse. As the Yellowknife Association for Community Living told us in a plea for government support, "these are the organizations that provide direct service. These are the organizations that know the needs of the people they serve and cannot meet these needs

with the funding received. These are the organizations that are no longer able to provide their current level of service and are actually reducing service or at the point of having to make that decision. These are the organizations whose members have the experience and skills to lead." These are the organizations we cannot afford to lose.

### **Government Operations And Efficiency**

The most widely mentioned concern about the GNWT's operations was with the transfer of the Social Housing Program to Education, Culture and Employment, which has not rolled out smoothly at the community level. Both the NWT Seniors' Society and NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities indicated the transfer has created confusion and raised concerns about the level of service. The committee heard of an Aklavik elder who received a letter informing her of the changes, and misunderstanding it to mean she would be evicted, was under a great deal of stress and ready to move to her bush camp. As one Aklavik resident told us, "even the staff don't fully understand all the changes or why."

In Sachs Harbour, the committee heard that housing paperwork is now being sent to Inuvik because there is no local income support worker. Residents pointed out that this creates additional administrative costs, as well as adding to the workload of the Inuvik staff and creating delays with the processing of housing documents. It is difficult for community members to understand why the local housing staff cannot continue to handle the documents when this would clearly result in a much more efficient process.

Another concern about government inefficiency was raised in Wekweeti, where the committee heard concerns about income support's practice of not delivering fuel while tenants are away, which, as one resident said, makes clients "prisoners in their own houses." In one case, the refusal to deliver fuel resulted in \$25,000 worth of damage, which could have been avoided by putting \$200 worth into the tank.

Other specific suggestions the committee received to improve government operations and efficiency were:

- elected, rather than appointed, boards for major agencies such as health and education authorities;
- more GNWT decentralization to boost smaller communities' economies;
- downsize and privatize government services like Public Works and Services;
- allow the use of southern air carriers for medical travel where this is more cost effective, for example, in Fort Liard.

### **Policy And Strategic Initiatives**

The Status of Women Council reiterated the recommendations it made last year for the GNWT to develop a gender analysis policy, provide resources to encourage women's participation on boards and agencies, which may include compensation for childcare, and support leadership training for women to address barriers and encourage their participation in determining future directions for the NWT.

The Status of Women Council also recommended once again that the GNWT establish a position to act as a focal point for issues related to immigration and newcomers, review the impact of newcomers on programs and

services, and provide funding to educate immigrants about their rights.

The NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities and the Yellowknife Association for Community Living both listed the disability action plan as a priority and indicated it is time for an update and status report to "re-evaluate, see what is working and what needs to be re-examined." The Yellowknife association also recommended the GNWT renew its commitment to inclusion for all by attaching resources to this statement.

#### **Health**

The committee heard many concerns about the level and frequency of service available in small communities. In Wekweeti, which has a high rate of tuberculosis, people told us that they need more regular health care. Sachs Harbour residents told us that mental health workers only visit every one or two months for a day or two at a time. The lack of continuity makes it difficult for people who are struggling with addictions to establish relationships with workers and open up about their problems. People returning from southern treatment facilities find they have no support. The lack of access to mental health workers also affects academic success in the school for students who need help. One resident requested that an outpost camp be established near the community for residential school healing.

The Yellowknife Association of Concerned Citizens for Seniors made a number of specific recommendations in support of elders' health: up-to-date equipment and facilities for elders, including a dementia facility; more assisted and supported living services to fill the gap between home care and long-term care; and up-to-date standards, policies and practices for elder care in plain language.

The Yellowknife Association for Community Living requested research on supported living options and the implementation of best practices. As they pointed out, supported living programs assist clients with practical needs, and often save money by helping clients to participate in education, employment and social aspects of our communities, and by avoiding the need for more expensive programs.

The committee also received a recommendation from the Status of Women Council for increased funding for HIV/AIDS awareness and education.

As we did last year, the committee heard requests for additional funding for addictions treatment and mental health services. In support of this request, Ms. Lydia Bardak, who is active in several Yellowknife community service groups, stated that the North Slave Correctional Centre is "the largest shelter for homeless, addicted, abused and traumatized people. ... If we had adequate resources to assist those with abuse issues or addictions, we would not need to have moved them from mental health institutions to correctional facilities. There is no cost savings there." Ms. Bardak specified that the need is not for treatment facilities, but for better resources for existing programs. The Status of Women Council expressed concerns with the Chalmers report, which stated there would be no new drug and alcohol initiatives, including youth initiatives. The council urged the GNWT to make comprehensive drug and alcohol treatment programs a top priority and "enter immediately into dialogue with all concerned parties, including the federal government, who has expressed concern and interest in this area."

#### **Family Violence**

The committee heard from both the NWT Seniors' Society and Status of Women Council that there is a need to continue support for the Family Violence Action Plan through Phase II, including continued public education and training on the Protection Against Family Violence Act, continued support for the coalition, the provision of safe homes and funding for programs and services. The need was highlighted by the NWT Seniors' Society, who said, "sadly, I have heard caregivers say we have not taken one step forward in 20 years when it comes to eliminating family violence. This cannot continue. Caregivers and other professionals must be given the resources and the tools to build our future."

The council, as they did last year, further recommended additional resources for transition houses, and that the houses be funded directly rather than through regional authorities as there have been instances of authorities not passing along all of the designated funds from the department. As the council pointed out, abused women and their children are sometimes transferred from one region to another, and the network of transition houses should therefore really be seen as a territorial rather than a regional program.

The council also repeated last year's recommendation for a major new initiative in collaboration with stakeholders to address the high level of sexual assault and sexual abuse.

#### **Education And Literacy**

Comments on education reflected many of the issues the committee heard during last year's pre-budget consultations. We heard again that the funding formula is inadequate for small schools and does not allow for a critical mass of staff and programming. We heard there is a need for better resources for high schools in small communities so that students do not have to upgrade after graduation before they can access post-secondary education. We also heard a request for more on-the-land programming.

The Status of Women Council reiterated last year's recommendation for a strategy to increase the numbers of women in trades and technical occupations, including ways of addressing childcare and mentoring needs.

The NWT Literacy Council provided a written submission with recommendations to: position literacy as a policy and funding priority and work with other stakeholders to renew a comprehensive Literacy Strategy; undertake a review of the Adult Learning and Basic Education (ALBE) system to identify gaps in service and explore ways to better support adults with low literacy skills; have all departments review their policies and programs through a literacy lens; and work with the federal government to move forward with a national strategy or system for adult literacy and basic education.

Mayor Martselos of Fort Smith suggested the GNWT fund more use of the Thebacha Campus Aurora College facilities, which are underutilized during the summer, and could be used for programs such as pre-trades training and summer schools.

#### **Economic Development**

As we did last year, the committee heard a number of suggestions for how the GNWT could better support economic development in areas other than the non-renewable resource sector.

The NWT Tourism Association requested that the GNWT look at removing the fuel tax for gas used in boats and for fuel used for generators in remote locations. Some communities also requested specific support. For example, Wekweeti residents suggested the community has potential as a side trip from Yellowknife, but needs assistance to develop that. A consignment store for local arts and crafts to capture at least some revenue from business travelers was suggested as one place to start. Fort Smith Mayor Martselos pointed out that community is losing many tourists due to the poor condition of the highway, and requested the GNWT make chipsealing that highway a priority. As he said, "when (tourists) ask if it's pavement or gravel and they hear 'gravel', they don't come."

The Territorial Farmers' Association urged the GNWT to look seriously at our renewable resource potential, and in particular at agriculture. Neglect of the agricultural sector is causing us to miss out on opportunities to increase our self-reliance, lower food prices, create a local industry, and access and leverage federal agriculture funding. As discussed earlier in this report, the association recently completed a study targeting a 25 percent market share of NWT consumption. The study estimated that achieving this target would create 30 jobs in agricultural operations, 37 jobs during the construction phase, have an ongoing impact on the GDP of about \$4.4 million, and require 7,500 acres.

The association reiterated several of the specific recommendations it made last year for: the GNWT to work with the association to set a clear vision for agriculture in all NWT regions; research, pilot and demonstration projects; establish an agricultural reserve designation, identify arable fertile land, and protect it as a sustainable natural resource, including small parcels near communities; exempt farm equipment from registration requirements under the Motor Vehicles Act; leverage federal program dollars; re-examine the criteria for assessment of agricultural land under the Property Assessment and Taxation Act; and provide off-road fuel rebate for equipment primarily used in agricultural and harvesting activities.

The association also expressed concerns that it often finds out about GNWT policy and planning initiatives after the fact, and asked that in future the GNWT keep the lines of communication open and work more closely with its members. As the association told us, "if we don't start working together, we are going to lose a lot of money that could come to the Northwest Territories for agriculture."

The committee also received a recommendation from Mr. Sonny McDonald for more GNWT support for the arts and crafts sector, and for the establishment of NWT achievement awards for the arts. As Mr. McDonald pointed out, the NWT Arts Council cannot meet the demand for funding with its current budget. The result is that some artists are turned down outright, and others receive only part of what they requested, which often means they cannot complete their projects. In Mr. McDonald's words, "many years ago before the diamond mines and the pipelines occurred, the arts and crafts in the Territories were a big money-making thing, in excess of \$36 million. ... In the past four or five years, we're lucky if we bring \$2 million or \$4 million to the coffers. So you know, it tells you something."

## Conclusion

Once again, the committee would like to thank all those who spoke at our hearings or provided written submissions. We look forward to the government's response to this report.

## Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommends the government provide a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days.

## Appendix 1

Accountability and Oversight committee pre-budget consultations, list of Presenters

Thursday, August 17, 2006

### Yellowknife

- Floyd Roland, Minister of Finance
- Beatrice Campbell and Barb Hood, NWT Seniors' Society
- Byrne Richards, Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, Yellowknife
- James Anderson, Private Citizen
- Dennis Bevington, Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic
- Tara Kearsley, Constituency Assistant

Friday, August 18, 2006

### Yellowknife

- Bill Graham and Aggie Brockman, Volunteer NWT
- Ben McDonald, Arlene Hache and Aggie Brockman, Alternatives North
- Sharon Thomas and Lorraine Phaneuf, Status of Women Council of the NWT
- Cornelius Suchy, Biomass Energy, Revelstoke, B.C.

Monday, August 21, 2006

### Fort Smith

- Peter Martselos, Mayor, Town of Fort Smith
- Henry Beaver, Private Citizen
- Lea Storry, Slave River Journal

Tuesday, August 22, 2006

### Aklavik

- Evelyn Storr, Senior Administrative Officer, Hamlet of Aklavik
- Arnie Steinward, Local Businessman

### Fort Resolution

- Terry Villeneuve, President, Deninu K'ue Seniors' Society
- Marcel Norn, Elder
- Sonny McDonald, Chairperson, NWT Arts Council

Wednesday, August 23, 2006

### Sachs Harbour

- Ted Elias, Private Citizen

- Donna Keogak, Manager of the Community Corporation and Chair of the Housing Committee
- Samantha Lucas, Private Citizen
- Joey Carpenter, Private Citizen
- John Keogak, Private Citizen
- Mary Connolly, School Principal
- Beverly Smith, School Teacher
- Jackie Kuptana, Business Owner and Private Citizen
- Andy Carpenter, Mayor, Hamlet of Sachs Harbour
- Lucy Kudlak, Private Citizen
- Benjamin Goose, Private Citizen
- Geddes Wolki, Private Citizen
- Hay River Reserve/K'atloodeeche First Nation
- Evellyn Coleman, Territorial Farmers Association
- Arthur Martel, Member, K'atloodeeche First Nation
- Alex Sunrise, Chief, K'atloodeeche First Nation
- Ron Cook, Councillor, Town of Hay River

Thursday, August 24, 2006

Fort Liard

- Mike Drake, Mayor, Hamlet of Fort Liard
- Irene McLeod, Private Citizen
- Joan Peddle, Local Nurse
- George Jooris, Private Citizen
- Alphonse Janvier, School Principal
- John Peddle, Private Citizen

Friday, August 25, 2006

Wekweeti

- Nora Jean Gerrior, Adult Educator, Aurora College
- Randy Bergon, Senior Administration Officer, Hamlet of Wekweeti
- Bobbie Boline, Private Citizen
- Johnny Arrowmaker, Town Foreman

Tuesday, September 5, 2006

Yellowknife

- Steven Meister, President, Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce
- Jane Whyte, Executive Director, Yellowknife Association for Community Living
- Cecily Hewitt, Executive Director, NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities
- Mark Henry, Energy Coordinator, City of Yellowknife and Andrew Robinson, Arctic Energy Alliance
- David Gridlay, Executive Director, and Linda Unger, Communications Manager, Northwest Territories Tourism
- Dale Thomson, Vice-Chair, Yellowknife Education District No. 1
- Lydia Bardak, Coordinator, Yellowknife Justice Committee and Voluntary Chair, Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition
- Greg Debogorski and Vivian Squires, Yellowknife Seniors' Society

Accountability and Oversight Committee pre-budget consultations, written submissions

- Todd Parsons, President, Union of Northern Workers
- Cate Sills, Executive Director, NWT Literacy Council
- Léo-Paul Provencher, Executive Director, Federation franco-tenoise
- Sandra Taylor, President, Yellowknife Seniors' Society
- Dan Costache, President, Yellowknife Association of Concerned Citizens for Seniors (YACCS)

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

**Motion To Receive Committee Report 6-15(5) And Move Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Committee Report 6-15(5) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Motion is on the floor. Motion is in order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Committee Report 6-15(5) will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Reports of standing and special committees. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. Honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

#### ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

**Tabled Document 62-15(5): Letter From The Yellowknife Inuit Katujjiqatigiit On Premier's Comments On Teacher Assault Suit**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to table a document that I received by hand delivery today from the Yellowknife Inuit Katujjiqatigiit hear in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Tabling of documents. Honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

**Tabled Document 63-15(5): Letter From The Yellowknife Women's Society On Premier's Comments On Teacher Assault Suit**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a letter from Arlene Hache, executive director of Yellowknife Women's Association to the editor of News/North; Bob Webber, Canadian Press; and all MLAs dated October 23, 2006. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Tabling of Documents. Notices of motion. Honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

#### ITEM 14: NOTICES OF MOTION

**Motion 9-15(5): Censure Of Premier And Support For Victims Of Sexual Abuse**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Wednesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that this Legislative Assembly censures the Premier for

his comments to the media on the civil case currently before the courts related to former teacher Edward Horne; and further, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the government bring forward a policy on how it will handle allegations of sexual abuse, which is consistent with zero tolerance toward violence, which shows support to survivors; and furthermore, that the government identify gaps in assistance and services for survivors of sexual abuse, and bring forward proposals to address these gaps; and furthermore, that the government, within the life of this Assembly, develop a mandatory sexual abuse survivor assistance training program for front-line workers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Notices of motion. Honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod

**Motion 10-15(5): Transfer Of Responsibility For Social Housing**

**MR. MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Wednesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that the responsibility for the administration of social housing be once again placed under the control of the NWT Housing Corporation; and further, that the responsibility for determining the methodology of calculating social housing subsidies remain with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Motions. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bills 13, 15, 17; Committee Report 5-15(5), with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the committee members wish to consider Bill 15, Elections and Plebiscites Act; Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3; and Committee Report 5-15(5), Report on the Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Workers' Compensation Board of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Is committee agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Okay. We will proceed with that after a short break. Thank you, committee.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I would like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. The first thing we have on our agenda this afternoon is Bill 15, Elections and Plebiscites Act. I would like to refer to the sponsor of the bill for opening comments. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to present Bill 15, Elections and Plebiscites Act, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly's Board of Management. This

bill will combine the current Elections Act and the Plebiscites Act into one act with the core components of each being maintained. The new act allows for a reorganization of the major components of the existing acts, the updating of definitions and language, clarification of some existing provisions, the addition of new provisions to address such matters as campaigning, access to multiple dwelling sites, restricting the use of electoral information, restricting campaign signs and campaigning near polling stations, contributions and expenditures and provisions respecting the holding of plebiscites.

Madam Chair, the new act also established the first Monday in October every four years as the permanent general election day for the Northwest Territories, commencing with Monday, October 1, 2007.

Finally, Madam Chair, the act provides an improved framework for the conduct of elections and plebiscites in the Northwest Territories. Madam Chair, that concludes my opening remarks and I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have with respect to the Elections and Plebiscites Act. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. There is no standing committee review of this bill. I would like to ask Mr. Ramsay if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Yes, I would, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Is committee agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Then we will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms if he would escort the witnesses to the witness table.

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

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have Ms. Janis Cooper with the Department of Justice; to my right is Mr. Glen McLean, CEO.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I will open the floor for general comments. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Some brief comments and a question. Of course, I am speaking here as a proponent of the bill. It's one of the larger ones to come before this Assembly so far, Madam Chair, at about 360 clauses.

I guess one very general observation I would make about this kind of legislation, Madam Chair, is elections are one of the very significant cornerstones of democracy and of the faith and the trust that our constituents have in how they choose their representatives. It's not something that should ever be taken for granted. That is a very strong and compelling reason for this legislation to come forward. It modernizes and cleans up many election practices, brings them into line with what works for us here in the Northwest Territories and what is good practice elsewhere.

One of the interesting things that I have come to understand about democracy, from connection with some of our events with the Commonwealth countries of the world, is that even among countries in the Commonwealth, there is great discrepancy and variance in how elections are run, in their integrity and in the confidence that people can have in them. I think Canada



is very fortunate to have one of the most stringent election processes in the Commonwealth. For that we should be proud, but we should never, of course, never take that for granted. That is why even though we have, as I say, one of the biggest bills yet to come before this Assembly, it is a very important one.

Madam Chair, a question I would like to ask relates to the plebiscites portion of the bill. I believe this bill reflects an amalgamation where there were two separate acts; one an Elections Act and prior to that a Plebiscites Act and they are now one.

It has been problematic, Madam Chair, especially for some smaller communities, that when plebiscites are held, there have been some pretty stringent requirements for approval or passage of some plebiscites. Very high numbers of the population, it's my recollection, were required to turn out and a high number of voters had to go one way or the other. This was especially problematic, Madam Chair, for plebiscites in some communities for control of liquor.

I am wondering if this new act, Madam Chair, changes any of those criteria or makes it more convenient or less stringent to have approval or passage of a plebiscite in a community, compared to what I understand were very stringent requirements before. Have we changed those at all, Madam Chair?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With Bill 15, the fact of the matter is, communities are responsible for any plebiscites they would have at the community level and the type of stringent guidelines the Member talks about is not part of Bill 15. It would be up to the communities to set their own guidelines in that. Thank you.

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

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Is that a provision of the new act, then, that communities can set their own criteria, whereas before it was lockdown, Madam Chair?

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

**MR. RAMSAY:** Yes, that is the way this bill is set up, Mr. Braden. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Any other general comments? Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to speak very briefly in support of the bill. I think it's a bill that contains lots of provisions that would clean up, so to speak, or enhance or improve our election procedures and set more clear rules and guidelines on certain areas of election rules where there are more grey areas than we would want to have had.

I am in support of this bill. This is quite a lengthy bill and one of the things that it is doing is to set the time for the election and it's now going to be known with certainty. I don't think a lot of people who are not familiar with this issue appreciate as much the extent to which the complexities have gone on in deciding that because of the vast differences in our weather systems or the large territory that we have to gather. In the past, election days were not set. Sometimes we don't get, not recognized, but we don't take time to pause and be happy or grateful for

those important decisions we do make. I think this is one of them and now when this legislation comes into effect, everyone on the land who is interested in putting their name forward will know just like the rest of us sitting here, who is planning on running again. I think that's just part of good governing in a democracy.

There are lots of provisions like that here. I just want to put on record my support for the general provisions and specific provisions of this legislation. I also want to express my appreciation to the Chief Electoral Officer and the staff for doing the work that he's done. I just wanted to put that on record. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. General comments. Any further general comments?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Detail.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** We will proceed there with the detail. There will be a motion for an amendment at clause 5. Until then, we will proceed clause by clause. After that, I believe we will group, because there are 361 clauses, we will group some of them together, but we will try not to move too quickly in case anyone has any questions. Clause 1.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 2.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 3.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 4.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 5. Mr. Pokiak.

**Committee Motion 30-15(5): To Amend Clause 5 To Bill 15: Elections And Plebiscites Act (re: CEO Of Term Of Appointment), Carried**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that clause 5 of Bill 15 be amended by adding the following after proposed subclause (5):

(6) Notwithstanding subsection (2), the first Chief Electoral Officer appointed after that subsection comes into force holds office during good behaviour for a term of two years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Clause 5, as amended.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Now we are going to group these together. Clauses 6 through 25.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 26 through 45.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 45 through 65.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 66 to 85.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 86 to 105.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 106 to 125.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 126 to 145.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 146 to 165.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 166 to 185.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 186 to 205.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 206 to 225.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 226 to 245.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 246 to 265.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 266 to 285.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 286 to 305.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 306 to 325.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 326 to 345.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clauses 346 to 361.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. To the bill as a whole, as amended.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Does committee agree that Bill 15, as amended, is ready for third reading?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Okay. Does committee agree Bill 15 is ready for third reading, as amended?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you. Bill 15 is now ready for third reading, as amended. Thank you, Mr. Ramsay, Ms. Cooper, Mr. McLean.

Now I would like Members to turn to Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. I will turn the floor over to Mr. Ramsay who has opening comments as the sponsor of the bill. Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am pleased to provide opening comments to Bill 17 on behalf of the Legislative Assembly's Board of Management.

Bill 17 amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to set out certain rights and privileges of the Legislative Assembly to clarify the responsibilities of the Speaker, Board of Management and officers of the Legislative Assembly to define and ensure consistent use of certain terms and to make a number of minor changes to the act.

Madam Chair, Bill 17 is the result of a comprehensive review of the NWT Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act undertaken following the election of the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. To assist in the review, a comparative analysis of our legislation was conducted in comparison to other more modern acts of similar purposes in other Canadian and Commonwealth jurisdictions. Bill 17, in addition to clarifying confusing and ambiguous language, confirms that this NWT Legislative Assembly enjoys the same privileges and independence as others under the Westminster's model. The bill clarifies the process for filling vacancies in the Legislative Assembly, distinguishes the sitting of the House from a session, clarifies the start date for various allowances for Members of the Legislative Assembly, and allows for the public release of reports of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting.

Thank you, Madam Chair. That concludes my opening comments and I would be pleased to answer any questions Members may have.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I would like to ask Mr. Ramsay if he would like to bring witnesses into the Chamber.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** I would ask the Sergeant-at-Arms, then, to bring the witnesses to the witness table.

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

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, with me I have Mr. Mark Aitken from the Department of Justice, legislative branch, the director; to my right I have the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Tim Mercer.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Bill 17, general comments. Are there any general comments?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Detail.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Okay. Bill 17, clause 1.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 2.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 3.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 4.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 5.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 6.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 7.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 8.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 9.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 10.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 11.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 12.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 13.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 14.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 15.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 16.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 17.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 18.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 19.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 20.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 21.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 22.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 23.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 24.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 25.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 26.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 27.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 28.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 29.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 30.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 31.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 32.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 33.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 34.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 35.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 36.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 37.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 38.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 39.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Clause 40.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Bill as a whole?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Does committee agree that Bill 17 is ready for third reading?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, committee. Bill 17 is now ready for third reading. I would like to thank Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Mercer and Mr. Aitken for their help here today.

Committee, could I ask you please to turn your attention to the Report on the Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Workers' Compensation Board of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut? This report has already been read into the record. It has been referred to

Committee of the Whole for discussion. Are there any general comments? Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Madam Chair, before we go into general comments, just on the procedural point, the recommendations in this report, are we going to be submitting them by way of motion, or are the recommendations being considered as being read into? Does it require any further action from this committee? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Yes, we will be processing the recommendations by way of motion. Those motions will be distributed shortly. Are there any further general comments? Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am very pleased to speak to the report, the work of my colleagues, the work of the Auditor General of Canada and her staff in accepting our request and, of course, the many workers who assisted in bringing to our attention their situation and the remedies that we should be looking at to make for a better WCB.

Madam Chair, my primary interest, as an MLA, is to give voice to my constituents and, in this case, to the many workers who have approached me over the past few years with their stories. Madam Chair, we have a picture of an organization that, for the most part, does a good job of helping the injured workers in a way that it is supposed to. That is to help them through the financial, emotional and physical impacts of their injury and get them back into the workforce. But, Madam Chair, obviously it has not done its very best on the part of some workers. While they all have unique stories to tell, there have been consistent threads in their situations that point to some systemic flaws and problems of due process in governance that must be addressed. That is our purpose here today.

As the Auditor General of Canada helped illustrate, these issues include shortfalls in the training and orientation, the board and the Appeals Tribunal members as well as the staff and front-line workers at the WCB. We know there are issues of interference at the appeals system and of its independence by the board and its executors. This has been proven in two recent court decisions by the courts here in the NWT and in Nunavut.

Madam Chair, we know there are major concerns with the interpretation of the medical evidence and information, especially in cases where the direct cause of an injury or its later consequences for the worker have been muddled in a system that seems more concerned with its bottom line and financial performance than in the well-being of the worker. As MLAs, Madam Chair, these are the people we are here to give voice to today in this Assembly.

Madam Chair, another common theme in their stories has been the endless treadmill of appeals, reviews and medical assessments they have had to endure in trying to get some resolution of their case. One worker infamously has been in the system for 19 years and is still awaiting justice. Despite his successful battle in the courts, Ivan Valic still awaits a new Appeals Tribunal, now 10 months after it was ordered by the Supreme Court of the NWT.

Madam Chair, some workers have experienced unusual degrees of surveillance as the WCB tracks workers for potential fraud. Some are addicted to some form of pain killer to try to manage their situation. Most have suffered anguish and hurt in their personal lives or in their personal and family lives. This is an aspect of the consequence of the injured worker that is all too often hidden. I know of

workers, Madam Chair, who have become obsessed with their cases and their pursuit of what they believe they should get from the WCB. This obsession recognized in some corners, I understand, as WCB syndrome, tears at their sense of well-being and, in the same process, tears up their personal, professional and social lives. To these workers, their inability to get some resolution from the WCB casts a wide net. Madam Chair, those spouses and children pay a terrible price as their partners and parents lose their pride, their sense of purpose and, of course, at least part of their income. The home is, in some cases, devastated.

Our job as standing committee is to take the findings of the Auditor General, the stories of our constituents, the information provided by the WCB officials, the recommendations made by the Act Now panel of five years ago and present a report to the Legislative Assembly on what we think should be done to remedy these problems. This report was indeed tabled and read into the record of this Assembly last week.

Madam Chair, it is vitally important that we take this job seriously and with a sense of resolve, purpose and optimism that we can make the changes needed. As legislators, we have a unique role to shape the WCB that does its job to the fullest extent possible for both workers and employers.

Madam Chair, as our NWT economy expands at incredible speed, so does the number of workers and businesses attracted to this part of Canada. We all need a WCB we can have confidence in. That should be our vision and our purpose today, Madam Chair. Thank you. That concludes my general comments.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. Are there any further general comments? Mr. Ramsay.

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to start off by thanking everybody that was involved in putting this report together. That includes the Workers' Compensation Board of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and, as well, the injured workers who were talking to many of us through this whole process, and the Auditor General of Canada who took us by the hand and helped us through this process. I think they are owed a great debt of gratitude. As well, I do want to mention Mr. Braden and his work in the area of helping injured workers. He is a real champion of the cause for injured workers. I think he is owed a great debt of gratitude as well in this whole process. Thank you, Mr. Braden.

I do look forward to us getting to where we need to go with the Workers' Compensation Board. There are nine recommendations contained in this report that I think, if acted upon by the Workers' Compensation Board, it will help get us there. There are also changes upcoming to legislation that could certainly help as well. I think by working together with the Governance Council of WCB, the Minister, the Government of the Northwest Territories and injured workers, I think we can get to where we need to go to. This report is long overdue. I am glad to see it here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly today so we can pass these motions and we can try to make a difference, especially for those folks who have encountered difficulties in dealing with the WCB and long-outstanding claims. With that, Madam Chair, I just want to, again, thank everybody involved in putting this report together. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. General comments. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a short comment I wish to make for the record. I don't want to repeat the issues that Mr. Braden so ably put together, but I just would like to state that I think we have to look at this as a new opportunity to finally do something on this issue that has been with us for a very long time. I am encouraged. Perhaps it is not a bad thing that, as the committee presents this report that reflects the work of committee over the last number of months and it is an accumulation of the workers who came forward to tell their stories once again and the work of the Auditor General's office who has helped us and actually the Board of Governance who has been showing its willingness to work with us on these issues and the fact that the report now is received by a new Minister of WCB who, I hope, will have a fresh look on these recommendations and apply all of his efforts and willingness to see if we can, once and for all, resolve some of these long-outstanding issues.

I have to tell you that I do sense, in talking to some of the members of the Board of Governance and just listening to what is going on, I think that this report, along with all of the other questions and issues that have been brought forward in the House, has raised the issue somewhat. I know that at the beginning of this Assembly, especially when the House passed the motion to send the WCB for a review at the Auditor General's office, I know there was a great deal of question on the part of everyone involved with WCB as to why our Legislature would take such a drastic action. I think, by virtue of having gone through the public hearing process and the findings of the Auditor General's report and the Board of Governance members and staff of the WCB being involved in this process and listening from the people, I think that even if the wheels haven't turned quite enough, I think there is at least an openness and willingness to look at it. In this business I know that we go on beating about what is wrong, but we couldn't keep on going with what we do if we didn't believe that we could make some changes. So I would like to encourage the new Minister of WCB to take this report and the number of recommendations that are going to come forward to his heart and that he would give it his best effort to make some changes and then he, too, could be a champion of the workers that Mr. Braden has demonstrated himself to be. In a consensus government, we need the Members on this side as well as the Ministers on that side to make it work in the interest of the people. I will be looking to the new Minister to make this happen. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. Are there any further general comments? Mr. Villeneuve.

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** This is just short brief comments on the report. I just want to commend the Auditor General on the work that her team did with compiling this report. I think it has been long overdue, especially for a public institution as important as WCB and how people view their claims as very important and very substantial in how their lives change and why they haven't changed for the better in many instances when they are working with WCB. Hopefully, over time, this report will make those changes more positive for the people that have these long-outstanding claims that they have been dealing with with WCB.

Again, as my friend, Mr. Ramsay has stated, I have to commend Mr. Braden on his efforts to see this report

come to some fruition. It has been taking a couple of years, but we do have a document here now in front of us that we can present and make recommendations and motions on that I hope the government can act on and draft some communications protocol and an action plan that will address all of these recommendations. I look forward to seeing that.

With that, I just want to say that I hope that the people that had a lot of input into the report and provided their experiences and what they are up against when they are dealing with the WCB, that they can have a lot of these issues put behind them and they can move on with their lives and hopefully see some benefits, if they are rightfully entitled to them, come to them and some justice coming out of this report for everybody that has to deal with WCB, that everybody is treated equitably and fairly. All hearings are taken with the utmost importance in seeing that people are treated in a fair and equitable manner by this institution or for the future. With that, again, I just want to thank everybody for having their input into it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Are there any further general comments? We will go to the committee motions. Mr. Braden.

**Committee Motion 31-15(5): CR 5-15(5): To Expedite The Resolution Of Long Outstanding Claims, Carried**

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board come forward with options to expedite the resolution of longstanding claims and to improve timelines for the hearings of appeals. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. The motion is in order. To the motion. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you. I just want to add a piece to this motion by saying that I hope that the response to this motion from the Minister, or the new Minister of WCB, would not be that there are some kind of policy or legislative barriers to doing this. I think that there is a lot that the Minister of WCB can do, including looking at new legislation. I don't want to hear the WCB Minister again saying the laws don't allow me to do that. If that is going to be the answer, I would like to know what that law is. I would like the Minister to respond by saying he could change the law, because, in case the Ministers haven't realized, we are lawmakers here, and I think that we will be willing to look at making new laws to make it possible. So I just want to put that key thing to this motion. Of course, I will be voting in favour of the motion. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the motion. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If there is one real tangible result that can come from this, it is that those workers...Madam Chair, I know that the Auditor General considered about 40 files of injured workers and just about all of them had longstanding cases that they were trying to get resolved. If we can do one tangible thing, it would be to see some kind of mechanism whereby they may see some resolution and some closure to their claim or to their case.

Madam Chair, it is well understood here that not all workers are going to get everything they think should be coming to them. The WCB does have a very serious obligation to ensure that claims are legitimate and that workers get certainly what they deserve and not necessarily more. But, Madam Chair, in talking to a

number of injured workers, their expectations were, of course, that something may result in their favour from the work of this committee and of the Auditor General of Canada. Of course, that was never the expectation, and we took some pains to make sure that workers understood that they were not going to see a direct resolution as a result of the Auditor General's investigation. But I would say, and this is the foundation of this motion, Madam Chair, that if there is a legacy that we could leave or start, it would be to find a mechanism whereby these longstanding chronic cases could see some resolution. That is the intent of this motion, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question has been called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Further motions. Mr. Lafferty.

**Committee Motion 32-15(5): CR 5-15(5): Action Plan To Address The Auditor General's Recommendations, Carried**

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board ensure the Governance Council and Workers' Compensation Board administration complete a draft communications protocol and an action plan to address the Auditor General's recommendation and forward these to the Accountability and Oversight committee by the end of 2006. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The motion is in order. To the motion. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just briefly, I think it's clear here there is a deadline here of the end of 2006, but I believe the officials at WCB are already aware of the recommendation, obviously, and in our discussions and in public hearings and the Auditor General's report findings showed that WCB could do much better in communicating its programs and policies and its decisions and such in the letters and the way the staff conveys messages to injured workers and such. But I just wanted to make it clear that in speaking and in putting this motion forward, I think that the whole general issue of communication is much larger than just a letter and message idea. Also, that this not be considered as something that would answer to all of the issues surrounding how the injured workers feel about the services they get from WCB. I just think that while the WCB, in our findings and in our public hearings, while the WCB has room for improvement in how they communicate their message, but also that shouldn't be taken as saying that the product is fine and that the only problem is the communicating. I don't think it should be seen as that. I think there is room for improvement in communicating, as well as improving the product itself, because sometimes when we think of communication and messaging we think of it as if we can just market it better we'll sell it better. But I think in this instance, as I stated in our public hearings, that there is something wrong with the product also. I think that the WCB's inability or unwillingness to address in a fundamental way the issue of chronic pain

and the conflicting medical opinion of lack of resources and wherewithal to the injured workers, I don't think that should just be categorized as merely a communication issue. I think that speaks to lack of action on the part of the WCB to really fundamentally address that.

So I just wanted to speak in favour of this motion accepting that the WCB could do a lot better to do their communication strategy and protocol, but that does not do away with its obligation to take care of the product itself. So I just wanted to put that on record. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Ramsay.

**Committee Motion 33-15(5): CR 5-15(5): Relocation Of The Appeals Tribunal Offices, Carried**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board locate the Appeals Tribunal offices separate and apart from the Workers' Compensation Board and that this relocation be undertaken as an immediate priority. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Ramsay.

**Committee Motion 34-15(5): CR 5-15(5): WCB Reception Protocols, Security Practices And Client And Public Relations Functions, Carried**

**MR. RAMSAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board direct the Governance Council to overhaul its reception protocols, security practices and client and public relations functions to provide a more accessible and responsive level of service. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This motion speaks to issues, longstanding issues I think with the general sort of service orientation and attitude and approach toward being an accessible and an open organization. Madam Chair, I know that going into WCB offices here in Yellowknife has some very stringent security requirements regarding access. I have tried to work with and assist workers who have had issues with the WCB, and I know that one worker in particular was denied and just total outright flat denied access to the office even though he was in the company of my constituency assistant. I think there are extremes, Madam Chair, of accessibility and openness that need to be

addressed and that is the intent of this motion, to try and steer WCB into becoming more of a service organization that we cannot only have confidence in, but know that we have a reasonable degree of access to it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Villeneuve.

**Committee Motion 35-15(5): CR 5-15(5): Mandatory Orientation And Training/Ongoing Professional Development, Carried**

**MR. VILLENEUVE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that mandatory orientation and training be implemented for all new Workers' Compensation Board employees before they are allowed to engage clients. The committee further recommends ongoing professional development be programmed for each employee, manager, executive and member of the Governance Council and Appeals Tribunal and documented and reported annually as a key component of performance measurement. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Pokiak.

**Committee Motion 36-15(5): CR 5-15(5): Amendments To The Act To Set Out The WCB's Mandate, Carried**

**MR. POKIAK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends the government introduce amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act as set out in WCB's mandate, including its duty to assist injured workers in clear terms. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The motion is in order. To the motion. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to draw the attention of the Minister to this motion, because I think it's a big one and it's one that if done properly could really make a difference in the issues that we're dealing with in this report. I would really like to recommend the Minister and anybody who cares to understand this issue to go and look at the transcript of our AOC public hearings where the workers' advisor, Colin Baile, spoke to us about what Meredith principle means and the history of it, and how that in the last 60 or 70 years we, as a society, might have lost our way in living up to that principle. In his opinion, and I tell you it is an excellent presentation, and I took copious notes of that presentation, but that is available in print, in transcript. The one that I remember in that discussion was the fact that the Meredith principle that WCB infrastructure is built on is understood commonly where the benefit of doubt should always fall with the workers. But I think for those injured workers that have been through the process, and Mr. Baile who works with injured workers all the time, the practice now is becoming that the benefit only goes to injured workers where there

is sort of a tie. Instead of benefit of doubt always falling with injured workers, that benefit of doubt only kicks in where the WCB looks at the situation, whoever is looking at the case, they look at it and say well everything being equal, you've got the employer's side or doctor's side and the worker's side, and where everything being equal, the tipping issue is a Meredith principle. I argue to the Minister and anybody who cares to see this, that that is a wrong application of the Meredith principle and that's a foundation for a lot of ill that exists in our WCB system. I think we, as a society, and we, as a Legislature, should stand up and say you know what, we don't agree with how that applies. I think, if necessary, the Minister should look at changing the legislation to make it clear that the benefit of doubt has to go to the workers as it was always meant to be.

Another thing that Mr. Baile mentioned is the fact that our society has changed and that the Meredith principle came around when there used to be minors; there used to be seven-year-old slave labourers in the mine digging coal. We don't live in that kind of society anymore, and there are new injuries like chronic pain and a lot of others things and depression and mental illness and all sorts of things that exist and WCB's system is just not recognizing in order to fulfill a take that we may need a legislative statement very clear in WCB legislation to give that strength. So that's the kind of thing that I'll be looking from the Minister to make sure that please do not feel limited and restricted to the WCB legislation as they exist, because if there are gaps, then the Minister should exercise his powers to change those legislation. Given the report that we have here and the support you have from the Regular Members, and I have to tell you that I am sure that no Minister will have any problem passing such legislation here.

Another thing I want to say I want to assign to the new Minister to look at is that the WCB legislation the way its written is very lopsided toward ratepayers. There's a very clear statement in the mandate of WCB that the mandate of the council is to look after the ratepayers, but there is no such strong, clear provision there that says that WCB looks after the workers too. I don't think that is clear enough and that's one more area of mandate. So all the work of WCB falls from that lopsided mandate. So whenever the worker is not getting their fair share, we're being pointed to this legislation that's lopsided. I would really urge the new Minister to look at that and I would really encourage him to really look at changing the mandate to equalize the power balance between the workers and the employers, because the Auditor General's report came out to say that WCB is following all the rules and principles and law and when you see that the outcome is such an unfair situation for a number of cases where there is a consistent injustice going on, then there is something wrong with the structure. I believe that it may be that's the only way to fix that, is by changing the law and I would like the Minister to really inquire and he should get his own legal counsel if necessary to look at that, because I respect the independence of WCB, but I have to tell you that I believe that we have power within this Assembly to make sure that our own power to make laws and make good laws are exercised. Thank you, and I will be supporting the motion.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Ms. Lee.

**Committee Motion 37-15(5): CR 5-15(5): Provisions Of Expert Medical Evidence And/OR Legal Assistance, Carried**

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a motion. I move that this committee recommends the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board direct the workers' advisor to draw up a proposal to provide for assistance to workers who need expert medical evidence or legal assistance with judicial reviews to move their case forward.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Braden.

**MR. BRADEN:** Madam Chair. The circumstance that injured workers can find themselves in if they have been through, I guess, the standard cycle of reviews and appeals before the WCB, is that they will find themselves without the resources or the ability to call on legal or medical help to help them advance their case. That is of course with the exception, Madam Chair, of having access to the NWT's legal aid system. We now are chronically under-resourced and understaffed in the legal aid area, Madam Chair, and so that means that an injured worker who may have very few or no alternatives other than to continue to work with or try and stay with the appeals or review process within the WCB, these workers have very little resources of their own and very darn few provided by our system, as I said, other than legal aid. So the idea of providing more resources to injured workers I think, as I say, once they have gone outside or beyond the regular scale of reviews and tribunals and appeals make some sense, Madam Chair, because every time a worker and hopefully his lawyer, and in a lot of cases a legal aid lawyer, will make a case to the WCB or tribunal, but find themselves up against a veritable phalanx, Madam Chair, of other lawyers and medical professionals ready to take them on. It is very unfair. It is very lopsided, Madam Chair.

In making this recommendation, committee does not have the answers as to exactly how it could be put together, but we are proposing here -- and I can bring to the committee the cooperation, the concurrence of the workers' advisor, Mr. Baile, that he is prepared to assist with this -- it is how to look at how could we provide some degree of assistance to workers in areas medical or legal or perhaps others that would help them with their case and that would somehow square them up with the resources that the WCB already has at its disposal. I think this is only a fair type of resource that we should offer injured workers in giving them at least a fair degree of representation in this system. So it is there with the optimism, as I say, and the cooperation of the workers' advisor who we think is best equipped to really assess what the injured workers need, and to be able to put forward, you know, realistic and tangible ideas about how to meet those needs, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the motion. Ms. Lee.

**MS. LEE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I need to speak on this motion because I believe this is next to the motion about changing the mandatory, or the Minister reviewing

the mandatory that I spoke to earlier. I think this is one single thing that we could make a lot of difference to.

Madam Chair, I have to say that while a lot of discussions here evolve around injured workers who are unsuccessful in their claims, I think all the Members here are aware of the fact that what we are trying to do is create a fair system. The way I see it, it's okay to go through the Workers' Compensation process for most of the injured workers who get their claims answered to and they're satisfactory; but for those who fall through the cracks -- and there is a commonality in cases like chronic pain and the disabilities that are not recognized that has to do with mental disability and such -- once they fall through the cracks, they don't have any assistance whatsoever other than the workers' advisor. In thinking about it, I think the only way that we could fix this is to balance the power structure and that we give more power to the workers to do the fighting themselves.

I agree with WCB and the officials there who may feel that this forum here is not the appropriate place for injured workers to bring their claims to. I agree with that to a certain extent. I believe our job, and the Minister's job, is to do whatever is necessary, either as redistributing resources or changing the laws to equalize the power balance. I have to tell you I know one of the Governance Council members said, well, we can't do that, we can't give resources to workers to sue us and that would be, you know, not good use of resources.

I say to them, then why is it okay for the WCB lawyers and WCB doctors and all the infrastructure built in there to work against the injured worker? Why is it okay to use ratepayers' money, millions and millions, to establish and protect that claim or whatever? I know it would be offensive to the doctors and lawyers who work at the WCB for anybody to suggest that they are not for the workers, but I tell you if you are a worker sitting on the other side, they really feel like they have nobody. If they get no claims, they have to get their own lawyer and they don't usually get legal aid for that. But not only that, the WCB system is not a regular court procedure where if you lose a case at a lower court, you appeal it. If the appeal court says you're right, then you win. Well, that's not how the WCB system works. When you win a WCB appeal, you have to go back to right where you started and you get your hearing reheard by the same people under the same rules under the same medical opinion under the same argument of that reviewed and then you may just fall back again. That's why you see these cases falling back over. That's why you see these cases falling back over and over and over; 17 years, 21 years. You can't make any changes.

Even when there are Supreme Court decisions from the Supreme Court of Canada, the Supreme Court of the NWT, the highest court in the land says your policy is wrong, WCB can, if it chooses to, use all of its legal resources, all of its financial resources, to read the policy as narrowly as possible and not necessarily look at changing the policy that would work for the injured workers and, for that reason, the only way I can see this changing is to equalize the power to the workers. Why is it to use most of the money or use all of the surplus in the fund to just maintain the status quo? Why is not okay to set up a system where workers could have resources they need? I tell you, I would make an argument that this will save money. If WCB people thought that their arguments would be checked and that their legal opinions would be countered, and that their medical opinions could get be



looked at by other resources, I tell you they would be more inclined to do the right thing by the workers. Right now, they have nothing to lose. They have nothing to lose by not changing the policy to follow with the Supreme Court decisions or anything. Right now, everything is designed, in my opinion, to maintain the status quo. At some point, we have to say we need to equalize this power, so that there is a necessary check and balance and that there is pressure on the WCB to change policies accordingly when there are new conditions and diseases that come up, when there are new decisions from the Supreme Court that allows them to make decisions. They would know if they don't do it, there is another counterforce. There is a counter balance on the other side that would come at them with a contrary opinion and they would be as strong as their own power. That is the only way I see that my work as an MLA doesn't continue to evolve injured workers coming to my door crying and begging, and me having to tell me them there isn't a lot I can do other than writing these reports and hoping that something would happen.

I would be willing to talk with the Minister and whoever wants to talk more about this, but I think this is not just prolonging the legal process or creating jobs or lawyers. I am not saying that at all. I look at this as a means to improve the power of injured workers, so they have more to go with than having to tell their stories over and over for 17, 21 or 25 years without seeing anything happen. Thank you. I hope I added new layers of argument for this motion.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Mr. Robert McLeod.

**Committee Motion 38-15(5): CR 5-15(5): Resolution Of Conflicting Medical Opinions, Carried**

**MR. MCLEOD:** I move that this committee recommends that, as a priority, the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board work with the Governance Council to develop options for an independent means of resolving conflicting medical opinions that provides finality, and that reflects the basic principles of the workers' compensation system and, in particular, the assumption in favour of the worker. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

**Committee Motion 39-15(5): CR 5-15(5): Comprehensive Response Within 120 Days, Carried**

**MR. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the government provide

a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Does committee agree that the consideration of Committee Report 5-15(5) is now concluded?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Committee Report 5-15(5) is concluded. What is the wish of the committee now? Mr. Lafferty.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** I move to report progress, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen):** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The motion is in order. It's not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

The motion is carried. I will now rise and report progress.

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

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

**MRS. GROENEWEGEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 15, Elections and Plebiscites Act; Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3; and Committee Report 5-15(5), and would like to report progress with 10 motions being adopted, and that Committee Report 5-15(5) is concluded, and that Bill 17 is ready for third reading, and that Bill 15 is ready for third reading, as amended. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Bell.

**ITEM 21: THIRD READING OF BILLS**

**Bill 16: An Act To Amend The Jury Act**

**HON. BRENDAN BELL:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Jury Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Bell. The motion is on the floor. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 16 has had third reading. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

**Bill 20: An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act**

**HON. FLOYD ROLAND:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. The motion is on the floor. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 20 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

**ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Board of Management at the rise of the House. There will be a meeting of the Accountability and Oversight committee at 6:00 p.m.

Orders of the day for Tuesday, October 31, 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
  - Motion 8-15(5), Reducing Maximum Percentage of Income Chargeable for Social Housing
17. First Reading of Bills
  - Bill 9, Write-off of Assets Act, 2006-2007
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 13, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2006-2007
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
  - Bill 15, Elections and Plebiscites Act
  - Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3

22. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, October 31, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 17:11 p.m.