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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Members Present

Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Honourable Paul Delorey, Honourable Charles Dent, Mrs. Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Mr. Hawkins, Honourable David Krutko, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, 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): Good morning, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 79-15(5): Targeted Initiative For Older Workers

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. The federal Department of Human Resources and Social Development announced a new program for unemployed workers in October 2006. This program, called the "Targeted Initiative for Older Workers" will fund the training and reintegration of older workers into the labour market. The program is intended to help reintegrate persons aged 55 to 64 years of age back into the workforce.

Over the next two years, 2007 to 2009, up to \$660,000 in funding will be available to the Northwest Territories in this area. The Government of the Northwest Territories will be required to contribute a minimum of 40 percent to projects, a portion of which may be in-kind.

Older workers have many contributions to make to society and employers can take advantage of their knowledge by reintegrating them back into the workforce. Many older workers want to continue to be actively engaged in employment in our communities. This program is an important investment in our northern human resource capacity. It is a valuable opportunity for older workers to improve their employability through activities such as skills assessment, counselling, skills upgrading and work experience for new jobs. It will also help to address skilled labour shortages.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has been holding information sessions with regional staff, stakeholders and potential community partners including the NWT Seniors Society. Program guidelines are being finalized and a public call for proposals will go out in the Northwest Territories for the coming month, with projects getting underway as early as April 2007.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the implementation of this new initiative in the Northwest Territories that will help provide older workers across the North with opportunities to re-enter the workforce. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Behchoko Dene Hand Game Tournament

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

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend was a very exciting event for the community of Behchoko. We had people visit from all over the Northwest Territories to partake in one of the biggest traditional hand game tournaments in the Tlicho region. Mr. Speaker, we have people who came from Tulita, Lutselk'e, Wekweeti, Gameti, Whati, Meander River, Deline, Assumption, Bushie River and others. It was a time to see old faces, Mr. Speaker, renew friendships from neighbouring Dene communities. Elders were happy and grateful for this opportunity to renew an important tradition.

Mr. Speaker, we have players that were 75-plus years of age to our youngest, approximately 15 years of age. As you can see from these ages, the knowledge and wisdom passed on traditionally via sharing their knowledge through interaction.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say the community of Gameti won the overall tournament this weekend. Lutselk'e came in second place; Behchoko came in third place. It's outstanding to see these remarkable teams. We had over 21 teams who participated. Congratulations to all teams that participated. The community was overwhelmed with 700-plus people who came in to visit the community. It was like witnessing another land claims celebration, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we at the GNWT also need to do our part to contribute and subsidize to this special gathering to promote traditional activities and next year we're hoping that we have an MLA team. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Behchoko Dene Hand Game Tournament

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to also talk about the traditional hand games that were witnessed in Behchoko over the last week and seeing the number of people there. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, the people that were there to witness the hand games also shared a common belief in culture of having fun together. When we look at the number of players in there and the number of sponsors that showed an interest that contributed to the hand games, some of

the older people were saying that this was like the old Dene Nation days where people get together from all over the region, they would come, they had some hard issues to talk about, like what we're talking about in this House and in the communities, but they would take time amongst themselves to put away those issues for the day and to play and to have fun.

In the old days they talked about these hand games that were played into other areas of Canada's jurisdiction, such as Yukon, Alberta, even to B.C. Even amongst ourselves in our regions we have different teams. But the fun and energy that was there showed that everybody could enjoy themselves and they could learn a lot. People such as the elders, the youth, were very appreciative of having the community of Behchoko host such a large tournament. We have it also in Hay River. We have it in Tulita and other communities down the Mackenzie Valley that show the importance of hand games. I guess I would also support Mr. Lafferty's suggestion as having the GNWT more involved, even to the point of the MLAs having a team in one of these events. I know that when we went to Deline last year, the MLAs were certainly playing and there were some pretty good movers and shakers on our side of the MLAs to play the hand games and some pretty good shooters in terms of how to guess which object is in which hand. I think it would be very good for our people to see us, as leaders, also get out in the community and support them at other events. I hope that next year at some of the events that we have, team from the MLAs to play hand games with the people and have fun and also to enjoy the activities that each community has to offer in terms of a tournament that hosts the traditional hand games. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Behchoko Dene Hand Game Tournament

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to mention just something about the Dene hand games tournament held in Behchoko there last weekend. As you may well be aware, these hand game tournaments can sometimes have very high stakes and are received by many as a good way to make some quick cash legally, while having fun and meeting old friends.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, just for the southern public's information and for the record, in the old days hand games were a very important part of the Dene festivities, which usually were played when different groups met on the trail and usually lasted for several days. Hand games were, and still are, one of the most competitive of all the traditional Dene games. Things like matches and gun powder and shot or tobacco, all of which were very hard to come by in the old days, were often staked. Similarly today, things are staked that are just as hard to come by, like cash and lots of it.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to congratulate some Lutselk'e residents like Albert Boucher, George and James Marlowe, Pete Enzoe, Steven Nitah, Tommy Lockhart, Archie Catholique, Lawrence Catholique and Alfred Catholique, who all surprised everyone and

captured a very respectable second place at the Dene hand games tournament. I will not say how much cash they won, for obvious reasons, Mr. Speaker, but I will say it was definitely worth the trip and the experience of fun, camaraderie and Dene tradition. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Impacts Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to speak about the Mackenzie gas project and how it will impact our territory. There is no doubt that the 22 communities located in the valley itself and along the proposed routing of the pipeline will see the largest socio-economic impacts. Just last year, the federal government announced the establishment of a \$500 million socio-economic impact fund for communities along the proposed route to be compensated for being impacted by the pipeline.

Mr. Speaker, as we move closer to the development of this pipeline, the pending impacts in all of our communities will become more and more of an issue. How can a government which is a public government abandon 75 percent of our population? Mr. Speaker, I want to state again, like I did last year for the record, that quite clearly the \$500 million should go to the 22 communities along the route. They will need and they deserve every dime of that money. The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that 75 percent of our population and residents do not, and will not, have access to a fund designed to help mitigate social impacts because of this mega project.

How could the Government of the Northwest Territories, or the federal government for that matter, believe that socio-economic impacts would stop at those communities deemed to be affected? How can you build the \$9 billion mega project down the heart of our territory of 43,000 people and expect that only some communities will feel the effects? It is virtually impossible, Mr. Speaker. Is it the Government of the Northwest Territories' position today that communities like Yellowknife, like Hay River, Fort Smith, Behchoko, will not bear any social impacts as a result of the pipeline? What about the aboriginal groups, Mr. Speaker? The Dogrib are left out of the funding. The Akaitcho and Yellowknives Dene are also on the outside looking in.

I'm not sure why the government settled on accepting the \$500 million for just the 22 communities. In my mind, and in the minds of 75 percent of our people, the Government of the Northwest Territories has failed to protect the future interests of the majority of our residents. I want to see our Premier talking to the federal government about establishing a second socio-economic impact fund for all the other communities and First Nations in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention the fact that we are on the verge...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ramsay, your time for Member's statement has expired.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to mention, for the record, that we are on the verge of this \$9 billion mega project and we still have not got a resource revenue sharing deal, nor are we any closer to establishing a permanent trust fund or heritage fund from the Mackenzie gas project that will benefit future generations of our people. Mr. Speaker, these outstanding issues continue to be the shame of this government. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Beaufort-Delta Regional Addictions Conference

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity yesterday to attend the opening ceremonies of a regional addictions conference being held from March 5th to 9th, 2007, in Inuvik. Mr. Speaker, during the opening ceremonies a well-respected elder and leader spoke of long ago when alcohol and drugs were unheard of. He spoke about how he grew up not to rely on what was introduced as rations to the people of the Beaufort-Delta. People were proud in those days because in order to survive, you had to be active in order to provide for your family.

By listening to this elder, Mr. Speaker, it should encourage our youth to take notice of what the affects of alcohol and drugs are doing to our youth and society today. He stated we need to turn this around today for our youth and people, and that is why this conference is being held this week.

Mr. Speaker, in partnership with the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the Gwich'in Tribal Council, we decided to hold a regional addictions conference because of the increase in alcohol and drug abuse in the region. Should the proposed Mackenzie gas project proceed, the leaders decided the conference is necessary because it may lead to further alcohol and drug abuse and may limit the ability of the Beaufort-Delta residents to participate in the economic benefits the project will provide.

Mr. Speaker, in order to address this problem of alcohol and drug abuse, the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services, the IRC and GTC decided a comprehensive plan needs to be developed that is appropriate to our residents and to our communities. Mr. Speaker, some specific topics to discuss at this conference are related to men only, on their traditional and contemporary role in the community, alternative therapies with hard-to-reach youth, helping families have fun and create joy by using recreation, working with families, and an update on addictions and FASD.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I applaud the leaders of the Beaufort-Delta in taking the lead to gather together to address the concern of alcohol and drug abuse, but, more importantly, to establish a comprehensive plan to address the alcohol and drug problems in the Beaufort-Delta. However, we, as government, must -- and I say must -- play an important role about providing the necessary infrastructure programs and resources so that the Beaufort-Delta can start addressing these problems. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Resource Revenue Trust Fund

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, March 19th, the federal government is going to table their budget three days after this House adjourns. Mr. Speaker, hopes are riding high on this federal budget. It's going to be the last chance for this 15th Assembly to show progress on resource revenue sharing. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I'm referring to how the federal government plans to calculate the resource revenues when they look at equalization payments and, in our case, our formula. It is anticipated and hoped that they will put 50 percent on the table and allow provinces to have access to 50 percent and not count those as part of the equalization arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, for us that would be a step up. We have been negotiating hard for the last 11 years hoping at some point we may reach 30 percent. If the government, the Conservative government, does this, then they will in fact deserve full marks. They will have done something the Liberals haven't done in 10 years, which is actually deliver for us on resource revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I raise this today is because if we get 50 percent in that budget, then I think when we get back together in May we should have a serious discussion about finally looking at, as the Member from Kam Lake has referenced and has been referenced by others in the past, the ability and the resources to finally set up a heritage fund; a heritage fund for the people, the future generations of the Northwest Territories; a fund that would be politically tamper proof, that would be similar to something as they have done in Norway, where they have wisely put aside money from their oil and gas to the tune of about \$300 billion for future generations.

We know, as we speak, that gas and oil is being pumped south, that diamonds are being removed from the land that we will never get a penny for. So we have an obligation to look as the aboriginal governments do, as the Iroquois do, seven generations out, what are we planning for our children in future generations? This will be our first opportunity, and I think at the earliest opportunity, should that come to pass in the May session, then we should be sitting down at the Legislature to take those first fundamental steps to protect the future generations. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Social Supports For The Homeless

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. One segment of our population that is in dire straights are the homeless. This is a condition that affects all ages, all genders, all races. What is the face of homelessness in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker? A bit of an inventory here: At the SideDoor facility they have a client list of about between 50 and 90 youth on a regular basis, including an overnight shelter. The Centre for Northern Families provides shelter for about 30 women every day, 98 percent of them are Inuit and aboriginal, Mr. Speaker; 60 percent of them are from Nunavut. The Salvation Army shelters approximately 40 to 50 men every day. Again, the majority are aboriginal men from northern communities and from the South. The YWCA is a tremendous organization with many different plans and services, Mr. Speaker. They see about 30 to 40 families a year who use their five emergency units and 20 rooms, they also provide transitional housing to move families, support families for up to one year. There are about 60 families a year and these, of course, all include children. Mr. Speaker, the Alison McAteer House provides beds for about 175 women a year. These are women experiencing family violence and have no other resources to turn to. About 100 more women are turned away every year, Mr. Speaker. There are also many organizations for the disabled, seniors, and even the RCMP. They provide a certain homelessness service here. In one year they will undertake to look after about 1,000 people, most of them intoxicated.

Mr. Speaker, if we put all of the homeless together that we know of that are collected here in the city of Yellowknife, we'd end up, we believe, with about the sixth largest community in the Northwest Territories. These people face many barriers. Just putting roofs over their heads in emergency situations is not going to be enough to solve these issues. There needs to be, Mr. Speaker, a continuum of community-based programs and it does not even come close to meeting the needs that we know today. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The homeless face many, many barriers: fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, spousal abuse, substance abuse and dependencies, conflicts with the law, employment and education issues, and increasing urbanization. Mr. Speaker, we know that so many people choose to come to Yellowknife and we also know that many of them choose not to return. Our government invests over \$120 million a year, Mr. Speaker, in some 17 programs across eight different departments for social services, many of them affecting the homeless. We know their efforts are not as well coordinated, efficient and focused as they should be. We began this term with a major project, Mr. Speaker, called the income security framework policy, which was intended to streamline this. We are not seeing the results or the progress that we should and we are letting the

homeless people of the Northwest Territories down, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Citizens On Patrol And Community Services Patrol Programs

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we often hear about the growth in crimes and other unwanted activities in Yellowknife, but today I'd like to highlight and recognize the good work being done by the Citizens on Patrol program and the newly established Community Services Patrol program being run under the leadership of Yellowknife Coalition of Community Wellness.

Mr. Speaker, in 2006, the COPS program completed 81 patrols, assisted in traffic direction and check stops on a number of occasions, they assisted the RCMP with security at youth dances, they assist the RCMP in other areas, they sort of cover their backs to free the RCMP to do their work. These people are all volunteers. They go out on weekends, they patrol the streets. Last year they reported up to 212 incidents, many of which led to arrests. They were involved in location of stolen vehicles, location of wanted persons, location of stolen property, location and retrieval of stolen bikes.

This year they're starting a new program called CSP, which stands for Community Services Patrol. This is based on an Alaskan model where CSP's mandate goes beyond just observing and reporting. They will have additional resources of medevacs and other people who could get directly involved. This should also result in reducing the time required for the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, this year they were able to use some of the money that they saved to buy some of the gear for the CSP people so they could be more recognizable. Also, they are reaching out to communities outside of Yellowknife. They've done training of patrollers in the town of Inuvik and I know they are working with people in Behchoko and Ndilo and Detah to see how these programs could be transferred there.

Another thing that I would really like to mention is the work of the coordinator, Mike Lowing, who had a contract given to them to set up this CSP program. The money was received from the crime prevention program from the federal government. But after doing all the work that he did, he decided that he wanted to be a volunteer and he declined to take that money. So I just want to highlight what great work this is and I want to thank Mike Lowing and the Yellowknife Coalition of Community Wellness for a job well done. Thank you very much.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Internet-Based Access To Business Licensing And Permitting Information

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Entrepreneurs in the NWT need the tools that will help them get their

businesses started more effectively and more efficiently. Led by Industry Canada, BizPaL is an innovative project designed to help Canadian businesses save time when accessing licensing and permit information from multiple levels of governments. This is a unique partnership between all levels of government that provide entrepreneurs and businesspeople specified access to information that would help them launch and grow their business. BizPaL is currently used very successfully in a number of provinces including the Yukon. This online service streamlines information on business requirements, allows for easier and less expensive ways for them to meet the standards that they want to. BizPaL expedites the permits and licensing acquisition process and cuts through the red tape, Mr. Speaker. Anyone interested in establishing a business or looking into the feasibility of one can go to the single website and after answering a few short questions, they can find information on a specific office to contact and, further, the specific permits that they would be required to start.

In essence, Mr. Speaker, this is a one-stop-shop that can be accessed from anywhere at anytime all in an effort to reduce the start-up time as much as possible. In business, as we all know, time is money and it's our job to take the lead to simplify the red tape process for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, BizPaL is a digital business tool and it has been well received across the country and has been strongly supported by the business community. Mr. Speaker, I will urge the Minister of ITI to consider introducing this innovative tool to the Northwest Territories.

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

Member's Statement On Public Information Regarding Convicted Sex Offenders

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as anyone who's read the media just recently, you will know that Hay River has encountered a very unfortunate situation where a sex offender from a southern jurisdiction ended up in our small community, unknown to the residents there, and became involved in volunteering in a high school and our library. I think that this is a situation that could occur in almost any small community in the Northwest Territories. We are off the beaten trail, we are trusting, we have people come into our communities and we welcome them, and then something like this comes to light and it does put a fear into us.

I think that our government has a role to play in working with employers and working with our institutions, our schools, and other government-funded agencies to put in place a better safety system whereby these types of people, these offenders, can be detected early on before they have a chance to do harm. Unfortunately, in Hay River, it would appear that, according to the charges, it may be too late to undo that now, but I think it's a good signal to our government that we need to do more to work with folks to ensure that criminal record checks become a standard course of action and also that there needs to be better reporting between jurisdictions in Canada when these folks fail to show up to report in with probation officers. There needs to be more national communication

that goes out to warn people. I know that sometimes there are issues about the protection of people's privacy, but I think that in the case where people are convicted sex offenders that sometimes you have to weigh their rights in the balance of the rights of other citizens who need to be warned of their whereabouts. So later today, Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Minister of Justice, and perhaps the Minister of Education, as to how we can change our systems and our policies to be more secure in the Northwest Territories against these types of incidents. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Groenewegen. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to recognize Chief Fred Sangris with the Yellowknives Dene Band. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Welcome to everyone in the gallery today. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 424-15(5): Internet-Based Access To Business Licensing And Permitting Information

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my Member's statement today, I talked about an Internet-based program called BizPaL and it would help small business streamline the process to make sure that they could do all the required permitting. Mr. Speaker, I have personally gone to this website and I found it extremely easy to use. So my question to the Minister of ITI is, is his department aware of this service called BizPaL and has he looked at bringing this to the NWT? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 424-15(5): Internet-Based Access To Business Licensing And Permitting Information

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first say that the reduction of red tape for business should be a concern and an initiative that all governments undertake. I know that the Minister of Finance and myself met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and they urged us to do a review of the requirements in our jurisdiction and talk about how we could streamline some of these things. The BizPaL program that Industry Canada has rolled out has come to my attention and I have asked my officials to investigate it. It appears, certainly at my first glance, that there's some real merit into a partnership of this nature. We'd have to look at costs and options and those kinds of things but, yes, I have seen it, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 424-15(5): Internet-Based Access To Business Licensing And Permitting Information

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister today commit to initiate some type of discussion with our business communities, be it the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, the NWT Chamber of Commerce as well as maybe the other chamber of commerce to see if they would be interested in this type of an initiative to help them streamline the business red tape process? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 424-15(5): Internet-Based Access To Business Licensing And Permitting Information

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, critical for this kind of program portal to work is the partnerships with provinces and territories and all of the relevant stakeholders. I will talk to my department of about this. I know they did receive a presentation from Industry Canada; it's quite possible that the chambers did as well, but I'll ask. I'll also ask if they would sit down and consult with the chambers.

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

Supplementary To Question 424-15(5): Internet-Based Access To Business Licensing And Permitting Information

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's emphasis on helping to work to eliminate the red tape process. My last question to the Minister is would he be able to prepare something and report back to the House on the feasibility of bringing this project to the Territories? I realize it's a big project and won't be done overnight but yet we need to get a communications plan out there and look at the feasibility. Could the Minister commit to doing that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 424-15(5): Internet-Based Access To Business Licensing And Permitting Information

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly come back to committee members, all Members on the other side of the House, with our analysis. You could just tell him that initially this may be one of the rare cases where, per capita, it works in our favour. Our understanding is that we would be charged on a per capita basis for the partnership with Industry Canada, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year. As the Member has pointed out, time is money and as a former businessperson I can tell him, small business person, that red tape is more than just an irritant; it really does hamper productivity. So this is something we'll look into and we'll come back to Members. Thank you.

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

Question 425-15(5): Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Impacts Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions today for the Premier. Last year when the \$500 million social-economic impact funding was announced by the federal government I stood up in the House on February 16th of last year asking the government what it was doing in abandoning 75 percent of the population here in the Northwest Territories. The \$500 million is for the 22 communities deemed to be affected by the pipeline. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand or appreciate that social impacts will fall down and end up in all of our communities here in the Northwest Territories. I'd like to start off by asking the Premier, from last year until today, what has his government done in addressing this concern with the federal government so that we can get socio-economic impact funding for each and every community in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 425-15(5): Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Impacts Funding

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member has been persistent on this one; indefatigable I think is the word. This is not the first time he's raised it; he's raised it many times before.

Mr. Speaker, let me go into a little bit of history and take a little bit of time here. We have access and benefits agreements, or impact benefit agreements, for any major development happening in a region. In the case of the diamond mines, there were impact benefit agreements signed between industry and the aboriginal people on whose traditional lands this development was taking place; those included the socio-economic impacts. In the case of communities along the pipeline, both those who are signing access and benefit agreements and industry appealed to the government to separate out socio-economic impacts and let the access and benefits agreements deal with land access issues and business opportunities. So an arrangement was made between the federal government and the aboriginal access and benefits beneficiaries to then have two arrangements in the place of the one as you had with the diamond mines. So we ended up with access and benefit agreements that deal with business opportunities, employment and so on, and access fees. Then you have a separate agreement that deals with socio-economic impact for those who are eligible for access and benefit agreements along the route. This did not include anyone else; it did not impact on those who were impacted by diamond mines, for example. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 425-15(5): Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Impacts Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I'm even more confused on how this exactly works. I'll tell you, with the City of Yellowknife, the IBAs weren't developed with the City of Yellowknife; they were with the aboriginal groups when it came to the development of the diamond mines north of the city. The City of Yellowknife was

impacted tremendously by resource development north of this city and my suggestion is that it's going to be impacted by the resource development in the Mackenzie Valley, as well. For example, the City of Yellowknife and, as well, the Yellowknives Dene and the Akaicho that live in the region, how are they going to access funding when they are impacted, and they will be impacted as a result of this resource development. I'd like to know that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 425-15(5): Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Impacts Funding

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly everybody is impacted one way or another by any kind of major development that happens in the Territories. For those people, and I'll say again, for those people on whose traditional land the activity is taking place, there is that opportunity to sign impact benefit agreements or access and benefit agreements, whatever we call them, or to enter into these other special arrangements like the socio-economic impact fund. For everybody in the Territories, aboriginal, non-aboriginal, the big opportunity is for us to achieve success in negotiating resource revenue sharing. That's the money that will come to all the people in the Territories, including Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, that is the real source of benefit for all of us; otherwise why have these projects? So it will come through resource revenue sharing and I look forward to full support from everybody for us to succeed in resource revenue sharing negotiations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 425-15(5): Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Impacts Funding

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is we've been fighting for resource revenue sharing in this territory for 20 years and I don't know how the Premier's response to me is going to make me feel any better. I know the budget is coming down, as one of my colleagues has mentioned, on March 19th. Hopefully, there's some good news; but we've been just hoping and praying for far too many years. Again, I want to ask the Premier how is the City of Yellowknife, for example, or the Town of Hay River, going to be able to access any funding to deal with social impacts from the Mackenzie gas project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 425-15(5): Mackenzie Gas Project Socio-Economic Impacts Funding

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could tell you right now that Hay River and Yellowknife are not beneficiaries of an impact benefit agreement or an access and benefit agreement, but all the people in the Territories, including Hay River and Yellowknife, benefit from the billion dollars or so that we have negotiated with the federal government for delivery of program services. We all benefit from that. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased with the support that the federal government gave us in adjustments in the 2006-07 budget, and I look forward to the adjustments that will come in the 2007-08 and future

budgets. Mr. Speaker, I could tell you, though, that we should not hold out hope or expectation that there will be a resource revenue sharing deal in the 2007-08 budget. When I met with the Prime Minister last week, he told me that it was premature, that he wasn't going to be able to deal with that part, but he would deal with fiscal imbalance and that became a bit of a debate between him and I on how that was going to work, but we cannot expect, I don't think, to see a resource sharing deal in that budget.

Mr. Speaker, we all have to work together -- aboriginal, non-aboriginal, large communities, small communities -- if we want to be successful in this. It's been going on for 20 years and I'm going to keep pushing until the last day I have in this office to try and make that deal succeed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 426-15(5): Funding Assistance For The Community Services Patrol Community

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I spoke about the good work that the Yellowknife Community Wellness Coalition is doing under the COPS program and CSP program. However, one thing I haven't mentioned is some of the difficulties they are having and my questions are to the Minister of Justice. One of the things that they need is a van. The van has a pretty sad story that I probably should have turned into a Member's statement. They were able to get a 1984 used van from the City of Yellowknife to carry these people around and the new program, that CSP program, that Alaska model-based program, would allow these people to help those people who are intoxicated or under the influence and keep them somewhere safe and that would relieve the work of the RCMP, who we know are under-resourced and overworked. Really, what they need is a van and this old van, they put lots of money into it to get it going but it keeps breaking down. They're using the Sir John automotive shop to fix it and the teacher there went on time off so they couldn't even get that, so they got some private sector subsidizing the money to fix it from Canadian Tire. So I'd like to ask, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister could be so kind as to look into this issue and see if the government could help out, because in the long run it's going to save them money for freeing up the RCMP time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 426-15(5): Funding Assistance For The Community Services Patrol Community

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I want to applaud the work of this organization and the programs that they've championed, like COPS. I think they're providing a valuable service to our community. We know that the policing and public safety is a community responsibility. The RCMP, obviously, are the key component of that that underpins our community response, but these volunteers are doing a wonderful job. I believe the Anchorage model is something that could be very successful here. The more time we can free up, as the Member points out, the RCMP from having to deal with some of these other social issues related to substance abuse and public intoxication, I think, the

better. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd certainly be prepared to sit down with the organization. I do know that we've funded them in the past; I know that they received funding and help through the RCMP. I'd want to look at exactly what they're proposal is and see what the deficit is that they're talking about, but it's certainly something that we would consider doing. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 426-15(5): Funding Assistance For The Community Services Patrol Community

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know in the past the GNWT department has funded minimal, a very minimal amount, maybe \$4,000 or \$5,000. The thing is what we have here is a lot of volunteers doing patrolling; we have volunteers organizing this group, really running it very professionally. They had to work for a year to find liability insurance that's suitable and affordable to them. We have a volunteer executive director who was on contract, was willing to give up his salary to make this happen. So could I ask the Minister for a more firm commitment; not just meeting with the group but would the Minister really look into working within, I don't know, maybe DPW has a disposal van that we could give to them? So would the Minister make a commitment here to look for ways to facilitate them with a van? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 426-15(5): Funding Assistance For The Community Services Patrol Community

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that I will look at their case and look at ways that we can help them. I know we have community justice monies available in all regions, all communities of the North. Sometimes those go untapped for various reasons. Sometimes there are program submissions, sometimes there are not. I will look at the funding we have available and I'll make sure that the department sits down with this organization to understand what kind of a gap or deficit they're facing. I'm not sure we can give an organization an asset from government, but if we can it might be a creative way to solve the problem. I'll certainly look at it, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 426-15(5): Funding Assistance For The Community Services Patrol Community

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then could I ask the Minister to commit to having his staff meet with the Community Services Patrol program, which is that one segment of the... because they run two programs. Could I get the Minister to commit their staff to meet with these people and see if we could resolve it within the next two months, or say next month? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 426-15(5): Funding Assistance For The Community Services Patrol Community

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can make that commitment. Obviously my staff is listening to the discussion in the House. I would also like to say I appreciate the work that this organization in reaching out to other communities. We know there are challenges in communities like Inuvik, for instance. They've been up to Inuvik to talk about working with that community to bring a similar organization, so that's the kind of response that we need to see across the Territories. I applaud this organization for their efforts and, yes, my officials will undertake to meet as soon as possible to discuss some potential areas we might be able to assist. Thank you.

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

Question 427-15(5): Aboriginal Language Curricular Tools

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question to the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has discounted all the concerns raised by the other education authorities. The language communities in the North are moving forward with the development of a flawed Gwich'in curriculum document. What I mean by flawed, Mr. Speaker, is it does not meet our needs as we have distinct language differences. Would the Minister please tell us why, in the face of criticism and the opposition of the other language groups in the Northwest Territories, the department is continuing to financially support a flawed curriculum document and a flawed curriculum development process for aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

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

Return To Question 427-15(5): Aboriginal Language Curricular Tools

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process that has been undertaken for development of a curricular tool for language isn't one that specifically deals with each language. What we are looking for is what is the process that each language can fit into a curriculum tool. So it's much like Dene Kede. Dene Kede is a basic curricular tool that doesn't focus on any one language. It allows people to use their language to develop the tool so that it is applicable to that particular region and that particular language. So, Mr. Speaker, the criticisms to date have been focussed on an expectation that the curriculum is going to come out and tell people how to instruct in each language, and that's not the case. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 427-15(5): Aboriginal Language Curricular Tools

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Despite the important work of a program like Dene Kede as the Minister stated, for the Dene communities and similar programs for Inuit communities, there has been little or no work over the years on the development of a curriculum document for aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to revisiting the curriculum development process for aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories to address the concerns of the education authorities and other language communities in the Northwest Territories? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 427-15(5): Aboriginal Language Curricular Tools

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be meeting in April with both the language boards and the chairs from all of the education councils. I will make sure this item is on the agenda for discussion at both of those meetings.

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

Supplementary To Question 427-15(5): Aboriginal Language Curricular Tools

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi. I appreciate the Minister's commitment on this particular, important issue. My final question, Mr. Speaker, is will the Minister ensure the development of aboriginal language curriculum receives equal treatment to other curriculum development projects at the department, such as English Languages Arts, Mathematics or Social Studies, and place the resources necessary for its development in the department where it should rightfully be placed? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 427-15(5): Aboriginal Language Curricular Tools

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The development of curriculum is an important aspect of the work that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment undertakes. All of our curricular instruments are considered important, so we don't say that one is more important than the other. All of the areas that are part of our curriculum in the Northwest Territories have to receive attention and make sure there is an important curriculum in place.

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

Question 428-15(5): Consultation With Young People On The GNWT Addictions Awareness Campaign

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services a question on his announcement yesterday regarding the issue with alcohol and drugs in the communities of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, the Minister announced the launch of a campaign aimed at youth to reduce or prevent them from getting into alcohol and

drugs. I wanted to ask the Minister, could he provide the government in terms of this time frame and types of commitment that will be put to this campaign in terms of helping our youth live a clean, healthy life? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 428-15(5): Consultation With Young People On The GNWT Addictions Awareness Campaign

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the area of the mental health and addictions awareness campaign is something that the department has been working on from within the resources we have available and trying to target the youth is a marketing campaign out there on the ill effects of drug and alcohol use in the territory. We have started working within the department. Again, we do have limited resources, but we feel that we can focus some of our existing resources in an area that will start to see some results and we will be working with the youth groups and community-based stakeholders and consultation of a development plan we are working on is still in the process. I don't have an actual timeline as to when we will come out with a final document, but we are beginning the process, as I stated, internally and working with other groups out there in trying to come up with an appropriate tool. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 428-15(5): Consultation With Young People On The GNWT Addictions Awareness Campaign

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, according to the government stats, the youth in the Sahtu are very high and I would ask the Minister if he would consider coming into the Sahtu region to talk to the youth as the main stakeholders. These youth are faced with a tremendous amount of pressure with the pipeline, with the changes in lifestyle and also with the changes of our culture. Would the Minister commit to coming into the Sahtu region, talk to the stakeholders, the youth themselves, in terms of how we help them get off alcohol and drugs and stay away from these types of addictions that are detrimental to the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 428-15(5): Consultation With Young People On The GNWT Addictions Awareness Campaign

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we develop this plan and come up with a framework that we can go out and have some of the consultations with the youth groups out there, I would be happy to travel with the Member working on our schedules, trying to go in and bring some of this discussion to the forefront. I do believe that if we are going to start this, we are going to start in communities, as well as individuals, families and aboriginal organizations that are involved in this. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 428-15(5): Consultation With Young People On The GNWT Addictions Awareness Campaign

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the Minister arranging some time with me to go into the region. Would he have an open-book policy when he comes into the region that his department doesn't put pre-notions in terms of how we put this together? Just ask the youth, sit down with them, look at what kind of ideas they have, just ask the real stakeholders, the future of our people here in terms of how we help them help themselves. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 428-15(5): Consultation With Young People On The GNWT Addictions Awareness Campaign

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess one is having an open book is which book are we speaking of? In working in the planning, I believe to sit down and have some good dialogue, we need to put some framework in place as to where we hope to go and bounce that off people to find out if it's a good direction or not. So, of course, we are going to be there. When we start this process, we want to hear from individuals on how they think things should go. Ultimately, there are some difficult choices to make for individuals and that has to be part of the process, as well as admitting that things need to be done and choices first need to be made on an individual basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 429-15(5): Public Information Regarding Convicted Sex Offenders

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my Member's statement, I have very serious concerns over the incidents that have allegedly recently occurred in Hay River and certainly we do know a few of the facts to be true. That is that an individual came into our community and he was on probation in a different jurisdiction and was considered a high-risk sexual offender. Now, he was there for six months before anyone detected his presence in our community. I would like to ask the Minister of Justice, on a national basis, does the justice system not have a means of having a person report in when they are on probation when they have gone missing for six months from the jurisdiction he was in? It says in some of the information that I have read that he is expected to report to the jurisdiction that he was leaving from and report to the jurisdiction that he was coming to. So, theoretically, he should have come to the Hay River RCMP detachment and identified himself as being a high-risk sexual offender when he arrived in Hay River. Now, the chances of that happening are probably fairly slim. Given that, I would like to hear the Minister respond to what kind of a safety net is in place to make sure these folks are reporting...I don't want to say folks. Let me say to ensure that these criminals and pedophiles are reporting when they are on probation in jurisdictions in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 429-15(5): Public Information Regarding Convicted Sex Offenders

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, it's a very concerning situation. I know that everybody in the territory is expectably upset by what has happened here and feel that the system has let us down, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell you that the offender was on probation in another jurisdiction, as the Member has indicated. When he didn't report to his probation officer after I think it was a week or two, there was a warrant out for his arrest throughout the country. It is unfortunate that we didn't recognize or notice that he had arrived in the Northwest Territories, was living in the community. Normally, yes, this offender should have reported to the RCMP and been submitted and included in the sex offender registry, and in that case, had he come into this jurisdiction, the RCMP would have been notified and then they would have made a determination around what kind of notifications had to be made to the local jurisdiction. The problem was that we didn't pick up on the warrant in this jurisdiction and it is regrettable, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 429-15(5): Public Information Regarding Convicted Sex Offenders

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the school where this individual was volunteering in Hay River, the school has taken a very proactive approach now and they are going to be requiring, by policy, that any volunteer working in our school system would automatically be required to provide a criminal records check. So this is a policy change that has come into place very quickly. I'd like to know what the Minister plans to do to ensure that this is not just in Hay River, that this will be implemented everywhere in the Northwest Territories. As I said, this could have happened anywhere in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 429-15(5): Public Information Regarding Convicted Sex Offenders

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I think that's a very good suggestion and obviously this was a good decision, in my opinion, for the Hay River DEA to take. A number of the DEAs across the Territories, I understand from discussing this with the Minister of Education, have similar policies. I'm not sure if all do. We would urge all of the DEAs to undertake such a policy. I think it's a good recommendation. I know that if you're going to be an employee for the Department of Education, you must undergo a criminal records check. That has not always been the case, obviously, for volunteers, as we're finding. But I would urge municipalities, DEAs, anybody going to be having volunteers work for them to ask their volunteers to submit to a criminal records check, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 429-15(5): Public Information Regarding Convicted Sex Offenders

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Minister is would the Minister consider, again in a proactive vein on the part of this government, to ensure that something like this does not happen again? Communications that go out to businesses for various other reasons, assessments for workers' compensation, something, somewhere in there that business owners, employers could be notified that there is an avenue for them to contact the RCMP and have criminal records checks done on people they potentially intend to hire. Could this government, in light of what's happened, take a proactive position and send, broadcast in some way, communication about employers' ability to do this? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 429-15(5): Public Information Regarding Convicted Sex Offenders

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I can, certainly. I mean I think it's a good policy for businesses to know who they are hiring and I can talk to the RCMP about a way that this might be accommodated. I think it would be a good policy for businesses to ensure that the employees who come to them have come with a criminal records check that demonstrated they're not a risk. Of course, we can't force everybody to do that, Mr. Speaker. I think there is another issue here, though, that we can't ignore and that's the discussion that's going on nationally. I know at our FPT meetings recently there's been a lot of discussion around remand and how people who are remanded to custody get credit for time served, end up out on the street very quickly. I think there is an interest right across the country, across all stripes, that we look at ensuring that we keep those dangerous offenders in jail, Mr. Speaker, and if they are a risk to the communities that they are not out amongst us, Mr. Speaker. It's important, I think, that high-risk offenders have to prove that they not be a risk to our communities as opposed to have the system prove that they will be a risk, Mr. Speaker. I think the onus should be on the high-risk offenders. That's a philosophical change that I think we, as a country, need to make. Thank you.

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

Question 430-15(5): Social Supports For The Homeless

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this morning are for Mr. Bell, Minister for Homelessness in the Northwest Territories. The GNWT is a major sponsor or contributor to many of the support services provided by the NGOs. I talked about a number of them in my statement earlier today, Mr. Speaker, but we recognize that a lot of these measures, not only here in Yellowknife but in other parts of the Northwest Territories, are not well integrated and we have put -- as an Assembly we realize this -- our reliance in developing the income security framework reforms. We've seen a lot of talk. There's been a lot of consultation, a lot of paper moving in a lot of circles in the last couple of years; certainly in the last few months, Mr. Speaker. But we seem to be lagging on moving this very vital program forward. I'm getting

questions and concerns from some of the NGOs about just where this program is.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the Minister, are we going to see the delivery of an income security framework during the life of this Assembly that will address the dire situation of the homeless in the NWT?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Minister responsible for Homelessness, Mr. Bell.

Return To Question 430-15(5): Social Supports For The Homeless

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is one that should be referred to the Minister responsible for income support programs. Mr. Speaker, since he's out of the House, I will take it upon myself to respond by saying that the Minister has committed to making available the document that the Member is referring to. I can't say whether it will be during the life of this Assembly, but it will certainly be done during the life of this government. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 430-15(5): Social Supports For The Homeless

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue on with my homelessness theme and if I may continue to direct my questions to Mr. Bell. Young people, Mr. Speaker, are facing significant challenges in getting started in their lives with housing. They have family issues, income issues, education issues. It often leads to young people leaving home without any options. Will this policy, or will the efforts that the Minister for Homelessness is undertaking, address the specific needs of young people trying to get started, Mr. Speaker?

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a question that can be referred to the Minister for Homelessness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The honourable Minister responsible for Homelessness, Mr. Bell.

Further Return To Question 430-15(5): Social Supports For The Homeless

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a very good question. I appreciate the work of Members opposite in urging that we come together as departments with a comprehensive response to a number of these issues. I think the continued support for Members in this respect has been very helpful. As I mentioned several days ago when the budget announcement was made, it was a good day for the fight against homelessness, Mr. Speaker, and that's because for the first time we've got some core funding to deal with homelessness issues and deal with the homelessness framework. In the past years I'd admit that it's been on an ad hoc basis, sort of patchwork as issues came up we would respond. Now for the first time we've got some core funding going forward. Youth shelters is an issue we need to address. The response for single men and shelters, we are responding in Bailey House. But, Mr. Speaker, there

continues to be gaps. We'll address them as we move forward. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 430-15(5): Social Supports For The Homeless

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, recognizing that simply providing shelter or a roof for the families, people affected because they're homeless is certainly something we should be endeavouring to do, but it is not a solution, and that is where our reliance is, Mr. Speaker, in this policy and this framework. Especially, Mr. Speaker, as I addressed in my statement, the migration to bigger communities, the in-migration to Yellowknife indicates that the kinds of supports and services, medical, education, otherwise, are not available in the smaller communities. Mr. Speaker, will this policy be addressing the chronic shortage of these services in smaller communities?

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

Further Return To Question 430-15(5): Social Supports For The Homeless

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of departments that have various initiatives related to addressing the pressures that we're seeing in this area of homelessness. I agree with the Member. If we talk about the Bailey House model, as an example, it will not be just a shelter, but will provide for programming. I know Justice intends to tap into that. We have many offenders who, upon release, are homeless, look to find employment, they're working with ECE, there are health related issues. This cuts across a number of departments, but I agree with the Member's point that it has to be a comprehensive, collaborative government-wide response and working with our NGO stakeholders and partners who provide critical work in this area. So we will continue to do that. The Member will see that that theme runs through the framework and I believe runs through the income security work that Mr. Dent is coming forward with. Thank you.

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

Question 431-15(5): Property Assessment Services In Small Communities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just have some questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs with respect to the New Deal again that's going to be coming out. I just want to ask the Minister, with the recent developments in the property assessment responsibilities that the City of Yellowknife wants to give back to the GNWT, how is that going to affect the New Deal for the NWT communities that the government is looking at passing down the assessment responsibilities to? How is that going to change any funding allocations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 431-15(5): Property Assessment Services In Small Communities

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The discussion with the City of Yellowknife about conducting assessment services is something that has been embarked on recently. There's been some concern. We are obligated as a department, as a government, to ensure that these assessments are done. If there's a desire from the City of Yellowknife that the department assume these services again, we will more than likely take it upon ourselves to do it. We don't think it will have any bearing on the other communities as part of the New Deal initiative. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 431-15(5): Property Assessment Services In Small Communities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to disagree with the Minister. I think it's going to be a big deal on the other communities because Yellowknife being the largest tax-based municipality, the largest funding base here in the NWT and they can't even do their own assessments. How are we going to expect all these communities to come together in cooperation and trying to put together tribunals, assessment appeals boards, just assessors, basically lack of resources, human resources and financial resources being a big factor in doing that? How would this New Deal, the funding formula, are communities going to be able to assess...Or let me ask the Minister this question: Can the New Deal just exclude assessment altogether and taxation and just leave it in the government's hands where it belongs? Government taxation synonymous. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 431-15(5): Property Assessment Services In Small Communities

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we don't plan to have the communities left in the situation where they can't do the assessments right now. The government is doing it and will continue to do the assessments. MACA will be responsible for that. We've added a staff person to assist us this year and we'll continue to offer that service until the communities are ready, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 431-15(5): Property Assessment Services In Small Communities

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So let me ask with this whole New Deal funding formula -- we're coming on to April 1, 2007, when these new initiatives are supposed to be really coming forward and coming out to the community level -- has there been any training at the community level to non-tax-based communities to help them make decisions, determine funding sources, and maintaining our community infrastructure? Has that started yet? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 431-15(5): Property Assessment Services In Small Communities

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, a lot of work has gone on in the last while since the announcement of this initiative to prepare the communities in terms of capacity. We've added a number of programs to our School of Community Government. In the area of assessments for property taxes, it's a requirement that we're obligated to do to conduct the assessments. We'll continue to work with the communities to develop a capacity. We've deferred the implementation; however, the tax collected will still be offered to the communities as has already taken place this year and the funding formula will continue to roll out. We don't see this as a real challenge to deal with, Mr. Speaker. In fact, with the City of Yellowknife turning over their responsibilities to us we may be able to use this as a benefit in terms of economics of scale now and provide a service that we are already doing with the staff that we already have. Thank you.

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

Question 432-15(5): Core Needs For Housing In Small Communities

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I look through the NWT housing issues and the core needs in our regions are very high and I understand from the Minister that the housing issue is something that the government has implemented, is going to implement a strong program in terms of building units in the Northwest Territories. I want to ask the Minister of Housing in terms of his recent meeting in the Sahtu in terms of how do we get these units in our region that are desperately needed in terms of reducing the core need in some of our smaller communities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 432-15(5): Core Needs For Housing In Small Communities

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have the funding secured. Our people are working with the local housing organizations in the communities as we speak. I expect that as we find homeowners, potential homeowners, we'll begin to get the housing units moved in there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 432-15(5): Core Needs For Housing In Small Communities

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a real challenge for our people in terms of finding potential homeowners, in terms of getting these units into our communities. As you know, at the region there's a high percentage of core needs and there's overcrowding in the housing. I guess in terms of putting some of these families into housing that possibly could be owned by the Housing Corporation. I know the department is wanting to get away from publicly owning these units. I'm looking at units that can be used today in terms of alleviating some of these overcrowded housing units. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 432-15(5): Core Needs For Housing In Small Communities

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The homeownership money isn't just totally allocated to new or additional houses in the communities. Where it makes sense to renovate existing units, then we're doing that. We will renovate units in the community and hopefully be able to help cut down on the core need that way. But it's not just for bringing new units in; it's also for renovations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 432-15(5): Core Needs For Housing In Small Communities

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to say here in the House, I want to thank the Premier and also the Minister for coming into the Sahtu and meeting with the Sahtu people in terms of this housing strategy. It's a very important issue and this is one of the reasons why we need to look at this issue here again. The core need is high not only in my region, but also in the Tlicho region in terms of bringing this core need down into our region. Again, when can we expect the number of core needs to come down in our community? In Colville Lake there's over 80 percent, I think, that are in core need. There's just over crowding in the homes there. As you know, Mr. Speaker, that will cause other problems. Again, I'll ask the Minister when can the Sahtu expect to see some real homes built for some of our people? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 432-15(5): Core Needs For Housing In Small Communities

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The staff in the Housing Corporation, and the LHOs, and the band, and community leaders have been working on this. We've resolved all of the land issues, to my knowledge. That's all behind us now. As quickly as our people can have the materials ready to go, we'll get them on the barges and I hope to...In fact I know we're going to see a lot of work happening this summer, both on renovations as well as new houses. I'm very aware of some of the core need, particularly as the Member mentions in Colville Lake, and that's of concern to me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 433-15(5): Income Security Review

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask some further questions on the homelessness area, but I think it would relate more toward Mr. Dent, who has responsibility for the income security review.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, the development of this policy or this framework has been a major initiative. It has involved, which is somewhat unusual, a large extent of public consultation. So I would like to ask Mr. Dent if he could

advise the Assembly of the next stage of the rollout of this policy or the next stage in this development, especially as it involved the greater community, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 433-15(5): Income Security Review

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've asked the Standing Committee on Social Programs for a meeting to discuss this issue and I'm hoping that we're going to get together fairly soon. I need to discuss with the committee the options we're looking at and get a sense for where we may be going with the announcement in terms of making the program public. So sometime after we've had a chance to have that discussion, we'll be in a position to talk about the program and where we hope to get it headed in the next little while. I would expect that we will have something definitive to announce by the time we get to the next session, if not before, and the reason I say that is that there may be some costs involved in this which may mean that we're looking at something in a supplementary appropriation. So I won't be able to commit until I know whether or not the money is committed to some of the options that may be under consideration.

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

Supplementary To Question 433-15(5): Income Security Review

MR. BRADEN: Okay, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the Minister wants to come back to committee to get some sense of committee's -- and that would be the Standing Committee on Social Programs -- to get some sense of where he can go with this. However, the point that's coming to me from my constituents is that because this did involve a considerable amount of public consultation, they, too, are stakeholders and I guess the question that it would leave is can we then anticipate that there will be some degree of public rollout within the next month of the income security framework, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 433-15(5): Income Security Review

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be difficult for me to commit to having a public document ready to roll out in the next month. As I said, I believe that the commitment will likely come at the next session. We may have some idea of where we're headed; we may be able to start the process a bit ahead of that. But in terms of the commitments, that would be the earliest that we're going to be able to make some of the commitments.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. Braden. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 8: RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Return To Written Question 43-15(5): Actions In Response To Caribou Tag Reductions

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written to question, asked by Ms. Lee to the honourable Brendan Bell, Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, on February 13, 2007, regarding actions and response to caribou tag reductions.

As of last Friday afternoon, Caribou Pass Outfitters Limited, Qaivvik Limited and Bathurst Inlet Developments (1984) Limited filed an application for judicial review in the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories regarding the Government of the Northwest Territories' reduction of big game hunting tags for barren-ground caribou for 2007. Since an application for a judicial review has been filed, it would be inappropriate to comment on these issues at this time.

Return To Written Question 44-15(5): Municipal Funding Under The New Deal

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 44-15(5), asked by Mrs. Groenewegen to the Honourable Michael McLeod, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, on February 13, 2007, regarding municipal funding under the New Deal for NWT community governments.

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mrs. Groenewegen on February 13, 2007, regarding municipal funding under the New Deal for NWT community governments. Specifically, the Member asked for information on accumulated financial support for all communities in the Northwest Territories from the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs; information on how a community's ability to raise revenue is determined; and the cost of trucked water and sewer services as billed to consumers in each territorial community.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table information on the increase or decrease of accumulated financial support for each of the 33 communities in the Northwest Territories for the 2002-2003 to 2007-2008 period. The information shows that funding for every community in the Northwest Territories has increased over a five-year period.

The Member asked how a community's ability to raise own-source revenues is determined. Municipal legislation requires community governments to recognize their sources of revenue in their budgets and financial statements. Common sources of revenue for community governments are GNWT grants and contributions, property taxes, user fees and charges for services, public utilities and facilities. Specifically with regard to water and sewage services, both the current and prior funding model assume that communities charge a reasonable fee for the provision of water and sewer services to consumers. Beginning April 1, 2007, funding for water and sewage services will be provided on a standard cost allocation approach. Under this new method of calculating water and sewer, all communities are assumed to have standard costs, and to raise standard revenues. For the purposes of calculating funding, MACA uses a standard revenue estimate of 65 cents per person per day. The decision to charge more revenue, or less revenue, to support the

provision of water and sewer services remains entirely with the community.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have information to provide to the Member regarding the cost of trucked water and sewer services as billed to consumers in each community. Under both the current and new approaches to providing funding for water and sewer services, the department does not require communities to provide this information as part of their annual audited financial statements.

Return To Written Question 45-15(5): Complaints Filed Against Public Housing Tenants

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 45-15(5), asked by Mr. Braden to the honourable Brendan Bell, Minister of Justice, on February 13, 2007, regarding complaints filed against public housing tenants.

Between April 1, 2006 and February 13, 2007, the rental office received 165 applications from public housing organizations related to non-payment of rent. However, the office has no way to determine, in most cases, how many of these applications may be related to the income or economic rent information provided by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment income support programs to housing authorities.

Return To Written Question 46-15(5): Outfitter Compensation

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question 46-15(5), asked by Mr. Yakeleya to the honourable Brendan Bell, Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, on February 13, 2007, regarding outfitter compensation.

As of last Friday afternoon, Caribou Pass Outfitters Limited, Qaivvik Limited and Bathurst Inlet Developments (1984) Limited filed an application for judicial review in the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories regarding the Government of the Northwest Territories' reduction of big game hunting tags for barren-ground caribou for 2007. Since an application for a judicial review has been filed, it would be inappropriate to comment on these issues at this time.

Return To Written Question 47-15(5): Resource Development Royalties

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question 47-15(5), asked by Mr. Robert McLeod to the honourable Joseph Handley, Premier, on February 13, 2007, regarding resource development royalties.

Can the Premier provide a summary of the amount of money from resource royalties taken from the Northwest Territories by the federal government in the past 20 years?

Later today, I will table a chart that shows federal resource revenues from the North over the past 20 years. The figures include federal resource revenues from all three territories over the past 20 years. The federal government does not publish separate numbers for each territory, but most of the royalties after 2002-2003 would be from the Northwest Territories because Yukon negotiated a devolution agreement in 1998 and the lead zinc mines in Nunavut have been closed since 2002. Although the Lupin mine reopened briefly, it probably did not generate significant revenues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. The honourable Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs.

ITEM 11: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 106-15(5): Historic Community Funding Amounts 2002-2003 To 2007-2008 Summary

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Return to Written Question 44-15(5), I wish to table the following document entitled Historic Funding 2002-2003 to 2007-2008 Summary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabled Document 107-15(5): Federal Revenues From Non-Renewable Natural Resource Exploitation In The North, By Category 1986-87 To 2005-06

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, further to my Return to Written Question 47-15(5), I wish to table the following document entitled Federal Revenues from Non-Renewable Natural Resource Exploitation in the North, by Category 1986-87 to 2005-06. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bills 18, 19, 21, Committee Reports 7, 8, 9, 10, and Tabled Document 104-15(5), with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair. By the authority given to the Speaker by Motion 22-15(5), Committee of the Whole may sit beyond the hour of adjournment until it is prepared to report. Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 16: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I 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 wishes to consider Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-08, specifically dealing with the Justice Department and Environment and Natural Resources; and, Madam Chair, we would like to deal with Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education, and Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act. Mahsi.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. We'll do that right after a break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Committee members, we left off yesterday on the Department of Justice. We have been through the Minister's opening remarks and the committee's opening remarks. We are

ready to go onto general comments, but I will ask if committee if they agree...Oh, Mr. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses to the table? Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Bell. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I will ask Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms if you would please escort the witnesses to the table. Thank you.

Minister Bell, for the record, could you please introduce your witnesses?

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. With me today is Don Cooper, the deputy minister of Justice; and Kim Schofield is the director of finance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Minister Bell. Welcome and I will ask the Members now if they have any general comments on the Department of Justice. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to focus on some key issues that my region is facing today and the first one I want to look at is with the initiative that the Department of Justice is going to look at other communities with similar type of population, lifestyle, in terms of the presence of RCMP officers in the communities. I certainly support the Minister in terms of Sachs Harbour getting a permanent RCMP station in that community. Also the pilot project that's been looked at in Gameti in terms of how the RCMP is being considered as having a person or persons in that position there in Gameti. I know Wrigley is also being considered and some of the other communities around here that desperately need the presence of the RCMP members.

Earlier on a colleague of mine spoke about the other initiatives happening in the North here in regards to citizens in the Northwest Territories taking some ownership and that and with the amount of dollars that are being looked at by this government and, of course, our social needs and economic needs and cultural needs are so high it will be a while before a community like Colville Lake would see or look at an RCMP officer, even such as Tsiigehtchic. They don't have an RCMP officer. So these other communities that have RCMP presence in their community, somewhat feel a level of safety and the comfort of having RCMP presence in the community versus the ones that do not have an RCMP in their communities. I want to ask, I guess, when we get to detail, Madam Chair, detailed questions on this specific issue here, on the need for RCMP presence or a different type of attitude or a different type of view on how do we put some safety measures into our communities, giving our community more authority or power to look at or share resources. So I want to ask those questions later, Madam Chair. Right now just a general comment on that issue.

Madam Chair, the other issue I want to look at is that the encouragement that I see in this Minister in terms of looking outside the justice system in terms of the correctional facilities. He's worked with me and another

Member in the House here in terms of having some wilderness camps be the starting point where inmates from institutions can be placed in these wilderness camps. I think it's really beneficial. I just don't think we have seen enough of the benefits or spoken enough of the benefits of having these wilderness camps in our regions or our communities. There is so much we can do with these wilderness camps and I think the Minister should certainly be congratulated. He certainly has my support in terms of looking outside the box, so to speak, in creating these wilderness camps for the people by the people that they're meant to be. It's a healing process. I think the Minister is on the right direction in terms of healing some of our people that need these healing camps as opposed to the corrections facility. There's a need for those correctional facilities and I think with these healing camps I think our wilderness camps will be a real benefit for the people and their families.

I want to talk about this healing camp in terms of there was another one that started up a couple years ago with the Tl'oondih Healing Society up in Fort McPherson where this was a pilot project and I haven't yet to date seen a document that says this was a good project. This Tl'oondih Healing Society did a good job in terms of working with the Department of Justice. I know it was a pilot project. I haven't seen anything in terms of what type of results that said that this was a good initiative by the Department of Justice in the Northwest Territories. I want to ask some questions to the Minister after on the Tl'oondih Healing Society. I think with the amount of people we have in our facilities, that this facility can be used as a point where families can get together and inmates can use this facility.

Madam Chair, in terms of Aftercare Program, I guess in terms of gaps that happen between someone leaving their community, going to such a facility, certainly we put a lot of emphasis and lots of support behind the Salvation Army. But like one of my elders said in the communities, we need to take them out of the Salvation Army and put them back in our communities. Let's not use the Salvation Army as a next step to reintegrating our people back into our communities, because I think we're lacking in that area in terms of aftercare programs. Bringing these people into these programs requires a lot of help and a lot of support by this government.

Madam Chair, the second last point I want to make is on some of the choices that we have given to our inmates and sometimes people need to be directed, steered into some of these programs. I know sometimes when I have some choices I won't always choose the one that's best for me in terms of what I need to do to be of benefit to society in terms of community wellness and community health. Sometimes it's easier to do nothing than to do any type of work on either myself or my family. So, Madam Chair, I think that some of these, and it may even be case by case, but some of these programs should be mandatory for some of these people who are in these institutions to go into Tl'oondih, go into the bush camp, go into Fort Good Hope, or go into anywhere in this territory that has a bush camp, to go through some of these programs here. If you have a nice facility that provides you heat, electricity and food, why would you want to go to a camp? It's tough out there, a tough life out there. I know it's beneficial, but a lot of our people haven't grown up in these days in terms of no woodstove, I mean, sorry, without furnace or electricity or water. But in my

generation we certainly have. I guess it's a real balance. So I'm going to ask questions to the Minister on that hand see what we can do.

Madam Chair, the last point I want to make is empowering our communities into the justice system and helping our community justice committees, strengthen our communities by taking a little more, taking on more ownership into helping our communities with the justice in our communities. I think by strengthening them and giving them some flexibility and some authority to how they administer justice, I think we can go a long way in terms of how to deal with the communities and how we could support our members. Because we usually just deal with the individual, Madam Chair, and sometimes the families, small children and the spouse usually gets left out somewhere and they get bounced off to health and social services or to education or to mental health and income support. But we don't really see any type of coordinated effort where all the families would get together, the children, work with them, work with the, usually the father that is or the husband is the one that's being sent out of the community. Madam Chair, I think we need to do more for the families. I'm going to ask the Minister later on in the details in terms of what we can do to strengthen our families rather than tear them apart. It's not blaming anybody; it's how do we help our small communities that can do this kind of work here. I point again to some of the facilities we already have in the Northwest Territories. I hope we could start utilizing some of these facilities that are out there already, proving that they do work, proving that it may cost a little more, but the benefits far outweigh what we're doing right now.

Madam Chair, that's all I have in terms of my opening comments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Next on the list I have Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Minister and his staff for being here with us this afternoon. I wanted to start off by saying I'm somewhat disappointed that the courthouse project here in Yellowknife is going to be put off. If you look at some of the numbers that are out there in terms of construction costs on new buildings, I think it behoves us as a government to try to get a courthouse built here in Yellowknife sooner rather than later. I know some of my colleagues aren't too happy with a new courthouse, but the judiciary is a vital piece, an integral piece of the government here in the Northwest Territories, and a new courthouse should happen sooner rather than later. Again, I want to make sure the Minister knows that I'm in support of a courthouse. I'm supportive of it for a number of reasons. Mainly, is because the longer we wait, the more it's going to cost and you can just look at the Deh Cho Bridge project for example. It started out at somewhere around 60 million and it's up over 100 million dollars now. The same would hold true for any piece of public infrastructure, like a courthouse would be 45 million; that number was banded around in capital estimates. If you wait three, four, five years, that number is going to rise. It's going to be 70, 80 million before we know it and I don't think we should wait that long to get this built here in Yellowknife. I'm not sure what the Minister can do to try to convince this House that that has to happen but, believe me, I do believe it has to happen; and like I said, soon rather than later.

I want to commend the department the establishment of RCMP in Sachs Harbour. I think that's a very good undertaking and I'm happy to see that that's happened.

I wanted to talk a little bit, too, about family law and how it is that we can expedite the process, especially for people who have been waiting so long to get a lawyer. I've talked to people here in Yellowknife that have to go outside of our jurisdiction to access family law. I think that's a travesty in and of itself. I think as a government we have to try to get some lawyers here to handle the family law side of things. When it comes to legal aid, I know instances where it's been six years, six whole years where a couple has gone through the legal aid process, the system. It's like a meat grinder. They put them in at the beginning and just keep grinding and grinding and grinding. Six years later there's no resolution. There's no divorce settlement. There's no custody, clear indication on custody of the children, and it's six years later. That, Madam Chair, is an embarrassment. I believe it's absolutely embarrassing that we, as a government, would pay legal aid services for a couple to go six years. That's terrible. It's a terrible travesty. There are examples like that out there. We shouldn't be allowing people to suffer through that type of turmoil in their lives for that length of time. It shouldn't happen.

The increased tariff for legal aid lawyers, that's something that I certainly, I think that might help. Obviously lawyers have to be paid to a standard where they are going to accept the work and carry out the work and get the work done. So if it's a tariff increase, that's something I certainly would be supportive of seeing happen.

The other issue that I wanted to mention while the Minister is here in my general comments is the discussion we had in the House last year regarding equal-share parenting and the possibility of federal legislation to that effect so that divorce proceedings don't take the six years or the five years and things can be settled and the default would be to equal-shared parenting for both parents. I think that's something that, fundamentally, I believe in. I think both parents are responsible in a child's life and both parents should have access to the child to ensure that they have both parents in their lives. That's just common sense should prevail in that matter. Obviously, through our proceedings, sometimes common sense might not be at the forefront and takes a backseat. It's again, not the fault of the Minister. I know he was going to bring that issue forward to his federal counterparts. For the Sake of the Children report that was done a number of years ago suggested that the federal Divorce Act be overhauled and equal-shared parenting be included as a provision in the revamped Divorce Act. So I'd like to see the Minister and the department continue to have an open dialogue with the federal government on this and pursue it. I think it's important.

The other side of this in the divorce proceedings as well, there doesn't seem to be much in terms of support for fathers. There's support, and let's be fair here and let's be clear about this, there are support mechanisms out there, but most of them are towards women who are affected by divorce. When it comes to a man and they're being impacted by divorce proceedings, there really isn't much to turn to. There isn't much for support. I would encourage the department to look at that DADS program that was up and running here for a little while. It needs to be funded. I think we have to be fair. We have to be impartial when it comes to support and divorce is an ugly, ugly business.

It's not easy for either party and I think, as a government, we need to ensure that both sides of the equation, the women and the men, have opportunity to get the support that they need to get through this difficult time in their lives. Far too often men are left to their own devices, Madam Chair. According to some of the statistics I've seen, men are somewhat 10 times more likely to commit suicide as a woman. I'm not sure if there are statistics that show whether men going through a divorce are more likely to commit suicide, but it's a tremendously difficult time in the lives of a man or a woman going through divorce. Again, I want to see our government doing everything it can to help people through this. It can be a devastating time of somebody's life to go through a divorce proceeding, so we have to be fair on both sides.

Again, with that, Madam Chair, I think I'll leave my general comments there and I do have questions through the detail. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Next for general comments on my list I have Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Minister and his staff for coming out to address items this afternoon. General comments, Madam Chair, I guess. I appreciate the inclusion of Sachs Harbour as part of the police services. We worked very hard for that. I'd like to thank my colleagues on this side here also. I think we've come a long way over the last three years and I hope we can continue to move forward and look at Colville Lake, Tsiigehtchic and Gameti, all those small communities that are without police services. I think that's one step that I think we've put our foot in the door now and we can move forward with that.

Just in regard to the corrections department, I guess, Madam Chair. It's unfortunate we have to spend so much money in corrections, I guess. Adult and young offenders, that's a lot of money we're expending that could be used otherwise. But that's the facts of life I guess we have to deal with.

Just in regard to the wilderness camps, I appreciate the department still trying to get these people who are in North Slave and South Slave correctional centres to go out and try to get some of these other programs that are available. It's up to these people to decide that and I'm glad to see that the department will continue to try to put funding into that, although, like I say, it's up to the individuals themselves.

Madam Chair, just a last comment I'd like to make is, you know, in our pre-budget consultation we heard about lack of funding for youth justice committees. I'm glad to see there is some money available for the department, for youth justice committees. I'm glad to see the department has been listening when we were travelling through the communities.

Just some general comments. I may have some questions in regard to detail later on. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Any further general comments? Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Minister and Mr. Cooper and Ms. Schofield for coming out here today. I just have a couple questions on the opening

comments with respect to legal aid services. I know that it's one of the, especially family legal aid services, is really one of those really complicated legal services, I guess, that I think a lot of legal aid lawyers just don't even want to look at. I know a lot of them, a lot of people have been calling me and asking me why their family legal aid cases have been outstanding for quite a number of years and I really hope that with some new clinics and more resources put toward legal aid services we can try to alleviate the workload on that front because I feel that there is, I'm not a lawyer but just from hearing what people are telling me, that they're having to deal with, as far as going through legal aid and getting legal aid for family issues, is really something that is a real uphill battle for them and it really causes them a lot of stress, a lot of worry, especially if it takes years and years for them to get any type of legal aid or get their case heard in the court. So I hope that maybe this government can help alleviate some of those strains that we have on our justice system and our legal aid services.

Just with community justice I'm glad to see that there is continued funding going into community justice committees and a little more funding for community justice coordinators, but I think when community justice starts working for communities we seem to cut back on the funding. You know, there's no guarantee it's going to carry on from one year to the next. I think that when they're doing funding allocations, especially for community justice committees and community justice coordinators, that they really should look at how many cases they handle, and I'm sure they do, probably. However, just with maybe the success rate of what they're doing every year to ensure that, yes, they do have good working relationships with other community members, with the court systems and with the enforcement personnel in the community, I think we have to build on that as we move forward here with the community justice work.

Just on the on-the-land programs, I know this has been a real tough one for justice, too, especially on the accountability issue just to...How do we monitor these on-the-land programs? I know we don't have RCMP or security services or any judges or lawyers going out to any of these camps and seeing how they're doing and asking these camp workers how it's working for them and how the government is reacting to their requests for either more funding, continued funding or just more professional development, I guess, in training and stuff to help their people that are out there to help. I like to see more monitoring mechanisms, I guess, in place for on-the-land programs and a closer working relationship with justice workers and RCMP in ensuring that, yes, they are doing what they're supposed to be doing and not just taking people out on the land to let them run around at their own whim and collect money off the government for not incurring any real expense on their part and making it more like a money-making business venture more than a rehab initiative.

Those are basically the only two issues that really jumped out at me on the opening comments. I'm glad to see that there are more dollars going into community justice. I don't want to see them going into jails and courthouses, but I think at the community level we really have to raise awareness that communities can take hold of their own justice systems and work with their own people that they know best and try to keep the court system out of the picture as much as we can. With that, I'm glad to be

going through the detail here with the Minister. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Next on the list I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a few general comments on legal aid and RCMP services, but first I'd like to just mention the issue with the courthouse. I know that project is off the books for the moment, or it's delayed, and I know it's one that may not have the most overwhelming support from some Members, but I think, in the end, that has to be a business case and the fact is the government is and will continue to spend money and will be required to spend money to hold those trials and hearings that have to go on. For some of the most extensive cases they need certain capacity, security and services that they need to hold those hearings and trials, and government will have to pay leasing or owning the building and I would like to encourage the Minister and the government to keep on working on that because it's not a public project that's going to go away; it's something that has to be addressed and in the end the business case has to make the decision on that. I think the business case will prove that that needs to be done sooner rather than later.

On the legal aid situation, Madam Chair, I am well aware of lack of family lawyers in Yellowknife and the fact that there are so many cases. I mean a lot of people who need legal aid can't get it and those who get the legal aid services, the files move very slowly, and there are some cases where, you know, the cases get really protracted for many reasons. People have disputes even in the best circumstances, but when you're going through break-up of a marriage and children are involved and families involved, people get entrenched and they sometimes are not able to make the best decisions that they'll see the end of the relationship or whatever. I know that federally, given that divorce legislation is under federal jurisdiction and much of the family law area is under federal law jurisdiction, I know in many jurisdictions attempts have been made to put in dispute resolution mechanisms just to put any extra steps that could work toward resolving these issues. However, at the end, if the two parties are set on disagreeing on every point, that does take time. I'm wondering if the Minister and the department has looked into a case management system where you could do a review of cases and see what cases are so long outstanding and whether we could do a concentrated effort to clean up some of those files, even if we have to get something like locum lawyers. You know, we have locum doctors to replace our doctors if they're on holidays or we can't get them. Is there some kind of set mechanism where...Is there a way, or do they have a way, or does the legal aid office operate under some kind of rule or system that would tell them that they need to review, have some idea of how long these files are and whether we could institute any new ways, whether using a short-term infusion of imported lawyers from other jurisdictions who are licensed, or who are members of the bar to practice here temporarily or something, just to clean up some of the files.

The second thing is I can appreciate that the work they have to do at the legal aid office is not an easy task. There are lots of people who are employed under the government who have to deal with hard clients and clients who are under a lot of stress and they are very distraught and so I can understand the stress that our staff is under,

but I think it would be helpful to remind everybody working for the government, serving the people, that what they do say and how they do their job matters and there are better ways to serve the people than not. So I would just like to take this opportunity to encourage everyone to be mindful of the clients they serve. They're under a lot of stress and they could be helped much further if they were given service with courtesy and respect.

The last thing I want to talk about, Madam Chair, is to do with the RCMP servicing programs in the North. We are all aware of the fact that RCMP resources nationally are under a great deal of stress. RCMP, in this heated labour market, I think they're having even...I mean, they're trying to recruit as many as possible but they're not able to recruit as many as they probably need or they could afford, and they probably can't afford as many as they need. In the North they are having lots of discussions here to make sure that every community has RCMP service. I support that and I do congratulate the department, the Minister and the Member from Nunakput, for the work that he has done in his effort to get that in Sachs Harbour. There are some other communities that are still working on that. I keep thinking about this challenge we have though. I'd like to see all the communities having... You know, Wrigley doesn't have RCMP service and, I think if you don't have RCMP service, other social agencies are unable to get into that. You know, nurses don't want to work in communities where there is no RCMP protection. We all need a minimum level of protection and any other social agencies, so RCMP sort of has to be the lead for other agencies to come in. So we want to see a situation where that doesn't happen anymore.

Having said that, I think it's important also to realize that not having all the RCMP support in small communities are affecting the services in Yellowknife, too. Yellowknife has...it's a community of half of the population, but certainly we do not have half of the RCMP contingent; not anywhere near that. I think probably most, I would say 60, 70, 80 percent, of hard crimes are committed in Yellowknife. The downtown core of Yellowknife is going through so much stress and we hear every day from retailers, pedestrians, we have youth being attacked by other youth, we have people being mugged in broad daylight, we have people doing drug deals at every corner. I mean we have serious crimes happening and my information is that we may have as little as 20 to 30 percent of our RCMP resources in Yellowknife. It's a problem if we are spending 70, 80 percent of resources, RCMP resources, outside of Yellowknife and yet we cannot staff all the communities. In the capital city where, not because Yellowknife is big and Yellowknife should get everything, it's just that because it's big there are a lot of really serious crimes being committed. I know in working with the RCMP and talking to the RCMP, they are bending themselves backwards and forwards to address all the needs in all the communities. At some point, I think that enough is enough in terms of how much Yellowknife can sustain and maintain a reasonable level of community safety if it keeps being under-resourced the way it is now.

Organizations like the Yellowknife Coalition for Community Wellness, COPS program, Community Patrol Services, RCMP Advisory Committee, there is a drug-free zone, there are a lot of things that the community is working on on its own to ameliorate the gaps that are being created by the fact that Yellowknife continues to be

under-resourced in its RCMP staffing. I think this needs a real focused attention. The issue is we have all this RCMP. Within the resources we have, we are not able to resource the big communities where the hard crimes are like Inuvik, too, and yet we still are not able to staff the small communities. So I don't know where the point is where we could adequately meet the needs of small communities and the large communities, and I think that's a challenge that the Minister and the government has to continue to work on and one that I'm prepared to work on if we could get some options on that. My time is up, Madam Chair, so I'll leave it at that for now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Next on the list for general comments I have Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Madam Chair. (English not provided)

Madam Chair, I just highlighted a few key points, three points to be exact, which I'll be reflecting on in detailed information, as well, where we talk about the department's goals and objectives for the year 2007-08; what their prime focus is on. There are a lot of issues around the table here that we've been talking about. One of the areas that we must commend the department and the Minister on is that Sachs Harbour is getting a detachment. It's the hard work of the Member from the area, Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak. Even in other communities, as Mr. Yakeleya pointed out, Colville Lake; and also myself, Gameti. I've been an MLA for a year and a half now, going on to almost two years, so if I had the same amount of time as the Member for Nunakput, we probably would have battled and then flipped a coin for a detachment in the community. At the same time, I fully support Mr. Pokiak's riding getting the detachment and I'm certainly looking forward to our detachment in Gameti and also Colville, and other small communities. It's a real asset and also it's a real need in the community to have that detachment in the communities.

That's one area that I wanted to focus on. The other one is this courthouse that's been brought up before. Mr. Ramsay brought it up as well, a need for a courthouse in Yellowknife. You know I was satisfied that it wasn't in the budget per se but, at the same time, I think those kinds of funding and investments should be going to communities first where we don't have a court facility, court supplies, court equipment; an up-to-date facility which we do not have in the smaller communities. So that should be the first priority before we look at a huge project here in the city of Yellowknife. Those are ongoing discussions and I'm sure we'll be talking about that at a later point.

Another area, Madam Chair, and a final point I'd like to focus on, is with respect to the culture programs through the rehab in the correctional centres. You know, we talk about the wilderness camps. I'm fully supporting the Minister coming to my region, his department, working on a wilderness camp for our region and also for the Sahtu. I've been after the department to know exactly when it's going to happen. I'm hoping that it will come to fruition soon enough. I'll be going after the department again, just as a reminder. They've been working hard, too, as well, with the community of Whati; it will be in Whati this year. So I'd like to commend the Minister and his department in that area as well. At the same time, with the correction programs...It's hard to focus. Corrections program at the correctional facility is the culture program. I visited the

facility. I met with the Tlicho inmates. At the same time, the program has been delivered. I think it is inadequate. More programs need to be delivered. Also, in different languages as well where we had over 20-plus inmates and there wasn't any Tlicho speaking person in there as a counsellor. I still have concerns about that. Interpretation services should be provided. There comes a time where inmates are there interpreting, which shouldn't be allowed at all. That should be the last resort. It should be an outsider coming in as an interpreter. That is why we, as GNWT, pay for the services. Those are just, Madam Chair, some comments that I have. I will have questions in the detailed documentation. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Next for general comments I have Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are so many aspects to what the Department of Justice does and how it relates to life in our communities. I think, as in the case of a number of expectations that the public has, too much is put on the shoulders of police or courts to fix things and remedy them. It is something we are always striving to find a balance for. Earlier today, we talked about the income security framework and how it can streamline and balance the delivery of all sorts of different things that affect people's lives. The aspect of justice is certainly a big one. One of the things that I look at is, well, what is within our realm, our ability to help make a difference, to give people more opportunity or better tools, better ways legally, through programs to help make a difference in their own lives or in their own communities. We are doing things, I think. In fact, in this Assembly, we have done quite a bit and are still looking at doing more.

Madam Chair, the Protection Against Family Violence Act is something that, I understand, has exceeded expectations about the uptake and the involvement from families who need exactly that, protection against violence. Madam Chair, we are soon going to engage in a long-anticipated review of the Liquor Act, not that this is going to solve all the ills associated with liquor abuse, but it is something that we can do in this Legislature that will modernize and reflect more current thinking and standards and put our values on the way liquor is administered as a controlled substance by this government. There has been a lot of work done in a very short period of time on the Safe Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, which also anticipates that something will come before this Legislature and the communities. These are all things, Madam Chair, that individuals and communities can use and that we can do our part as a Legislature.

Madam Chair, our colleague Ms. Lee referenced the fantastic work of another volunteer organization, the Community Wellness Coalition here in Yellowknife which, I think, is in its third or fourth year now. I was at their annual meeting last week. I got the sense that this is an organization that is really finding its feet. It has secured some substantive resources from the federal Department of Justice. I know that the RCMP, our Department of Justice and many other agencies have been involved with it. Ms. Lee outlined a couple of things that are going on that this community should be deeply indebted to that organization. I also learned at their meeting, Madam Chair, that other communities in the NWT are looking at what they are doing and want to engage with them to see if what these volunteers in Yellowknife have started could be also undertaken in other communities. I think that is a

major achievement. In reality, it begins to satisfy one of the visions of this organization, which was to enable a community to take more responsibility and have more involvement in what goes on in the community in the sense of policing and justice and making their community a safe and secure place. That is what has been demonstrated here. I hope that we can give them every possible assistance including maybe a spare vehicle or two.

Madam Chair, something that has come up frequently in this department is the role of community justice committees. These are organizations mandated to serve as alternatives to regular court practice. It seems that we still, Madam Chair, do not give these committees or organizations the recognition or resources that I believe they could or should have as the kind of alternate to our courts and our correction system that just don't seem to work for so many people that get caught up in a life of crime or especially the repeat offenders. I still believe that we can do so much more if we try to assist those people to solve their issues in the context of their own communities, cultures and family situations rather than exporting them to some other place for a few weeks or a few months and expect that they will be able to return being better off.

Madam Chair, my colleague Ms. Lee also referenced the terrific work of the RCMP in the community. While we have achieved new policing resources on the street here in Yellowknife and, of course, in at least a few other communities in the last two or three years, I think there are still things that can be done to enable the police to do more policing, to do exactly what they are trained and expected to do when they put that uniform on. I know that, here in the Yellowknife detachment for instance, Madam Chair, through some creativity and some new ideas and new thinking, they have brought in some different ideas about administration and freed up a lot of RCMP time, trained officer time, that otherwise went into paperwork or administration, is now being achieved in other ways. The police are actually able to do more policing. This is something that I hope we continue to do and that other agencies such as the Department of Justice and corrections and perhaps our municipal bylaw officers where in most communities that have them, can also be involved in sharing more of the responsibilities and, like I say, be more creative in delivering policing services in our communities.

Mr. Chair, that concludes my remarks. I look forward to getting into more detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Next on the list for general comments I have Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am just going to go over briefly some of the things that I would like to get some response from the Minister on as we go through the detail. I would like to get some information on the status of the restructuring of the G division of the RCMP. I would like to know what exactly is happening with the police space in Hay River at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre that was allocated for remand services and how the change in the way that remand inmates were being handled, how that is playing out compared to the plans and the goals that were intended to be achieved with that reprofiling.

I would like to ask a little bit about the RCMP drug dog that we have and how successful that is proving to be. I just want to say that I am not so concerned as to where the drug dog is located, but just the availability for those services to be deployed in the Northwest Territories as required at various locations and whether or not one dog or one handler is sufficient.

Again, on the subject of the RCMP, I would like to inquire about how the auxiliary program is going, whether it is expanding, whether it is diminishing and how that fits in with the overall policing agenda here in the North.

With respect to the Yellowknife courthouse, I want to say that I do concur with the Members here who have previously stated that we need to regionalize the court services as much as possible. I think that, on a cost comparison, we would spend an inordinate amount of money and police resources bringing people back and forth to the courthouse and correction services in Yellowknife. The more that those services, court appearances and incarcerations can be decentralized, I think the better it is for the region. It is better for people who come into contact with the justice system. So that is all I have to say under general comments for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Next on the list for general comments I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am just going to comment in a couple of small areas. There won't be really much of a question as opposed to just some observations. The first one I will speak in the area of law enforcement. I will say, from an MLA point of view who has to work here not just for Yellowknife Centre but work with his colleagues, I know my colleague Calvin Pokiak has worked very hard on seeing the realization of an RCMP station and members posted in the Sachs Harbour area. I just want to pat the government on the back. That being said, with that significant accomplishment, I say tongue in cheek of course, someday there will be a chicken in every pot kind of thing. Maybe every community will have representation from the RCMP forces in their detachment. Someday our territorial government will have to reach a point of saying that those types of services are more along the lines of a need and a must as opposed to a hypothetical some day. I look forward to that transition to us moving forward to that type of policy that every community has some type of policing service they can lean on regardless of the fact that they may be only a 30 minute flight away. Sometimes it takes a two hour flight to get there to make it a 30 minute flight. By the time an emergency happens, I don't want to say it has been gone and past. It could also have been a lot worse. Someday. Kudos to the Minister moving forward on that initiative.

The other area I wish to draw attention to and applaud the department for their work on is the legal aid services. This should be no surprise to the Minister, the deputy and everybody else in the Department of Justice. When I came to the Assembly three and a half years ago, I remember people telling me that it has all been said before. It has all been done before. Just calm down. Nothing is going to change. People in the law profession even told me that they, of course, we have all worked on files. It is just the way it is. The department continues to make strides. It is very easy for us here to critique and criticize. Sometimes, I often say, we are not here to judge

but just be judgmental. The department, as well, needs to get a pat on the back when they make strides forward. My issue here is, when I first started on this, getting more lawyers or a new office was, of course, everyone said would never happen. They have made that happen so that there is a new office. It has been running for a few years, as we all know. But the next stride was they said that they would never pay lawyers more. It is not just about paying lawyers more; it is about paying them what they are worth. If we can't attract people in the private area to pick up these files, who is going to do the work? It falls back on the public servants who are lawyers in our shops. They can't keep up with the workload. I know it sounds strange to be complimenting them for paying lawyers more money. Typically, the general public thinks that is a wrong step to go, but the fact is, access to law is a very critical thing that defines your democracy. Justice is a pillar of our democracy, so it is an important value that we always have to make sure that it gets the supports and emphasis it needs. If we are able to attract more lawyers to do these files, that will help families that are in crisis sort of get through those dirty days, as some may describe it. I, like many other MLAs here, have heard from families where all they are trying to do is get a simple maintenance enforcement order, trying to continue with their divorce, trying to get access to their children, or trying to get court orders to protect themselves. It doesn't sound like much when you are in a family that is, if I may say, relatively stable, but when you are not in one of those stable environments, it is everything to you. If we are able to help propel a safe environment or home by getting access to the legal process for these people, we may sometimes be avoiding situations that never should have been. I say to the government's Department of Justice specifically that I am happy to see that they are bringing forward an adjustment in legal tariffs. Again, it is a challenge that I see that we are meeting because, like I said, when I first came here and was championing some of these issues, many people laughed on my side of the House and they heckled on the other side of the House and thought it was foolishness, but here it is yet again. The government is responding to change and they are responding in a positive way. I think it will affect many people's lives in a good way. I have no questions, Mr. Chair. It is easy to criticize, but we also have to compliment them when they do a good job. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I don't have anybody else on my list for general comments. Thank you, committee. The department starts on page 7-7, department summary, operations expenditure summary. We will defer this until the end. Page 7-10 is where we will start, committee. Information item, revenue summary. Are there any questions on that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 7-13, activity summary, services to government, operations expenditure summary, \$8.840 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 7-14, activity summary, services to government, grants and contributions, grants, total grants, \$79,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 7-19, activity summary, law enforcement, operations expenditure summary, \$27.094 million. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as I highlighted earlier about talking about the importance of having RCMP presence at detachments, especially in the small communities and just highlighting the achievement on Sachs Harbour, I would just like to question the Minister again about the Gameti RCMP detachment. How far are we at within the system of the GNWT negotiating with the federal government? We know there is an announcement on March 19th. Is there going to be money to that effect? Is there any positive news that is coming? Has the Minister heard any news on their part? If he has, then when are we going to see results? That will be my first question. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Minister.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On getting the assignment of the Department of Justice, one of the first things we did was sit down and talk about some priorities and some political priorities and areas that we thought we could make some headway. One of the most important things for me was to add policing in the Northwest Territories. I think we have done that with 28 additional bodies in the last three years. We also looked at, most importantly, policing in our smaller communities and the way that the operations were set up to serve our smallest communities. It was readily apparent, from talking to Members, that what we needed was a permanent presence in our smaller communities. We had 13 without police detachments. We will be down to 12 with the addition of Sachs Harbour, but we set out a course or a plan that would see, my hope was to go from 13 communities without detachments to 10 before the end of this government. We have been successful with Sachs Harbour. We made the argument to the federal government, to the Minister of Justice. We were very well aware that there were sovereignty arguments for having viable, sustainable communities in the High Arctic. I was very concerned about the response time in Sachs Harbour. If something goes wrong, two hours is a very long time. That is if there is good weather. Thankfully, we had some very good response on behalf of the RCMP in some critical situations in Sachs Harbour, but that was the case we made for Sachs Harbour and its detachment. The federal government was listening.

The RCMP has worked very closely with us. We talked with them about their operational priorities. I did meet in the summer with Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and laid out the case for Sachs Harbour. I am happy to say that we were successful. I have since gone back now to the same Minister again, Mr. Chair, and made the case for more detachments. I think they are a little bit amazed and bemused that, after getting one, we have come back for more, but we have done that. I can tell Members that we have a plan. We will be discussing it in the next couple of weeks for Gameti and for Wrigley, which are two very high pressure points in the system. We know the winter road experiment in Gameti. We saw the need first-hand. We spoke with the leadership and elders. That is a community that has been in desperate need of a permanent policing presence for a long time. I think we are going to deliver there. The same case can be made for Wrigley, especially with the coming pipeline development. We need to do something about a

detachment there. There are other communities that we will move on to after that, Mr. Chair, but very much I want to work on delivering on these three detachments before our time is up here as a government. As I say, in the next couple of weeks we will be sitting down to discuss a plan with Members.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we definitely have to keep on after the federal government since we don't have the resource revenue sharing with them yet. It is forthcoming. Once we have that, then we have most of the power in the North as our jurisdiction. At the same time, Mr. Chair, I am quite impressed with the department's initiative to have a police presence in the community of Gameti. Last year was a very successful winter road monitoring operation. Now that the Gameti winter road is open, has the same approach been made as soon as it opened up? There is a lot of traffic going back and forth now. I am certainly hoping that they are out there now, because the road just opened last week during the duration of the winter road project. That would eventually lead to a Gameti police detachment. Do we have crews out there now as we did last year? Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Minister.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that is the case. The RCMP has made the commitment to continue the pilot project in Gameti for this winter road season. The apparent need last year, I have to admit from talking to the RCMP that they were surprised for the amount of pressure and amount of need. They had anticipated initially that a couple of officers could handle it. We needed more than that. The support had to come from Yellowknife. I think that underscores the point that some of the Members are making about the larger centre complements having to resource our smaller communities. That has been the case there but we have made the compelling argument that we need a full-time police presence. So this pilot road project is good. It has been very successful. It is a temporary solution. I hope that by next fall we have a permanent presence on the ground in Gameti. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are on page 7-19, activity summary, law enforcement, operations expenditure summary. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the RCMP staffing and the distribution of it, I would like to hear from the Minister as to what kind of challenge we are facing. I want to be constructive on this. I don't think this is one that we are talking about a big community versus small communities. We understand that there are always limited resources, not just in dollars, but bodies too. I understand that RCMP contingency nationally is under pressure. They can't get all the money they need to have as many RCMP as possible, but even if they did, we have to find the bodies and train them. With the employment opportunities available everywhere, those are different challenges as well.

As the Minister mentioned earlier, there has been an increase in the RCMP force. I think the numbers are 26 or 27 in the last three years. We have succeeded in placing a detachment in Sachs, but I don't know if it is the never-

ending upward trend in the crime rates in Yellowknife or downtown situation. We are hearing more and more from Yellowknifers, especially downtown, that we need more resources there. We just need more resources there. We have youth and, in some cases, gangs doing some serious criminal work in the downtown area. Not only that, in suburbia too. This is why communities are willing to step up to the plate and they have set up their own community network to assist the RCMP. It is really frustrating to be sitting in this chair and see the numbers going up and putting more resources, but then we are not seeing the boots on the ground, so to speak.

There has been mention about the Gameti situation. I really would like to see a full-time detachment in Gameti because, right now, the Yellowknife force is staffing that and that takes a lot of resources outside of Yellowknife. The RCMP detachment in Yellowknife is very stretched because of that.

Another thing I want to talk to the Minister about, and I would like the Minister's feedback on, is what kind of work has been done between the GNWT as a funding partner, the federal government and the RCMP as to what kind of steps we could take to free the non-boots on the ground kind of work? Is there any lessening of paperwork we could do? Is there some work that RCMP is doing that they probably don't have to do if it was not required by law to do? For example, I understand the correctional officers now have taken over escorting of people that need to show up in court from correctional facilities. I saw a correctional officer escorting somebody to Hay River. That freed up a whole lot of time for RCMP. I understand the RCMP is engaged in lots of paperwork in organizing travel schedules for people who had to show up in court. I heard that from a very reliable source. Is that the kind of work that we could do? Is there anything we could do as a civil or public government to free the RCMP time so that all the RCMP we have can be on the ground doing the police work? When was the last time that sort of review was done? Maybe I should get the Minister to explain all the questions I posed, and then I can go from there.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There were a number of questions there. I hope the Member will forgive me if I don't get to them all and then we can come back to this. The point that the Member has made about corrections officers taking over the escort work from the jail to the courts, that was a deal that we made with the RCMP to alleviate some of the administrative pressure. That falls into that category in our minds. We were able to do that. There is no doubt that there is probably more of that that we can do. There is a civilian support staff located in Yellowknife for the RCMP. They are about 23 people in that complement. They do much of this work on behalf of the RCMP.

In addition, the question earlier, I think the Member posed it in her statement. I just want to let Members know that, of the roughly 228 RCMP positions we have, about 110 of those are Yellowknife based. That gives you a sense of the breakdown. There is no doubt in the larger communities, it is not just Yellowknife, it is Inuvik, Hay River, the requirement is put on those detachments to serve some of the outlying regions. We have just made the move to have more of a regional model in the Tlicho so that, out of Behchoko, the support is provided to the

Dogrib communities. In the past, it has been Yellowknife, but this is something that the RCMP has agreed to address in keeping with the self-government. I think that is a positive, progressive step on behalf of the RCMP. They have approached a number of issues in that respect. I have been very pleased with their efforts to improve policing. Are there more things that we can do, more discussions we can have related to reducing the administrative burden? Yes. I think the Member earlier today in the House talked about one of the things, in my mind, that alleviate a lot of pressure. That is dealing with the people who really need supports from government, from NGOs, people who end up in the drunk tank overnight because there is nowhere else to go. I think much of that can be handled by our support network if we put the pieces in place. We talk about the Anchorage model that would free up a lot of RCMP time. We are also looking at some other tools. Obviously the SCAN legislation we hope will crack down on some crime across the North and free up the RCMP as well, Mr. Chair. So there are a number of initiatives. I agree; it is important to continue to have ongoing dialogue with the RCMP and ask where we can be of assistance because we have to make sure the RCMP are used in the most effective way. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Out of 228 police officers and 110 being in Yellowknife, on the first look there, that might look like not quite half of the staff is in Yellowknife, but that is actually misleading. I think the stats have to be on where the crimes are committed. I would like to get information from the Minister. My understanding is that 60 to 70 percent of serious crimes are being committed in Yellowknife. It is not the bodies thing. We have to go where the crimes are being committed. I would like to get information from the Minister on that.

Secondly, more specifically, my information is that the RCMP is currently in charge of organizing all of the travel for witnesses. Is that the best use of RCMP time? We have court administration. We have court staff. Is that something that the GNWT staff could look into so that RCMP in uniform is not sitting in its offices trying to book? I understand they do the booking and it is the court administration office that rubberstamps them. I think that is the kind of area. That is just one example. But I am thinking there might be a lot of other areas where, if we cannot put any more bodies in, the next thing we can do is free up RCMP time so that they could have their boots on the ground.

Thirdly, I would support there being an RCMP regional operation in the Tlicho area based out of Behchoko and serving Whati, Gameti and Wekweeti. That is fine, but that does not answer my question. That is a separate issue. In fact, that would be very good as long as we get to keep Yellowknife detachment to do their work. I am telling you, if Tlicho gets their base and they could operate out of Behchoko and serve their communities, that is great. Right now, Yellowknife detachment numbers are misleading because they are servicing all those communities. That takes them out of service for extended times. I would like to ask the Minister if he could make a commitment to review with the police and with whoever is in the know, review their workload and what are the areas that we could assist with RCMP freeing up their time so

that we could maximize their presence in our communities to address the ever-increasing crime situation in the Yellowknife area with the influx of all the thousands of trucks that are coming in, the influx of people. I understand there are serious criminal gangs that are trying to move into Yellowknife to fill the gaps put on by the gaps that had been created by the operation drug bust that we had. Whenever there is a vacancy created in criminal reign, there will be somebody else coming in to fill that. I think it is important that we maximize the RCMP time. So there are two specific comments and questions that I asked that I would appreciate an answer to. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chair, the question of the organizing and planning of travel arrangements for all civilian witnesses, yes, the RCMP detachment does that on behalf of Yellowknife witnesses but the travel outside of Yellowknife is handled by the local detachment. It is my understanding from the RCMP, maybe the Member has different information, but I would agree that, if you compare the city of Yellowknife to other similar sized cities, Whitehorse, others, the complement numbers are lower than other comparatively sized cities. That is an argument that I made to the federal Minister. Take into account the additional requirement to serve outlying regions and communities. Gameti was a perfect example. Last year, during the winter road season, at times there were up to five officers there in a weekend. That takes five officers off the ground in Yellowknife and that is a concern. That is why the Gameti detachment will not only be good for the people who have been long waiting a permanent police presence there and, in my mind, have a right to that and deserve that, but it will also help Yellowknife citizens because those officers will be back on the ground in Yellowknife.

I know that, anecdotally, we understand that the crime and the nature of crimes is hardening. We see that every day in Yellowknife in the downtown, but I do want to point to some of the progress that I think the Yellowknife detachment has made in reducing crimes. If we look at the statistics I have from the RCMP comparing 2004 to 2006, in 2004, there were 847 assaults. That is down to 433 in 2006. We look at sex assaults for 2004 to 2006, from 49 to 39. Break and enters in 2004 from 343 down to 166 in 2006. There is a long way to go. It is going to take the entire community coming together with the police, all the other tools we can bring to bear on finding a comprehensive solution, but I think the men and women of the RCMP, the volunteers who are involved, are having a major impact on crime in this community. Admittedly, there is still some way to go, for sure, but I think there are good things happening. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to need more of a breakdown of the 110 that the Minister has given. He mentioned earlier that there are 228 full-time RCMP officers and that 110 of them are based in Yellowknife. The information I have is that, in fact, there is no more than 42 full-time RCMP officers in Yellowknife. That is 25 percent of the full contingent. In fact, many of them are volunteer RCMP officers. The RCMP officers not only work full time, but they volunteer their services at

schools and in communities. They are doing more than their share. I don't really need platitudes or saying we are doing the best we can because, I am telling you, on the ground, we have serious issues in our community. I have lived here for 29 years now. In the entire seven years I have been here as an MLA, the crime situation in town is getting worse and worse. The attitude of people who are committing crimes is getting very strange. They think nothing of attacking and assaulting somebody in broad daylight in a crowd. So you can't go by numbers like these numbers are going down or that number is going down. It is also the quality or the intensity of the crimes is an issue too. I have to tell you that outlying communities of Yellowknife need police officers too. If they don't have people based there, of course the Yellowknife detachment has to come in and help them. That should not be considered. That service, those hours and the times that the Yellowknife detachment has to serve the outlying communities should not be included as Yellowknife contingency. That is not fair for Yellowknife for the Minister to say that we have half of the bodies in Yellowknife. I tell you, a couple of weekends ago, there were only two RCMP officers that were on the ground in the whole city because everybody was in court or in communities or they were in offices making travel arrangements. I don't know. So I need the Minister to take it very seriously. I give him credit for doing what he can to meet the needs of small communities. I don't want to take anything away from that, but we have very serious criminal activities happening in Yellowknife. We can't continue to say that we are doing the best we can and we are just going to let it take its course. I think the community citizens are taking steps to do what they can. The Community Patrol Services, when that comes into effect, it's going to free up the RCMP's time. That's a really good thing that the RCMP don't have to be picking up people who are intoxicated and then you have to process them and put them in whatever cell. That's a lot of time spent by the RCMP on a repeated customer basis. To take away way from the RCMP's time, that's a great thing. But where is the assistance on the part of the government to help these people? Everything is done on a voluntary basis. Why do we not do more to help the community resources that are doing the job to free the RCMP's time so that we can maximize the use of RCMP time?

The \$100,000, that's not going to RCMP service, it should be going into communities so that community people can have half-decent vehicles and resources to help the RCMP in that way. I would like to ask the committee to give a better breakdown of exactly how much resources in the RCMP staffing is going into Yellowknife. How does it compare to crime rates? I want to know the crime rates. How much crime is being committed in Yellowknife versus others and how does that relate to the bodies? I want to know if the Minister would make a commitment to do a study on what work the RCMP does that can be freed so the RCMP can do the RCMP work they are trained to do and they are most qualified to do. Could I have that report to the standing committee whenever he can do it at his earliest convenience? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, there are a number of dynamics at play here. We try to analyze crime rates. One of the things we know is that in communities

without detachments, quite often crime goes unreported. Community members feel what's the use. We know that a response is some hours away. We will find a solution here locally, so that doesn't get counted in the official crime statistics.

Another thing we know, Mr. Chairman, is that in some communities where you might be able to warrant one officer, we can no longer have one-officer detachments. We must have a minimum of two-officer detachments, Mr. Chairman. The Canada Labour Code requires us to do that.

The next thing I would say is there is a critical mass of support in Yellowknife that allows for economies of scale. That just comes from having a bigger complement. I will certainly provide the breakdown to Members, but if I read what the Member is saying, asking me to remove federal policing positions which are located in Yellowknife, asking me to remove administrative positions which are non-uniform police. I can do that and I can tell you that the actual number of people in uniform based in Yellowknife, that includes both Yellowknife detachment and "G" division, is around 64 people...

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we just take a break?

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Good afternoon. I call Committee of the Whole back to order after a short break. I would like to recognize Ms. Lee again. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before the break...I think I am going to go with the way of asking the Minister for clarification, because my question was pretty straightforward. I would like to ask the Minister to exercise less flexibility in his answers here. I had a pretty simple question. I wanted to know exactly how many boots were on the ground in Yellowknife out of 220. The information I have is there are 43 full-time RCMP officers on the ground. In fact, there are about 36 bodies and about 12 or...I believe there are 32 bodies in Yellowknife of RCMP officers who do patrol work, boots on the ground; however technical that is. There are 16 extra positions that are volunteers. That's volunteer work they do. Altogether there are 48.

Now the Minister tells me there are 110 out of 200 RCMP officers in Yellowknife. So obviously there is a discrepancy and I wanted the Minister to explain that. The point I had a problem with was the Minister was suggesting if a Member wants to take this out and that out, and that's not what I meant at all. We should be more careful about how we present our information. I appreciate the Minister's clarification.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I will do that. In the interest of clarity, I won't talk about boots because I would have to double my number by two, I will just talk about people...

---Laughter

...and I know the Member wasn't suggesting that we remove positions. I was simply trying to reconcile the information I had given her before to be very clear. There

are federal policing positions involved in, say, drug work. We won't talk about that. The number I think the Member is looking for is in the Yellowknife detachment there are, and I will run the accounting, 37 full-time paid police officers. In addition, somebody is responsible for traffic work; there is the dog unit; there are two relief unit members. That comes to 41 RCMP officers in Yellowknife.

In addition, Yellowknife-based G division headquarters, there are 27 members who also have responsibility territorially, but they fill in and support in Yellowknife as well. So Yellowknife-based we're talking about 68 RCMP members of a total throughout the territory of 166. The larger number, the 220, involves other things, as I've just indicated, including admin support, just to be very clear. So I think I've given the number that the Member is looking for. But we can provide that, an accounting of this in writing which will also, in addition, show the administrative support and show federal positions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I think we're having a good debate here. I wanted to get the Minister information and so we're just having a back and forth and I just don't... Anyway, let's leave it at that.

I want to ask the second question about whether or not the Minister will commit to...Okay, getting back to focus here. That still shows that it is still less than, we don't, we have half of the population in Yellowknife and we don't have anywhere near half of the RCMP officers here. I know when you're looking at numbers like 68 or 42, I mean that seems a lot. I understand that, especially when in smaller communities you don't have RCMP in some places and I support the RCMP officers going into that too. But the fact is, a lot of these RCMP are stretched out helping in areas outside of Yellowknife as well and it would be to the benefit of all of us if we could have RCMP in smaller communities so that Yellowknife detachment could concentrate on Yellowknife work, which they have enough of.

Now, I have not had, I don't think, an answer from the Minister on whether or not he would be willing to commit to doing a review of what area of RCMP work that they're doing now that would allow them to spend more time on the ground. I think that's something that we can do to, whether government could put extra resources in or if the court administration or the Department of Justice could take on some of the work or other departments in the government. I think that it would be a good thing to do a study. Work with the RCMP, I don't know if they're federal, I guess the RCMP are federal police that report to the GNWT on a cost sharing way. I mean there are people better equipped and more knowledgeable than we are about how they could streamline their work so that we could maximize the time and resources of the RCMP where they are needed the most. So could the Minister make a commitment to do that study and get back to us? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with the Member. It's in all of our interest to see additional police resources throughout the Northwest Territories. Yes, Yellowknife is particularly stressed,

especially when it compares to other cities of its size. You'll get no argument from me there. We are sitting down with the RCMP to talk about some of the non-police work functions that the RCMP have to carry out. It's this kind of work and this kind of discussion which led to the agreement between ourselves and the RCMP to have corrections officers doing escort work. There are a number of other initiatives that we think can be undertaken to free up RCMP officers to do more police related work, Mr. Chairman. So that discussion is underway. I'll commit to seeing that through. We'll also sit down with Inspector Fortin and seek to better understand some of the pressures the Yellowknife detachment specifically is under within the RCMP, because I think some of this concern came I believe probably from a briefing where Members were informed of the nature of the police work that's going on in Yellowknife and I agree that we need to do a job of sitting down to understand what their challenges are and working with them to help alleviate some of that. So I'll commit to doing that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I need to correct the record on that. Mr. Chairman, we get information from sources we have. We talk to our friends, our constituents, people on the ground. I would not like the Minister to attribute information to any source. I just want to state that and if the Minister could agree with that. I'm just interested in all of us working together to see how to maximize the use of police and their time so that they can do what they're best equipped to do and so that they could be placed on solving their criminal issues and see where we could step up to the plate to assist them in that regard. But I don't want that to be attributed to any person or any detachment or any resource or any briefing or anything like that. I get information where I get information. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I was only thinking that I could sit down with the Yellowknife detachment inspector to better understand the nature of the problem. But, obviously, I'd be willing to sit down with Ms. Lee and she doesn't have to tell me where she got the information, but if she could lay out some of the concerns that she's aware of, then I can take those forward to Inspector Fortin. I can also sit down with the RCMP more broadly. All I'll need is her willingness to sit down and go through that with me. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'll stop trying to correct the Minister's record. All the information I have, I've given it to him right here. I look forward to having him do the review, talk to whoever he needs to talk to, use the information he has coming out of this. I would really like to urge the Minister to look at how we could streamline the work that the RCMP is doing so that we could have them do what they are trained to do and they're most valuable in doing, which is to be on the ground and solving criminal issues. It's up to him to obviously meet and I'm giving him all the information I have here. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thanks. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I indicated we are doing that. We are meeting with the RCMP to talk about how we can free them up to keep them focused on police work. We'll continue to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. We're on page 7-19, activity summary, law enforcement, operations expenditure summary, \$27.094 million. Next I have Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand some of what's being discussed here today and it's the overlap between the administration of the G division and the actual RCMP who serve Yellowknife exclusively as opposed to the whole division. If it would help to eliminate confusion, of course, we would offer to take the G division headquarters in Hay River...

---Laughter

...and that would make it abundantly clear what the Yellowknife RCMP are doing here. Mr. Chairman, my question is about the restructuring of the G division. There have been some changes made lately, or proposed, and it was going to see some of that G division function divided between Yellowknife and Hay River and I'd like to ask the Minister what is the status of that. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: My understanding, Mr. Chairman, is we're awaiting the arrival of the new CO, who will be here shortly, and once he's had a chance to review the plan, then he will be discussing that further and will go through that with me as well, I expect. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: So, Mr. Chairman, am I then to understand that the restructuring of the G division that would see the presence of some additional supervisory capacity in Hay River is tentative at this time? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I understand that they are working toward just that, the additional supervisory capacity, but that that, I don't want to use the word tentative, but it hasn't been signed off yet because we're between COs. As Members know, CO McCloskey has left and we're waiting the arrival of Middleton. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I guess I'm not fully informed then of what's going on, because I thought there was a senior level RCMP officer that had been located in Fort Smith that had already been reassigned to Hay River. If that's incorrect, could the Minister please clarify that? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, of course I don't have all of the operational information about how the RCMP are moving bodies, but I do understand the member who left Fort Smith was going to an already existing job in Hay River. So the person moved from Fort Smith to Hay River; no jobs were moved. I don't know if I'm making things more complicated, but that's my understanding.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The other thing I wanted to inquire with respect to the RCMP is the status of the RCMP auxiliary program. It was receiving, you know, a while back, some real participation and buy-in from some communities I know in Hay River and Yellowknife. I had an opportunity to attend a function at one point a few years ago honouring the folks that had taken up that challenge, I guess, in the community to serve as auxiliary RCMP officers. I'd just like to know how that program is going, what the status of it is, if it's expanding, if it's decreased, if there has been any obstacles. Just wanting to know what the status of the auxiliary RCMP complement is. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I know that the auxiliary program is still underway. It's still operational. Unfortunately, with me here today, I don't have numbers to be able to talk about trends as to whether that's increasing. I'm not aware of any obstacles to the program, but we'll certainly look into that and report back to Members. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, like so many other communities, Hay River is also experiencing an increase in crime-related activity. I can't really quantify it except through the statistics, which I'm sure must come to the Minister. Although I realize some smaller communities are just realizing detachments and members that they didn't have before, Hay River is the second largest community in the Northwest Territories. It is a point of entry and a large centre for commercial activity. With that comes some increased responsibility for RCMP members. I'd like to ask the Minister what the forecast or prognosis is for any increase in members assigned to Hay River in the future. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, the RCMP provided us with a business case and a business plan for additional resources. They talked about their operational requirements. As I said, we met a number of those requirements, but there was an ask, and this was met, for an additional officer in Hay River. Then there were four additional of the five traffic services positions. Four of those were located in Hay River because it is exactly as the Member has pointed out, a gateway into the rest of our communities and the rest of the North and there was additional pressure there related to people coming and going. So that was where it was seen the complement was primarily needed in relation to traffic. So that's five

new positions of those 28 that have been in Hay River. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those positions are already in place. They've been filled, staffed and operating out of the Hay River detachment as we speak. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, the positions, I understand, have been created. Whether or not all of them have been staffed or filled, I think the point has been made here that the RCMP are under pressure nationally. There are vacancies that they're trying to fill. I think there are double the complement of officers going through depot this year in an effort to graduate more recruits. So I can't say that all of the positions have been staffed. I should also mention that the RCMP have put together a submission related to resource development and have focused on Hay River as well with an ask for four additional officers. So there is a recognition that that community will be under pressure, as will many others, with coming resource development. So that is something that we have to set our minds to now as we talk about how we can meet the needs of the RCMP as we move forward. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My other question, then, relates to the use of the RCMP drug dog and the handler. Now, I understand that that position is located in Yellowknife at this time but can be deployed to any community in the Northwest Territories where those services are required. I don't think that it is a bad concept to have that program stationed someplace, but having a real flexibility and ability to deploy that program or service when required. Because I think once people become aware that there is a drug dog, say at a certain airport or at a certain point of entry, it kind of defeats the purpose and it kind of takes away any element of surprise as to where this dog and handler might show up in relation particularly to drugs. So I don't have any issue with it being stationed someplace with the understanding that it could, on any amount of notice, be anywhere else.

However, I'm wondering if the Minister could confirm for us whether or not he thinks that one dog and one handler is sufficient for the demands of the Northwest Territories. Now, I don't think that this dog and handler either are completely restricted just to the Northwest Territories, because I understand that this same dog and handler accompanied the Prime Minister not so long ago on an international tour that came out of Yellowknife. So any chance of those services being increased based on we're in a remote location, there's only a few ways to get drugs into the Northwest Territories, really, and if the dog is proving to be a useful tool, do we need more of that particular service and, if so, how readily available are dogs and handlers to the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The nature of this work is very much that there are peaks and valleys in the work. We are being well served by the one dog and handler. It is located out of Yellowknife for a number of operational reasons. The handler lives here. As well, there's the veterinary support in Yellowknife that the dog requires. A number of other jurisdictions, Nunavut, I'm thinking of Yukon, I'm thinking of Prince Edward Island, all have one dog and handler. So we're on sort of equal par. The RCMP tell me that we are adequately served with the one dog. I'm sure they would admit that we could, if in future there becomes the availability, we would jump at the chance to get another dog, Mr. Chairman. But a lot of advance police work goes into being able to deploy the dog and that requires officers and people too. So I think it's working well. We can come back with a look at the statistics. Unfortunately, to jump from one all the way to two would require quite an additional amount of work required. We hope we're not there, but we'll continue to monitor the situation. If there is the need for an additional dog, I will bring that case forward and talk to Members about that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Next I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Maybe it's time, Mr. Chairman...Are we on the legal aid section?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister on this budget line item in regards to policing and I know the constraints that they're having on the RCMP in terms of the financial costs for our territory. I would ask the Minister for a breakdown in the amount of...You did give some numbers to Ms. Lee in terms of the number of positions in the RCMP in terms of this contracting service, as to the breakdown between Yellowknife and our region as to what it costs to have members here. I think it was 68. It's almost close to the population of Colville Lake here. So in terms of Yellowknife and the Sahtu region, Mr. Chairman, I would ask for that type of information.

I also want to say that I just got off the phone from a resident of Colville Lake and I asked him about the RCMP services and he said it would be greatly appreciated if the department could look at placing an RCMP position in Colville Lake. So I want to ask the Minister this question here, he can provide me information later on in terms of a monitoring chart or graph to show me how many visits in the last year they had to Colville Lake, because the member from Colville Lake was quite concerned that they were given the notion or attention that there were more visits to Colville Lake and he's quite concerned that it's not happened as stated it was going to happen by a letter from the RCMP. So I want to ask the Minister if he could provide the number of visits to Colville Lake by the detachment responsible for Colville Lake in that sense?

Mr. Chair, the question I want to have for the Minister is to ask about the RCMP presence. I know from earlier numbers of what it costs to put a position in the community, it is quite high. If the department has come up with some alternatives in terms of creating more positions or creating more options to have some sort of law enforcement present in the community. Community councils, community constable programs, I am not too

sure if that is happening. The highly regarded Special Constable Program that was once used in the Northwest Territories is no longer being considered. There are auxiliary RCMP officers now. I know it is being used in other locations in the Northwest Territories. I think it is a good program. There are other things that we could do to alleviate some of the pressure and create some sense of security and safety for our communities that do not have RCMP officers. Right now, we are just being told that it costs too much. We don't have the money. There are other pressures that other members talked about the table here.

There are certainly a lot more things happening in their communities that really give a good business case of why we need RCMP or a law enforcement unit there, either a dog unit or more officers or more investigators. At the same time, I think sometimes the communities that do not have RCMP officers are off the radar chart. I think we need to keep our eye back on the communities that do need an RCMP officer in their communities. I say officers because we are told that they cannot have only one officer in the community. We need two of them. I am looking at some other alternatives to bring some level of comfort and security to the people like we just found out, Mr. Chair, from the community of Sachs Harbour. God bless the people. They are going to get RCMP officers in that community. Gameti is also asking for it. I know the community of Wrigley is asking for it. Colville Lake is certainly on the list of asking for it. I think that is something I want to talk about. I don't want to get too discouraged by the Minister saying that it is a money issue. I would like to stay away from the larger centres and small communities. I guess I want to stay focussed on our need for officers in small communities that do not have a police presence there similar to other communities. I want to really help the communities to look at what we can do. What is it in the short term that we can do? We have the winter road in Colville Lake. Can we utilize that more? I have the statistics from 2003, 2004 and 2006. Certainly, in our communities in our region, some of them are going up and some are staying down. I think that is the reason why we need to have more presence of RCMP officers in our region here.

I said quite a lot there, so I want to ask the Minister if he could respond to some of my comments and questions and some of the things I have been asking. Help me help my people on this issue here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will first talk about the regional component of the police force in the Sahtu. There are officers in Deline, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells and Tulita on a permanent basis if the Member knows; not in Colville Lake at this point. The number of officers in those communities: In Deline, three; in Fort Good Hope, three; in Norman Wells, three; Tulita, two. I don't have the costing information the Member was referring to earlier. I am not sure that we can break that out, but I will talk to the RCMP about whether or not that is possible.

Because we have several communities that at this point don't have permanent detachments, we have also talked to the RCMP about upping the scheduled patrols and visits to these small communities. I can give the Member some information for RCMP visits in Colville Lake from the

last half of 2006. I can certainly get fuller information as well for the Member. Colville Lake is served out of the Fort Good Hope detachment. Patrols occurred on June 3rd, June 20th, July 2nd through 5th, October 25th through 27th, and December 5th through 8th. Mr. Chair, I will get fuller information for the Member.

He also raised another issue that we have discussed with public safety and that is the Community Constable Program. I think the RCMP did their regional consultations and visits and found that there was still incredible support for that program in the North. We have been lobbying for the continuation or the restart of a similar program. We had hoped that we would have seen something by now. Unfortunately, the model first proposed looked to be more relevant for larger communities and wouldn't have been that helpful for our small communities. So we have asked to go back to the drawing board and find a model that will help us with especially this policing challenge in communities where we don't have detachments, but that has proven to be difficult. We will continue to work on that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly do look forward to this new model that the Minister is talking about and hoping we will have some input into it and open that. Colville Lake would be happy with the presence of RCMP in the community. There are other communities that do not have an RCMP in their community. I hope that they will be served by this government. At least give some light by the end of this term or my term that we know there is RCMP or some form of law enforcement present in our community. That is really needed in our community in this day and age here. So I look forward to that.

The other thing I asked the Minister is if he would look at revisiting his staff and working relationship with the RCMP to have a consistent patrolling schedule with Colville Lake. Be on a consistent base staff. Certain circumstances do not allow them to do that: weather, other crimes happening, people getting sick and members going on holidays. I guess it is a scheduling problem. For the Colville Lake people, at least they know just like Christmas. They know it is coming, so for the RCMP people, our Colville Lake people know that once a month they can at least come in once or twice a day, three times a day and know it is a regular visit. Right now it is sporadic. It is all over the place. Even having an extra RCMP member in Fort Good Hope would help ease the situation to help serve Colville Lake. I would like to leave it at that, Mr. Chair, in terms of the law enforcement issue.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to get back for a minute to the request and our work to try to see special constables back in the Northwest Territories. Our hope had been that, with the new required two member detachments, possibly we could come up with a model for smaller communities that saw one regular RCMP officer and a special as the complement in that community. We are still working to try to find a way to see that happen, Mr. Chair.

I will speak to the RCMP about the number and frequency of visits in communities. They are reluctant to come out with a broadcast schedule of when they are going to be in communities. What is helpful is the element of surprise, unfortunately, Mr. Chair. It is important, and they do recognize, that Members are very interested in seeing a beefed up presence in communities, more frequent, more routine patrols, Mr. Chair, so we will talk about that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. We are on page 7-19, activity summary, law enforcement, operations expenditure summary, \$27.094 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Turn to page 7-22, 7-23, activity summary, legal aid services, operations expenditure summary, \$4.638 million. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just some clarification here. A few months ago, the Minister approved someone from the legal aid office to work at the Centre for Northern Families. I am just wondering if the Minister could comment on how that has been going. Will it be able to continue for a while? I would like to hear on that. I have heard that the concept has been working well. I just want to hear the Minister's point of view on this. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chair, this has been a focus for the department. As Members know, we have a mixed model where we have staff lawyers in our service as well as trying to work with the bar to get members of the private bar to take on legal aid work. One of the things we have done, as Members know, is increase the legal aid tariff. It hasn't been increased for some time. We are trying to both keep the people who are willing to do this work currently and attract new people to the bar. It is a bit of an experiment for us. We are going to monitor this and watch and see if it makes a difference. If we aren't able to attract more members of the private bar, we may have to look at a model that relies more on staff lawyers, but we will talk about that.

We are also doing some things, though, in terms of a pilot project at the Centre for Northern Families to have staff lawyers go in, work with the clients there, and help provide them with access to legal aid services. We conducted a pilot and we are in the midst of doing a review of that pilot. We will be talking about that and will have a report shortly. I can't say exactly when, Mr. Chair, but this was one of the things that we felt might be important to do, especially at the urging of the centre and the willingness of the centre to provide that service or house that service. So I was very happy to get involved in that project. I thank the Member for his encouragement in this respect. Now we will sit down and talk about what we have learned. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will accept that the review is being done. If the Minister will agree to forward the review or post-mortem on this sort of pilot project on to me, I will wait at that time and hold any

further questions until I have a chance to read that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chair, yes. I will get a report at some point. Certainly, we will talk to Members about the report so they can see that this was worth undertaking. I am eagerly waiting for the results of that report. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: I have nothing further. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Next I have Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a quick question on legal aid services just with regard to government reacting on feedback from defendants that apply to legal aid services. I know I get a lot of inquiries from people that are either in jail or have been assigned legal aid services through this program, but sometimes they are just not satisfied with who they have been assigned as their legal aid. In many instances, we are just getting information that raises the issue of convenience and expediency of process that these legal aid counsellors just tell these guys plead guilty and we will get it done with. We are over, see you later and that kind of thing. A lot of these people are not really given the right amount of information from legal aid services. A lot of them think that they are in the legal aid services basically because it is simple and they receive the same wages as a regular lawyer but with half as much work. How does the department look at ways of trying to do away with this practice of expediency just for court process costs versus fair treatment of clients? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chair, if there are people who are accessing legal aid and they are unhappy with the services being provided, I would encourage them to contact the Legal Services Board and make their case. It is very important. There can be cases where the people who are accessing the legal aid don't like the legal advice and may not want to work with the lawyers. It may be very good advice. It doesn't mean people are always going to like it, Mr. Chair.

One of the things that we have done is focus hard on getting the backlog down. We are down to about 60 cases of people who have not been assigned legal aid support and that has been well over 100 in the past, so we have cut that almost in half. The time of wait is up to about four months. It has been much higher in the neighbourhood of nine months in the past, so we are making some headway here. I think we still need to improve, but on the issue of people who are assigned legal aid lawyers and are not happy with the lawyer they have been assigned, they certainly need to make their case with the Legal Aid Board. Oftentimes, another lawyer can be assigned if there really is an issue. Thank you.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If the Legal Aid Board is getting a number of requests from clients for a particular lawyer that they don't like the way he is defending them or working with them, why are these people still on the legal aid services? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chair, I assume that the Member is referring to staff lawyers as opposed to members of the private bar who do this work, but I would say that there are performance review mechanisms in place. I guess since it is a potentially hypothetical question, but if there was a lawyer who was doing legal aid work and employed and their performance is not up to par, then, obviously, measures would need to be taken. Eventually if it couldn't be corrected, they would no longer be employed there, I would assume, Mr. Chair, but I can assure you that there are performance measures in place. Thank you.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is good to know that there are performance measures in place. What I was more referring to is recommendations to improve the performance of legal aid workers or legal aid counsellors. Just from my experience with talking with a lot of people that...I know a lot of criminals. I come from one of those small towns. A lot of the people that deal with legal aid are assigned the same particular guy. This has been going on for years. They always tell me the same story about the same representation they get, how inconvenient it was for either them or the way they didn't like the representation but that is still there. I don't know. If there are monitoring mechanisms in place, that is great to know, but if we are not going to do anything to make any changes in how legal aid is delivered and get these people to either get better representation or more fair representation for the benefit of the client as opposed to the benefit of their pocketbook. If it is vice versa, then I would rather see them down the road. So far, I haven't seen any changes at the legal aid services level that even addressed that issue. I know the issue is still there. So if we have monitoring in place, why haven't I seen any changes at that level with respect to the representation of clients? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chair, if the Member has a concern about one of the members on the panel of lawyers, as he has indicated, who has been doing this work in the region for a time and there have been a number of complaints, I would certainly be willing to sit down with him and meet with him to discuss the specific issue. It is hard for me to do it and probably hard for us to do it on the floor of the House here, but I am more than prepared to have a meeting and go through the concerns the Member has with respect to this individual. We can work on that. Thank you.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: That is fine. I understand where the Minister is coming from. I don't want to throw names out here, but I am just expressing some views that community members have. They like the improvements in legal aid services. There have undoubtedly been some major steps forward, but they always come back and say, why is so-and-so...He has been there forever. He is still there. Nobody wants him there. So I just don't understand why we can't make changes right at the forefront and I'll definitely bring it up with the Minister in a different forum. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: No, I think that's where we need to go and I appreciate that it's not one of our staff lawyers. So I think that this is something that we need to best handle in that respect. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Next I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. Just on the legal aid programming, the Minister mentioned earlier that the caseload has been reduced from 140 to 40. I'm just wondering is that as a result of extra resources, or have there been extra legal aid lawyers? Could I just get more information on how that was achieved? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, a number of factors have come to play here. We now have the three offices open; one in Inuvik, two in Yellowknife. We've increased the tariff, and that goes back to July 1, 2006. Members will remember the supplemental appropriation to do that. We're then proposing to continue that on through this budget. We are using southern counsel to assist when family law files are not being assigned quickly enough. We're also working to refer clients to our mediation pilot project, and we've had a lot of discussion here about the potentially adversarial nature of a lot of these cases and our desire to see much of this handled outside of the courts, if possible, where possible, where that could be of benefit. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Of the 40 files remaining then, and I appreciate that this must be fluctuating all the time -- just as we speak there might be some cases walking in or cases being resolved -- but is there any way of knowing what the nature of these cases are in terms of how long they have been on the books? Sometimes it's not about the total numbers, but is there a mechanism in place and something that I referred to earlier in the response to general comments, or in giving my general comment, about whether or not we need to look at reviewing these files? Is there a mechanism in place within that legal aid service programming so that there are necessary checks and monitoring about some of the cases that are falling through the cracks and whether extra measures or intervention could be useful to move those files? Is there any ongoing monitoring process for that?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make sure that I am clear here about the question;

we're not talking about people waiting to be assigned legal aid lawyers, we're talking about people who have been assigned legal aid lawyers and the cases are taking what seems to be too long to resolve. If that is in fact the case, I know that the executive director routinely does a review of these to see if there are certain reasons for a resolution not being arrived at. Sometimes it's a matter of assigning a new lawyer; sometimes it's working with the clients to talk about alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. I don't have a list of which categories those fall into, but I know it's routinely reviewed by the executive director. I would say to Members that if they are aware of cases, if constituents bring cases to them that are seemingly taking too long to resolve, please bring them to our attention so we can forward that on to the executive director who can look into the case and see if there is something that can be resolved with that respect. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. There is merit in that but I'm not sure if it's the best way for the...I guess the MLAs' work involves lots of different things, but my preferred way is to...I just would not think of calling a legal aid office on a long-term file. I mean I respect the work of lawyers and I would think that they wouldn't appreciate a call from an MLA in that sort of way, or the Minister. What I would prefer, and I think the one that we need to work on as a Legislature, is to get a system in place so that we don't get involved in personal files but that there is a system in place so that the people in charge of it, in the shop, have a monitoring system where they have regular knowledge of some of the files that are really long and getting protracted and where there are additional resources needed to move that along. Is there a way of knowing that? Do we have a mechanism in place for knowing that? I mentioned earlier about bringing locum lawyers or whatever. I don't know if it's a resource issue, but I just want to be satisfied that we have a mechanism in place for monitoring and that the staff and the people in it are equipped to do that, or they're addressing their mind to that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's a good question. I may not have the entire answer here. I do know, from talking to the department, that there are many reasons why cases sometimes aren't resolved quickly. Sometimes the parties to the case decide that they would like to resolve things on their own and take a break from the legal process; go away to try and resolve them, only to find that they can't and are back into the system and still the case goes unresolved. So I will talk to the board about how they routinely review these longstanding cases. I can provide information back to Members. As I say, I'm not suggesting that MLAs start to call the Legal Services Board or the ED, but if they have constituents calling them to discuss this, I would suggest that they refer those constituents to the ED at the Legal Services Board if they need to raise some of these concerns, or the Member can bring them to my attention, in which case I would forward on the concerns and refer the client to the executive director of the Legal Services Board. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. Just one more thing and I don't know how to address this because I don't want to give too

much individual private information. I recently had a very compelling case where there is a working mother, professional, holding a good job, but raising three kids, I think, on a very long, protracted divorce. The real estate rules are such that now you can't even sell property -- well, we can't sell property without their consent -- if the other party doesn't want to consent. She has to make all the mortgage payments, and I think she needed help with getting not only...I don't think she's into the dissolution of marriage, I mean a divorce situation, but I think just sorting out the child payment issue, child support issue. She is definitely in the category where you're working poor. She's being forced to make payments on the house, on the mortgage, and not on a big fancy house or anything like that, just a dwelling like that, just a living in that she cannot dispose of because you can't without the consent of the other. However, she's being tested on the grounds that everybody else is and I think normally, under legal aid, if you own property like that, you're not going to get legal assistance. So you have working poor who are in need of legal aid who are completely stuck. I just want to know if there are any mechanisms in place for that sort of flexibility. Secondly...No, I'm going to leave it at that because I don't want to reveal too much private information.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I guess we'd have to know a little bit more about the case, but I understand from my deputy minister that there is something called an action for partition and sale of a matrimonial home and indicates that that's used quite frequently. Of course, he doesn't have the facts of the case and maybe that isn't possible here, but there may be some things that I'm certainly not qualified to recommend. However, I would certainly sit down and listen to the Member go through the case and maybe we can find some sort of solution or recommend where the client could go to get some additional help. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I want to pick up where Ms. Lee left off on legal aid. I'm not a lawyer, I'm not an expert in legal aid, and I'm not sure if the department has looked at something like this, but the cases that are protracted, years long cases, or where maybe we could set (a) a time limit, or (b) an expenditure limit, and when you exceed either the amount of time that a case has taken to go through the process or you've exceeded an allotment of money that has gone to a case, that would trigger some type of review of that file to ensure that everything has been done by the legal aid office, by the lawyers involved, to get that case settled and put to rest. I'd like to ask that question to the Minister, Mr. Chairman, if the department has looked at something like that. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, again, I indicated that it's difficult to know exactly why cases take a certain amount of time in all instances, so I don't know that there's anything that's bullet proof in that respect. As I indicated, sometimes the parties decide they want to go away for awhile and try to resolve things to come back. Sometimes people don't want to take the legal advice

that's provided and that causes a problem. However, I do know that there are expenditure caps on cases and when that threshold is met, then that triggers a review of the case file and the ED would sit down to talk about and look at whether or not it's a matter of needing different counsel, needing different mechanisms to try to resolve the dispute, whether it's ADR or some sort of mediation. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can understand and appreciate the different scenarios that might play themselves out with participants in a legal aid battle, especially when it comes to family law and some of the sticky aspects of that. However, I'd like to ask the Minister, what is the cap on a case? Let's say two people were both legal aid applicants and proceeded down the path of getting legal aid, at what point in time would a review of their file take place? What is the cap? I wasn't aware of a cap being in place. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I can talk to the Legal Services Board and find out what those caps are, but I want to be clear that that's a threshold or a cap that's met and then a review has to take place; we don't cut people off. If it's a very legitimate reason that that amount of money has been spent and that time has taken place, then the support is continued, Mr. Chairman. I can find out what those thresholds are. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the Minister understands my concern and that is, well, there is a dual concern here, not only for the people who are receiving the services from legal aid and it taking forever and a day to get some resolution to the case, but also the tab is running on the cost to legal aid services and cost to the government in looking after lawyers. That is another issue and I think we have to try to put a focus on resolution to these outstanding cases and we should, in fact, I believe we should set some parameters on what the thresholds are and be clear about that. What is an allotment of time that, let's say, a couple going through a divorce, both looking for legal aid services, what is the length of time that is acceptable? Is two years acceptable? Three, four, five, six? What is acceptable and when do we turn the tap off and get some resolution once and for all on long outstanding cases, especially when it comes to family law? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, it's difficult for me to answer this question. There are all kinds of scenarios and variables but I would say that if these reviews are triggered when a threshold is met, if there is -- to deal with the issue, the second concern -- if there's a case where the parties don't appear to be serious about resolving the issue and the money continues to flow, then I think the board would make the determination that this is not resolvable, the parties are not trying to resolve, and they would withdraw the support, Mr. Chairman. So there

are mechanisms, those are board or executive director decisions that are made, Mr. Chairman. But we can certainly talk about reasonable lengths of time. Again, there are a number of scenarios here: parties oftentimes try a number of mechanisms, mediation sometimes works, if we can find lawyers interested in doing it on collaborative law. So there are a number of different mechanisms that can take place over time here, so it's hard to put a strict deadline or time frame on some of this. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the Minister for that. I can appreciate what the Minister is saying in this regard but, again, our obligation is twofold; again, to try to get the services to the people who need it in a timely fashion and not having to cost us money for years on end in long, protracted divorce proceedings. So I'll leave it at that, Mr. Chairman. Again I know we've done some good things here, opening up the second office here in Yellowknife, and there are some good things happening. Again, as I mentioned in my opening comments, the increase in tariffs, I supported that and I'll support it again in the budget as it goes forward because I think that's an important aspect of getting the services that the people need in the area of legal aid. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I didn't hear any question. Comment, Mr. Bell?

HON. BRENDAN BELL: No. I agree that there's some good work here underway and, of course, we're not satisfied with the current wait times and the current backlog of files, although it's vastly improved, I think, and that's why I say that we're looking at this 15 percent tariff increase to the private bar. If that works and if that encourages more people to take on files, then good. If it doesn't, I think we're going to have to recognize that this is not working, that we need to move more to a staff lawyer model, but we'll have that discussion as we talk to committee as we go forward. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: That's good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Legal Services Board, do they have a mechanism in place where instead of the parties going to court, do they have a mechanism in place where they have a mediation process for the husband and wife? In small communities, I know sometimes because the legal aid office is in the larger centres, the small communities have to wait and wait and wait and pretty soon it gets really nasty into the courts. Then the kids are the ones that get hit the hardest because the parents are back and forth at each other, especially in small communities. So is there a process in place for these small communities that would have a mediation process kick in right away? I saw somewhere in the newspaper where this company is offering a course, a workshop on separation and divorce. You know that should really be offered in small communities where it's required sometimes in the small communities. It will cost the communities to bring these people in, but is that

something that they can have in the communities such as this mediation process by this legal aid service? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: It's a good suggestion, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make the point that this is difficult for us to be able to deliver in our smaller communities. If you're going to be mediating on family law matters you basically, pretty much, have to be a lawyer, and you have to be willing to do this kind of work, and that's difficult. We have had a project underway in the Northwest Territories and I know it's been accessed by people in smaller communities over the phone, Mr. Chairman, which isn't ideal, but if we don't have somebody able to do it in that community -- and somebody would have to be trained -- this is the best approach that we've seen. We do think that we need to do as much mediation as we can to avoid the formal court process. I think our statistics show us that it has about a 60 percent success rate, which is quite good, Mr. Chairman, and so we'd like to use it more but would acknowledge that it's difficult to roll out in our smaller communities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: So would the Minister look at some type of option paper in terms of how do we roll this out in small communities, similar to the previous budget item in terms of other programs that we don't have in the communities? I understand what the Minister is saying, because it's a system of legalities, but it's also some common sense in a small community, in terms of elders getting involved and justice committees getting involved. I think before you get to a stage where you require some legal advice, sometimes it's good that some things can be done a little more culturally appropriate. Some things can be easier. I'm thinking about the children, Mr. Chair. Children get caught in between these wars; call it the war of roses I guess. The children are the ones that suffer the most and they're the ones that get impacted most and then we wonder why our children are using chemicals to alleviate some of the pain and suffering they go through when families have to go through difficult battles or spouses go through some hard times. Children are the ones that take the brunt of our anger.

Mr. Chair, I wanted to see if that could be looked at. Looking at the population in our small communities, it's fairly high on our own aboriginal culture. So that's something we could use. We have to look at other options; we have to start thinking out of the box here. I wanted to ask the Minister is there any chance for that to happen for our communities? I understand in the east, in larger centres it's needed, it's required and I certainly support Yellowknife and Hay River getting these services, even in Inuvik, but in the small communities it's always different there. So we've got to kind of balance the playing field of this legal aid services for our other constituents. So that's what I want to look at, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, there are a number of programs and, of course, I won't get into some

of the programs that probably are in other departments. Basic family counselling through Health and Social Services I think does play a role, but if I could just talk about some of the family law programs we have. We talked about mediation for separating couples. As I've indicated, we have contracted a local lawyer and that contract is to provide family law mediation services not only in Yellowknife, but through teleconferencing to all communities. In addition, we do have seminars for parents. Those educational seminars do exactly the kind of thing that the Member is talking about; positive parenting workshops. In those workshops, parents would have a chance to sit down and better understand the effect that a break-up could have on their children. We have local support; we have community workers in 14 of our communities who have been trained to provide one-on-one support for parents and to assist community members to play a supportive role both before and after a couple separates. So there are some things that we're doing. Quite possibly we need to get out there and do a better job of promoting some of the services we have and I certainly would be interested in talking to Members about that, making sure people understand the services that are available in all of our communities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: No more questions for the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. We're on page 7-23, activity summary, legal aid services, operations expenditure summary, \$4.638 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Pages 7-28 and 7-29, activity summary, courts, operations expenditure summary, \$8.689 million. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as indicated in my general comments about the court facility in Behchoko, considering it's one of the largest aboriginal communities in the North, still we do not have a suitable facility or court establishment in the community. I'm just wondering if the departments have been planning or are at a planning stage to give an up-to-date renovation to the existing...We have a little courtroom area, but we use fold-up tables that are originally used for bingo's. The court judge sits at those tables. So it doesn't really look good professionally. I understand the department may be looking to refurbishing that area, especially the bleachers and whatnot where people are sitting as well. I went there a couple of weeks ago when there was a court proceeding happening and it was still in that state. So does the budget we're faced with here on the materials and supplies possibly, or has that been dealt with with the previous budget? I'm just curious to know, Mr. Chair. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Can I ask Members, Mr. Lafferty has the floor and we're going to hear more discussion on that side. So he's got the floor. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you. It's a very good question, Mr. Chairman, and we are interested in improving court services in all of our communities and philosophically do believe that we need to take court to

our communities. There is no intention to start to reduce the number of trials in our smaller communities, but I think in order to have facilities that properly befit a court trial, we've got to do something. We've got a plan to do that. We're going to have to set some standards across all of the communities to make sure that there's a certain minimum level of facility that we use when we conduct trials. The difficulty for us and the challenge has been that we don't own these facilities. So to go make capital improvements or upgrades to facilities we don't own is difficult, Mr. Chairman. What we have done, and I've talked to the chief with the Member in Behchoko about how we might improve that facility and may provide for the building of a dais or some proper chair, bleachers and that kind of thing in the facility, and we'd be looking to do that in other communities as well, Mr. Chairman, but it is about having the agreement on what standards are. I know the judges are in full support of this, of course. So we will be rolling out that plan shortly. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Yes, we'll certainly be happy to put away those bingo tables and establish new, up-to-date, modern equipment in the facility. We talked about the foldaway table for the judge and we talked about ideas, the planning stages. I certainly hope that we can see that sooner than later, because there are talks about reintroducing this courthouse in Yellowknife, but this should be given priority over that and the other communities as well. There is an outcry from the other small communities. As the Minister indicated, we must focus in the small communities. I totally agree with him, I fully support him that the department is looking into small communities and I just wanted to reiterate that there are outstanding needs in the communities and I'm glad the Minister is focusing on that. I'm certainly looking forward to that initiative. Just a comment. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, we are one of the few places in Canada that conduct court in all of our communities and my mandate is to ensure that we have suitable facilities for those court trials in those communities. We don't want to see trials moved because the facilities aren't adequate or aren't suitable. Oftentimes they have to be moved out of communities, it's difficult to find a jury, it's difficult to find people who are prepared to participate in the trial. Sometimes they have to be moved, but we don't want it to be because of inadequacy of facilities. So I take that mandate very seriously and, as I've indicated, we'll come forward shortly with a plan. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Lafferty. Thank you. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to ask a couple of questions on the courthouse. I understand it's been put off for a couple of years and I just wanted to mention I understand and I appreciate my colleagues when they say that they need the services, court services in the smaller communities. There's some upgrades that need to be done, there's obviously some money that needs to be spent so these services can be provided and if that's one of the obstacles to getting a courthouse built here in Yellowknife, I think we have to

pay close attention to the needs and the aspirations out in the communities to get the services that they require. This courthouse, as I mentioned in my opening comments, if it doesn't get built within the next couple of years, you can rest assured at anytime down the road it's going to cost millions and millions and millions of dollars more. Mr. Chairman, I hope to be around this Legislature for a few years, with any luck and at the will of my constituents, but if an opportunity presents itself to get a vital piece of public infrastructure built in Yellowknife today in an effort to save us millions and millions of dollars down the road, and I know it will cost more later on, we have to try to do that. It gets back to the fact that we don't have a resource revenue deal with Ottawa, we don't have a chance to increase our revenue and to me that's, again, the crux of a lot of the issues that we're dealing with here. Going through our budget it's like we're on a fixed income and we need to get off that fixed income and have some more surety on money that's flowing through to us and opportunities to get access to more revenue so we can address the needs in the smaller communities. We can have, if I could, the best of both worlds so that we address the needs that are out there.

Justice is just a small part of the bigger picture. We have needs everywhere, but we can't address them because we don't have the resources necessary to do it. So I think that, Mr. Chairman, is fundamental to a lot of the arguments that are here. Maybe I'll ask the Minister this question: The courthouse has been put on hold for the foreseeable future, but how can the Minister work, and if the opposition to getting that courthouse built here in Yellowknife is the concerns of my colleagues to get some services and some court services out into the smaller communities, into the regions, upgrades and whatnot, how can we accomplish that in an effort to save ourselves millions and millions of dollars down the road? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, just to set the context properly here, the delay in the courthouse is the direct result of limited capital funds and seemingly unlimited capital needs across government, whether it's repairing schools or other things. Members are fully aware of the rationale for delaying the courthouse at this point. The business case has been made, we need a purpose-built courthouse. It makes no sense for us to continue to rent no more than it would make sense for us to rent Legislative Assembly facilities. As renewals come up, the owner or private owner could basically name their price. So not only do we know there's a business case for building as comparing to continuing to rent, the unknown about what kind of rent we'll have to pay also factors in, Mr. Chairman, security concerns, inadequate space currently for all of the court operations. I agree that the cost of construction is, no doubt, going up. I do have a mandate to provide adequate court facilities across all of our communities. I intend to do that and intend to come forward with a plan. Of course that means Yellowknife. We've seen the deferral here for two years now and that means that I have to address some of the renovation needs at the current facility. It's a shame to spend money, but I have no choice given the deferral. We are short one judge's office; we're short space for the sheriff's office; we need to do some things. So I'm going to be able to move around some funds within my department to

accommodate some of the short-term needs, but the long-term fix here is a purpose-built facility in this community. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Minister for the juggling act on getting the funds from inside the department to carry out the necessary work at the existing courthouse, but I wanted to ask is there anything in the current location, such as renovations or major retrofits, that would need to take place in the foreseeable future at the current facility that, again, are going to cost a substantial amount of money to carry out? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: No, Mr. Chairman, that's simply not, in my mind, a viable nor a prudent use of funds. I mean to invest millions of dollars in a facility we don't own that can never be big enough and can never really solve our security concerns at that site is not an answer. So we continue to plan for the courthouse. We are looking at a number of other avenues. The challenge really at this point is our limited capital budgets. The Members know that we've explored partnerships with other builders in the past. There may be a way for us to do a combined facility that would help us save some costs on the building envelope, there may be economies of scale that way in working with another party to see a joint facility built. We're exploring all options, Mr. Chairman. Nothing, I would say, is off the table, but in the interim now I do have to make some small adjustments to the current facilities to make sure we have some adequate space for the judges and for the staff who are working there and that's what we're doing. But by no means am I proposing to spend millions of dollars there. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: No that's good, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. We're on page 2-29, activity summary, courts, operations expenditure summary, \$8.689 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we go to page 7-34, 7-35, activity summary, community justice and corrections, operations expenditure summary, \$35.093 million. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to talk about the corrections facilities, specifically the wilderness camps. The other one is with the Tl'oondih Healing Society's pilot project that was done several years ago by this department and I wanted to ask the Minister in terms of those two specific facilities in terms of the wilderness camps now being initiated with the community of Fort Good Hope in terms of that camp. I know it was done last year and this year we are looking at having it in use, it's actually in use right now as we speak, and types of long-term use of these types of camp in the Northwest Territories as one specific use of our people in these, I call

them, very beneficial camps for the people. The other one is the for the Tl'oondih healing camp that was done by this department in terms of pilot projects and see if there are any types of assessments or evaluations being done on that. We haven't seen it. I'm on the committee of Social Programs and I haven't seen any assessments like that or evaluation. We did take a tour of the facility and we did look at the surrounding environment and we talked to some of the staff members in terms of how this program is being used and how it was used by this government and this department. I think that these two different types of camps are very beneficial for our people. There's a huge number of aboriginal people in facilities and having them out on the land does a lot more. For some of them, it needs to be out on the land and do this type of community service because they're getting some healing programs out there, they're serving their community by understanding their wrongs that they did in life and putting their time into useful things like trapping or going out with some elders on the land and spending time in the bush. The list of all the benefits of being on the land and being in the bush as opposed to correctional facilities in the larger centres. So I don't want to get into that issue here, but I think the people that I speak for, the older people and the elders, know what we mean when we talk about going out on the land and getting a sense of healing and getting a sense of that respect for life. I think that's what's missing in some of these facilities. There is a need for some of these facilities mind you, but I think a lot of our own people need to be on the land. So there's probably a different view of the philosophy in how we look at justice and healing and I respect that, but I think that's also given a great amount of opportunity for our own people to be given the opportunity for being on the land.

I know what it costs to have inmates at a facility versus programs like Tl'oondih or Fort Good Hope wilderness camp. I know Tl'icho is talking about looking at a wilderness camp. I don't know what's the percentage we spend on facilities like that versus what we have in the Northwest Territories on the South Slave and the North Slave correctional facilities. I think it's a huge difference, but I really wanted to ask the Minister in terms of this wilderness camp and what, if any, types of plans for the Tl'oondih healing program. It's a good facility, there are good people, it's on the Peel River. I think the key point of these camps that we need to look at and strengthen and make sure that these people stay out of our jail systems. Of course in the small communities, and maybe even the larger centres, families are really affected by these correctional facilities. I want to talk about the programs in the North Slave and South Slave facility in terms of how they're helping the families and the kids in terms of what's being done for them.

Again, Mr. Chairman, let me tell you that there's some people who just do not want to get help. As much as you can lead the horse to water, you know, they won't drink. I understand that. Some you just shake your head and wonder why they're back in the system again. It's a crying shame that it's happening in this day and age here. Certainly it's encouraged by the support by these Members here of having our inmates, people that are going in and out of that system. But there's some good people there and they really need to be helped and want help and sometime they're caught in the system here.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I'll go back to the people that are really hurting are the young children in the families when

certain inmates, even for the women. Their husband and children are hurting when they're in the institutions. It's really awful to see our communities when they have their parents in the facilities and away from home. These kids get in trouble, they get hurt, they have no one to talk to. The wives get hurt, the husbands get hurt. So we have to really look at this type of situation in the Northwest Territories.

There are people that sometimes just seem not to get it, that they just keep going back into the system. I really don't understand. Maybe one day I will. They just do not want to help themselves. But there's a lot of people who want to help themselves. I think the key component to this justice situation here is taking people on the land. It's really hard to explain sometimes in a situation like this, they have to go out there, they have to experience being in those type of facilities. We can't have that when people are sitting in these facilities such as the North Slave. They've got programs, but it's a one-week program or a two-week program. It's not the same.

So that's what I'd like to look at this budget item here in terms of the corrections and the community justice and really focus on the issues such as the Aftercare Program, bringing the families together, bringing the inmates, either man or woman. Bring them into a healing centre in the community either to make amends or do what's right for them, because they're not the only one that's being punished. Sometimes the family and children are being punished by what they have done in the community, and sometimes can be very harsh. Again, go back to the small kids that they're the ones that take a lot of the brunt of the jokes, brunt of cruel insults. Sometimes they get hurt and sometimes they take their hurt out on other people. We see them end up in youth court or youth alcohol addiction problems.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to leave it at that with the Minister in terms of these issues I bring up and I hope to have some or see some evidence of the pilot project they did up in the Gwich'in area in Fort McPherson on the Tl'oondih healing. Are we going anywhere with that project or is it a once-in-a-lifetime deal that we're no longer going to put money into that area, or are we going to use it again in the future? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all I want to thank the Member for his support in this area. As the Member points out, institutions are necessary. We know we need them. The personal healing journey is different for different people and not everybody is interested in, unfortunately, the healing journey. So we will continue to need our institutions. But it's been a year and a half now that we've really kick started this new wilderness camp pilot project in this region. This is the second winter with Charlie Tobac that we've run the operation. It's been extremely successful. We did a review and I think all good pilot projects need to be reviewed. We have to ensure that we are being successful. So we had staff from the department go out and stay with the inmates twice, I think, last winter at the camp overnight. They were very, very impressed by the programming, by the work that's going on out there. I think it's an excellent idea and it has to, in my opinion, the wilderness camp has to remain a part of our corrections mix. The more we can get people out of our institutions and out on the land to make

reparations to the community, to do some personal healing, the better off we'll be. So it's my hope that we can expand this very successful pilot into other regions. We will look at Tl'oondih again. We're doing a review currently of the programming that's been delivered there in the past and I am going to come to committee to talk about what we've learned there. We'll certainly use that facility again though, Madam Chair.

I've also had the pleasure of staying on the shore of the Peel River, as all Members of the last Assembly did. Had a good time out there. I know that it's a very good facility and we need to look to use that in future, Madam Chair. Now I'm really confused.

---Laughter

So let me thank the Member for the support in this respect. I think we've had a very successful pilot there. We're working to roll this out in the Tl'icho as well. I appreciate that Member's support for this. I think that's important. Our mandate can't just be about warehousing people and we made that philosophical shift some time ago. Thankfully we did. We're not looking to be building bigger and better prisons. We are looking to have a fully integrated correction system that recognizes the various different pieces, recognizes the roll that these pieces play. We know that we've got far too many of our northerners, far too many of our younger people in jail, far too many of our aboriginal people are in the criminal justice system. We need to work to find solutions to help people get out. So I appreciate the support on transition programming. I think that's important too. How do we sort of take this trend of recidivism and turn it around? So that is something that we need to work on. We'll use our community justice committees, the additional money that we're putting toward those committees. I hope to do some of that good work. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you for that answer, Mr. Bell. We are on page 7-35, community justice and corrections. Next on the list I have Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Minister, in his most recent exchange here, talked about the situation of putting people in jail. It's not a great option. We could do better and I wholeheartedly agree. But in the meantime, we do have to contend with this and a situation that came up at the North Slave Correctional Centre, I believe late last year, was we ran into a term where we were either right at capacity or in fact overcrowded. I wanted to just confirm, was this the case, Madam Chair, and what is the design capacity of the North Slave Correctional Centre, Madam Chair?

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. One-hundred-eighty is the design capacity of that facility and I understand that our most recent information the last few days is 118 inmates. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Has the facility been at maximum capacity or in fact overcapacity at any one time? Understanding, Madam Chair, that as terms end and

temporary remand things come along we may touch this point?

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: At one point, Madam Chair, last year we were getting closer to capacity, but that has subsided and the numbers are back down and stable and in and around that 118 range. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Are there any plans, is there any intention to look at expanding the facility or redesigning it to accommodate potential capacity issues in the near term or long term, Madam Chair?

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: No, Madam Chair, but we have looked at how we best use our facilities and we have juggled some of the facility use. For instance, in Hay River we're looking at the reintegration programming and making better use of our facilities, Madam Chair, but we're certainly not talking about expanding any of our facilities at this point.

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

MR. BRADEN: Madam Chair, one concern that I understand has been circulating, and this is the potential to redesign or reconfigure some of the pods at North Slave Correctional Centre for double bunking. This is something that has, I understand, been the practice in some other institutions and, you know, you run into issues there of the quality and the calibre of lives for people who may go through that kind of thing. I wanted to find out is double bunking or potentially redesigning the facility for double bunking something that is on the option list for the department, Madam Chair.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Madam Chair, the facility was always designed to accommodate double bunking if need be. I understand this is a standard practice across the country. Of course, we don't want to do that unless we absolutely have to and if these numbers, average of 122 or in that neighbourhood, 123 inmates in the facility 2005-06, we're not in need of that at this point; but should the need ever arise, we are able to do that. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: This is something that I certainly hope that we can avoid, Madam Chair, through alternate methods of either incarceration or getting someone to serve their time and be under supervision. When this centre was originally designed it was to avoid, Madam Chair, you know, many of the old fashioned or old style or inappropriate methods of incarcerating people, of jailing people. One of them was the overcrowding that with the old Yellowknife Correctional Centre was acute and really presented a hazardous situation for inmates and staff alike. We designed a new facility to avoid that and I really

do hope, Madam Chair, that, you know, we're getting to the point where we're starting to put a lot more people in jail than we have capacity for. If we can find other alternatives than potentially double bunking, even though the facility, as the Minister said, has been designed for that. I'll stop there, Madam Chair. If the Minister wants to engage anymore I do have one other aspect that I would like to ask about. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Madam Chair, no doubt the old YCC was vastly inadequate: A large number of inmates in one room together; it was also set up in a fashion as was the old custom of largely having guards and inmates on different sides of the bars, as it were. So now we have a pod-like supervision model where our corrections officers are integrated with the inmates. We think it's a much more progressive approach. There's much more program space to accommodate the needs in the facility. So there are a number of very progressive elements to this new facility. We think it's state-of-the-art. Of course, we would avoid double bunking wherever we can; it would only be as a last resort. At this point the main issue is that we're not foreseeing any growth that would cause us to have to redesign or build new facilities, at least in the near future. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. To that point, one of the goals across our social system, Madam Chair, is to repatriate as many northerners as possible back into the NWT or as close to their homes as we can get them. Especially in our medical and our chronic illnesses, Madam Chair, many Northerners are housed now in southern institutions; we'd really like to bring them closer to their families and communities and the same thing has been said of corrections. Is this still an initiative that's actively under review? Are we able in any ways, have we been able to repatriate any inmates and what are the projections in the near future for us to be able to do that, Madam Chair?

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Madam Chair, we still actively do this. I think we're typically at around 20 inmates who are doing federal time, that's over two years. So we continue to do that. Of course, the security risk has to be fit for the facility. There are prisoners in the South that we simply can't accommodate here and aren't suggesting that we should. So, yes, we still very much do that. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to be clear, the Minister said that, I believe, there are about 20 inmates doing time in southern institutions. Have we been able to repatriate any in the last, say, two years? I don't know if I picked up that information, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. For clarification, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Madam Chair, I'm referring, when I say 20, on January 30th, the most recent information we had, there were 29 federal offenders in NWT correctional facilities. So we're not talking about in federal institutions, we're talking about federal prisoners who are serving time in NWT facilities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Bell. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Madam Chair, one other aspect that I wanted to put on the record was an idea that I think we've had a couple of exchanges on it in earlier sessions. This is the idea: At North Slave Correctional Centre, or others in the NWT, to reintroduce a craft, carving training program which, at one time, was quite successful. This was a program, Madam Chair, that provided materials and tools and training and suitable workspaces for inmates to engage in crafts and art production and also to sell the product or the work and potentially have a bit of cash available for them upon release. In a couple of previous exchanges with the Minister it seems that this idea was positively received and I'm wondering, has it been advanced at all, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): So, Mr. Braden, you're talking about arts and crafts. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you very much for that summary, Madam Chair. There were several concerns, I understand, in the past with our facilities and they aren't adequately set up to be able to accommodate carving; the amount of dust can be a health concern if it's not properly ventilated. We apparently aren't set up to do that is my understanding. I know there were also some concerns from the private sector about competition. I'm not sure how much of a factor that was. I think the larger factor at play here, the larger issue is the health concerns related to ventilation that has to be accommodated for carving. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to start off by asking how the proposed federal dealings with law and order and the justice system, especially the proposed three strike law that would see repeat violent offenders put away for an indefinite period of time – I think it's 15 or 20 years at a minimum – on the third offence. How will this proposed federal legislation impact our correction facilities here in the Northwest Territories, and will we be seeing an increase to our inmate populations here in the NWT as a result of federal legislation? Have we figured out how this might impact us or the ramifications of such legislation? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Madam Chair, the legislation that the Member is referring to, that specific piece -- and there are a number of bills before committee -- I'm not sure what the likelihood of their success is. Many of them, I understand from talking to the Justice Minister, have been watered down and so may not meet the spirit and intent as initially proposed. I'm not sure if this sort of proposed three strike legislation will be coming forward, but I would say, it's my understanding that in most of these cases we'd be talking about people who were doing

federal time at that stage. So we don't think this would have a large impact on our facilities in the event it were passed. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: I thank the Minister for that. I just wanted to ask another question in regard to levels of occupancy. The Arctic Tern facility in Inuvik, there were never too many young offenders at that facility. I'm just wondering, what is the current status of that facility in Inuvik?

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Madam Chair, the capacity is 10 open beds, four secure beds, two secure watch beds, single occupancy, for a total of 16 beds. The last occupancy numbers I have are three as of January 30th, Madam Chair. So we have quite a bit of vacancy at that facility. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That number of three, if I'm not mistaken, is an increase from zero or one that was from there last year and the year before that. I'm just wondering, if we've had a historical occupancy rate at that facility of zero, one, two, three, at what point in time do you start to ask yourself, you know, is it worthwhile to keep the facility open? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Madam Chair, the average 2005-06 was six offenders in that facility. Yes, that still is quite a bit of vacancy, but we feel we need a female young offender facility in the jurisdiction. If we were to close that facility, we wouldn't have that and we'd have to send our female young offenders to other jurisdictions. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. In keeping with the, and I don't want to pick on Inuvik, I'll ask you about the young offenders facility that's in my riding in Kam Lake. I'd like to ask you what the occupancy levels are at that facility for the past two years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: The 2005-06 average was 19 young offenders at that facility. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister mentioned 19 from 2005-06. What is the total capacity of that facility and what is the occupancy there today? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. That would put it in context if we knew it was 19 out of how many beds and six out of how many beds in Inuvik. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: My apologies. Inuvik is 6 of 16. I mentioned 19; that's 19 of 27. I admit I don't know the exact number today, but the information I'm giving the Member is recent, it's January 30th.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. So those are averages. Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: I thank the Minister for that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Anything further? Okay. Next on the list, then, I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to ask the Minister has he done an assessment of some of the facilities that could be used in terms of facilities outside the North Slave Correctional Centre here that could be used? Something like wilderness camps, transition facilities that could be used around the Northwest Territories. Madam Chair, when I look to see an assessment in Tl'oondih, I know there's a facility outside of Fort Providence that was used one time, we looked at units in the Sahtu, Tlicho, I know there's some around the Hay River area that people use on these wilderness camps. There are assessments saying this is what we can use, these are the kinds of dollars we can spend in these facilities for helping the people who need them. Has there been one done on a territorial-wide basis so we could do some real number crunching, I guess, and talk about it when it comes up maybe in our committee or some future discussion to this is what we can do? He's given some numbers in terms of inmates that are in the facility and I'm not too sure what the exact cost is to house one inmate for one year, two years. I know the Salvation Army is quite full of inmates in transition. People are saying don't use that facility; send our people back to our region and we can certainly use them on the land or some of those programs here. So I guess I'm trying to get a picture, Madam Chair, in terms of we've got to shake up this way of how we get people back to really get solid into reintegrating back into the community. Otherwise we'll see a huge repeat in terms of them coming back into a facility. So I don't know if I'm making any sense to the Minister, Madam Chair. I'll wait until he gives me a response and then I'll follow up with a question again.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I think I understand the Member and I think the philosophy makes sense. We have just recently conducted a review of our facilities and talked about how we best utilize our current existing facilities and that's why the move to a reintegration unit in Hay River. There have been several other changes, Mr. Chairman, but, I will admit, I don't think we've gone and looked at other facilities that are not being used in the territory to decide whether or not they'd be well suited for wilderness camps or other things. I do hesitate to get into a strict cost analysis of, say, wilderness camps versus institutions, because I know for sure that it costs us a lot more money to work with people on the land in wilderness camps as compared to when you're dealing with 150 people in an institution. You know, you start to break down the cost per person. I don't

think you can just look at that. I think you have to talk about the cost to society. If we are more successful in reducing recidivism, if people are serious and able to heal and make amends, make reparation to the community, we are going to save a lot of grief in future and we are going to save a lot of future costs and impacts on the system. So I'd hope that we consider the total and full cost to society when we're talking about the best methods of dealing with people in our criminal justice system. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly agree with the Minister in terms of the cost analysis, but sometimes that seems to be the only case sometimes when we do a business plan. I mean, I do agree with the Minister that if we put the people out on the land in wilderness camps it would be of great benefit to our people, but when it comes to the business plans it seems that we have a cost analysis. Look at the courthouse issue that we just discussed about in our last budget item here. That's why I'm saying when it comes down to the business case we always seem to lose out. So I guess what I'm asking the Minister go back to a facility that's being used. I visit; we have good discussions about it; we have some good meetings; we have some good tours; so why are we not yet using the Tl'oondih facility? It's right there; the people are there; they run the program. I understand the Minister is doing a review and it's been a while since...I haven't seen it in the three years since I've been here. So why is that facility not being used today? Last year I talked about this. The year...(inaudible)...I talked about this. So why are we still sitting here and still talking about the use of the Tl'oondih? Look at the program that they had used in Fort Providence, just outside of Fort Providence, that little camp there. I remember going there and sitting with some individuals from the correctional centre. Time is running out here, Mr. Chair, in terms of this issue here. Not very long in our life of this government and I think the 16th Legislative Assembly is going to talk about this issue. So time is of the essence here in terms of how soon can you look at some type of action plan that we can use this facility? I guess I want to leave it at that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I appreciate the Member's support and I know that, as I've indicated, I've asked for a review of the Tl'oondih programming that we were funding. I know there were some challenges with the programming there. I don't have all the details for the Member. This is certainly not the forum for that, I want to discuss that and talk about how we could see a model that would be viable and sustainable there. Last year the reality was that we couldn't do and fund all of the things we were proposing to do between the Sahtu pilot, the Tlicho pilot and Tl'oondih. So we've conducted this review of Tl'oondih. In addition, we hope that we'll have programming up and running there in future, but we do have to make sure that we've got programming that is working and best fits that facility. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to ask the Minister on 7-35, there was an increase on the compensation benefits, almost \$1 million. It's because of the union or it's because of the qualification of the workers, what is it? Is it because, are staff getting other benefits that we're not aware of. Just let me ask that question.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, the increase as a result of collective bargaining to GNWT employees in our department was \$988,000. That's what that is. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The point is again I'm going to again ask the Minister in terms of the facility that we do have in the North here needs to be utilized. These are our people that need to use these programs. I guess the large portion of the population are First Nation people in our facilities and we're housing them in a facility that is, I don't know how to put it in words, but I think the best for these people that are in these facilities is to be out on the land and I just don't understand why we're taking so long to put these programs on the land. I do appreciate the Minister's direction and leadership on putting these wilderness camps. It means a lot to the people who are using them and it should be there for, again, not only for the people, but also for the families and children. We're missing that key part. The family and children are not involved in the justice system. The only way they're involved in the justice system is through a court or a ward to the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services or some other youth crime prevention programs or youth corrections. I'm not too sure if I'm getting my point across, Mr. Chair, in terms of we're forgetting the children, we're forgetting the wives, the spouses, we're forgetting about them and I think we need to really come out of this box and come to some clear thinking to have the families involved in this. I think we're going to see a lot of benefit. So, Mr. Chair, I just wanted to say that in closing on this issue here. I know the department is doing its best. However, I haven't yet seen any type of substantial result in terms of how we're going to get the families involved in this process. Right now I'd like to see a change as to when the prisoner or the inmate leaves the correctional facility what options does he or she have? It's usually a house or the Salvation Army and then they're sent back to the community. What's done for their family in that community when an inmate leaves the correctional centre? What's done for the children, what's done for the wives to integrate them back into a family? I'd like to know. Please tell me. Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I mean it's a difficult question when people commit crimes and are sent away to do time, or even out on the land in our wilderness camps oftentimes the family can't be a part of that, but I think we should, wherever possible, work to make sure that there is and we are working on integration, we are working with the entire family because, as I've indicated before, if we aren't facilitating these family reintegration

visits, if the people aren't able to come back successfully into their communities, we've got a problem where, more than likely -- and we see it time and time again -- the people end up right back in our criminal justice system. We know that, I mean the evidence is there, it's in front of us. So we have to work to make sure we are recognizing that as a system and putting the pieces in place to allow us to make that happen and work with the entire family. I fully agree with the Member. How we do this operationally is sometimes a challenge and that's all I'm saying, but, yes, we need to make best use of our facilities and we need to recognize that the entire family needs our support and help when one of the family members goes away. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Next I've got Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to follow up on what Mr. Yakeleya was asking about. The Minister has made reference to a reintegration unit in Hay River. I'm assuming it's at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre. I wonder if the Minister could please describe for us what this unit is and what's its intended purpose is and maybe some of the programming that's associated with that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, yes, we are working to convert the former SMCC remand unit to what we're calling the Living Skills Reintegration Unit. The warden of SMCC is overseeing the development of this program and implementation is tentatively planned for April 2007. We're trying to stick as close as we can to that date. We've got one person identified who will be working to develop the program. Again, the unit will provide new options for offenders preparing to re-enter the community, will allow for a heightened focus on pre-release planning, something that we felt we needed to do a better job of. Offenders will develop personal release plans, including housing, employment, money management, education, health, life skills, relationships, restorative justice, offenders will gain experience in areas identified in their plans and they may include temporary releases for activities, such as job searches and work, activities at facilities that will provide positive alternatives to addictive substances, traditional events and programs, the family reintegration visits we just spoke of in reference to the Member's earlier questions, Member Yakeleya. I'd also make the point that offenders are tracked after release and a community contact person would be identified to help with that reintegration and help understanding how that person and their family are coping. So we think it's a very valuable program, we think it's been a gap and a void in our programming because of the remand unit not being operated there we had this ability to provide that very useful programming in that facility and that's what we intend to do. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister has taken all the wind out of my sails because I was going to ask about the remand unit and how viable that was now that all the South Slave inmates that need to be held in remand have to be brought here and who is escorting them. Are we using up police time? Are we

using corrections officers to escort them? Are we using RCMP planes? How much are we spending on travel? I was going to talk about all those things, but this reintegration unit actually sounds like a very, very good idea and I was thinking that while Mr. Yakeleya was speaking that he was talking about reintegration of families, re-unification and that sort of thing. If there's one thing you cannot do in this particular business, I think it is generalize what is a one solution that fixes all kind of approach and I was going to say -- I have it written right down here -- inmates, if we're going to help them and rehabilitate them, we need case management that's done on an individual basis, not warehousing people, but identifying do they have life skills deficiencies, do they have learning disabilities, do they have other issues of grief and things that are causing them to continue to be, as you say, in the criminal justice system and if our facilities can help people -- and that's just naming a few of the areas they may need help in -- if our facilities can help people in those areas in their lives, well then I'll take my hat off to the system. That would be a happy, happy day because I'm afraid many times the programming has not been there. I was not aware of this happening in Hay River, but I've got to tell you I commend you and maybe it is worth then some of the extra dollars that I think it's costing you to have re-profiled our remand centre in Hay River. Is this a pilot project in Hay River and if it works out well -- and I'm sure you're going to be monitoring it closely -- is this something you're looking at instituting in another facility, for example, the North Slave Correctional Centre? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, we fully expect that this will be permanent. We will work with this in this facility. I'm not sure we'll expand this exact program to other facilities. One of the goals and the aims of our review was to talk about developing certain core competencies at various different facilities so we had the critical mass. You can imagine if we really do have support workers dealing with the casework at one facility, we may not be able to duplicate that in others. So if there is a significant demand over and above what can be accommodated at Hay River, we would look to expand it. But until then, we want to work with the rollout of this program. If we have to bolster this with additional human resources in future we will look to do that, but at this point we think we can get this program up and running and are very excited about how successful we think this can be. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Well just to restate then, Mr. Chairman, it sounds like a very good idea. I'll be very anxious and looking forward to hearing what some of the results are going to be. Certainly in a jurisdiction as small as ours there's the possibility of assigning people who would be the most likely recipients of this, kind of services of a reintegration unit like this. I mean its close enough, Hay River, Yellowknife, it's close enough that you could easily put people down there that would benefit from such a program. So that's all I want to say, Mr. Chairman, is that it sounds very encouraging, it sounds very good, and we're happy to have it in our community and we hope it does expand. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Thank you, committee. We're on page 7-35, activity summary, community justice and corrections, operations expenditure summary, \$35.093 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 7-37, activity summary, community justice and corrections, grants and contributions, contributions, \$2.381 million. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Can the Minister explain as to the Elder's Program on 7-37 in terms of it not being in the budget in '07-08? Thank you.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I understand this to be simply an accounting exercise. We transfer money internally to the community justice committees who then turn around and pay the elders as opposed to paying the elders directly here. So that's what you're seeing is just an in and out in that respect. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, good enough for me.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. We are on page 7-37, activity summary, community justice and corrections, grants and contributions, contributions, \$2.381 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 7-41, activity summary, services to the public, operations expenditure summary, \$4.087 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): At this point I'd maybe ask Mr. Pokiak if he could assume the chair. I have some questions on this page for the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. We're on page 7-41, activity summary, services to the public, operations expenditure summary, \$4.087 million. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to spend a few more minutes talking under the services to the public. In the three and a half years that I've been a Member of the House one of the more difficult challenges to deal with has been talking to people who are going through a divorce and custody battles and the adversarial nature that this sometimes often takes. When you're dealing with children, finances, and your livelihood in many cases, it's a very, very difficult time for people to go through. It's a very difficult thing for them to have to navigate through the financial turmoil, the legal turmoil, the turmoil in the home, the children if they're involved. Mr. Chairman, I just think that there's so much more as a government we can do to help both men and women get through divorces with their mind intact, with a sense that they can go on. Often women and men who go through a divorce just get chewed up and spit out at the other end and the children end up paying the majority of the cost that's associated with divorce proceedings.

Maybe I'll ask the Minister this: Is it possible that the Department of Justice set up a program tailor suited to if it's couples or men in one program and women in another program, but somebody has to help people, they need help, they need help getting through divorce, they need help coping? If there's a mechanism or something that we can do as a government to help people get through a divorce, I think we have to do it and I'd like to ask the Minister if the department could take a look at something like that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I fully agree that these processes can be very adversarial in nature. Whenever we can avoid the formal process I think it's in our best interest to do so. It doesn't always work and it isn't always possible and it isn't always advisable, but where it is, I think we need to do as much of that as possible. I indicated in response to Member Yakeleya earlier that we do have seminars for parents that are offered as part of our family law programming. We have local support, community support workers who work with parents one on one, assist through this process, play a supportive role and we talked a bit about the mediation for separating couples, the pilot project, the teleconferencing that is available. So there is programming available currently and I think Members making the case though that we need to do more for alternative dispute mechanisms, we need to investigate more in the areas of mediation and collaborative law. I certainly agree. I think whatever we can do in the investments we can make in those areas are certainly advisable and would help and we'd be agreeable to talking to the committee about other things that we can do. Again, I think we have to look at not just the cost of the programs, but the overall costs we're saving society. So that is something I would be prepared to talk about.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Minister for that. I do believe he's grasped what I'm really after here. There are a number of other jurisdictions across this country and we can look to other models. If you're looking at alternative dispute resolutions, there's the Fair Play, I believe that's in Ontario or New Brunswick. There are models out there. I mean we can try to bring them here and adapt them to the Northwest Territories at any opportunity to try to get people away from going through court and if there's any way at all to keep people out of court, we have to be doing that. I spoke earlier of the DADS program and I feel that we should be looking at funding a support group like Dads to help get people through the divorce process.

So, again, I just wanted to leave those comments with the Minister. It's not necessarily a question, Mr. Chairman, but I just think as a society we let people suffer far too much through divorce without giving them all the avenues possible to get the help, to get them to cope with what's happening to them. Because it is a tremendous life altering event when couples break up, children are involved and I think we can be doing better and I'm glad to hear the Minister say that he believes we can do more as well. Mahsi.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, and we are looking at what more we can do. The program, the seminar that we've been working with and using has been called Parents Forever and we can offer that more frequently, but the seminar does teach parents how to help their children as well deal with changes in the family and cope with the effects of separation or divorce. Another thing we're looking at internally is whether or not some of our staff lawyers can be used at some point during a week, maybe a morning a week or a day a month, used to help in mediation because we have this pilot project but we would like to expand it. Possibly we can use some internal resources to do that. So we are looking at a number of options but agree that the more of us we can do, the better.

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just as on another maybe related note, if you look at the subscription to our Employee and Family Assistance Program that the government runs for our employees, there is a subscription there that has gone through the roof. I would suggest that a lot of it probably has to do with divorce and issues related to family law and counselling that is required to help couples get through the divorce proceedings. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I am not in any position to be able to refute that nor would I want to. I don't know what the majority of the caseload is under the EAP, but I agree there's no doubt it's very challenging and is facing many families across the North and it's very unfortunate. We need to do what we can to help make sure the resources are in place to solve these issues as amicably as at all possible. Thank you.

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

MR. RAMSAY: That's good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. We are on page 7-41, activity summary, services to the public, operations expenditure summary, \$4.087 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we now turn to page 7-46, information item, work performed on behalf of others, continued on page 7-47 and 7-48. Information item, work performed on behalf of others, \$1.352 million. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask a question on the RCMP First Nations policing community consultation. It's my assumption that the funding for this First Nations policing agreement has yet to be finalized with the federal government. I want to ask the Minister if he would confirm this.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, we are still in negotiations on that money. I understand typically it is late. It is not atypical here. We are hopeful and believe that we will get the funding. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly will support the negotiations. Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the Minister when he would bring something to the Members to see that we have successfully negotiated this agreement here and when can we expect some type of announcement in terms of the completion of this agreement here with us on this issue?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, I would have hoped that we could have that information by now. We don't, of course. We continue to negotiate, but I can tell Members the minute we have confirmation that that funding will flow, I will pass that on to Members. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the negotiations being successfully completed and I hope that some of the communities would be happy in terms of how these negotiations are going to roll out and hopefully we will see some benefits for the communities that do not have some of the services. Good luck to the Minister and good luck to the staff. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Once again, we are on page 7-46, 7-47 to 7-48, work performed on behalf of others, \$1.352 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: I want to ask a question also from the First Nations policing recruitment. Would this be in the same boat as the negotiations or is this gone altogether? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, we are in negotiation for the continuation of that funding.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I hope this boat is a strong boat and not a leaky old boat. Again, I want to wish the Minister a safe trip and come back with some strong negotiations. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Once again, page 7-46, 7-47 to 7-48 information item, work performed on behalf of others, \$1.352 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Now can we turn back to page 7-7, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$88.441 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we now turn to page 6-8, infrastructure acquisition plan, courts, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$250,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total activity, \$250,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, is there any work going on right now in terms of remodelling or retrofitting the existing courthouse, Mr. Chair, considering that the construction of a new one has been deferred? Oh, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand that question has been covered. I have no questions then. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Braden. We are on page 6-8, infrastructure acquisition plan, courts, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$250,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total activity, \$250,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we now turn to page 6-10, infrastructure acquisition plan, community justice and corrections, total capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$88,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total activity, \$88,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Now can you turn to page 6-12, infrastructure acquisition plan, services to the public, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$280,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total activity, \$280,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Total department, \$618,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Does committee agree that the Department of Justice has been completed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you. I would like to thank the Minister and his staff. Thank you, Minister. Thank you, witnesses.

Next on the list, we have the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Mr. McLeod, do you have any opening comments?

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am pleased to present the proposed main estimates for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The department is requesting a total of \$57 million for the 2007 fiscal year, an increase of about four percent from the previous year.

The proposed main estimates reflect the commitment this government has made to protecting and conserving our environment through the responsible management and sustainable development of our natural resources. These estimates are based on the vision of a healthy environment that is capable of supporting traditional lifestyles within a modern economy.

It is our responsibility to ensure the environment we enjoy today will be here for our use and the use of future generations. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources must continue to focus its resources in areas where they will have the most impact.

This government continues to play a key role in the review of development projects through environmental impact assessment processes. The department will continue to ensure baseline data needed to monitor, assess and mitigate proposed developments in the Northwest Territories is available. This will be accomplished through a \$500,000 investment to extend the biophysical study. The data collected under this program helps governments, industry, regulators and communities make informed decisions about mitigating the impacts of resource development.

In addition, the department will enhance its ability to monitor commitments made through environmental assessment and regulatory processes. To keep pace with the growing demands for monitoring and environmental and regulatory reviews, the environmental assessment and monitoring unit has been reorganized. Two new analysts' positions will be established to deal with induced resource development in the Mackenzie Valley and resource development in the remainder of the territory. These positions will strengthen the department's ability to monitor existing environmental agreements with the diamond mines. A third position will provide support to regions dealing with the environmental assessment and regulatory review processes. This investment will build capacity and increase the overall efficiency of our regulatory approval and monitoring process.

Mr. Chair, climate change and its impacts are another major concern in the Northwest Territories and the rest of Canada. Changes in climatic conditions are having, and will continue to have, an impact on our landscape. Over the coming year, the department will finalize a revised NWT Greenhouse Gas Strategy, which places a much greater emphasis on the need to respond to the impacts of climate change. The strategy also sets clear emission guidelines for government and encourages other sectors to follow this example through impact and adaptation plans. We expect to work closely with the federal government on ensuring the Northwest Territories has fair and equal access to the recently announced ecoEnergy initiatives to support our efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions and the high cost of energy.

In addition to these initiatives, Mr. Chair, the department continues to work on the development of the Species at Risk Act, the implementation of the Beverage Container Program, the expansion of waste reduction and recovery

efforts, forest management regulation changes and the ever important issues surrounding water. The department will also complete the public process to enter into new air tanker services contracts for the forest fire management program this year.

These main estimates, Mr. Chair, will ensure we are successful in meeting our commitment to strike the right balance between sustainable development and the protection of our environment.

Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development for their comments and suggestions during the review of the main estimates. I look forward to the committee's comments today and I am prepared to answer any questions Members may have. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. At this time, I would like to ask Mrs. Groenewegen to give committee's comments on the Department of ENR. Thank you.

General Comments

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee met with the Minister and his officials on September 22, 2006, to review the draft business plan of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The committee considered the department's draft main estimates on January 16 and 17, 2007. Committee members made note that the department is proposing to spend \$57.1 million in operations expense and \$2.4 million on capital projects in fiscal year 2007-2008.

Committee members offer the following comment on issues arising out of the review of the 2007-2008 Draft Main Estimates and budget-planning cycle:

Waste Management Strategy

From November 1, 2005 to October 31, 2006, over 16 million ready-to-serve containers were collected through a system of community-based depots. ENR reports this means that so far this year, two out of every three containers sold in the NWT do not end up in our landfills. Building on this success, ENR will soon undertake public consultations to identify additional waste types for recovery. Examples might include batteries, electronic waste and/or plastic grocery bags.

The committee applauds the department for their success but encourages them to go much farther.

As we have suggested in prior reports, the committee believes a program similar to the beverage container recovery should be considered for fuel drums, and that ENR should consider an increase for the return deposit on these barrels in order to encourage the public to collect and return them.

There is also another recycling opportunity for waste tires. Waste tires can threaten not only the environment, but public health as well. Tire fires can contaminate groundwater and surface water and are also virtually impossible to extinguish. Waste tires are also an ideal habitat for the breeding of mosquitoes. For these reasons, the Governance and Economic Development committee supports environmental initiatives that would rid the NWT of this problem. A mobile tire shredder could

even travel between communities, turning dangerous waste into a useful commodity.

Finally, the committee knows there were concerns in the past about charging a deposit fee on milk containers but would recommend the containers be considered for recycling again.

The committee is looking to ENR for leadership and innovative solutions to our waste management problems. ENR needs to take even greater actions to encourage businesses and the general public to recycle. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. At this time, I would like to ask if the Minister would like to bring in witnesses.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, I would, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): I would ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses in, please. Thank you.

Order, please. Mr. Minister, can you introduce your witnesses? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have with me the deputy minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Bob Bailey and also Nancy Magrum, the director of finance and admin with shared services.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One issue I would like to make a comment on is an issue that has been lingering quite long in my communities and I wanted to congratulate the department on this cash and trash project that was so successful the last couple of months and years, or actually the last year. Improving that program is great. I think people in the communities have taken this initiative and used it wisely. I can see young kids running around the communities and picking up these containers, pop cans. They are using that. These kids are really taking the program to heart and soul. They are benefiting the community and benefiting the land by having clean land and taking pride in the communities. I appreciate the support that is given to our people in our region.

I saw a vehicle driving on a really smooth winter road the last few months here. It was a vehicle taking big bags of trash out of the Sahtu. They were going somewhere out of the Sahtu to recycle them. This one vehicle, I think they had a dozen huge bags. They just came from one community in the Sahtu.

So like any other people in other communities and regions, this cash in the trash has made a lot of difference in the way we see things in the small communities. It is showing the value of our land and showing the land of this initiative. I wanted to thank the department for helping our people in this area.

The other area I want to talk to the Minister about, Mr. Chairman, is we have these -- and I hope we expand this

area to other areas -- we have these white garbage bags that are used by the Northern Stores, Co-op stores. When they finish using these garbage bags, they usually end up in a garbage can and they are sent to a local dumpster. The ravens get after them and open them up. So there are lots of white garbage bags in and around the communities. Sometimes during the summer, it looks like there is fresh snow around the dump because there are so many white plastic bags on the trees. Elders are saying sometimes these birds chew on the plastic bags and swallow them. It's harmful to the birds. Elders were concerned about that, but also the same extent as the cash in the trash issue that we so supported through this program.

I hope the department has some time to look at the issues as the garbage bags that are used in our communities. I think it would be really beneficial if you had a program that would have people clean up or take these white garbage bags and recycle them or do something rather than to throw them into the garbage sites. Then they get distributed by the birds all over the trees and the ground. It doesn't look very good.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to make a comment first with regard to these two issues. I wanted to leave it at that. I know it's been on people's minds for the last three years. How do we get rid of these white garbage bags? Do we have to work with the Northern Store or the Co-op store? Can we work on a system that collects these garbage bags? There are lots around; we can see them on the trees. There are lots. It doesn't look very good there.

I think we are on the right step in how we work with our people to clean up the environment. I think we need to continue on with other products such as white garbage bags. The kids really look forward to being more involved in the clean-up in our area and our land. There is a lot of pride in there. The message is there. I could tell from the communities that you can't throw this away. It can be collected or you can make money on this. It's a strong message. It's getting out there. I want to say that on behalf of our region. Thank you for this program that's been so successful in the Sahtu in terms of bringing the trash out of our region and cleaning up the stuff. I just have that to say, Mr. Chairman, but I am really concerned about the white plastic bags right now. That was something the elders wanted to talk about in several communities I have gone to, is how do we clean up these white garbage bags?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. General comments. Mr. Lafferty.

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

Mr. Chair, I would just like to highlight some of the three key areas that the department has initiated or is looking into initiating. One of the areas that we have to focus on is the Greenhouse Gas Strategy that has been put forward by the NWT. That's part of the region why we put the motion forward, because it's a huge concern in the community. It's here that the NWT has fair and equitable access to the federal announcement, ecoEnergy initiative. We are looking forward to the outcome of that. As soon as the news, probably on the 19th, the news will be out and we are all anxiously waiting, even the people in the communities are waiting for us as well for the announcement. I am glad to see the Minister has

indicated that he's watching out for that and we will certainly get back to the House here.

Also, there is a discussion on the public process on the forest fire management program. As I indicated in this House on numerous occasions, there are big forest fires in our regions, not just my region but the Sahtu region, our neighbouring communities, where it destroys all the wildlife and also the food for the wildlife. That's probably part of the reason why caribou are far from the communities now too. We used to have caribou in the communities a few years back. Now we have to travel three or four hours on a snow machine just to see a caribou if we are lucky. I am glad to see that there is a process in place here. We will certainly be watching that. I personally will be watching the process closely this year and next year, especially this summer.

There was a big fire a couple of summers ago in Whati and that was addressed in this House as well. At that time, there was a lack of funding so they had to let the fire go and I totally disagreed with that at that time. Anyway, I will be on a watchful eye for that.

Mr. Chairman, the next item I would like to focus on is the successful program of recycling, the recycling initiative that was brought to this House, approved and now it's creating entrepreneurs in the small communities. Even the youngsters are carrying their wagons or even on their bicycles collecting pop cans, juice cans, on the side of the highway, on the side of the road, which is great to see. It's kind of cleaning up our yard, our communities as well. So that's an applaud to the department for that particular initiative.

At the same time, I believe GED is looking into the milk containers. That's another big initiative that should be undertaken. There is a vast amount of milk cartons at the dump. Even from my household, there is a few that we go through. I certainly will support the recycling of this particular area.

One more item, Mr. Chairman, is the garbage bags that Mr. Yakeleya has raised already. I just want to reiterate, the white garbage bags, when you travel to Behchoko, you see them on trees too. It's an eyesore when you get into a community. Definitely something needs to be done in that area, some sort of a newly created program that can deal with those white garbage bags as well. At the same time, I just heard over the news about the black garbage bags as well. We have 33 million people living in Canada. They use six to seven million garbage bags. They say it can go around the earth 67 times. Just imagine that. It's a fear. Guess where it's going? It's going underground. Eventually, it's going to crop up on us.

So I think recycling is the best way to go. I just want to share that as a comment to the department. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thanks, Mr. Lafferty. Next I have Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just quickly, in addition to his commending the department for their budget, the issue of how do we improve the recycling in a whole host of areas, we have a vast amounts of electronic waste. As has been pointed out, we have garbage bags. Some jurisdictions have taken the very bold step of just outlawing, making it illegal to use those white bags in grocery stores. They've gone to households

and given households these light bags that they can reuse. It's a huge cost-savings to the store as well. They put a tax on the bag and if you don't use the bag, you don't have to pay the tax. I believe there are ways to do that.

The one comment I did want to make is as we move along and we look at all these areas where we want to do things with energy, we want to do things with recycling, all of which are tied to environment and greenhouse gas emissions and saving the environment, one way to do this is we recognize that 70 percent of the emissions that are currently being put out in the Northwest Territories come from business and industry. If we have some kind of carbon tax with a built in rebate system similar that we do have with motive and non-motive fuel to let homeowners and such maybe not pay the same burden but recognize that industry is a good corporate citizen and should be paying a price. We can use that money to fund these initiatives in our communities. It will help us offset our own emissions and help us better meet our targets as good citizens of this country.

We know that those targets are coming and Canada has to lower their emissions. So there is a way, I believe, for us to be able to fund more capably both in ENR with the energy issues, helping communities with their community energy plans and generally helping us look at getting our dependence off of diesel. I think there are some things we can consider. If we just have to rely on our own funds, we know that we are always going to be chronically short and we will never be able to address these issues.

I know that we can do it and I can tell you as well that just about every other jurisdiction in the world, in the developed world, is looking if they haven't already put in carbon tax, they are looking at it. Norway, Britain, Australia, all these countries, the consortium of corporate leaders that have gotten together, the 250 Canadian leaders, they are looking at some kind of tax as well because all these things are tied to the environment, all these things are tied to emissions, all these things are tied to energy costs. All these savings in our own carbon footprint. So we as we look at this, we have to keep that in mind as we look past this budget into the future. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Next I have Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I will be brief also. I think a 4 percent increase from last year's budget is pretty cut and dry. I commend the Minister for that, for striking that balance between forced growth and forced reductions. I just wanted to say again what some of the other Members are saying we have to put a lot more emphasis into finding ways to look at reducing our waste, dumping in our landfills and also to do some recycling and reusing and reducing. I think that's basically just putting out a lot of information for people to be able to access on how they can reduce their daily consumption of toxic materials that are around us everyday and we just don't think about it when we are chucking them in the garbage. I think we should put out more ad campaigns that really helped this whole recycling thing take off. I think this Beverage Container Program, people took hold of it and ran with it. That's why we see the success that it is today. Obviously there is still more work in that area and I would like to see this government be the champion of that, of any kind of ecoEnergy initiatives or waste reduction

initiatives. I think people would embrace, especially here in the NWT where things tend to sit around for long extended periods of time.

Other than that, it's a difficult balancing act to define sustainable development while protecting our environment. But being the Environment Minister, I think our emphasis and our priorities have to be on the environment side of things. I don't think it's a bad thing that we really have to crack the whip sometimes on the industry and resource development and say this is the way it is and there is no other way that it's going to go, if it is going to go. I think we really have to dig in our heels when we say we are the protector of the environment here in the NWT. That's what we have to do. We have to get that point across to all the regulatory and monitoring agencies, that they have to exercise their authority to the fullest extent that they are allowed to. They should have the backing of the whole GNWT to do that.

I have to agree with the other Members that we are not going to be able to do any of this stuff by ourselves. We are going to have to get the federal government outside to match our funding commitments to all our monitoring and assessment agencies, especially with the new water issues that are coming up with our inter-jurisdictional arenas there. I think we have to put more emphasis into board representation at that level and make sure that our voices are heard in Alberta, or Saskatchewan, or B.C. and in Canada, that we are going to be really negatively affected by industry and resource development that we have really no control or say over except through a board which really doesn't have any authority or regulatory authority or law behind it to say that they can stop it at any time. I think that we have to get a better hold of that, I guess.

Other than that, I know today, through this budget process, the issue of wildlife management is probably going to be a big one and I will likely leave the caribou issue alone, but I would have to raise the issue again of I think this total \$57 million. Maybe I'll ask Bob later if \$3 million of that is still slated for the bison recovery remediation and compensation issue that still seems to be plaguing the department and the community of Deninu Kue, but I'll leave it until we get to that section.

Other than that, I see good things happening in ENR and I'll just leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. General comments. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to speak to a couple of items, and then I will ask questions on them when we get to the detail of this budget. The opening comments from our committee talked about expanding the items which are recycled and they can be returned, and that we need to have a government rebate program put in place for them. I think tires is the next obvious one. We did have a tire fire here in Yellowknife at the dump not so long ago. It was in the summer, maybe a year and a half ago or something like that, and it was incredible, the fire that was created by that. So there's an environmental hazard in having these tires laying around, so I think that the tire shredder idea is a good one. There's all kinds of technology out there on it. I'd like to see somebody from ENR go and look at tire shredding equipment and an operation someplace in southern Canada since we don't have one. I would

suggest that it would be a very good investment on the part of this government to get a tire shredder in one of the communities. I don't know about the viability of taking it from community to community, but I might suggest that Hay River would be a good place to put it since we could backhaul tires from communities and from further north on the barging system. Barges usually come backhaul from down the valley with nothing on it. I don't know how many tires are generated in those communities. There's not probably a lot of tire traffic as much as in Yellowknife and Hay River, but certainly the mines are going to be discarding a lot of tires. I don't know what they do with them now, but the equipment that they use in the mining operations here would be going through tires, I would imagine. So I think we should explore that and I think we should make that investment.

With regard to forest management, I'm going to be interested in hearing what's happening with the contracts for fire suppression. I know there's been some analysis and evaluation done of how we're going to respond to that contract for the next several years, and I'll be interested in hearing from the Minister where we're at with that.

On the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and any money that might be available through our government or through the federal government, I would really like to see this money go to some fairly big ticket projects. I would hate to get several million dollars and just kind of waste it away on small initiatives that aren't really going to net the kind of benefits we want. I raised one in the House already this week where I think that the idea of doing some matched funding with a private proponent to expand the distribution of hydro power from the Taltson dam to other communities is one fairly big ticket item that money from our government, money from the federal government, could go to address and we would see some really significant results from it. I think too often when we talk about the Arctic Energy Alliance and some of these programs, we do a little bit here, a little bit there, a little bit of awareness, a little bit of studies. We try to spread it too thin and with the impact it really is nothing. So I'd like to see some really tangible, concrete actions with any money that this government is going to invest and I would like to see this government invest that money there.

I think that's about it for now, Mr. Chairman. I'll have more questions when we get to the detail of the budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. General comments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): If there are no further general comments, does the committee wish to go into detail? Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we turn to page 11-10, information item, revenue summary. Questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Can we turn to pages 11-12 and 11-13, activity summary, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$10.522 million. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask a little bit about International Polar Year, and unless there's somewhere else that's more appropriate in the detail, I'd like to ask it here. Mr. Chairman, the Minister, in his statement to the House yesterday, told us that Ottawa is about to announce what is anticipated to be some 40 projects totalling about \$150 million spanning the two years of International Polar Year. I wanted to ask the Minister what kind of input or preliminary design we had in any of those projects, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the International Polar Year officially started March 1st of this year and the plan is to run for two years. It's a two-year program of science research and education focussed on Arctic and Antarctic regions. We have been working with the federal government and other stakeholders and other countries. We will be starting a communications plan workshop. We're also working on a communications plan. Our input has been something we've worked on for some time. We have a number of different initiatives that we've brought forward. We have not had the response whether or not these have been accepted, but there are a number of things I probably could list or provide later to the Member. We have seven initiatives that we brought forward for consideration. I don't believe any of the decisions have been made as to which projects will get funded. I know there are a number of jurisdictions that have brought fairly large projects to the table, and the budget that has been pledged by the Government of Canada is \$150 million. We're looking at a lot of different things in terms of some of the climate change initiatives and issues, and Arctic wildlife observatories, and environmental science centres, and some of the studies that need to be done with the communities on country food, safety and wildlife health and those types of initiatives, Mr. Chairman. These things, again I have to stress, have not been accepted or committed to, but those are the type of things we've brought forward.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, are any of these contingent on the GNWT contributing to them financing or in kind in other ways, potentially providing our resources or staff or skills to back them up in any way? I'm just wondering if there's something within the budget, Mr. Chairman, that we should be identifying as potentially or absolutely earmarked for IPY, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there is no budget line items in our document here that we're bringing forward. Our contribution will be in kind and I should mention we did contribute to our initial meeting with all the different stakeholders I think to the tune of \$40,000, but that was dollars from the previous year.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, I know this is an amazing year end and the scope and the size of this is going to be quite considerable. I've heard that numbers in thousands of scientists and researchers and explorers and expeditions will be crisscrossing the polar regions of the South and North poles. I was wondering if the Minister would be able to provide, upon approval of the projects from Ottawa, any kind of idea of the impact that communities may see from this through visitations, through contracts for services, airlines, this kind of thing. It would seem that this could have a marked affect on tourism and service-related industries. Would the Minister be able to do some research and get back to the Assembly with that, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, we're expecting to see some significant economic activity around these initiatives in the area of employment, in the area of services and those type of economic initiatives that would come from a project of this nature. We do not have right now in our hands a listing of all the different initiatives that will happen in the locations, so it would be very difficult to give him that at this point. Our team is working with the federal government and the International Polar Year people and other stakeholders are involved, and we will certainly commit to providing that to committee as soon as we know the location and the projects that are going to happen.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): We're on page 11-13, activity summary, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$10.522 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Page 11-14, corporate management, grants and contributions, contributions, \$40,000. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This page provides some detail of grants and contributions. The Mackenzie River Basin Board is identified here for a \$40,000 contribution consistent with the last couple of years. This board cooperatively manages the rivers and the watersheds of the Mackenzie River basin going into the Yukon, B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan. Mr. Chairman, of late there has been heightened awareness of the absence of agreements and protocols and things with our neighbours on the management of river systems that affect us. I think there's considerable expectation that this board has a mandate to be the negotiator and the clearing house and the monitor for these agreements. No additional dollars have been allocated to the board, or at least our contribution to the board, and I'm wondering if the Minister could tell us why we're not seeing any new funds allocated here or whether we should anticipate that something may come our way later on in the fiscal year, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the board is made up of seven different jurisdictions, or seven stakeholders I should say, that contribute \$40,000 each for a total of \$280,000. So far they've been able to live within that budget amount.

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

MR. BRADEN: It's become much more apparent that we need the services on this board to help ensure that the waters flowing into and through and around our shared jurisdiction are going to be properly managed. If the board has been able to get by with \$40,000 each, that's fine, but I think we're going to need the services of this board to a considerably greater extent. That's my opinion, I guess. Has the Minister looked at this, and are we going to need this board and should we be allocating some more money for it, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the budget line here, \$40,000, as I said, was part of a larger pot. That is for the operation of the board. Other services, such as technical services, other in-kind support services are provided by the different jurisdictions and members of the board. Along with our government, if there is need for work, that is provided for by in-kind resources from within our ranks. There is an allowance if there is a need for additional resources to expand that.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On sort of the broader topic then of I guess our awareness now that we need to put more energy and more resources into negotiating these deals in monitoring the waters and working with our neighbours, does the department plan on investing more money in this inter-jurisdictional negotiations and protocols, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, at this point we're not sure if that will require more investment. We're certainly expecting it will take more time. We have been very busy in the last while negotiating with the other jurisdictions, especially Alberta, and it will entail additional work further to what we have been doing already. But at this point, we are not convinced that we will need additional resources. So if that is the case, then we may have to come back in the form of a supp, but we're not expecting to do that at this point.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps this is something that we can pursue in some other venues, then. I guess I'm picking up from the discussion and the tone that we've seen here on the floor of the Assembly specific to a couple of motions that were passed yesterday, that we've been lax in preparing, negotiating and working those agreements, especially in light of what's going on in northern Alberta -- hydro, tar sands,

pulp and paper developments -- and also in British Columbia. We know that we're behind the eight ball on this and yet the Minister is saying that we haven't identified that we should be putting some extra resources or extra attention in this area. Could the Minister advise, is he, is his department paying attention to the messages coming out of the Assembly here, and can we see some further response on what I think is deemed to be an urgent situation for us, Mr. Chairman?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to assure the Member that we absolutely recognize the urgency that has been placed on the issue of water. We recognized as the budget was being put together quite some time ago, the signing of an agreement with Alberta was not anticipated. We had been at it for quite awhile. It's really welcoming news that we are embarking on an agreement that will allow us to jointly work towards protection of quality of water and quantity of water. That will involve a lot of baseline studies, monitoring stations and we would have to put a work plan together. It should be recognized that the work plan is not part of this. It will have to be developed and brought forward for the House to consider.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Braden. Thank you. At this time, we will take a short break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order. We left off on...I'm not sure where, so let's go to 11-13, activity summary, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, \$10.522 million. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Page 11-14, corporate management, grants and contributions, contributions, \$40,000. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. One question in terms of the Mackenzie River Basin Board. I understand they're planning a summit in 2008. I want to ask how this government is planning to get ready for this important event and have a strong position in terms of the type of agreement we want to actually protect the northern interests of our people in our land. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you for that concise question, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are no firm plans to have a summit with the Mackenzie River Basin Board at this time. There is some discussion, however, that hasn't been formulated yet to a concrete plan.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Thank you for that concise answer. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Is the Mackenzie River Basin Board, in their discussions, looking at a summit in 2008 or in any other year, 2009? My question is, are we getting ready for this type of a summit?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, there is, and has been, some discussion around having a summit and looking at 2008. There's still no firm decision to do that yet.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Very good. Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Anything further on corporate management? Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the discussions, are we, as a government and this department, getting ready in terms of some preliminary discussions getting ready if the Mackenzie River Basin Board decides to have a summit that we are preparing ourselves to come up with some strong positions on the board's role?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we do have representation on the board and we will take part fully if there is a summit and put our positions forward. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Madam Chair, we are a member of this board here and I guess having the plans to involve other people in the Territories to voice our position, sometimes we just have the territorial government's position or the department's position. Are we preparing ourselves to have the aboriginal voice, also the land owners in the North to have their position heard at the summit should there be a summit? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is no decision to have a summit yet. However, if there is and the decision is made to host a summit, we do have two people that sit on the board. One is the Government of the Northwest Territories rep, and that's Mr. Bob Bailey, and there is also an NWT aboriginal rep, Mr. Sonny MacDonald. I'm sure the summit would allow for other people to have input into the discussions. So until that decision is made, it would be very difficult to discuss how that is going to take part.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Madam Chair, the Mackenzie River Basin Board is managed from the various jurisdictions, and the Government of Canada and the Northwest Territories are board members. These are term positions and when is that position up for renewal? Has the GNWT ever considered a member other than a GNWT staff member being on this board here? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just trying to get a sense of how long the term was.

Mr. MacDonald has been on for roughly five years and Mr. Bailey is the Government of the Northwest Territories appointment and we have not discussed renewing either position at this point.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Madam Chair, I'd ask the Minister is there any type of discussion in terms of members on this important board here? Because it talks about a motion that we discussed the other day in the House in terms of the importance of water and the inter-jurisdictional issues that we have with the other jurisdictions that have development in their area that have an impact on the Northwest Territories environment, the climate. This board here is more of a monitoring board. They're supposed to protect us and protect the integrity of our ecology system in the Northwest Territories, and it seems that we are not strong enough in terms of enforcing the quality and the quantity of the water and other things that affect our region.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not sure where the Member has gotten the opinion that they're not doing a good job. We think they're doing a very good job. They've put together a lot of good initiatives, master plan documents, and it's been difficult; I would agree that some of the transboundary agreements that people are expecting to be signed over the last while haven't happened. Those agreements are not signed by the Mackenzie River Basin Board; those agreements would be negotiated by the Government of the Northwest Territories on behalf of the people of the North, and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. So there are a couple responsibilities that have to be separated at this point. We think the board members are doing a good job and we have not had any discussions about replacing board members.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we just heard the news that the Alberta tar sands again has another project, conditional approval, and they're going to use a huge amount of water from the Athabasca River to help that project and it's going to have a great affect on our water system here in the Northwest Territories. Alberta is a member on the Mackenzie Basin Board here and it ignores the significance that this whole water basin board stands for. We are just monitoring the garbage coming out of Alberta into the Northwest Territories, B.C. and Saskatchewan and all this stuff. We don't have a very strong agreement, Madam Chair. We don't have any transboundary agreement with any of the regions that have strong project developments. I guess I'm trying to say how strong is our board. We negotiate right now; we negotiate as we look at some of these issues that are affecting our people and we have no strong teeth in terms of this Mackenzie River Basin Board. It's a monitoring agency board.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the mandate of the board, perhaps, Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The board mandate is to provide advice. It's an advisory board. The responsibility for transboundary agreement falls with the Government of Canada along with the Government of the Northwest Territories to negotiate with Alberta. We have already signed one agreement with Yukon. We signed off a framework agreement with Alberta, and no other jurisdiction has gone that far. I think we're ahead of the game. In order of enforcement, we need to have agreements and that's what has been lacking here. It's been very difficult to deal with the different projects that are coming forward. We have to go through the same process as other jurisdictions, or other stakeholders, when it comes to expansion projects or projects of resource development in Alberta. We have to go through the hearing process and intervene like everybody else. So if we had agreements, everybody would know the rules and we'd have to follow them. So I agree with the Member that we have to develop some strong agreements that would give us some authority to put some real influence on what's happening in other jurisdictions, and that doesn't really mean that Alberta is the only jurisdiction we have to deal with, there are other jurisdictions that we have to get some good agreements with.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Next on the list I have Mr. Pokiak. Before I turn the floor over to Mr. Pokiak though, I just want to tell Members that you are certainly entitled to take up to 10 minutes but if you decide not to, we won't think any less of you. Mr. Pokiak.

---Laughter

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one quick question with regard to IRMA. In '06-07 there was \$305,000 and in '07-08 there is nothing identified there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, we are required only to include project line items that have received approval. In this case, we haven't signed an agreement on the IRMA for this year. However...

I'm told that I guess we have an agreement, but we haven't included it at this point.

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

MR. POKIAK: Thank you. Will they include that somewhere down the line? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, we're having a dispute about this year and next year.

---Laughter

Madam Chair, for the 2006-2007, we have signed our agreement. For the next fiscal year we have not signed an agreement. We fully expect to come to an agreement on the same amount for this next coming fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Very good. Thank you. Okay, that's it for Mr. Pokiak. Corporate management, grants and contributions, contributions, \$40,000. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Madam Chair, I just want to be clear to the Minister that I'm not questioning the Minister's decision or authority to have a staff member from the GNWT to sit on this board. What I'm questioning is has the department considered using other members other than a GNWT senior staff member on this board? There are other members that could be used in this capacity and Mr. Bailey could be a strong advocate. Is this an option to look at? So I hope the Minister is not thinking that I wanted to see his DM off the board. Is there an opening there for other members to sit, other than a GNWT senior member of the government? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, initially the board was set up and consisted of, I think, a majority of bureaucrats and that has been the case to this point, until today. We would certainly consider looking at a process if there is some desire that we look at changing the board members on a scheduled basis. We'll take a look at that and see if there is any merit to doing that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you for that, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's what I was asking and hoping I would hear, to be open to that consideration. So if there's merit, certainly, to have other members represent the Northwest Territories. There's a really important issue and we only target \$40,000 to this issue, so that's my point here. In that motion we talked about, Madam Chair, this issue is really key and it's important and it's seems so little money into this budget line item. I think it should be way up there as funding. Anyway, that's a comment I want to make to the department, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I don't hear any question there. Corporate management, grants and contributions, contributions, \$40,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. Page 11-19, activity summary, environmental protection, operations expenditure summary, \$2.799 million. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. On the environmental protection issue and specifically to the industrial activities that are going on on the winter road to supply the mines, it is the busiest road in the NWT and we have heard of some trucks going off the road and there have been some accidents on the road. I just want to know what sort of work the department is involved in to monitor that. I'm sure all the people operating on that are doing their best to minimize any potential accidents, but accidents do happen, especially when there are busy activities going on. So I'm just interested in knowing what the department is doing to monitor them and how do we enforce any clean-up or protection from that. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The winter road the Member is referring to falls under federal jurisdiction and it is monitored by the land use people from the federal government and also the water management people. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: So do we have no involvement in that? Do we have access to information on the federal government's work? What kind of relationship do we have? Do we have any means of making sure that the federal government is taking care of their responsibilities in their jurisdiction which, after all, is in our backyard? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. We do have an agreement with the federal government and Nunavut, and we have a document called NWT/Nunavut spill agreement which requires us to share information and work together, Madam Chair. On the ice roads, it is still a federal jurisdiction. On the NWT highways, that becomes a Government of the Northwest Territories responsibility.

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

MS. LEE: So then on the NWT roads I guess down to the end of the paved road I guess, what sort of situation are we having? We've heard of a couple of accidents of late. Were there substantial environmental consequences from that, or is that under control in terms of being monitored and making sure that any spillage coming out of that has been cleaned up and accounted for? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm told that the amount of accidents we've seen in terms of spillage, there's been five accidents. They've all been cleaned up. There are some requirements once the warmer weather sets in and there's starting to be some spring runoff; additional clean-up may be required.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Next on the list I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under the energy management section is talk about this c the government's response to climate change. Can the Minister talk about some of the projects that they have done, because it says the energy management encourages energy conservation and the use of energy-efficient technologies and alternative energy sources. Can they demonstrate some of those projects and qualify that a bit? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, there are a number of initiatives that we've worked on with other partners; first of all, providing support to the Arctic Energy Alliance. We have also been working with the Aurora Research Institute and looking at some wind energy development projects. I think those are the only ones that we have, along with other ones, that promote public awareness on benefits of energy management. Our budget up to now had been \$200,000 per year.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Are we doing anything to encourage energy conservation, and are we doing anything in the area of using energy-efficient technologies?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, we have been working on developing a new energy plan with the Department of ITI and also working on a Greenhouse Gas Strategy that we will be tabling, or releasing, on March 15th. In it, it lists a whole number of actions that we will be bringing forward. There have also been announcements from the federal government side that we are hoping will complement these documents and allow us to move forward with a really meaningful budget and a list of action items that would fall in the area that the Member is requesting information on.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Minister further explain a little more of what they've actually produced? He did talk about the Aurora Institute on the wind energy. From the sounds of it, I'm not sure what we produced. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thanks, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, we were working with the other departments on some initiatives. With the wind energy project, I think Tuktoyaktuk had one and was it Paulatuk that had the other one?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We worked with the EnerGuide program for homeowners and the pellet stove project at the correctional centre.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's the stuff I was trying to boil down; what have we produced and done, and the energy guide, and I hear your department is working with the wood pellet, that's good.

You mentioned you'll be tabling your strategy on the 15th but that's the last day of session. Is there any way we could speed that up, at least by the 14th? I'm sure I don't have to explain to the Minister, but of course, for the public record, it doesn't have the advantage of the orders of the day, tabling of documents is the 11th item on the agenda and oral questions is number six. So in other

words, we get to see it and we don't have a chance to discuss it the next day that doesn't exist in theory because we may adjourn before the 16th. So is there any way of at least getting an advance copy of this so we can maybe deal with this potentially in the House on the 14th or the 15th? Otherwise we don't get to see it and discuss it until we're back in session in the middle of May. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm assuming the Member will still be working the next day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Ohhh.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, we have a process we have to follow and we will do our best to try to get the information brought forward. I'm not sure if it's already printed or if it's still at the printers, but the document is basically completed and we'll do everything we can to try to get it to the Members as soon as we can.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Although I didn't necessarily want to go down this line, what process are we talking about that if the document has already been produced or is out to the printer that we can't table it in a timely way to be dealing with it in this House? Yes, I will be here on the 16th, if necessary. So the fact is, I would like to see this document that we have been talking about for several months. Session is coming to a quick end and by the time we see it in a public context to deal with it, session will be over. So I guess I am asking for some type of commitment from the Minister. Is there any way we can speed this up? Him being the Minister and acknowledging that he would be in charge of the department, is there any way he can use his influence as the Minister to get the document on the floor so we can talk about it? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, one of the steps we have to take is to bring the document back to Cabinet for ratification. We, at that point, will discuss our ability to release the document earlier. I don't see, pending that there are no problems at the Cabinet level, that we shouldn't...I don't see why we wouldn't be able to bring it forward. We will do everything we can.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Page 11-19, activity summary, environmental protection, operations expenditure summary. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just another area of concern I had noted on the budget here to remind myself, during committee discussions quite some time ago, I had brought forward a concept about ENR maybe working to purchase or implement a waste oil furnace program where we become central depot and we are able to burn waste oil for heat. Recognizing that either in a large community or a small community, we are always limited as to where you can bring your waste oil. Something like this in a small community could be used to

heat a small garage, a government garage, that is, something along those lines. You could be cleaning up some of the waste oil that is sitting in people's yards or that shows up at the dumps in the middle of the night. I brought forward that concept. Where has it gone since it was brought forward a few months ago? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The issue of waste oil is something that is of interest in a lot of the smaller communities. A number of the people in the private sector have these waste oil furnaces that gather the oil in communities and utilize it. We are planning to look at the possibility of expanding our waste reduction and recovery program. We need to look at a number of things that have been brought forward by Members of this House and members of the general public, including electronic waste, plastic bags, tires, batteries, fuel, oil, chemical drums, paper and paper products and cardboard, milk containers and waste oil. We are out right now with the request for proposals to find a contractor that will look at the feasibility and investigate the feasibility of expanding this program and collecting items. We expect to have that on board very shortly. We hope we will have somebody on stream by the end of March. We would like to have a report ready, a discussion paper, for June.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe if the Minister could expand what this contractor is looking into. As far as I am concerned, if we purchased one of these waste oil furnaces, they could range in the price range of between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and in theory we could be getting that almost free because that waste oil has to go somewhere. If you live in Wrigley, you live in Fort McPherson, you live in Lutselk'e, someone eventually is going to change the oil in their car. Someone is going to have to eventually deal with these things. They have to go somewhere. I am just curious as to what we are doing with them now. My best guess is probably nothing. Even the City of Yellowknife, they have an amnesty period every year and they say come bring your waste oil to the fire hall, drop it off and out of that goes quite a volume of the stuff. So it's got to go somewhere. My suggestion on this is I would like to see some initiative and some action on this where we could find a small community that could use a dual furnace that burns waste oil and whatnot. We could be doing something very good with it. Using it as an example as opposed to hiring a contractor and maybe doing a big study and report. Madam Chair, I would maybe like some thoughts on that from the Minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. McLeod.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Madam Chair, the contractor will investigate all the different scenarios and look at the infrastructure, infrastructure requirements and cost of embarking on expanding a program. We can't just go take a one-off and say we don't need a study and go ahead. A lot of the communities already have waste oil furnaces. I know in the community of Fort Providence, there are three waste oil furnaces and you aren't going to find any waste

oil laying around. So Fort Simpson has one, there are other communities that have them. We would have to investigate how many communities would benefit from these initiatives. There are a lot of things we would need to look at before we expand the program to include one of these things. We are certainly not in a position where we can do all of them, so we are going to have to pick and choose the ones that are most cost-effective and the ones that would benefit us the most. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Environmental protection, operations expenditure summary, \$2.799 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed? Thank you. Page 11-21, activity summary, environmental protection, grants and contributions, contributions, \$460,000, total grants and contributions, \$460,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. Page 11-25, activity summary, forest management, operations expenditure summary, \$30.542 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Thank you. Page 11-27, activity summary, forest management, grants and contributions, grants, \$100,000, total grants and contributions, \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I had a question on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Forest management, page 11-27, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a lot of money that we spend on forest management and part of that is the fire management aspect. I would like the Minister to tell us, if he could, please, where we are at in determining what the future holds in terms of contract, length of contract, change of contract, are we going to contract, are we going to tender, are we going to RFP? What kind of stipulations are going to be on that? Have we assessed the viability of proponents? I would just like to get an update on where we are at with that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Minister, we are on page 11-25, that is where the question generates. It's not on the \$100,000 number, it's on the contracted services number of \$16.5 million. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure what contract is being referenced. Are we talking about aircraft tankers? Are we talking about forest fire contracts? Maybe we could ask for a little more clarity. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I am talking about probably the major piece of this which would be the fire suppression

contract, not the rotary wing, not the fire crews, the big ticket item in this budget. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: I am assuming that we are talking about the air tankers that are up for renewal. Yes, Mr. Chairman, the contract for the air tankers, both parts are going up for renewal. We have put out an expression of interest. We've received four people that came back and qualified as potential bidders and we have gone out to a tender process. We've gone out for request for proposal...Thank you. That process is in place right now and we are going through a question and answer period and that will close by the end of April. We are expecting to award the contract by June of this summer.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Could I ask the Minister, please, Mr. Chairman, what the duration of that contract will be?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, we have expanded the term of the contract to 10 years.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask if the four potential bidders are all northern companies?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, we have three northern companies and one southern company.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I would like to ask the Minister if the business incentive policy will apply to this contract.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: In terms of the four companies then, they have already been through a process that would determine that they are qualified in the sense that they have the capacity to deal with a contract of this nature.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: That's correct, Mr. Chair.

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

We are on activity summary, page 11-25, forest management, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chairman, a couple of questions in terms of forest management. With the communities that have forest fire suppression crews. When there is a fire, sometimes they work a certain amount of hours and you have to pay them overtime and sometimes you decide to pay them overtime or do I go fight a fire that could be out in a couple of hours, three or four hours? Do I leave it until they punch the clock at 8:00 or 10:00 and then go fight the fire? How is a decision like that determined whether you do fight or not fight?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I think I heard two questions there; one in terms of how are the contract firefighters are paid. Our contract with the communities and the community crews are on a daily rate. The arrangements for overtime and things of that nature are with the contractor and their employees. In terms of what fires are going to be fought, it falls under a fire response plan and our policy is to meet with the community and explain to them the forest fire management policy and the areas that we deem as areas that should be protected, especially areas close to the community and we sometimes allow input from the community in terms of what they would like to see and where they think we should protect and fight fires. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. There is some flexibility as far as coming into a community and determining what areas can be fought and have some discretion there by the community. That is to say this is a good moose area or a good trapping area. Can the Minister relay a message to the regional staff to get into the community early and look at some of the areas that could be looked at in terms of fighting fires this season? Also, to have a process where there are some areas that require some difficult decisions to be made. Sometimes a community does not always agree with the department's decision as to these firefighting methods. They should come back into the community and at least have some discussion with them, otherwise it causes a lot of hardship and confusion in terms of the forest management policy in his department. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We certainly expect our staff to have good relationships with the communities and discussions on an ongoing basis. We will certainly remind our staff to go into communities and update and have refresher discussions on the fire protection, fire response areas and try to get a consensus on areas that should be fought and other areas that should be left to burn.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I must say the regional staff has been very

good in terms of this area here. I want to let the Minister know that the regional staff, I have seen them come into our communities, talk to our members, take them out, fly the parameters of the fire and fly around with some of the key members, decision-makers in the community, and let them know what's going on. I just want to encourage that. In my region at least, it's been a good open relationship. I thought I would bring that up because some members from my communities talk about some of these issues and fires that should be fought and some that should be let go. I just wanted to relay that to the Minister at this time. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a practice that we encourage in all regions. We like to have the community members take part in flying the parameter of their areas and we also encourage members to go see areas that have burnt and are now regenerating and some of the benefits of having those fires allowed to burn. We certainly will encourage that and take the message out within our ranks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. I have Mr. Lafferty next.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I would like to focus on the fire suppression and forest resources. To follow up on Mr. Yakeleya's question on the forest fires, does the department get calls out on every fire or is there a limitation on how critical each fire is? There are some fires that are ignored in my region specifically. I would like to have the department's response on that and then I will have a follow-up question. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, we are notified and we track every fire. We have fire response plans that fall within their region and are coded in terms of a response. Some areas, we will definitely fight the fire. Other areas we will monitor and there are other areas that we won't fight at all. Those plans we share with the communities and we always encourage input of the community leaders and people in the regions.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think it was last year I raised that issue too. There was a grave concern in the areas in my riding, in the Whati area, where our elders told us it was a migratory path, feeding grounds. There was a big forest fire there and the fire was just completely ignored. The fire crew were in Whati. I was visiting them at that time because it was during my...before I got elected, just a month before I got elected I believe it was. The fire crew was sitting there waiting to be shipped out. There was a big forest fire and you could see it from the community, but it was ignored. I raised that issue. When I raised that issue, it was a lack of funding. Funding was an issue. So I am just wondering if that funding was an issue at that time. Has that been identified here as emergency measures to deal with those fires that are destroying our habitats, the feeding of the herds and also the caribou migratory path? Right now, we are talking about the declining caribou. It was a real critical

issue, but we need to deal with forest fires. Is that in a budget to deal with those issues that have been outstanding for some time now? Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, no fire is ignored because of budget restraints. Fires may be in an area that we don't see any benefit to fighting. There are times where there are fires that are in an area that we have to pull crews from other areas and have priority over certain fires. So there is really no ignoring of fires that are because of budget restraints. We certainly want our plans to be upfront so that the communities know. We have situations where some community leaders get excited because a fire is burning in a location and they don't see any action. So it's really important that we share our information with communities, so everybody knows what areas would be responded to first, what areas would be monitored, and other areas that would be allowed to burn. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is a priority for me as well. Fighting fires, the Minister indicated that not all fires are ignored but priorities are given to certain fires. I would like to know if they consult with elders on community priorities. Those are the trappers and hunters of the land, but the decision comes down from the Fort Smith area. We have our own jurisdiction and community land. I think that a decision needs to be with the grassroots, the elders of the community, which I don't see happening. When I was in Whati at that time, it didn't happen. I would like to ask the Minister, Mr. Chair, if they could involve the elders if there is a critical fire near the community, involve the elders to move forward with it. If it's a critical area like a trapping area or a migratory area, then we can fight the fire. That big fire was a main area, essential area, where people were gone. There were cabins put there that burnt down. That's the question I have for the department. I would like to have the elders involved in the decision-making when it's near the community. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will certainly follow up to ensure that the communities the Member has referred to are consulted. It is our intention to have all communities, the leadership familiar with the fire response plans in their area and in their region. We cannot, and probably will not, fight all fires, but we have a priority list and response areas that we share with the communities and I certainly will share it with the communities in his riding.

As to involving elders when it comes to a fire close to communities, our practice has been to involve the emergency measures committee and usually that is the chief and council and if they want to expand it to include elders, I am sure we can allow for that. It's mostly to look at the different plans required or maybe needed and providing information. So we certainly will look at that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, just a final note. With respect to the decision-making, even though it comes down from Fort Smith, the essential headquarter location, I think the decision should lie with the community. Over and over I have been told that the community has requested to fight a fire or around that nature, but Fort Smith is saying no we are not going there. Again, they are the ones who know the community. I think the decision should lie with the community. We are the ones who are impacted, not Fort Smith. So I think that needs to be clear. We are the ones impacted. So we like to make the decisions at the community level. The sooner the better. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly agree with the Member's comments. We agree that the community should have input and decision-making into the response areas. However, we can't afford to wait until there is a fire burning in a certain area before we start debating whether it should be fought or not. We need to have good advanced planning and that involves fire response planning. We will certainly commit to going to the Member's riding and sitting down with his communities and show him what has been utilized in terms of fire response plans and priorities up to now. If that needs to be changed or upgraded, we will commit to doing that. Thank you.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have some quick questions which follow up on Jackson's questions. When were these response area lists updated in all these areas of firefighting? Do they get updated annually, biannually, five or 10 years? When? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Before I go to the Minister, I want to remind Members to address Members by their last name and witnesses by their last name, please, committee. Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had to check with the deputy minister to see how far back it was, but the policy came into place in 1988. Fire response plans were introduced at that time. They are upgraded on an annual basis. If there is desire from any communities to do that, we will certainly provide them. Our officers are expected to have good communication with communities and keep the communities up to date. At the same time, Mr. Chairman, sometimes there is high turnover within a community and it may be difficult, but we will commit to contacting communities and let them know that there is a process in place.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me rephrase my question. I didn't ask about when the plans are revisited. I want to know when these priority lists that the forest management retains on where they are going to actually go and fight a fire and where they fall in the priority list. How often do they go into these communities that are in and around these areas and sit down and talk

with the communities to try to redraw the priority areas in and around their communities? Is that done on an annual basis? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The priorities are in the forest management policy. The ability for a community can be done at any time; ability to update their priority response areas can be updated at any time at the request of the community. We don't necessarily go and review the plan every year. It could be done on an annual basis if things change that much. We don't expect the priorities to change once it's set. The number one priority for protection would be the community and then it starts going outwards. Those plans, we keep on monitoring them. We utilize them to respond to fires. So it's something that could happen as often as the community would like.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the communities should be made aware that they have the option to revisit these priority areas that the government has slated as priority and non-priority or high priority versus low priority. I have gotten a lot of elders who have come to me and said they have seen fires burning in perfectly good caribou feeding grounds and the fires are just left to burn. To them, that's a high priority. There might not be any cabins in the area, but again it might be prime trapping area, prime migratory route area and yet the fire is just left to burn. I know there are pros and cons to say we could let it burn or we could fight the fire. We are letting it burn and refurbishing. When they are in migratory routes and feeding areas that a lot of the elders deem as always being like the way it is, I think that should be right up there on the priority list. Just let me get back to that priority list. Are there migratory routes, or calving areas, or calving grounds, or feeding areas, or wildlife habitat on that list besides cabins and communities? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, yes.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: No, that's fine, thanks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi. Next on the list I have Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple more questions on this tanker contract. In previous contract awards, is 10 year a new length of time? How many years were previous contracts awarded for? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I guess the term that is laid out in the contract is for 10 years and the previous contract was for five years with an extension clause, I think. So this is, to

answer the Member's question, yes, 10 years is a new time frame.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know much about these kinds of contracts, but I can tell you 10 years is a long time. There are a lot of variable costs that come to play in terms of fuel and labour. Ten years is a long ways out there. I am just curious if there is some kind of an escalation component to this contract. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask the Member to repeat the question? I didn't pick it up.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): I will go to Mrs. Groenewegen to please repeat your question.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I just said 10 years is a long time and a lot of things can happen that would affect the variable costs of performing a contract like this. Ten years is a long time. I was asking if there is a component in the contract for some form of escalation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Escalator, Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, first of all, I have to recognize this contract has very high capital costs and, yes, there is a form of escalation in the contract.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mrs. Groenewegen?

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I would like to ask the Minister, since this is an RFP as opposed to a tender, what percentage of the contract is being awarded for price? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chair, we are getting into an area that is fairly confidential. We have hired a fairness commissioner to guide us through this process. It is very sensitive and releasing how the contract will be analyzed and points awarded is something we can't provide right now.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I can understand that and I appreciate that. I won't go down that road anymore, but let me just ask you, are the proponents aware of the breakdown for the various things? I know quite often in RFPs, for example, maybe only 25 percent of the points are awarded for price and a lot of the rest of stuff has to do with experience, corporate profile, management and northern content and all kinds of other things. I would assume that the proponents know the breakdown. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the proponents are aware.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, committee. We are on activity summary, forest management, operations expenditure summary, \$30.542 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 11-27, activity summary, forest management, grants and contributions, grants, \$100,000, total grants and contributions, \$100,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 11-31, activity summary, wildlife, operations expenditure summary, \$13.281 million. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a quick question on the bison ranch remediation plans in Deninu Kue. Is that included in this wildlife budget over the next two years and at what price?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is money in this budget for the final part of the remediation for the Hook Lake bison herd.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The remediation plans that we pretty much talked about that were over a three to four-year period. Is this budget only going to cover for this year? Are there any plans to do environmental assessment work in the previous years, some water sampling and soil sampling over the next three years or five years after this remediation is complete? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have already dealt with the compensation. This year we plan to go in and clean up any of the leftover equipment and fencing and things of that nature and remove it. There will be one final, I assume next year, to go and do a final assessment to determine if there is any contamination of the site.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mr. Villeneuve?

MR. VILLENEUVE: No, that's fine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one quick question with regard to the Species at Risk Act. In your opening remarks, you talked about species at risk. I am just wondering can you tell us how far the development of this Species at Risk Act is? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, after some time the whole process was at a standstill this past spring, the Species at Risk Act started moving forward. There has been a lot of work with the aboriginal governments and we have agreed that we would hire a contractor to do the drafting, and discussion has been taking place and translation has also taken place. However, our target to have this piece of legislation brought forward to this session is something we weren't able to meet. We are hoping we are able to come forward. I am not sure we will be able to commit to coming forward for the spring session, but that's something we are looking at.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mr. Pokiak?

MR. POKIAK: I wonder if it's possible if we can somehow speed up the process. We talked about it almost a year ago and I think it's important now that we start looking at something like this. I wonder if we could try to speed it up so we could have it in May. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really, along with my staff, really wanted to see this whole process speed up, as the Member has indicated, so that we could see the introduction by this session. We looked at ways of how we could accommodate that and we weren't able to do so. Hiring additional contractors to do drafting doesn't work. We need to have the same drafter to work on the document so we are consistent. We need the translation to take place and the aboriginal governments are telling us that they need a process that will allow them to have comfort that they will have good analysis and provide quality feedback. We've received a number of letters, since word has gone out that this Species at Risk Act wasn't going to come forward during this session, that we stay on course and continue doing the good work and moving it forward, so we can look at either an introduction late this summer or early in the new government.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To follow up on Mr. Pokiak's question on the Species at Risk Act, I mentioned it in my region and they certainly want to see some development. This has been long overdue in terms of this whole Northwest Territories development policy. It seems like we would certainly be in favour of seeing this come together and see some light on this Species at Risk Act by having this come to some reality by the end of the life of this government.

I certainly encourage the Minister to know how important this Species at Risk Act is to our people here, to get the players on board to move it along in a speedy fashion, as Mr. Pokiak was saying. I certainly would support the Minister in whatever he can do to get this Species at Risk Act into some form of document that we could be proud of at the end of the life of this government. I guess I wanted to convey that message also to the Minister in terms of my correspondence with my region over the last couple of days. This was a big issue and I just am relaying that

message to the Minister on behalf of our people in the Sahtu region.

Mr. Chairman, the question I want to ask specific to the Minister is on the Protected Areas Strategy. As you know, our region is one of the areas that are indicated for the Protected Areas Strategy. I want to ask the Minister regarding the areas around the Sahtu; Great Bear Lake and the Fort Good Hope area. How is this government going to work with the federal government to ensure that these areas receive the proper protection under the Protected Areas Strategy and those areas that were identified by our people and this government? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, we certainly plan to continue to support the communities as they submit their proposal for Canada protected sites. We have right now 16 communities with 20 different sites at various stages. We hired a person to work with us to help us guide through this process and work with the communities. We will continue to support the Protected Areas Steering Committee and continue to promote the Protected Areas Strategy.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask the Minister, what does he need from this government to push it and knock on the federal government's door and say we want to get the land protected under the Protected Areas Strategy? He mentioned 16 communities, that's a lot of communities. Everybody is probably wanting to make sure their land is protected. I am not too sure which communities, whether it's settled or unsettled land claims. What is it he needs from us in terms of asking the federal government to do the honourable and right thing to protect these lands from the government as elders wish to do under this strategy? It's a good strategy. We need to get some movement on this. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member has referenced a number of sites in his riding and in his region. We have worked with his communities of Deline and Good Hope to move the sites forward. Our people have gone with the delegations that have met with the federal government. These are federal sites and I think we just have to continue to pressure the government to start moving these sites forward. Some of these have been in place for some time. Communities have worked hard and long and we expect this coming year we will start to see some positive results.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: I look forward to the Minister's announcement that some of these sites will be protected with regard to working with the federal government.

Mr. Chairman, the oil company that worked in our region that was planning to do some work on a sacred site identified by Tulita elders in the community of Tulita also identified a site. The oil company voluntarily withdrew that

piece of land because of the nature of the site and the sacredness of the site. I am hoping that we could have that type of a meeting to show that there are areas around Great Bear Lake, Fort Good Hope and other areas that are identified in the Northwest Territories that would see some withdrawal of land. That's more of a comment to the Minister. I know he's working on it and I hope we can give support where he needs it to get the federal government to start withdrawing some of these lands. I know it's a balance between pro-development and resources development in terms of protecting our land. It's something we need to see; how serious the federal government is in protecting some of our lands and not just giving it away to oil companies and mining companies to say go ahead and you work a deal with the communities, you work this deal out with the communities. Let's stand up for the little guy here in the North.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, the federal government, the territorial government and also the environmental non-government organizations have collectively contributed over \$16 million for implementation of the action plan up to 2009-10.

The Sahtu is of real interest. There is a lot of activity there. Ducks Unlimited and INAC have contributed some money towards putting a position in that region. That person has been hired by ENR and will be working as a regional Sahtu community coordinator. I don't have the name of the person, but it's a lady from Deline. She came on stream to assist this process as of September last year.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question on some wildlife management issues dealing with wildlife habitat and impacts on wildlife from human activity in reference to the Taltson hydro dam that is still in operation and still has a lot of impact on hunters and trappers up and down the Taltson area. One trapper was showing me pictures from last December of water levels coming right up to his cabin, flooding out his dog houses, flooding his cabin out. He said every year, in the springtime...In December there is a high demand for power, the gates are opened, the water levels come up, the beavers are forced out of their lodges out on top to prevent them from drowning but they wind up freezing to death anyway.

So each spring, he says, there are hundreds and hundreds of beaver carcasses on the river. Is there any wildlife monitoring and mitigating and compensation? Are there any compensation issues that should be addressed with the people in the area especially if they have pictures of things that are going on? I think probably the onus is on the Power Corporation to ensure that there is some sort of monitoring agency that does it for them so they get their water licences renewed. Does the wildlife management section of ENR provide for something as drastic as that? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the project is under NCPD and that corporate body would be the people that would have to be dealing with any formal compensation along with ITI. Our role would be to gather the information, and if there is a form of complaint or a concern, we'd certainly have our renewable resources officer, I think it's Lutselk'e that the Member is referring to or Resolution. So through those communities we have officers in those communities and we certainly would take that information forward or document it for the Member.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: No, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll take the Minister's positive response on that forum and I know it's an NWT Power Corp issue and I have raised it with them and it seems to have fallen on deaf ears all the time. These trappers are providing photographic proof. I saw the pictures and there's obvious flooding going on there in the middle of December. So we've definitely got some issues there to deal with and I think he said he's even showed them to the Power Corp personnel and they said it's a compensation issue that's been long gone, it's done, it's history, it's Government of Canada when it was NCPD, I think. So basically he's just getting sloughed off and I think he's spoken to renewable resource officers and they're basically telling him there's no real permanent damage. It's basically flooding out his cabin and once the water recedes and his cabin seems to be okay, it's still standing, but that's not the issue for him. The issue for him is basically the wildlife issue. So I'll just give your department a heads up and maybe they can just relay the information down to their renewable resource officer to maybe touch base with them and I'll let you know who it is at some other time, but maybe to go out there in the springtime and see if there are hundreds of beaver carcasses floating down the river after the ice flows because that's what he's telling me. I think it's something that we should really be addressing anyway if that Taltson expansion project has any glimmer of hope of going through. Just a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. I see the department officials taking notes on that. Thank you, committee. We are on page 11-31. I have Mr. Pokiak next.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll leave it to your discretion I guess, I'm going to ask a question in regard to the wildlife and the maintaining of wildlife, more specific towards the caribou I guess because of what's happening over the last year or so. I'd like to ask the Minister, Mr. Chairman, there's been aerial surveys done over the last year or so and they've been working with the co-management boards in terms of the harvesting of the herds. I'm just wondering if the Minister will continue to work with these co-management boards to make sure that they can sustain the level it is now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. I'll leave it up to the Minister as to whether he'd like to answer that question. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, we'll certainly answer part of the question and that is to commit to working with the co-management boards.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mr. Pokiak?

MR. POKIAK: Thank you. Just one last question for the follow-up here. In working with the co-management boards, does the department do that on a monthly basis or so just to make sure that they are keeping in line with or keeping in contact with them to make sure that things can be sustained? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, we have members on the board that meet on a regular basis.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Thank you, committee. We are on page 11-31, activity summary, wildlife, operations expenditure summary, \$13.281 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 11-33, activity summary, wildlife, grants and contributions, contributions, \$255,000, total grants and contributions, \$255,000. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've just got a quick question on the support of natural resources and environmental issues contributions from \$322,000 down to zero. Maybe I could just get some clarification on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Where exactly...Oh, you're talking the '05-06 actuals?

MR. VILLENEUVE: Yes.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, we'll have Nancy Magrum speak to the issue.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Ms. Magrum.

MS. MAGRUM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The contributions various are one-time contributions, they're not ongoing contributions. So they are above what we regularly budget for in contributions and we have a list of the contributions that we expended in 2005-2006. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Anything further, Mr. Villeneuve?

MR. VILLENEUVE: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Could Ms. Magrum maybe just give me or the Members here an example of one-time contributions in that area? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Ms. Magrum.

MS. MAGRUM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For example, we had a \$40,000 contribution to the Gwich'in Tribal Council, a \$60,000 contribution to Sahtu Secretariat, \$15,000 Hook Lake bison recovery, \$50,000 Ducks Unlimited in Trout Lake, \$75,000 University of Alberta. So it's made up of an assortment of contributions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Anything further, Mr. Villeneuve?

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I just wanted a little more detail on why is it just one time. What are these people doing that it's just a one shot deal here with wildlife management? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. For that I'll go to Mr. Minister.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, they're one-time arrangements for isolated contracts and the difficulty and why it's at zero is because some of these things are not anticipated and they're various contributions. If you look at the document on page 11-33, it lists it as actuals that we report.

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

MR. VILLENEUVE: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I see those are actuals. So if we got \$322,000 in contributions going out in 05-06, does that mean that in '06-07 we didn't have any applications coming in for similar contributions from the similar organizations?

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we don't have the detail on every contract as the Member is asking us to lay out. We'll have the deputy minister speak to how the process is set up.

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

MR. BAILEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. These are individual projects with third parties that probably attract other funding from other funding sources to do specific pieces of work, as Mrs. Magrum mentioned; studies that were done with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, there's other ones here like with Wildlife Habitat Canada. So they are small individual projects that took place in the fiscal year '05-06.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Bailey. Anything further, Mr. Villeneuve?

MR. VILLENEUVE: Yes, just one more quick question. Since we make contributions to support all these research projects or small one-time projects, do we get copies of those?

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

MR. BAILEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there was a document produced or some other product from those projects, we would have a copy of it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Mr. Bailey. Thank you, committee. We're on 11-33, wildlife, grants and contributions, contributions, total grants and contributions, \$255,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 11-36, information item, lease commitments, infrastructure. Are there any questions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 11-37 is another information item, environment fund. Any questions there?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Page 11-38, 11-39, 11-40, 11-41, 11-42 and 11-43, work performed on behalf of others, information item for a total of \$4.248 million. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a quick question on the Bison Control Program for the Wood Buffalo National Park and also for just basically bison here and around Yellowknife too. Is that sunset, this program, because I don't see the funding for '07-08? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: We'll have Ms. Magrum respond to that.

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

MS. MAGRUM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The work on behalf of others, it's similar to the contribution agreement. We only record it once there's actually a signed agreement in place. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Magrum. Anything further, Mr. Villeneuve? Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Next I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on 11-39, Sahtu GIS project, Sahtu banding project and Dall sheep studies, these numbers, are they in a similar situation as Mr. Villeneuve asked in terms of the Bison Control Program in terms of money not recorded for 2007-2008? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Minister, would you like me to go to Ms. Magrum? Ms. Magrum.

MS. MAGRUM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's the same answer, Mr. Chair. These agreements tend to be renegotiated partway through the fiscal year. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Ms. Magrum. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess sometimes, again, we look at in terms of the negotiated agreements that were for these projects, specific for mine for the Sahtu region in terms of the Dall sheep studies, is there sometime within the next three or four months that we would say yes, we have an agreement, studies are going to happen and this is what we agreed to through our negotiation in terms of the project? Is this a five-year project, a 10-year project, or a one-year project? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll certainly follow up once we have a firm commitment or we

can confirm that there is a joint project or if the project will continue. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in light of that answer, is there a backup plan if the projects decide not to follow through by failed negotiations or just shift of some of the priorities? Some of these projects are significant, so is there any type of a backup plan to continue on concluding these projects? Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If we weren't able to come to an agreement on some of these discussions, we'd certainly have to re-evaluate whether the project should continue or not and if there's other sources of funding.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Minister. Anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I would ask the Minister if he would look at working with our region, our regional boards on these issues in terms of, you know, the department may decide not to continue, but maybe the region really wants to see more studies done on these areas here. What type of cooperation agreement would they have with the region in terms of jointly making a decision? It may be the department voicing that decision, but at least it comes to the region and say talk to the elders, talk to the board and say we want to have this project re-looked at or at least make that decision together. Thank you.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, these projects are all discussed and negotiated at the regional level. The boards are involved in most of these projects and I'm told that the board and the Members from the Sahtu have been very determined in getting these things moved forward. So I'm sure they will be followed through and we'll see some positive results.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, committee. We're on page 11-38, 11-39, 11-40, 11-41, 11-42 and 11-43, work performed on behalf of others for a total of \$4.248 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I now draw your attention back to page 11-7, department summary, operations expenditure summary, \$57.144 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Now if you could, I'll draw your attention to the infrastructure acquisition plan, page 10-5, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, corporate management, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$601,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Total activity, \$601,000. Mr. Yakeleya.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Sorry, Mr. Yakeleya, I'm so used to seeing your hand up.

---Laughter

We're on page 10-8, infrastructure acquisition plan, forest management, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$1.127 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Total activity, \$1.127 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. On to page 10-10, infrastructure, acquisition plan, wildlife, tangible capital assets, total tangible capital assets, \$650,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Total activity, \$650,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Total department, \$2.378 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that the Department of ENR's main estimates is concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Agreed. Thank you, committee. I'd like to thank you, Minister McLeod, Ms. Magrum and Mr. Bailey, for being with us this evening.

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. By agreement earlier, we had agreed to consider Bill 18 and 19 and I'd now like to ask if the Minister responsible for An Act to Amend the Education Act, Bill 18, Mr. Dent, is able to introduce the bill?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to introduce Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education Act. The purpose of this legislation is to provide for a definition of "ratepayer."

The current definition of "ratepayer" in the Education Act is "a ratepayer as defined by the Cities, Towns and Villages Act." The definition of ratepayer in that act was repealed, meaning that there is no longer a functional statutory definition of the term ratepayer for the purposes of the Education Act.

Mr. Chairman, this bill repeals the existing definition of ratepayer and replaces it with a definition that is equivalent to the definition that used to be in the Cities, Towns and Villages Act. This amendment is necessary to restore the meaning of the term "ratepayer" to the

meaning that was intended when the Education Act was originally enacted.

We trust that members of the committee will agree that this amendment is necessary and appropriate.

We would be pleased to answer any questions the members of the committee may have.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Minister Dent. I'd now like to ask the chairman of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, who reviewed the bill, Mr. Yakeleya, if you could make comments on the bill please?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The standing committee has reviewed Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education Act, on December 8, 2006, and notes the amendment is of a housekeeping nature. The previous definition of "ratepayer" in the Education Act was based on a definition contained in the Cities, Towns and Villages Act. As this definition was repealed, it is necessary to replace the definition in the Education Act with one that is consistent with the Cities, Towns and Villages Act.

The committee had no concerns with this legislation. However, individual Members may have comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya. I'd now like to ask the Minister responsible for Bill 18 if he'd like to bring in witnesses?

HON. CHARLES DENT: Yes please, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. I'd now ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee, and thank you, Minister Dent. I would now like you to introduce your witnesses, for the record, Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right I have Mr. Mark Aitken and on my left, Mr. Dan Daniels.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Welcome, gentlemen, to our proceedings. We're here with Bill 18. I'd now like to open up the floor to general comments on Bill 18.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Clause by clause.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause by clause. Okay. Clause by clause review of the bill. Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education Act. Clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Does committee agree to Bill 18 as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does the committee agree that Bill 18 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Bill 18 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, Minister Dent, Mr. Daniels, Mr. Aitken.

Thank you, committee. Thank you, Minister Dent. We'll now move on to Bill 19. Bill 19 is An Act to Amend the Archives Act. For the introduction of that legislation, I'll go to Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to introduce Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act. The purpose of this legislation is to modernize legislation relating to the Northwest Territories archives. To that end, this bill proposes various amendments to the Archives Act.

This bill creates a new definition of the term "record" to include electronic records. It also amends the definitions of "government body" and "public record" so that the provisions of the Archives Act related to public records do not apply to the personal and constituency records of Members of the Legislative Assembly and the records of the Legislative Assembly and its committees. These changes will address concerns that have been raised respecting the implications of the existing definition and use of the terms "government body" and "public record" in the act.

This bill eliminates the Public Records Committee and transfers the committee's powers and functions to the archivist. This amendment is being made in response to the feedback from members of the Public Records Committee that the legal and audit issues arising in departmental records disposition cannot effectively be addressed through the committee. The advisory functions of the committee will be assumed by a new interdepartmental committee operating under policy to provide advice, direction and support to government bodies on records disposition issues.

Amendments will also be made to those provisions of the Archives Act that enable the making of regulations. New powers are added to make regulations respecting the transfer and storage of records, and to establish classes of records to which particular regulations apply. These provisions will also be amended to provide for the Commissioner in Executive Council as the sole authority to enact regulations under the act.

We trust that the members of the committee will agree that these amendments are both necessary and appropriate to ensure that the Archives Act is administered in an effective manner and reflects good archival practice.

We will be pleased to answer any questions the members of the committee may have.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Minister Dent. I would now like to ask the chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, Ms. Lee, the committee who reviewed Bill 19, for committee's comments. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Standing Committee on Social Programs reviewed Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act, at a public meeting held on December 8, 2006. The proposed amendments will ensure that electronic records like e-mails are captured in the definition of record. It will amend the definitions of government body and public record to clarify the provisions of the Archives Act relating to public records do not apply to the personal and constituency records of Members of the Legislative Assembly or to the records of the Legislative Assembly and its committees. This is important to ensure that the privacy of constituents is respected in dealing with Members of the Legislative Assembly and to ensure that the records of the Legislative Assembly are treated differently than a regular government record.

The committee would like to thank the department for recognizing these concerns. Other amendments recognize the evolution of sound record management procedures within the Government of the Northwest Territories, redefine the role of the territorial archivist, eliminate the Public Records Committee by transferring many of these duties to the territorial archivist, and allow for the formation of an interdepartmental committee to provide advice on records disposition issues.

Amendments are also proposed that will allow the Commissioner in Executive Council to make regulations relating to the transfer, storage and classification of records. The committee had no concerns with the proposed amendments and agreed it was necessary to update the act to reflect the current records management practices. Individual Members may have issues as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. I'd now like to ask the Minister, Minister Dent, if he'd like to bring in witnesses.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. I'd now like to ask the Minister to bring in his witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, thank you.

Thank you, Minister Dent. If you could, for the record, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right I have Mr. Richard Valpy, territorial archivist and on my left, Patricia Gall who is legal counsel.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Dent. Welcome to our proceedings this evening. Next I'll move into general comments on Bill 19. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try to be short here. I just have one question for clarification in terms of reading the Minister's statement on this bill as well as the amendments we are making here. One of the things we are doing through this amendment is to eliminate the Public Records Committee with an advisory committee. I think our understanding in the committee review was that the roles of different committees will be quite similar. Could I just ask the Minister as to what will be different between what was in existence before and what is being proposed under the new act? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The role of the committee will be assumed by the territorial archivist, Mr. Valpy. The reason for that, as is pointed out in the opening comments, is the whole issue around what needs to be retained and not retained has gotten a bit more complex. So the committee didn't feel they were the right body to be making some of these decisions, and it's at their recommendation that we've moved this forward.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. So the sole decisions on what would happen to disposition of records will be with the office of the archivist. If that's the case, how does...I know we're doing, in a way, administrative and housekeeping sort of amendments. But the area of public records is quite complex and I'm not sure if...It would be helpful to have a process in place or a policy in place that would give advice on policy information and implementation and such. Is there any room for any input on the policy or how documents are disposed? I know the territorial archivist is sitting with us, so this is not about the person but the office, the work itself, and in terms of public duty that we have to make sure that we have the necessary checks and balances to show that the work of this office changes with the times, that it responds to a changing environment. This will also deal with documents of all manners, whether they be in electronic format or a printed document. I don't think it includes Cabinet documents, but it's going to deal with all sorts of documents and changing times, and I'm sure the departments would want to have a say on what happens to this. So I just want to know what sort of public input process or just a wider stakeholder input process there will be under this new change. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under policy, the Public Records Committee, their advisory and oversight role will be accomplished through an Interdepartmental Archives Advisory Committee. So there will still be a body that provides advice and the policy will also advise on how legal and audit issues related to disposition of records can be addressed by departmental records managers in direct consultation with the Department of Justice and the Audit Bureau. So it isn't being left to the one position to do things arbitrarily. There is still a consultative process that will take place. It's just that the committee will be formed by way of policy and won't have the legally mandated role.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am in support of the bill, so I am not going to pursue this issue much further. But I would like to ask the Minister if he would be willing to come back to the committee, or at least communicate with the committee, on how this committee would work. Also, it's still not clear to me whether that advisory committee would be...Would the territorial archivist be required to follow the advice of the committee? What does advisory committee mean? Do they have real strength to have a say on the policy or what

happens to documents? How do these two offices fit in? Are they equal partners? It's just not clear to me still, but I am willing to let this legislation go, with the commitment from the Minister that he would communicate with the committee about how those implementation issues will be addressed. In all legislation like this, there's still a lot of work, once the law is passed, to work out the implementation process and I'm willing to let it go at that if the Minister could make a commitment to come back to us and communicate with us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd be pleased to appear in front of committee. I'm assuming the Member is referring to the Standing Committee on Social Programs; but whichever standing committee is appropriate, to again go through the role or the reasons for the replacement of the statutory role of the PRC, or Public Records Committee. Right now under current legislation it has a statutory role. That's not really being changed; it's just that right now their statutory role is to provide the Minister advice on what records should be destroyed. What we're doing is saying that through regulation we will create an advisory body to provide advice to the archivist about which records should be destroyed. But we can certainly appear in front of committee to outline how that will work.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. That's very clear to me now. My only question is, then, what is the obligation on the part of the territorial archivist's office to accept the recommendation of the advisory committee? Would that be set out in the policy? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department intends to enact regulations under the act with reference to the destruction of public records. So the standards will be set through those regulations. The archivist would have authority to destroy records where he or she is of the opinion that the public record does not have archival value, and they would take into account the recommendations of the new committee that will be established under regulation.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you. At this point, I'm not asking for the Minister to appear before the committee. I'm only one Member here. But I would like to get the Minister to communicate to the committee in writing as he goes about developing policies to implement this. That's all I'm asking for. I think the Minister already committed to that and I'll end there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Thank you, committee. Are there any other general comments? Mr. Braden.

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, oh, Mr. Braden.

AN HON. MEMBER: Go get em, Bill.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask a couple of questions. I think they're kind of technical in nature. Mr. Chairman, the act brings into play the new realm here, the digital era. We're going to be capturing e-mails and this kind of thing, and so we should. But, Mr. Chairman, one other aspect of so-called record gathering is the imagery that's captured, pictures, maps, diagrams, all sorts of other electronic information, not just the text that comes up on our computer screens with maddening frequency. So I wanted to ask whether or not this kind of data is also considered archive and record and needing attention and management and storage? Simply the cost of memory for this kind of thing, Mr. Chairman, is extraordinary and if we're going to be starting to bank the gazillions of kilo blobs of this kind of stuff, to what effect does it have value? I'm just wondering if this is an aspect of the new capture that we're looking at, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I answer Mr. Braden's direct question, I should point out Mr. Valpy has reminded me that it's not the archivist who destroys documents; it's the archivist who gives permission to departments to destroy documents. So it isn't an arbitrary decision made by one individual in government, it's a department that would come forward with the intent of getting rid of the documents and the review process then kicks in.

In response to Mr. Braden's question, if you look at clause 2 of the new bill, you'll see that we're inserting a new definition of record, and a record includes a document, a book, a ledger, a photograph image, audiovisual recording, X-ray, map, drawing, and a record created or stored in digital or other intangible form by electronic means. So it's pretty broad in terms of what kinds of documents would be captured by this new definition.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is there anything further, Mr. Braden?

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One other related aspect was whether there was any connection with the office of the Privacy Commissioner with any of the types of decisions that may come into play as to whether a record should be kept or not, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm advised that that sort of thing would be out of the archivist's hands. The ATIPP legislation applies to government documents in general, so it's an act that sets out the standards for what is available or accessible and what is considered confidential information. That's not the same sort of thing as whether or not a document needs to be maintained, so it's a somewhat separate area.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you. I think I have my answer there. So the jurisdiction for protecting that information or managing it is with the department, not the archivist. I am seeing a positive sign to that question. That's all, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Braden. General comments. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Could I just ask one question about whether there is any plan to...Government has a lot of documents and we spend, actually, hundreds of thousands of dollars in storing those documents, but we have technology available to scan documents. I know even land titles were documents which is quite crucial that they are kept. It talks about people's properties. Even those were scanned. Is there any plan? Does this legislation foresee a future and the possibility of professionally scanning these documents so we could store the information but not take as much physical space? Would that be something the archivist would be looking into or the office or this legislation? Thank you.

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

HON. CHARLES DENT: Could I ask Mr. Valpy if he would answer that question?

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

MR. VALPY: Yes, this actually does address that concern of yours. It's a concern with us as well. Basically we can establish through regulation standards by which archival records must be...If they were digital, we would be establishing standards to ensure that they would be available over time.

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

MS. LEE: But is there any plan to convert some of those hard paper documents that we have that we have to use a lot of space to store right now? Is there any plan to convert them into an electronic format?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Lee. That's beyond the scope of the act...the bill. It's beyond the scope. Mr. Minister.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Each department would be responsible for ensuring that their acts were maintained in proper format. Under this act, though, it would allow for standards to be set for how departments were maintaining their documents. But it isn't something that is dictated by the act. The act permits departments to act in certain ways with certain documents.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Minister. General comments, committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Clause by clause.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause by clause. Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act...Committee, please. We are on Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act. Clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 8, commencement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Bill 19 as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does committee agree that Bill 19 is read for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Now Bill 19 is ready for third reading. Thank you, committee. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, witnesses, for being with us. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Chair. I move we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The motion to report progress is not debatable. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

MR. SPEAKER: Can I get the report of Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Committee has been considering Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-2008; Committee Report 8-15(5); Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education Act; and Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act, and would like to report Bill 18 and Bill 19 are ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Do we have a seconder? Honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche. Motion is on the floor. Motion is in order. All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 7, 2007, at 11:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Question
9. Petitions
10. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
11. Tabling of Documents
12. Notices of Motion
13. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
14. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 9, Write-Off of Assets Act, 2006-2007
 - Bill 22, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2006-2007
15. Second Reading of Bills
16. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 21, Appropriation Act, 2007-2008
 - Committee Report 7-15(5), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 8-15(5), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 9-15(5), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the 2007-2008 Pre-Budget Review Process
 - Committee Report 10-15(5), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the Review of the 2005-2006 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner
 - Tabled Document 104-15(5), WCB Comprehensive Response to Committee Report 5 -15(5)
17. Report of Committee of the Whole
18. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Education Act
 - Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Archives Act

19. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 7, 2007, at 11:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 20:36.

