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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, August 15, 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. Yakeleya

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

Speaker's Opening Comments

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Welcome back as we sit together for the last time as Members of the 15th Legislative Assembly. I know that the summer recess has been brief and very busy for all Members. In addition to your constituency work, committees have been travelling on the public review of bills and Cabinet has continued with the work of government. In spite of the schedule, I hope you have all managed to savor a few minutes of our glorious, but all-too-short summer season and found some time to enjoy the company of family and friends.

As the summer began to wind down, the Speaker's Outreach Program paid a special visit to the residents in the High Arctic community of Sachs Harbour on the south shore of Banks Island. This historic visit marks the first time the Mace of the Northwest Territories travelled above the Arctic Circle.

---Applause

Our visit was extremely well received by community residents. I had the pleasure of having tea with the elders, playing sports with the children and youth and enjoying caribou stew and bannock with the community-at-large. Community members, students and staff were an enjoyable audience and regarded the Mace with awe and delight.

I also had the pleasure of meeting the man who selected the stone that was placed inside the Mace to represent the voices of the people of Sachs Harbour, Mr. Geddes Wolki. On behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I extend gratitude to the residents of Sachs Harbour for their hospitality.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the late Rosie Firth, respected elder, mother and artisan from Fort McPherson. The late Mrs. Firth is the artisan who provided the beaded Delta braid featured on the Mace of the Northwest Territories. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend condolences of the House to those communities who suffered tragic losses this summer. Our thoughts and prayers have been with you.

Colleagues, we have a full agenda for the next seven days and I know that you are all eager to begin. I remind Members to continue to act with respect for each other and for this institution, allowing us to work for the benefit of all residents of the Northwest Territories and to complete the mandate of the 15th Legislative Assembly.

It is my duty to advise the House that I have received the following message from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. It reads, "Dear Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories the passage of Supplementary

Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2006-2007 and Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2007-2008 during the Sixth Session of the 15th Assembly. Yours truly, Anthony W. J. Whitford, Commissioner."

Thanks for your attention, colleagues. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 26-15(6): Sessional Statement**

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome all Members back for this last session of the 15th Legislative Assembly. I know that it has been a busy summer for everyone in your constituencies and attending the various annual assemblies.

Given this is the last session of the 15th Legislative Assembly and, therefore, my last sessional statement as Premier, I want to take this opportunity to formally announce my own intentions regarding the impending election. After talking it over with my wife, Theresa, and my family, I have decided it is time to seek new ways to serve the people of this territory and so I am formally announcing I will not seek re-election this fall. I am glad to see so many people here to celebrate that.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the accomplishments of our government and this 15th Legislative Assembly. At the outset of our term, we promised we would act with honesty, integrity and transparency and uphold the highest ethical standards in carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to us as a government. We committed to running a government that made decisions in a clear, competent and consistent manner. I believe we have lived up to our promise.

While it is not my intention today to speak about all the specific accomplishments of this government and Legislative Assembly over the past four years -- many of these have been outlined in previous sessional statements -- I want to highlight some of our most important accomplishments in terms of the goals we set at the beginning of our term.

After listening carefully to the people who elected us, we stated at the outset our primary goal was to achieve greater self-reliance through shared responsibility as a territory, as communities, as individuals and as northerners. In the past four years, we have worked to meet this goal by designing programs that provide residents with a "hand up" not a "hand out."

We have made significant investments in education and training facilities and programs that have contributed to record graduation rates from high school, ever-increasing numbers of northern students pursuing post-secondary studies and more and more trained workers. This has resulted in record employment and labour force participation rates throughout the territory.

---Applause

After a significant consultation process with stakeholder groups throughout the territory, we have reformed and restructured our income security programs to better meet the needs of individuals who utilize these programs. These changes are intended to provide relevant programming that help move people who rely on these programs from poverty to self-reliance.

We transferred funding and responsibilities to community governments so they could take greater control of decisions affecting their communities. We have been pleased to work with strong, focused mayors and councils throughout our territory who are committed to taking more and more responsibility and building strong, healthy, sustainable communities.

We have introduced and supported new health prevention programs such as the Don't be a Butthead campaign that has contributed to the decreasing trend in the number of our residents who smoke. We have expanded critical health services throughout the territory, such as rehabilitation services in the South Slave and Beaufort-Delta regions, outreach services provided through Stanton Territorial Hospital and dialysis services in Hay River.

We have invested significantly in much needed new housing for NWT residents, increasing the housing stock in our communities. We have revamped housing programs to promote the transition from public housing to homeownership so individuals and families can achieve their personal goals and reach new levels of success. At the same time, we have increased resources to address the serious issues of homelessness across the territory including innovative projects such as Bailey House, which will assist homeless male clients seeking to make the transition to permanent community residences.

---Applause

We have worked towards the very important goal of eliminating the incidence of domestic violence by introducing new legislative and policy tools that remove abusers from the family environment, improve education and awareness, enhance prevention activities and services, and improve training for shelter workers.

We have developed an Energy Strategy and Greenhouse Gas Strategy with new energy efficiency and conservation programs and strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories. We have worked to maximize our recycling efforts through programs such as the Beverage Container Program, which has dealt with over 25 million containers that would otherwise have ended up on our streets or in our landfills.

We are working to make our communities safer by increasing policing in many communities, increasing funding to victim services programs and putting in place legislative initiatives which provide our communities with new tools to address the insidious problems caused by illegal drugs and alcohol.

We agreed at the outset of our mandate to work in partnership with other governments in the Northwest Territories. We have established new funding arrangements with aboriginal governments to help build capacity in these organizations to deal with intergovernmental processes and have developed modern, forward-thinking, formal consultation processes.

Our government's relationship with emerging aboriginal governments continues to evolve and grow stronger. As I have noted in this House in the past, governance in the Northwest Territories is changing as aboriginal rights

negotiations are concluded and agreements are implemented. This environment is a complex one and future governments will have to work hard to address the larger constitutional and intergovernmental issues that are developing.

Through cooperative relationships on the Taltson hydro project, our support for the Aboriginal Pipeline Group and our active participation in the Protected Areas Strategy, we are working with aboriginal governments to advance our common goal of balanced development. I want to thank aboriginal leaders from all parts of this territory who have shared their vision, shown resolve and determination and never wavered in their commitment to building a more prosperous, sustainable future for their people.

---Applause

While we continue to have a strong economy fuelled mostly by resource exploration and development, we have made real progress in efforts to balance our economy regionally and to respect traditional economies so that no one region or community gets left behind. To maximize economic opportunities in the resource sector, we have negotiated solid socio-economic agreements with the diamond mines and partnered with other governments and the private sector to deliver successful training programs in the mining and oil and gas sectors.

Mr. Speaker, we have also worked hard to address the large issues we identified at the outset of the 15th Legislative Assembly. Our first priority was to put our own fiscal house in order by making decisions that ensured a balanced budget. It also meant negotiating and concluding a fair Territorial Formula Financing Agreement.

I am pleased to say we have been successful on both fronts. We have made significant investments in some of the key priority areas I spoke of earlier, while ensuring our overall financial position was stabilized. This was in large part because of new arrangements reached with Ottawa on territorial formula financing. This new arrangement recognizes the challenges facing northern governments in providing basic public services in a territory with a small, dispersed population, developing economy, underdeveloped infrastructure, high living costs and challenging social conditions relative to southern Canada.

We have also been successful in negotiating flexible fiscal arrangements with the federal government in a number of other priority areas such as health wait times, infrastructure, climate change and the environment. Our borrowing limit has been increased to \$500 million, providing future governments with the flexibility to make strategic investments in critical infrastructure and other priority areas. This responsible approach to managing our finances resulted in an upgraded credit rating of Aa1 being issued by Moody's Investors Service.

---Applause

There have, of course, been frustrations and it will be of no surprise that the most important piece of business that remains unfinished is the completion of an agreement-in-principle on devolution and resource revenue sharing. However, the good news is we have reached a common front with four aboriginal governments, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Gwich'in Tribal Council, Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated and the Northwest Territories Metis Nation, on this important issue.

Over the past few weeks, we have been working with our aboriginal partners and the federal government to resolve the remaining issues surrounding an AIP. I am

encouraged we have narrowed the issues substantively. It is our intention to work to resolve these issues before the end of the 15th Assembly and we are hopeful this can be achieved. It is my fervent wish the 16th Assembly will achieve a final devolution agreement that will give our territory the means to determine its own future course of action with regard to development and, most importantly, ensure the people of the NWT will become, as the Prime Minister has promised, the "primary beneficiaries" of our own resources.

---Applause

We would have liked to have greater certainty the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline will move ahead. However, our government believes the challenges facing the project can be overcome if government and industry work together to resolve them. The Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline is a basin-opening project that will provide significant benefit to Canada beyond the direct economic benefits from its construction. Our government believes the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline is too advanced, too desirable, too necessary and too beneficial to the North and to Canada to allow it to fail.

This Assembly has worked hard to ensure northerners will benefit when this project proceeds, including our work with the federal government to establish a \$500 million socio-economic impact fund for impacted communities in the Mackenzie Valley. We also negotiated a socio-economic agreement with the project proponents that include a \$21 million fund and provisions for northern employment and procurement.

As I have noted many times in this House, the single greatest impediment to economic development and the growth of our communities is the lack of infrastructure. Over the past four years, we have taken a number of important steps including the completion of the paving of Highway No. 3, the reconstruction of 60 kilometres of highway, the resurfacing of 52 kilometres of road, the construction of permanent bridges and improvements to the Mackenzie Valley winter road including the construction of bypasses of Norman Wells and Tulita. We have also worked on new critical infrastructure projects throughout the territory, such as long-term planning for an all-season road to the Arctic Ocean.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note the strides we have taken as a Legislature to build a strong voice for the Northwest Territories within the federation. We play an active role and have a very strong voice at national tables including the Council of the Federation and the Western Premiers' Conference. At every meeting, we continue to gain support from the provinces for attention and action on northern issues. Last week, I attended the Council of the Federation meeting in Moncton and dealt with a number of issues critical to the Northwest Territories including the effect of climate change in the Arctic and the release of a national energy plan, developed in part by the Northwest Territories.

We have established strong working relationships with our federal colleagues. I would like to congratulate the Honourable Jim Prentice on his new assignment as Minister of Industry and thank him for his good work for the Northwest Territories. We look forward to working with the new Minister responsible for Indian and Northern Affairs, the Honourable Chuck Strahl.

Mr. Speaker, even though an election is near, we still have significant work to do in the remaining life of this

Assembly. There is a significant legislative agenda remaining for the current session.

As well, we have continued to work with the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation for over five years to reach an agreement to build the Deh Cho Bridge. It has been a challenging process that has taken longer than any of us thought, but I am pleased to report this project is proceeding.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, the project, as originally conceived, was to be self-financing. A combination of savings from the elimination of the ferry and ice crossing and a toll on commercial vehicles was proposed to provide a revenue stream to cover all the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation's expenses and a minimum return on their equity. However, due to construction cost escalation, the total project cost is now over \$150 million. To address this issue, and as a result of our strong fiscal position, the GNWT has committed additional funding of up to \$2 million per year to make the Deh Cho Bridge a reality. It is also important to note we can do this and meet our commitment to maintain the toll rate at \$6/tonne in 2002 dollars. This is the only direct cost to consumers.

At the same time, we are continuing to work with the federal government as they develop the criteria for their infrastructure programming to ensure a federal contribution to this important project.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased a highly reputable construction company, Atcon Group from New Brunswick, has stepped forward with a formal offer to build the bridge for a guaranteed maximum price with a completion date of fall 2010. Atcon Group's price is contingent on starting preparatory work this fall and allowing for three full seasons of construction.

It will take another six weeks to wrap up details surrounding the financing of this project. In the interim, the GNWT will issue a limited notice to proceed. This will authorize the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation to carry out, through Atcon, up to \$5 million of preliminary work, under an increase to the loan guarantee.

This government strongly supports this important project. We have taken a measured approach to this project every step of the way and are completely satisfied that this is a good and fair deal. Given the rising cost of construction in western and northern Canada, this is probably our last realistic opportunity to build a bridge across the Mackenzie River. Now is the time to bring this vital piece of northern infrastructure from planning to completion. Members of this Assembly should be proud they have been instrumental in making such an important contribution to a project that will provide a legacy of improved service well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, as I noted earlier, I believe we have delivered open, honest and competent government over the past four years. I am grateful for the enormous support I have personally received. It truly has been a great privilege to serve the people of the Northwest Territories as Premier, to have the chance to help contribute to the future of the territory in these exciting, volatile and historic times.

I want to extend my deep appreciation to a dedicated and strong team of deputy ministers. I believe our team of deputy ministers serves the people of the Northwest Territories with an energy, commitment and degree of expertise and professionalism that is exceptional for any

jurisdiction. I also want to pay tribute to the many public servants in the GNWT that toil tirelessly across the territory. Their hard work and commitment to excellence and services are a credit to us all.

Finally, on a personal note, I wish to thank the people of Weledeh for the privilege of serving them for eight exciting years as their MLA. I also want to extend my sincere thanks to the staff in my office who have worked with me over the past four years, indulging in my idiosyncrasies and consuming more than enough Tim Horton's coffee as a duty, and working to make my job easier, all with great good cheer, loyalty and wise counsel.

Mr. Speaker, for Theresa and I, it is time to seek new challenges. We will, of course, be remaining in Yellowknife. The North is in our hearts. It is where our family and closest friends reside. It is our home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Minister's Statement 27-15(6): Human Resources Information System Upgrade

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in early July, the Department of Human Resources implemented an upgrade to the Government of the Northwest Territories' human resources information system. The older version of this system, also referred to as PeopleSoft, required upgrading as support for this version is no longer available.

While the upgrade has provided some benefits, the upgrade did not go as smoothly as had been anticipated. I recently sent a letter to all MLAs explaining the issues with the upgrade; however, on behalf of the Department of Human Resources, I would like to apologize to all GNWT staff for any inconvenience the upgrade may have caused them.

There were problems with processing pay for July 13th and 27th. Some employees did not receive their pay at the usual time; while some employees received an incorrect amount of pay. Letters of apology have been sent to these employees. This letter also offers a letter to financial or credit institutions for employees who are concerned that their credit rating may have been adversely affected. In addition, it offers to reimburse employees for charges incurred as a result of the delay in pay due to the system issues.

Although there were still some problems with processing the pay for August 10th, many of the previous issues had been corrected. HR determined that many of the problems with the system stemmed from the Absence Management module. The contractor, Answerthink, has been unable to correct the problems, and the Absence Management module has been turned off for the foreseeable future. Self-service is now fully operational again. Work is being done to ensure leave balances reflect the time taken through Absence Management. Revised leave balance sheets will go to all employees later in August for their information.

Once again, I would like to apologize to GNWT staff. Their patience and assistance have been very much appreciated by the staff at Human Resources.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 34(6) to allow Ministers' statements filed with the Clerk to be delivered today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister is seeking unanimous consent. Are there any nays. There are no nays, Mr. Bell. You may proceed with your Minister's statement, Mr. Bell.

Minister's Statement 28-15(6): Gahcho Kue Rough To Support NWT Secondary Diamond Industry

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I am pleased to inform the House today that the Government of the Northwest Territories and De Beers Canada have reached agreement regarding the provision of rough diamonds from the proposed Gahcho Kue Diamond Mine, currently in the environmental impact review process.

The agreement will ensure continued support for our secondary diamond industry by making available 10 percent of diamonds by value from the proposed Gahcho Kue Diamond Mine for sale to approved NWT diamond manufacturers.

To ensure the continued integrity of our government certification program, our agreements with De Beers also include provisions that will allow us to monitor the sorting process for these diamonds.

This deal, together with the Snap Lake arrangements confirmed in February of this year, reflects the continued commitment of De Beers to the Government of the Northwest Territories value-added diamond manufacturing program.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 100 people are currently employed in various aspects of this emerging secondary industry.

Our secondary diamond industry is contributing to our region's exports of manufactured goods enhancing economic diversification. Other benefits include increased revenue for the local retail jewellery industry and tourism spin-offs.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the government is collecting revenues associated with trademark royalties and authenticity certification. Over 20,000 certificates were issued in 2006-07 for diamonds mined, cut and polished in the NWT. It is estimated that we will issue approximately 24,000 certificates in 2007-08.

This agreement, Mr. Speaker, is a testament to the partnership approach that we are taking to build our northern economy.

I would like to commend De Beers Canada for their support and investment in this unique and challenging economic environment, in which we are building a sustainable local and growing diamond cutting and polishing industry.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement On Labour Dispute At Trailcross Childcare Facility In Fort Smith**

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the last few years, we seem to begin the first day of each session with an active ongoing labour dispute. Today seems to be no exception, Mr. Speaker. During the lunch hour, I had a chance to meet and talk to the employees from the Trailcross group home in Fort Smith who flew here in large numbers in order to make their cases known, their voices heard and to highlight their issues and the importance of resolving this labour dispute.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, if past example is anything to go by, all labour disputes that have come to our attention in this way have concluded with a settlement, and most, if not all of them, with positive results for the employees and employers and, most importantly, for the clients they both serve and the services they provide.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we have also had the opportunity to get a brief update from the Minister of Health and Social Services on this issue. I have also had a chance to talk to not only the workers, but the union leaders. I also had a chance to talk to the representatives from Bosco Homes. I have to say that I remain optimistic that this can be resolved.

Mr. Speaker, I do understand that there are a couple of issues that are still a point of strong contention, but given that there are only a few issues outstanding, there is a hope for resolution soon. But both parties will need to work. In all of these labour disputes, I have taken a consistent approach to this and that is to encourage both parties to get back to the table and keep talking. I do understand that there are no more negotiations scheduled since they met last minute on Wednesday. I would like to take this opportunity again to encourage both parties to get back to the bargaining table and I will call upon the government to do what is possible within their mandate and jurisdiction to urge and facilitate this process so that we can all see this come to a quick resolution and make it possible for the group home to be open and operating again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Before I go on, I would like to acknowledge and draw your attention to the visitors gallery and the presence of a former Member of the House. Mr. Leon Lafferty is with us.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Labour Dispute At Trailcross Childcare Facility In Fort Smith

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to first thank my colleague from Range Lake for as well raising the issue of Trailcross in this House. I would like to briefly speak to the current circumstances at Trailcross as well.

Trailcross is a childcare facility that has a long history in the Northwest Territories in Fort Smith. In fact, in the last century, I had the privilege and good fortune to manage the facility and work there for a number of years. I know the type of work that is done, the type of children that require the service, the needs that are out there, and the stresses and the pressures of the job.

It was at one time a government facility where the staff were all employees. There was a decision to privatize it in the mid-1990s. Now we have a circumstance where there are contractual discussions that have reached an impasse. While it is part of the negotiating process, clearly a strike serves nobody in the long run. Hopefully, it will bring resolution to the outstanding issues. But, like my colleague from Range Lake, my hope is that an encouragement to both parties is to get back to the table and resolve the issues that are outstanding.

I have been in discussion with the union. I have met with them a number of times. I have been on the phone, as well, to the Minister and his senior staff a number of times, as well, encouraging them to try to move this process forward. I would like to thank both sides for their recent activity and some of the suggestions that were made.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we are close. I know that there is a willingness and interest by both parties. I hope they do get back to the table. There are a host of children that require the services that Trailcross provides. Every day that this strike goes on is every day that these children don't get that service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On GNWT Human Resource Management System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the problems experienced by the Department of Human Resources. It does seem to be an endless list. I don't purport to be any expert on the subject of software for human resource applications, but I know that our government has spent millions of dollars to ensure an effective and efficient system. That is definitely not what we have today.

Oracle, or the system formally known as PeopleSoft, is what is known as an enterprise resource planning system. There are several problems related to these ERP systems. In general, they are expensive; turnover of knowledgeable personnel makes them difficult to run well and consistently; installation is expensive; some programs also require costly annual licence fees; switching to another system is very costly; there are frequent compatibility problems; and, finally, an inefficiency in one of the departments can affect the overall performance of the system. These are only a few of the problems that I know of, Mr. Speaker.

Given the problems inherent in this enterprise resource planning system, given the problems with PeopleSoft which are well known and there have been many law suits launched against these folks, it makes me wonder why we bought into one of these systems, particularly this one, in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard my constituents complain about their personal banking information being exposed, requests for leave being published across the government e-mail system. That is if they are even able to enter leave at all, as the system has been down so very frequently. Mr. Speaker, employees are even finding mistakes on their paycheques. A lot of them have lost faith with the flawed system that is responsible for keeping track of their pay and benefits and keeping their personal information confidential.

Positive time recorders have suffered the most. These are employees such as nurses whose hours of work fluctuate, so they enter the hours manually into the system. Why are we causing needless stress to these employees who are just trying to get the pay that they deserve? This is a very serious situation, Mr. Speaker. I think this government needs to respond when employees begin to doubt the ability of their employer, this government, to handle the most basic functions: their pay and their benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that Minister Dent has apologized to the employees of the GNWT today in his Minister's statement. However, Mr. Speaker, I still have questions about this. We had expended millions of dollars on this system. We had tried to tell the Minister of some of the problems. I, for one, have been absolutely categorically contradicted and denied access to correct information. Incorrect information has come to the Minister through his deputy. I don't think we have begun to tally up the cost to this government of this difficulty. I am going to have questions for the Minister about that today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Gameti School Addition

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today on the Gameti school addition. It is with regret to inform you that the GNWT offered the community of Gameti a totally different plan from its original plan. GNWT is offering two options to consider. One option would see the project redesigned to reduce costs and delay for a decision by the next Assembly. Another option would put off construction of a gymnasium for an unspecified time in the future and bringing in modular classroom units and tacking them on to an existing building. I, personally, find these proposed plans a poor excuse for a solution to a problem that we are facing in the community of Gameti. The plans do not meet anyone's needs; certainly not the students, the parents or the community, Mr. Speaker.

These plans don't help anyone, not even the GNWT. It just seems to be a poorly thought out attempt to put something in place and move on to another issue regardless of whether what is put in place is of any value.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time the GNWT had to deal with a hot economy and the high cost of construction in isolated communities. A similar project in Tulita, my neighbouring community, brought in debts several million beyond the government's estimate. The GNWT found the funds for this project.

Mr. Speaker, for the Gameti project, the GNWT is struggling that a redesign is needed to come out with a cheaper school, that even redesign then must wait until after the election for any decision on funding. This is foolish, Mr. Speaker. A redesign will not make the school cheaper. The existing design is not excessive. The costs are not because of the design. The costs are because of the marketplace. A marketplace is not going to change in a community.

Mr. Speaker, a contractor is not going to find an electrical subcontractor or other trades easier because of redesign. We also don't have to wait until another election to make this decision, Mr. Speaker. We were elected and put here

to make decisions now. We can do so certainly in this session at least until the term ends.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT...

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is also suggesting that classroom modules made by workers in the South and shipped to the North is a solution. This too is foolishness, Mr. Speaker. Not only do we get substandard products that are not what we really want, we also make sure that there is little work, or no work, for the communities. This is not acceptable for people of Gameti, the chief of the community and the Tlicho Government Community Services Agency.

Mr. Speaker, just to conclude, I realize there is a cost factor involved here, not only the economic money issue. As a government, we see day to day the importance of recreational facilities in a community for young people. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister at a later date. Mahsi.

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

Member's Statement On Northern Residents Tax Deduction

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement is on the northern residents tax deduction. In February of 2002, this Legislative Assembly passed the motion in favour of an increase of the northern residents deduction. The motion also calls for the annual indexing of this tax incentive. The Premier and the Minister of Finance were tasked to work with their counterparts in other jurisdictions to lobby the federal government in favour of the incentives. The maximum amount of a northern residents tax deduction has not been increasing since 1987. This means the real work of reduction has shrunk to half of its original value while the cost of living keeps rising. We are paying more or too much more.

We need this federal tax incentive more to keep up with the high cost of living in our communities. We heard this over and over during our budget consultations in the past two years. We continue to hear it in our communities today. The Finance Minister promised in his budget address in February that he would get the federal government to increase the northern residents deduction and would be a priority for this year. He has written fellow Finance Ministers. The territorial Premiers have met. He has established a working group on this issue. Where are the results? We want to increase the northern residents deduction to help our people live with the rising cost of living. We want this adjustment, including annual indexing, now because we cannot afford to struggle from paycheque to paycheque while the cost of living keeps rising and rising. I will have questions for the Finance Minister at the appropriate time.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On GNWT Human Resource Management System

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, like my colleague from Hay River, would like to highlight the concerns about the PeopleSoft program. Mr. Speaker, the word Oracle, the name of our program here for pay and benefits, its definition is authoritative person who defines the future, Mr. Speaker. Did they foresee the thousands and thousands of dollars that would continue to be spent and paid for this debunked or crazy program that does not work, Mr. Speaker? Maybe that is what they saw all along.

Mr. Speaker, GNWT employees have been unable to enter leave for days on end. Their reports aren't entered properly. Manual pay hours have to be put in by themselves or sent even off to other people. They do not know. Confidential and personal information is out there, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, even as of late, I know an e-mail that was sent out this week to groups of employees who had everyone's pay and time leave still outstanding. So, Mr. Speaker, this is still happening, and so there continues to be massive technical errors and reworkings of the system that has continued to go denied.

Mr. Speaker, we need to focus on where we are going and what are we going to do. Mr. Speaker, this program seems unfriendly. I should say it seems fully unfriendly from the very beginning, Mr. Speaker. For instance, this system allows you to get into a program, enter a few hours and then when you are exiting, it doesn't verify or approve of what you put in. So in other words, you can leave and short your own paycheque without even realizing it. What a nightmare this has become for people who live cheque to cheque, who have child support payments or mortgage payments that come due and the money isn't there, Mr. Speaker. Oops doesn't put milk on the table and sorry doesn't work for a lot of banks. There is a lot of frustration out there on even the rollout of this program. So even that is questionable looking back to the source of the problem.

Mr. Speaker, we want an organization that works. We want the GNWT to recognize that personal information needs to be protected. All we heard is, yes, we fixed it. We heard that three months ago and it still seems to be an issue. So what are we going to do? Rather than spinning our wheels, Mr. Speaker, and begging for blood on the street, which some of my colleagues may be asking for, we should be saying, how are we going to fix this? If we can't, let's dump this program because it seems to be a waste of time and a waste of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Speaker, the apology given by the Human Resources Minister today, I will accept and I will move forward. But the fact is, we have to stop defending a program that does not work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Tuktoyaktuk Gravel Source Access Road

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today once again to raise the important issue of this government to

allocate \$15 million to construct a 22 kilometre access road from granular source 177 to Tuktoyaktuk.

---Applause

The access to this granular source is needed because the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk needs to address their municipal requirements such as repairs to the main roads, paths for new housing, erosion of private homeowners for repairing and upgrading their driveways. I have been in politics for over 30 years and can now say, with confidence, the people of the Beaufort are ready for the access road and for the all-weather road between Tuk and Inuvik, a distance of 80-plus kilometres. I have mentioned the Tuk-Inuvik highway because the location and access to gravel source 177 is an alignment with the proposed Tuk-Inuvik highway.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Floyd Roland, the Minister of Finance, in his budget address in February, indicated the federal government will include \$25 million for the next seven years for our infrastructure requirements. We are now in mid-August 2007 and there has been no indication from this Cabinet on how this money will be spent. Why? Mr. Speaker, why can't this government find it in their heart to make a decision to allocate \$5 million annually for the next three years from the identified infrastructure fund of \$25 million to a project that will address the long-term future for the residents of Tuktoyaktuk? By allocating capital dollars to a project such as a 22 kilometre access road from source 177 to Tuk, it will be prosperity for local and regional businesses, employment and training opportunities. I mention training because funding could come from the Department of MACA, DOT and ECE, and can be applied to conduct a heavy equipment operators course to build a road.

Mr. Speaker, discussions to date, discussions for locating access to granular sources has become a priority for the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk. They have asked in numerous meetings of the Premier, the Minister and the deputy minister of Transportation, MLA, mayor, deputy mayor of Tuktoyaktuk, the chair and CEO of IRC, the chair of the Tuk Community Corporation and the previous DIAND Minister, that they allocate \$15 million for a three-year period towards the 22 kilometre access road to granular source 177. Mr. Speaker, I request time to conclude my statement. Thank you.

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

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. A lot of time and money has been spent to meet and discuss a source to access to source 177. Let's take what was discussed and move forward and find and allocate the money to construct the access road.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for their continued support, patience and encouragement in allowing me to raise the issue about access to source 177. The Beatles had a hit song in the mid-'60s called a Long and Winding Road. In comparison, the access road to source 177 is only 22 kilometres and a mere cost of \$15 million. Compare this cost to the cost of the proposed construction of the Deh Cho Bridge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Condition Of The Dempster Highway

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I start, I would like to extend my condolences for the family of Stella Bourque, a long-time resident of Inuvik, and also the family of Rosie Firth who always welcomed you into her home when you visited Fort McPherson.

Mr. Speaker, I take my role as MLA quite seriously. I sometimes use a little humour to get my message across but, Mr. Speaker, the condition of the Dempster Highway is no laughing matter, even though it is a joke.

---Laughter

Two hundred and seventy three kilometers from Inuvik to the border. I was pleased to see the Minister of Transportation and also the Minister of Public Works went and took a ride on that highway. I would like to have been part of that ride because I can see two Ministers riding together complimenting each other on the condition of the road and wondering what we are complaining about.

I bumped into people and they tell me, are you going to speak to the Dempster Highway, are you going to speak to the Dempster Highway? Of all the years they've lived up there, this is the worst they've ever seen it. Some members of AOC and myself had the privilege of visiting Tsiigehtchic in June. The drive to Tsiigehtchic and back wasn't a privilege, but the visit was. It is a very dangerous road, Mr. Speaker. This weekend coming up is going to be a particularly busy time on the highway as many people from Inuvik are going to be going down to Dawson City for their annual Discovery Day weekend. I am sure there are going to be vehicles on the side of the road. There will be for sure. We usually have a couple of people roll this time of year. The highway is in terrible condition.

I listened, with great interest, to Mr. Handley's comments on infrastructure and talking about the highway and the money they put into the highway, but there was no mention of Highway No. 8 or the Dempster Highway in his statement. Mr. Handley, I was paying attention to your statement. There is no money there. The money that does go into the highway I don't think is enough. I am sure the Minister has his own personal opinion of the highway now that he's been on it.

Our mandate of this 15th Assembly is almost over, but we have to put it into the business plans for the 16th Assembly to have a serious look at redoing the Dempster Highway and making it safer for the residents of the Beaufort-Delta because they deserve the opportunity to travel on a very nice highway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement On Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to speak today about a topic that continues to cause some of my constituents a great deal of stress and anxiety. That is the Social Housing Subsidy Program that is now administered by ECE.

During my almost four years in this Legislative Assembly, one of the most strange and bizarre occurrences of which, Mr. Speaker, I probably would have to live many lifetimes

to try to figure out and understand, is the transfer of the \$30 million Social Housing Subsidy Program from the Housing Corporation to ECE. To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, this program was working properly when administered by the housing authorities. Then the government decided to take the \$30 million and put the responsibility with ECE to deliver the subsidy program. We all know when we have many discussions here in this House about the fact that ECE, in order to deliver the program, would have to hire an additional 14 staff members to carry out a program and the delivery of a service that was already being done. So we had to spend another \$1.4 million a year to deliver the same program.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that here we are today spending this additional \$1.4 million a year and getting a service that continues to fail clients, especially those clients who are disabled and unable to leave their homes with any regularity. Constituents advised me that they had never encountered problems when dealing with the YK Housing Authority. Now, on a continual basis, they encounter problems: staff being away, the power going out, computers not working, statements being lost, only one staff member being assigned to any one client. It is just so unfair and inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, that people's health, peace of mind and well-being is being compromised on a daily basis because we do not deliver the service that we previously had done with the Housing Corporation.

Last November, at the urging of Regular Members of this House, a motion was passed asking the government to put the responsibility back with the Housing Corporation and the authorities. Members spoke to the many concerns that their constituents were having with ECE, and today those concerns are still there. Clients are e-mailing documents because they get tired of so many of their statements being lost or misplaced. Not only is this having a negative impact on clients, it is also causing undue stress to the housing authorities across the Territories who are not getting the assessments in a timely fashion. This is not a situation the authorities appreciate being in and the time has come to examine the delivery of this subsidy program, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable 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. Mr. Speaker, Members of this House, the clients and the constituents we represent are getting tired of hearing of excuses on what's wrong with this program, Mr. Speaker. It's time we fully examine its functionality. Thank you.

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

Member's Statement On Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In our May session a few months ago, I stood here to applaud the signing of an agreement-in-principle on devolution and resource revenue sharing. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to salute the vision and the leadership shown by the Gwich'in, the Metis, the Sahtu and the Inuvialuit leaders in joining with our government to present a unified approach to Canada on sharing the wealth of this great land. We should remind ourselves, again, Mr. Speaker, that that wealth amounts to

some \$750,000 every single day in the value of taxes and resource royalties that are going not into our pockets but into Ottawa's.

Mr. Speaker, we had, a few months ago, high hopes that Canada would actually see the signing of this agreement as real progress and we could actually have an AIP signed off, but that was not to be, as the Dehcho, Akaitcho and Tlicho governments have not signed on.

Mr. Speaker, in doing so, the North collectively gave Ottawa again the same excuse Ottawa has been able to use over and over to say no to us; that is that until we are unified, our quest for a real share of our resources is futile. Mr. Speaker, when are we going to figure this out? How can we come to accept that as different, special, unique, deserving and entitled as we all are in our separate governments and regions, we had this one dream, this one goal that we shared? When will we resolve that the only real power that we have is that of a clear, single voice demanding that we have a real share of the wealth coming out of the very ground we claim to be ours?

Perhaps the answer lies, Mr. Speaker, not in our meagre and limited political ability as proven by 20 years of futility. Perhaps it lies instead with the youth and artisans, the real visionaries of this territory, Mr. Speaker. I want to quote from a song that a young Dene woman named Leela Gilday wrote. She's a Juno Award winner and she just might have the answer. In three eloquent lines from a song called One Drum, she tells us: "We are speaking the truth to the people. We are marching to the beat of one drum."

We have tried for decades to do it. As politicians, we've failed. Perhaps Leela Gilday has the answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Condolences To The Family Of Rosie Firth

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to Robert and Firth families in Fort McPherson on the passing of Rosie Firth. Rosie passed away on Saturday morning in the community of Fort McPherson. Rosie was well known and respected for sewing and beading. Rosie's work can be seen in museums across Canada and one of her many accomplishments you can see here in the Legislative Assembly on our Mace. Rosie Firth of Fort McPherson did the Delta braid beadwork on the shaft of the Mace.

She was a great lady who contributed to not only herself, but had her house open to anyone who came to visit. She will be greatly missed throughout the Northwest Territories and the Yukon and also in the whole community of Fort McPherson. She shared her food, her stories, her knowledge and wisdom and especially the Gwich'in culture and language that she had to give.

I had an opportunity to visit Rosie before she passed away, which is something I will always cherish for the rest of my life.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of the Mackenzie Delta, I would like to say thank you to Mary Ross and her family, Norman and Denise Firth and their families, for sharing their mother and grandmother with all of us.

I would just like to say thank you very, very, very, very much. Mahsi cho, for Rosie will be greatly missed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to recognize a long-time friend and well-recognized senior in Yellowknife, Mr. Ed Jeske.

---Applause

Ed called me the other day and gave me heck for not consulting with him before deciding to retire. I appreciate the fact that I made my decision before I called him. With Mr. Jeske is Vivian Squires, the executive director of the Seniors Society here in Yellowknife. I'd also like to recognize a constituent who's been in the gallery many times over the years that I've been a Member, and that's Ms. Barb Wyness with the UNW. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of being able to recognize some of the workers from Trailcross that are here in the gallery today: Pam Gallant, Tanya Smith, Shawn Smith, Mary Bishop, Jason Decker, Lacey Abbott, Kristy Jones, Tony Jones, Gertie Rozon, Kelsey Frauts, Trent Krawec and Connie Foobert. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the Tlicho chief executive council: Grand Chief George Mackenzie, Chief Leon Lafferty, Chief Charlie Jim Nitsiza, Chief Henry Gon. I'd also like to recognize Behchoko member Jonas Lafferty. Thanks for being here. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a few special people in the gallery today: Mr. Ed Jeske, still one of my favourite seniors even though when he was my teacher he used to yell at me a lot at Sir John.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No!

---Laughter

MR. HAWKINS: Vivian Squires, as well, like Mr. Dent had recognized. There are a couple of other special people in the gallery that I'd like to make mention of: Katherine Silcock. She has her mother here from down south who's visiting here today in our gallery. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have all the names but I'd just like to recognize the UNW executive in the gallery: Mr. Parsons, Ms. Wyness, and sitting next to him, he's not with the UNW, but Byrne Richards, who works very hard on the Aurora Oxford Home. I'd also like to recognize Sue Glowach and Lydia Bardak. Thank you.

---Applause

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

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize all the visitors in the gallery today, but in particular the president of the UNW, Mr. Todd Parsons, the vice-president, Ms. Gayla Wick, and we already mentioned Ms. Wyness. Welcome everybody and welcome to all the folks from Fort Smith at Trailcross. In addition, city councillor Bardak, welcome. I hope you enjoy the proceedings. Mahsi.

---Applause

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize the president of the UNW, Mr. Todd Parsons, a constituent of Great Slave; and Barb Wyness, public relations and research officer with the UNW. I believe I earlier saw a long-time family friend, Mr. Brad Enge in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a Yellowknife South resident, Amy Hacala, in the gallery. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although he's not my constituent, I'd like to recognize Patrick Scott in the visitors gallery today, a long-time northerner who's made many contributions to the North, not the least of which are his six wonderful children.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we've missed anybody in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's always nice to have an audience in here. Acknowledgements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 6: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to stand here and acknowledge Patrick Scott, the North's newest author. For cultures with an oral tradition, Mr. Speaker, storytelling is a particularly important way of passing on people's history. But I would like to congratulate Pat on the release of his book, "Stories Told: Stories and Images of the Berger Inquiry", published by the Edzo Institute.

Pat served as a CBC cameraman 30 years ago during the Berger Inquiry and his book recounts the incredible stories told to the Berger Inquiry about the land and the people, and his writings connect this historic event, Mr. Speaker, in a very timely way with the current debate and issues of the Mackenzie gas project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Acknowledgements. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to advise that on May 25, 2007, fire chief Urban Antoine of Tulita was honoured at a luncheon organized and hosted by the Hamlet of Tulita in recognition of having him being chosen as the recipient of the 2006 Territorial Fire Merit Award.

The Department of MACA and the NWT Fire Service Merit Award Program annually acknowledges and recognizes important contributions made by community firefighters. Urban was chosen as the recipient for his dedication to training and maintenance of community equipment and for hosting the successful Fire Prevention Week open house with the Tulita Fire Department. The luncheon hosted by the Hamlet of Tulita was an opportunity for all of us to say mahsi cho to Urban and to publicly recognize his past and ongoing contributions to the community of Tulita. Congratulations, Urban; a job well done.

---Applause

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

ITEM 7: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 116-15(6): Driver's Licence Formatting Issues

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Transportation. It's in regards to something that I have been working on with his department and it has to do with the driver's licence. Mr. Speaker, lots of coverage has been made in the issue. The new format, while it's very good and very needed, and it takes up security questions, but it doesn't have the system in place to accommodate long names. I know that department...and people could have all kinds of reasons for having long names. My constituent, in particular, has four names she was given by birth and she goes by the fourth name. Mr. Speaker, the Minister has indicated that the software is being changed to accommodate this, but it has been delayed and delayed and delayed. So I'd like to ask the Minister, what is the most recent update on that issue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Menicoche.

Return To Question 116-15(6): Driver's Licence Formatting Issues

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to say that the department has been working hard with the providers of the software and there have been software changes made. We're continually testing it in the next couple weeks and we expect to roll out the new changes by close to the end of September, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 116-15(6): Driver's Licence Formatting Issues

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate his answer but I have to tell you that this has been an ongoing issue for a long time and the last deadline I had from his officials was that they were hoping to have it in place by the end of July. The latest date I'm getting is by the end of September. I'd like to accept the Minister's answer for what it is, but I have to believe there must be other reasons why it's delaying that. I'm wondering if he could give reasons as to why the complications and could he communicate with us, to me, in writing, as to exactly what's behind it, why the delay, and why is it that he's sure that it will be in place by the end of September? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 116-15(6): Driver's Licence Formatting Issues

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the changes of the new computer programming or general identity card system, the problems have been that there are only 45 characters allotted on the first line and so we usually run into issues when we're providing many names there, Mr. Speaker. That was one of the complications that we have had. The software changes have taken a lot more time than anticipated. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 116-15(6): Driver's Licence Formatting Issues

MS. LEE: I don't know. These software problems. Mr. Speaker, could I just ask the Minister to make a commitment to either make a statement in this House to confirm that he's going to do this, when he's going to do it so that I have something in writing, or he could write me a letter so that I could have a commitment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 116-15(6): Driver's Licence Formatting Issues

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would be glad to provide the Member with more details. I'll simply go back to the provider, the people doing the testing, and get a firm date for the Member to answer her request. Mahsi.

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

Question 117-15(6): Trailcross Labour Dispute

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services in follow up to the Members' statements by myself and the Member from Range Lake and it's to do with the current labour dispute at Trailcross. I'd first like to acknowledge the efforts of the Minister to try to resolve this, but I'd like to ask the Minister if he could update this House to the most current circumstance in terms of what is happening with the strike? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 117-15(6): Trailcross Labour Dispute

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll have to be very careful in responding to this issue. As the Member is aware, there is still a process in place and all those negotiations have halted. There are some discussions still going back and forth. Our first priority, as a Department of Health and Social Services, was to ensure that the youth in that facility were taken care of in other facilities and we've done so and we'll continue to monitor that. On the other side of the equation, we've done our part through the Fort Smith Health and Social Services Authority in contacting the contractor to see how things are going and to encourage a settlement in this area. I, as well, have spoken to union officials and encouraged that we would come up with a successful conclusion and I believe we're, in fact, quite close to a conclusion, hopefully, that they can reach soon. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 117-15(6): Trailcross Labour Dispute

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister for the update. I as well understand that they are very close to a settlement. I'd just like to ask the Minister if he would commit to continue to use the powers of his good office to try to encourage the parties to come to some resolution so that everybody can get back to work and the children can get the care they need? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 117-15(6): Trailcross Labour Dispute

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, to the extent we're able to. We have to recognize the fact that this contract and the union negotiations are going outside our processes. So I'll have to be careful that we're not deemed to be influencing process on either side, but we've been monitoring it on a regular basis and we've had our contact to see what was happening in the current settlement. We will continue to do what we can within our realm of authority to try and ensure that this comes out to a successful conclusion; the sooner, the better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 118-15(6): Northern Residents Tax Deduction

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier, I spoke about the motion that this government looked at, instructing the Government of the Northwest Territories to work with the counterparts of the jurisdictions to increase the index of northern residents reduction. I would like to find out from the Minister of Finance what progress he has made to date to have the federal government increase the northern residents deduction. In January, the Finance Minister started discussions with his territorial and provincial counterparts and they wrote letters to the Finance Minister. Will the Minister tell this House if he heard back from his colleagues and if he's able to secure their support? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 118-15(6): Northern Residents Tax Deduction

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the area of the northern residents tax deduction, I have contacted my fellow colleagues across the country, in the territories and provinces. We are beginning to get their responses back and many of them are favourable. We have another opportunity, in fact. Coming up in September, as the House finance committee launches their pre-budget consultation, we're working with the three territorial Finance departments on a joint presentation and this will be one of the items that we're hoping to include in that consultation process.

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

Supplementary To Question 118-15(6): Northern Residents Tax Deduction

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Finance Minister give some strong indications to the people in the Northwest Territories in terms of an outline of somewhat of a time frame to see that they will hopefully receive this type of benefit from the federal government in terms of securing support from the other jurisdictions in increasing the northern residents deduction?

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

Further Return To Question 118-15(6): Northern Residents Tax Deduction

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it would be difficult to give an absolute timeline as, number one, to try and get a schedule together of all Finance Ministers where we have our joint meetings and, secondly, to get the agreement that we will put that on the agenda that would also include the federal government. On a provincial and territorial side, as I stated, we're starting to get responses back that are favourable and can see that we can put that on a provincial and territorial agenda, but the meeting dates have not been finalized or discussed at this point. Secondly, from that table, to bring it up to the federal/provincial/territorial Ministers table is another initiative that we'd have to go forward on. Again, that's an area of trying to get dates established. Sometimes it is short notice, but we will continue to work on that. The first things are to ensure we've got support with other jurisdictions and that is coming in now. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 118-15(6): Northern Residents Tax Deduction

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we know from previous discussions on devolution and resource revenue sharing, this issue here is very important to the people in the North in terms of getting it on the federal government's agenda and having some results. Given that the Public Service Alliance and the Western Arctic MP started a lobbying campaign for a substantial increase of the northern residents deduction, what else does this Minister suggest the GNWT can do to finally get results providing this incentive to its citizens in the North?

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

Further Return To Question 118-15(6): Northern Residents Tax Deduction

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have started the process that I think would be the appropriate one. Ultimately, we need the federal government to make that decision. As I stated, we're working with our colleagues across the territories and provinces and we will be addressing the federal committee of finance or the committee that's reviewing pre-budget consultation on the federal budget and will be making a presentation there as well. So we've got a number of processes in place and we'll continue to proceed and push those forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 118-15(6): Northern Residents Tax Deduction

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that the Finance Minister would give some good news to the people in the Northwest Territories prior to us leaving this Assembly in terms of this issue here. I hope that we see a little more progressive steps taken, not like the devolution and resource revenue sharing. So, again, what type of a letter of comfort maybe to the people of the North in terms of this issue as being taken seriously by Canada and the other counterparts so we can see that this issue be front and foremost in terms of this issue being dealt with in the near future?

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

Further Return To Question 118-15(6): Northern Residents Tax Deduction

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we've seen from our results and many discussions that involve the Northwest Territories and other provincial and territorial Ministers of Finance, as well as the federal government, the process can be rather involved. We are working with that. We have initiated the contact and we're starting to get those responses. As well, we have the opportunity and actually, as I stated earlier, we're going to be working together with our territorial colleagues in making a joint presentation in Iqaluit on September 24th as the House finance committee launches their pre-budget consultations. So that's another avenue that we'll be making a presentation and doing recommendations, as well as continued effort on the territorial and provincial side in getting this onto the agenda with the federal Department of Finance. Thank you.

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

Question 119-15(6): Gameti School Addition

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

Mr. Speaker, the original plan of the Gameti school extension involved the community, the elders, the youth; most importantly, the past elders and respected Tlicho leadership. The community leadership are begging to stick to the original plans. So, Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister explain why his department is calling for a redesign of the school project in Gameti when the higher costs are due to the marketplace, not the school design? Mahsi.

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

Return To Question 119-15(6): Gameti School Addition

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the original budget for this project, Education, Culture and Employment had \$2.8 million. In order to complete the project on the prices received, we would have had to seek an extra \$3.8 million; so more than the actual cost in the budget. As Members in this House will know, it's a challenge at any time to find additional money for projects and that project was, unfortunately, one of those ones that we couldn't find the extra money for in this year's plan. The problem we're really facing, though, is that this project is coming in, Mr. Speaker, more than \$2,000 a square metre higher than any of the other projects that we're looking at in this current year in construction and we're concerned that if we accept a bid at that price, it sets the standard for future ones and this government can't afford to be building schools at that price. So we're hoping that, although the Member doesn't believe that we'll find some savings, we're hoping that a redesign might find some savings to bring the price down.

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

Supplementary To Question 119-15(6): Gameti School Addition

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to focus on the need of the community; the community of Gameti. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister tell these Members here around the table why he and his department believe that the people of Gameti do not want the same educational and recreation programs for their children that he and other Yellowknife Members take for granted for their children here in Yellowknife and other major centres? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 119-15(6): Gameti School Addition

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to making sure that we offer good educational programs in all communities in the Northwest Territories. This government, as the Premier noted in his sessional statement today, has a pretty good record in making sure that we are putting a lot of money into education. Mr. Speaker, we are, though, going to have to take a look at designs of all of our schools, given the prices that we're seeing them come in at. I want to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that in communities across the Northwest Territories, very many communities, we are using portables to provide schooling and they are providing very adequate service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 119-15(6): Gameti School Addition

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the portable is just a quick fix-up and we certainly want a long-term solution here. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister. Will the Minister tell the Members why extraordinary funding was found by this government to go ahead with the construction of the school in Tulita when

the project was millions of dollars over budget and the Minister will not do the same for the Gameti school? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 119-15(6): Gameti School Addition

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in the answer to the first question, there's a difference of \$2,000 a square metre between the project the Member just mentioned and the cost we're being asked for the school in Gameti. We, at this point, are struggling with that difference and can't understand why we're being faced with that, and that's one of the reasons we want to go back and ask Public Works to work with the architects to look at a redesign. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 119-15(6): Gameti School Addition

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Minister, with respect, we have to respect our elders' wish to have an addition to our school with a gymnasium for our children to have a healthy lifestyle and wellness in the community. So my final question to the Minister: Will the Minister do the right thing and add and support a third option to his briefing note where the GNWT will find the money to go forward with this project on this year's winter road, 2007-08, and build the school addition and gymnasium as planned with the original plan? Mahsi.

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

Further Return To Question 119-15(6): Gameti School Addition

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the next period of time, I can commit to the Member and the residents of Gameti that this government will explore all options. If there is any way possible that we can meet the community's desire and still get the construction done or the materials in over this year's winter road, we will work to achieve that. Thank you.

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

Question 120-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to address some questions to the Premier in relation to the long sought agreements-in-principle on devolution and resource revenue sharing. Mr. Speaker, there has been tremendous sustained work through the spring and the summer, I know, to try to achieve something prior to the end of the life of this Assembly and this government, but we're not there. However, the Prime Minister, on his rather casual swing through Yellowknife the other week, did offer a little bit of insight into the situation and he was quoted as saying we're closer but not there yet, regarding the AIP negotiations. Mr. Speaker, could the Premier interpret the Prime Minister's remarks for us and tell us what progress has been made and what remains yet to be finalized in our AIP negotiations?

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

Return To Question 120-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can provide more detail. Mr. Speaker, as we've said before, there were six outstanding items between ourselves and the federal government and I won't go through each of them, but I will say that there are only two that are still outstanding. One has to do with the issues around net fiscal benefit. The other one has to do with the amount of money that would be transferred when federal employees and services are transferred to GNWT.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of net fiscal benefit, we are not going to accept a bad deal. We'd sooner have no deal. The Prime Minister has committed that northerners must be the primary beneficiaries of resource development. We take him at his word on that and we have included, in the draft agreement-in-principle, those words. The negotiators didn't want to have those words in. They wanted to leave us to negotiate a cap on our net fiscal benefit. That doesn't make us very comfortable. I think we have made some progress in having their negotiator agree to put the words back into the agreement-in-principle, but the negotiator is briefing the responsible Minister I think this week, but possibly next week. That was one issue. We are not going to accept anything less than a good deal for the North.

Mr. Speaker, the second issue was around a base transfer. That one is a fairly small one to resolve, in my mind. It may need a political solution and I intend to try to achieve that with that situation. Mr. Speaker, that one, we're only a few million dollars apart. The federal negotiators seem to believe that they have reached the maximum in their mandate and they're asking to go back and talk with the Minister responsible.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are the two issues. A base transfer, the amount of money, which is not a huge amount in the bigger scale of things, and second is on net fiscal benefit where we're not ready to accept a deal that puts a cap on what we will receive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 120-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A condition that has always been before us, and I referenced it in my statement, is that while I think it was in the words of Minister Nault, a former Minister of Northern Affairs, that we do not need to see absolutely all northern governments signing off on the agreement, but there needs to be a very strong majority of northern governments ready to participate in this kind of deal. Without, as we unfortunately experienced in May, without the Tlicho, the Akaitcho or the Dehcho on board, is it feasible that we will still see Canada signing off even though these three governments, at least to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, have not indicated their willingness to join into this AIP, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 120-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the best of my knowledge in a negotiation and in any discussions, the fact that only four out of seven aboriginal organizations have signed on has never been an issue with the federal

government. They have not raised that at all. They are satisfied with the four that we have been working with us. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 120-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, the timing of potentially achieving this deal, while we all, in this Assembly, certainly desire to be able to put this checkmark beside our performance and our legacy here, Mr. Speaker, the life of this Assembly technically and legally ends at the end of August. The government, of course through the Ministers, continue until the new government is signed on, probably sometime in mid-October. That leaves really only days in which an agreement may be finalized. Mr. Speaker, is it really appropriate? Is it really practical? Is it realistic? But the government is going to continue to pursue this AIP in the life of this Assembly, considering the extremely limited time that we have before the next Assembly would be coming on board.

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

Further Return To Question 120-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was elected as Premier for the life of this government. This government is alive and working until the writ is dropped. Until that happens, then, yes, we will continue to pursue this negotiation. Now, Mr. Speaker, I might add that this is complicated a bit by the shuffle of Ministers in the federal system. Even as I speak today, I am not sure who is the lead Minister for the North, so there are some delays there. But, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to press on this. That is our job. We will do it for the life of this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 120-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

MR. BRADEN: The Premier has cast one other aspect to this relating to the uncertainty and the frustration of dealing with Canada when he had just indicated that while we have, for some 24 hours now, a new Minister, Mr. Chuck Strahl, I wish the new Minister luck. The Premier has indicated that he doesn't know, as of today, who is the lead Minister for the North. This is a rather disturbing situation. Could the Premier outline what is the source of this confusion? If Mr. Strahl does not carry this mandate as the Minister of Northern Affairs, who does and under what authority? Just where does that place us in terms of knowing who is in charge, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return To Question 120-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Until I see the clarification on the roles, I will not make assumptions about who has what responsibility. Mr. Speaker, I am told that Minister Prentice, for example, is the lead Minister for the pipeline. That pipeline is in the North, so I don't know what else may be in terms of division of responsibilities between these two Ministers, so I can't make assumptions. But we will continue to work hard on trying to achieve an agreement-in-principle in the meantime. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 121-15(6): Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent. It gets back to my Member's statement from earlier in a topic that has been talked about in this House and in committee meetings for at least the past three years. It gets back to the transfer of the responsibility of the Social Housing Subsidy Program from the Housing Corporation to ECE. It was approximately nine and a half months ago the Regular Members on this side of the House passed a motion in this Assembly instructing the government to go back and take a look and take that program back from ECE and put it back in the Housing Corporation's mandate, because Members were concerned and they were getting complaints from constituents that the delivery of the program wasn't what it used to be. Here is a government that had a successful program under the Housing Corporation. They took \$30 million right out of the Housing Corporation and put it into ECE and had to hire 14 people to deliver the same program that was being delivered the day before they did it for the \$30 million. That has still not been fully explained to me.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by asking the Minister what exactly has happened since that motion was passed with ECE to try to address the concerns that were outlined in that motion? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 121-15(6): Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since that time, the Housing Corporation and Education, Culture and Employment senior staff have gotten together to ensure that there is a working group that deals with issues and complaints. The Minister of the Housing Corporation and myself meet regularly to review whether there are issues. We are confident that we have moved the process along so that there are far fewer issues, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 121-15(6): Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the clients being impacted by what would seem to me poor delivery of service, also the housing authorities out there are being impacted because of ECE's inability to calculate the subsidies in a timely fashion which in turn leads them to have some cash flow problems down the road in addressing fixing up units. I would like to ask the Minister if he has gotten any feedback from housing authorities in the Northwest Territories on the inability of ECE to accurately and timely get those assessments done. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 121-15(6): Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are only two authorities in the Northwest Territories that continue to complain about the approach we are taking. Almost all of the housing authorities across the Northwest Territories are working together with staff from Education, Culture and Employment. Particularly with the new change in the Income Support Program, what we are hoping to do is to have a case management approach which brings people together from the Housing Corporation, Health and Social Services, Justice, if necessary, and Education, Culture and Employment to ensure we are delivering the services appropriately to each individual and family in the Northwest Territories rather than having the disjointed set of programs that we have had in the past. The staff from all of the departments now are committed to bringing services by working together better. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 121-15(6): Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Minister that a centralized approach to government services, yes, that is possibly the answer here. But right now, it is done in a haphazard way. It is not a one stop shopping or one-window shopping per client. They have to go to two government offices, perhaps a bank, before they can deal with their rental subsidy. That is not the way it should work. I would like to ask the Minister what work has been undertaken to try to move us to that centralized government services approach? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 121-15(6): Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories, the Cabinet, has adopted a policy on income security. That policy speaks to how our approach to income security should take place. It is going to take some time to coordinate everything, but the first steps are taking place starting on September 1 when we roll out the new Income Support Program. We will be developing offices across the Northwest Territories to ensure that our subsidy programs are delivered in a more coordinated fashion.

This government right now delivers \$120 million a year of direct subsidies to people. We want to make sure that we are providing those subsidies in the best and most coordinated fashion. We think that we can do that better by bringing things under one roof. But it is going to take us a while. We are trying not to move so quickly to disrupt the system so that it causes a lot of turmoil to people. We think that the approach we have taken will, in fact, resolve issues and by coordinating between the different departments, we will be able to offer one-stop shopping. It is going to take us a while to get there. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 121-15(6): Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have one final question. It gets back to the committee the Minister

was talking about with the Housing Corporation and ECE to listen to complaints or talk about complaints and how they are dealt with. I would like to ask the Minister if there is any opportunity for that committee to report back to the Members of this House on what complaints they are hearing and how they are dealing with them in an effort to try to examine how this program is being delivered? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 121-15(6): Administration Of Social Housing Subsidy Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That work is being done with the direction of the president of the Housing Corporation and the deputy minister of the department, and then the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation and myself meet with them in order to ensure that we are dealing with issues. So either Minister or both Ministers would be pleased to meet with committee to report on what we are hearing and how those issues are being resolved.

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

Question 122-15(6): GNWT Human Resource Management System

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask questions today to the Minister of Human Resources. I want to make sure that we totally understand and find out, did we receive the program, the pay and benefits program, PeopleSoft, that we actually thought we were buying, Mr. Speaker? I am concerned that we may have bought a product that was faulty from the very beginning. Mr. Speaker, my first question to the Minister today is to find out what did we do when we bought this program. So, Mr. Speaker, does the Human Resources Minister today know, or can he tell us the fact that, did we change this program? Did we modify it in any way? Did we make adjustments without testing it properly to make sure it works? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister responsible for Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 122-15(6): GNWT Human Resource Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, no. The version of the program that we are moving to will not be a customized version. That is what has led to the problems. The problems that we have had have been trying to move away from a program that was modified in ways that were...It is difficult to find words to explain why it was done that way because I am not sure. I really can't explain why the modifications were made to the program in the first place, but I can tell you that moving to a plain Jane version...

---Laughter

No pun intended at all. Moving to a vanilla version, Mr. Speaker, has met significant difficulties. We don't believe the problems are with the software, Mr. Speaker. The contractor who delivered the program to the government was specifically quizzed on whether or not they had the skills to deliver a working system. They told us they could move us from the compromised system we were using to a fully functional system. But it is evident that they have not been able to do that at this point.

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

Supplementary To Question 122-15(6): GNWT Human Resource Management System

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally we are hearing some solutions. By the way, for the record, I want to say that Jane is not plain, because I have worked with her for four years. I can say that is a fact. Mr. Speaker, the fact is there is the problem right there. It has been changed and modified. Mr. Speaker, what are we going to do to bring back the integrity of this system to both the employees who work in Human Resources, who are probably getting backlashes every day on this problem, and also the fact the employees who have to know that the integrity of the personal information is out there and they are not 100 percent sure if it is confident or even confidently being handled? So the bottom line is, what is he doing to ensure and restore confidence back in the system that obviously has been changed, modified and who knows what else? It is good to hear we are going forward with something better. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 122-15(6): GNWT Human Resource Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since we discovered the issue, we went past the contractor that we had hired to implement the software. So we did buy the software from Oracle PeopleSoft. We actually hired another company to do the installation because Oracle PeopleSoft doesn't usually do installations with the program. Their responsibility was to ensure that the proper tables and interfaces were in so that the program would work in our system and that we could migrate the information from the old version of the software to the new version. Since we ran into the problems, we are unable to get expedient resolution from the company that we had contracted with to deliver the software, we contacted Oracle. Oracle very quickly sent somebody to Yellowknife who has stayed here to ensure that we are able to get the program working in a manner which it should be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 122-15(6): GNWT Human Resource Management System

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, their responsibility is not the answer. Their problem is not the answer. Mr. Speaker, I want to hear the Minister say that it was his fault in the sense of...Boil it down to the fact that he knew about this months ago. Now we have chopped up a system and who knows what we have. Will the new system be tested to ensure that it works properly before we put it back on line and we put our employees' personal information at risk once again? I can tell you for a fact, e-mails were floating around even earlier this week with personal information of various employees out there. So the fact is that it is still happening. When will it be fixed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 122-15(6): GNWT Human Resource Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we ran a system in parallel before moving it to go live and it seemed to work when it was running in a test

system. For some reason, when it moved into the production system, it didn't work. I can't answer why that happened. In fact, it seems we are having some trouble getting to that answer. Mr. Speaker, the issue that the Member refers to this week was not a software issue. That was a human issue. That sort of thing can't be solved by new software. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 122-15(6): GNWT Human Resource Management System

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it is great that we are running a parallel system that is not doing anything correctly and we are running the actual program that we don't have any confidence in but we are continuing to do that. So, Mr. Speaker, why are we bothering to continue to invest in a program that continually shows us bad results? I want to hear that now, because we are wasting everyone's time and money. Why do we continue this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 122-15(6): GNWT Human Resource Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure where the Member is getting his advice that the program is at fault. What I said was the manner in which the program was modified in the first place is what has caused this problem. Eight of 10 Canadian provinces use this. Another province is moving to PeopleSoft. One of the other territories uses this program, as well. So it is the program that is most widely used in Canada in terms of dealing with pay and benefits. The program itself is not the issue. The manner in which the program was changed previously and now trying to move to a non-modified program, one that is fully functional, has caused some problems.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that, with the assistance of Oracle, we are going to get this situation resolved. I would like to point out that the last pay, for instance, did run pretty well directly. There were very few instances of problems with the last pay. The real problems we had were in the two July pays and we think that we resolved the problem. We haven't got the full functionality of the program that we were trying for because of the modifications that were done previously. Thank you.

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

Question 123-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Perhaps if we had a plain Jane program with a plain Jane Minister running his department, we would work a little better. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Minister's statement today, one of the problems that are still causing a great deal of strife for departments and for managers is the Absence Management module has now been shut off. This is summer holidays. This is when people wanted to input leave requests. This is when managers wanted to approve leave requests. This is when people needed to know what their leave totals were. If there was ever a time that we needed this information, it was now, but, as a solution -- temporary, I am sure -- the Absence Management module has been turned off for the foreseeable future. I would like to ask the Minister how is

the leave for employees being managed if not through this software? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 123-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absence Management was a brand new module that we have not used in the past. So when we turn that off, then leave is being handled in the same way that it has been up until the new software was installed. So it is the same process as was used prior to July 3. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 123-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I would like the Minister to assure us, and I don't know what I can really stake on that assurance because I stood in this House and told the Minister that we had a problem about this previously. He categorically denied that that problem existed. He subsequently found out it did exist and now I am asking for those assurances again anyway. I would like to ask the Minister what assurances can he provide to us that now, going forward, we have a system that works and is not going to see managers and staff spending inordinate amounts of time trying to sort this out? Is he confident now today that we have a system in place that is functioning properly? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 123-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not confident that we have that system in place today, but I am confident that, with the assistance of the software manufacturer, who now has a representative here in Yellowknife working with us, that we will get to that very quickly.

As I said, we managed to get the last pay out without any significant issue and I am confident that that demonstrates that we are on the road to getting there. Whether or not we will ever be able to implement the Absence Management module, I don't know. We were hoping to, because it would improve the functionality of the system; but even if we can't, the system would have the same level of functionality that it had prior to July 3rd when we tried to bring that module on line.

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

Supplementary To Question 123-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have to assume that the Government of the Northwest Territories is a pretty sophisticated client and we have spent, as I said, a very large amount of money on ensuring that we have a modern and efficient system in place. I would like to know what is the Minister doing to protect the financial interests of this government with respect to the purchase of this and all of the subsequent costs that have occurred by its failure to function properly? What is this Minister doing to, I suppose even assess

what those costs are, and to protect this government from further expenditure? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 123-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a significant dollar figure and outstanding invoices to the contractor who was to deliver the system in a working state to us and we are in the process of ensuring that we are satisfied that we have a working system before we would even consider paying those invoices. We are also tracking our extra costs. So we think that we have some protection and we will be working to ensure that we do our best to make sure that we are delivered a system for the price we were told we would get it for and protect the taxpayers. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 123-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I realize this is fairly late in the life of this government, but I would like to ask the Minister if he could undertake...I mean he will still be the Minister until a new Minister is sworn in. I would like to definitely come up with some kind of report that would put in chronological order where we went wrong, to avoid something like this happening again. It's fine to keep saying, well, this is a problem, this is a problem, this is a problem. I would like to see some kind of a constructive debrief report come out of all this activity that would be useful, hopefully, as we go forward in the future. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 123-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to ensure that we do that kind of report and I will share that with the Members opposite. I'd also be pleased to ensure a regular report through the life of this Assembly to Members on progress in implementing the new system. I can tell you that the one piece of advice I will give the new government is don't customize software.

---Laughter

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

Question 124-15(6): Tuktoyaktuk Gravel Source Road Access

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's sessional statement today he indicated how his government is working on new critical infrastructure projects throughout the territory, including the all-season road to the Arctic Ocean. As I indicated in my Member's statement today, Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of discussions with the Premier between the mayor, the deputy mayor and myself with regards to accessing funds up to \$50 million for access to the road to source 177 from Tuk. I'd like to ask the Premier at this time, has he heard anything from the federal government on how this money can be spent? If so, will that include allocating \$50 million to source 177? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 124-15(6): Tuktoyaktuk Gravel Source Road Access

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm told that we have now received a framework for how the infrastructure money will be spent. The Department of Justice are reviewing that now. So I expect we should be proceeding quickly on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 124-15(6): Tuktoyaktuk Gravel Source Road Access

MR. POKIAK: Thank you. Yes, it's been since February 2007 and we're now in August, like I say right now. It's been a long time to finally find out how that money can actually be spent, the \$25 million infrastructure fund. I'd just like to ask the Premier I guess, he indicated that it should be shortly, once the Department of Justice reviews that, so can he give an indication to this House on whether they will expend that money between now and October? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 124-15(6): Tuktoyaktuk Gravel Source Road Access

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First let me clarify, we don't have any dollars yet. What we have is a framework that sets out some of the guidelines to how the money will be spent. Assuming that there are no difficulties with the framework, then I would think that this will move fairly quickly. The federal government will be getting back to business soon from their summer recess. So I expect early this fall, but we have no way of knowing how fast they will work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 124-15(6): Tuktoyaktuk Gravel Source Road Access

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there is a framework in place here now, but I think this government is spending a lot of money in other places outside of the Beaufort-Delta. I would like to advise the Premier and the Minister that any considerations for giving to the Beaufort-Delta in terms of capital infrastructure funding and I encourage him because he's the funding source of access road to source 177. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 124-15(6): Tuktoyaktuk Gravel Source Road Access

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is right; we've had a lot of meetings about this and I'm sure it's frustrating for people who attended meetings with myself with the Inuvialuit president, with the former Minister of DIAND, and in fact I think this was even discussed with the Prime Minister when he was here last week. Mr. Speaker, we will do everything we can, but I would expect that because this is a new expenditure, that this is something that would have to now go to the next government, but we will make that recommendation that they give it the same attention we have and make the commitment once the money is received. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 125-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to also jump on this PeopleSoft issue and I have some questions to Minister Dent. Mr. Speaker, this PeopleSoft issue has been around for a long time, for the entire eight years, and as far as I know it's an internal personnel management software program, but the reputation for this program has grown to such a level that when I had a neighbourhood coffee meeting recently, even the people who have nothing to do with government, or they're not employees of government, couldn't stop talking about this PeopleSoft problem. Mr. Speaker, there are private businesspeople and doctors and health care professionals and they have asked me and begged me to say that until this is all ironed out, that this not be implemented for the doctors and other professionals working at the Stanton Hospital because the reputation is that lots of managers are spending their entire time because they're not even asking the staff to do it anymore and they're spending time putting the stuff in. So until it's all ironed out, could I get the commitment from the Minister that no one else will be added on? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 125-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, if they're being paid now, they're already on the system. So the system is actually delivering their cheques to them as we speak. What we're talking about here is upgrading the software and we can't go back to the old software because the old software is not being supported anymore. So we can't get the new tax tables or if the system doesn't work, it's not being supported. So the requirement is to move to a new system. So either its upgrade PeopleSoft or find entirely new software in order to get people paid. The issue that has been has been the Absence Management module that's given us the most problems. The rest of the system appears to be working as it should. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 125-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'm suggesting that government comes up and adapt a whole new software program to address this. I'm talking about the network of people who are required to actually sit in front of the computer and enter these numbers or whatever they have to do to put the process in place and data in place to get the software to do whatever it has to do. A lot of people who are not having to do that right now don't want to experience the kind of stories they are hearing from other people who are having to spend a lot of time dealing with it. So until these are ironed out, I understand you still have to use the same program, but can we limit the number of people or the duties of people having to deal with the software program until it's ironed out? I hope I'm clear on that question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 125-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There will be no changes. The doctors should see no changes from what they were seeing before July 3rd and how the system operates. In fact, all employees should see the same system as what we had in place pretty well before July 3rd. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 125-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to ask the Minister for clarification then. Is it the Minister's information that everybody that works at the Stanton Hospital actually has to enter all of their data in this computer? That is all I am asking. Can we just limit it to people who are most familiar with that program so that there is less chance of a lot of people spending a lot of time trying to iron out the wrinkles? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 125-15(6): GNWT Human Resources Management System

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, not every employee has to enter their time. Positive time reporters and shift workers are the ones who would most often take advantage of the opportunity to do that. If they are not doing it, then it has to be done manually by somebody. If there is an issue around it, that process could be handled at the hospital. But what we find is that most people want to enter their own time to make sure that it is being done accurately. Obviously, when you have somebody else do it, there is a chance that there is a mistake. Thank you.

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

Question 126-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Premier a question to continue in the area of the agreement-in-principle on resource sharing and devolution. Last May, the Premier told us that an agreement-in-principle on resource revenue and devolution had been signed between four aboriginal governments and the GNWT. Mr. Speaker, public access, familiarity with the terms and conditions of this kind of agreement I think are essential to transparency in our government and to the confidence that they have in the commitments that we are making on their behalf. Mr. Speaker, would the Premier commit to making this agreement public by either tabling it here in this session or by making it a public release at his earliest possible opportunity? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 126-15(6): Devolution And Resource Revenue Sharing Agreement

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will consult with the aboriginal leaders who signed on to make sure they don't have any difficulty with the agreement we signed with them. But the details of our negotiations involving the federal government, we would not want to make that public except in a very general sense until

those negotiations are completed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 127-15(6): Development And Management Of Canol Heritage Territorial Park

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last month, several hikers along with myself and the Premier and some youth have hiked the Canol Trail. Mr. Speaker, it's a beautiful area, very sensitive. There were a lot of good discussions that happened there. One of the things I wanted to ask the Minister of ITI and his responsibility for this park here, proposed management park, is in terms of the protection. Can the Minister provide to this House an update as to how this park will be developed and managed in the next coming years in terms of what can he say to this House in terms of giving assurance to the Sahtu people in terms of looking after the Canol Heritage Park? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 127-15(6): Development And Management Of Canol Heritage Territorial Park

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to applaud the Member and the Premier and others who took that opportunity this summer to trek through the Canol Trail. I believe they have one segment left next summer. I am sure we can have a reunion to see that last third completed. Mr. Speaker, we are certainly moving forward to see a territorial park created there. Of course, there are land transfer issues, DIAND. There is a park committee that has been set up to watch over that and handle that administration. There are a number of steps here. I don't have the latest in terms of the discussion with the committee, but I can tell you we are addressing some of the issues related to clean-up of some contaminated sites and other things, ensuring that that is conducted by the federal government. So there are a number of steps here. I will provide more information for the Member as I get an update. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 127-15(6): Development And Management Of Canol Heritage Territorial Park

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to also say to the participants who walked on this hike, it was a wonderful trip and a golden opportunity. One of things I would like to state, Mr. Speaker, is that the heritage trail is very sensitive and very precious to the Sahtu people, especially to the Shutah le Gohlini (sic) Dene people. Will the Minister look at looking at restrictions or some type of bylaw or law in terms of the use of ATVs in the Canol Heritage Trail? I know it has been quite an issue amongst our people in terms of the use of these all-terrain vehicles especially in the hunting areas. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 127-15(6): Development And Management Of Canol Heritage Territorial Park

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad the Member has brought this to my attention. I am not sure what measures are in place for protection now. I

guess interim protection until the park is established. I will enquire about that and we can have that discussion with the committee. I take the Member's point. We want to make sure that we are protecting that very fragile ecosystem. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 127-15(6): Development And Management Of Canol Heritage Territorial Park

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister advise his department officials in the interim, advising all public about the use of ATVs in the boundaries of the proposed park of severe warnings of not allowing them to come into our area and disrupt the environmental nature of this park? Can the Minister send out a strong notice to all: beware ATV owners and riders in the park? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 127-15(6): Development And Management Of Canol Heritage Territorial Park

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure at this point whether ATVs are allowed in any area of the park in any capacity. I will find that out. We will discuss this with the committee. I think we need to ensure that protection is upheld, as the Member has pointed out, and, as we establish these rules, criteria and this plan to protect the park, we will do a communications plan to make sure that everybody in the region and anybody coming in from outside the region knows the rules of being able to enter the park. It is obviously very vast. It is hard for us to police and protect in that manner, but we can work, I think, with committee members and community members as well to ensure that they're vigilant and on the lookout for anybody who may be creating problems in the park. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 127-15(6): Development And Management Of Canol Heritage Territorial Park

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from witnessing two years of walking the park with the Premier, Mr. Premier walks just like the ATV. He just gives her. I want to ask the question, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the ATV. There have been noticeable curves witnessed by this government, the Members and the people of Tulita, that the use of ATVs at mile 222 is disturbing. It is serious. Actually, if the Minister can do some serious follow-up in terms of letting people know, if you come to our border in the Northwest Territories, not to chew up our land, people outside of the Northwest Territories, especially the park that we are proposing to have for the Northwest Territories.

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

Further Return To Question 127-15(6): Development And Management Of Canol Heritage Territorial Park

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Speaker, we will talk to the committee, as I have mentioned. Obviously, we would prefer that the people entering the park use other means that weren't as disruptive. I understand that the Premier and the Member were on horseback. I applaud them for that. I think that is a very good step. I also understand that there was some walking going on, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

That is a rumour. Yes, we will take a serious look at this. There will be a response and some follow-up and I will get back to the Member. Thank you.

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

Question 128-15(6): Transportation Infrastructure At Hay River Airport

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought the Minister was going to run the clock out. My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Mr. Speaker, I have written to the Minister and the deputy minister. I do thank the Minister that he took the time to attend in Hay River to look at some of the transportation infrastructure. As everyone knows, Hay River is the transportation hub of the North, and so our transportation infrastructure is very important to us, as it is to any community. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister what the plans are with respect to the deficiencies that have been identified at the Hay River Airport runway. We have, over the years, had our air services take on various schedules and various aircraft. At this point, we don't have regular service from a 737. However, we do need our runway to be maintained and kept in good order to ensure air transportation in and out of our community. I would like to ask the Minister what are his department's plans with respect to the deficiencies on the Hay River runway? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 128-15(6): Transportation Infrastructure At Hay River Airport

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April of this year, the departmental staff and air carriers were aware of a portion of the Hay River runway. Approximately 650 feet of runway had some serious depressions in there that were deep enough to impact jet planes. So we did look at that. We did initiate some remediation of that section, Mr. Speaker. As well, we just closed a contract to completely resurface and reconstruct that section that has that depression, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 128-15(6): Transportation Infrastructure At Hay River Airport

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A contract has already been awarded. I am understanding that's what the Minister is saying. A contract has already been awarded for the resurfacing of that 650 feet of runway surface. I would like to ask the Minister if he could, for the benefit of people who live in Hay River, let us know when that work...What would be the scope and what would be the intended timelines for that particular work? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 128-15(6): Transportation Infrastructure At Hay River Airport

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contract to repair the Hay River runway has been awarded and the construction schedule is for the first week of September to complete the work. There has been notification to air carriers and anybody using the airport

that this work will be taking place and hopefully it won't interfere with the regular scheduled aircraft that run into Hay River. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Time for question period has expired; however, we will allow a supplementary question. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 128-15(6): Transportation Infrastructure At Hay River Airport

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was going to be one of my next questions, whether or not the work that would be done, which I understand is much needed, would interrupt any of the air traffic that is currently scheduled in and out of Hay River. The Minister has indicated that the work on the runway will not interfere with that schedule. I would like to know from the Minister, Mr. Speaker, if Hay River would still be designated today, Mr. Speaker, as an alternate site for planes, 737s and larger aircraft that could not land in Yellowknife because of weather. Is Hay River still the alternate destination? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 128-15(6): Transportation Infrastructure At Hay River Airport

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: As far as I am aware, it's still an alternate destination for Yellowknife, but, once again, the notice has been given to all air carriers that the depression on the runway will be remediated soon. However, it is still a secondary location for emergency purposes. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Time for oral questions has expired. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 9: RETURNS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Return To Written Question 4-15(6): Consumer Protection On Gas Prices

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Hawkins on May 10, 2007, regarding consumer protection on gas prices.

Neither the GNWT nor the federal government regulate the price of fuel.

The GNWT relies on the active market created by buyers and sellers to set prices for goods and services in the NWT. Reviewing the price differential between Yellowknife and Edmonton since June 2001 shows a trend where the price differential is diminishing, going from about 26 cents per litre in 2001 to a recent 18 cents per litre.

Some jurisdictions have attempted to place controls on the price of fuel. When market differences such as taxes and transportation costs are removed, the price of fuel in jurisdictions with controls is not significantly different from other jurisdictions.

Price fixing and other anti-competitive activities are illegal under the federal Competition Act.

The Competition Bureau is an independent law enforcement agency responsible for the administration of the Competition Act, which includes provisions against price fixing, price maintenance and abusive behaviour by a dominant firm resulting in a lessening of competition. All of its provisions apply to gasoline and other markets for

petroleum products. The bureau's role is to protect competition in the marketplace so that Canadians can benefit from competitive prices, product choice and quality service. Each year, the bureau receives numerous complaints about gasoline prices. Complaints are examined to determine whether the provisions of the Competition Act have been violated.

The fact that retailers may charge similar prices, or that prices change, does not constitute an offence under the Competition Act. There must be evidence that competitors have made an illegal agreement to set those prices.

Franchise retailers who sell gas on consignment often change their prices on instructions from their head offices. This is not illegal under the Competition Act.

The Information Centre of the Competition Bureau will receive any evidence of improper communications, illegal agreements among competitors, or evidence of the impact of the alleged anti-competitive conduct.

The GNWT, through its Consumer Protection Act, provides the framework for which buyers and sellers transact business in the NWT. The GNWT responds to all complaints under the act received from consumers. A review of complaints filed under the act failed to uncover any complaints relating to fuel price gouging.

In communities where an active market does not exist, the GNWT, through its petroleum products division, sells fuel at a formula derived price. Where an active market exists, the GNWT refrains from distorting the market price through government intervention.

Return To Written Question 5-15(6): Supports For Secondary School Students

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Yakeleya on May 10, 2007, regarding supports for secondary school students.

1. Can the Minister provide to me as to how the funding formula for small high schools ensures that core courses that our students can take and will get them into universities and/or colleges?

The per student funding that a school receives is greater for small high schools than it is for large ones. For instance, the average per student amount in the Sahtu is approximately \$18,700, whereas the average per student amount in Fort Smith is approximately \$13,200. Some of this difference is due to location factors, but some is due to the size of schools as well.

In the case of very small high schools, such as Colville Lake with approximately seven students, a special formula for senior secondary small schools applies. In the case of Colville Lake, the school receives approximately \$30,000 per student.

In regard to student access to courses needed for university and college entrance, providing diversity of courses is difficult in a small high school. Indeed, the courses offered might be limited to those that are suitable for the majority of students in the school.

If students need a particular course that is not offered at their school, such as chemistry or physics, in order to meet the entrance requirements for the postsecondary program they wish to pursue, they may have to take that course either on line or through other distance education options available to them. A parent may also choose to discuss alternative options with the school and the local district education authority.

2. Can the Minister explain to me how students in these small high schools, who want to take courses such as biology, chemistry or grades in their community?

Providing diversity of courses is difficult in a small high school and the courses offered might be limited to those that are suitable for the majority of students in the school. If students need a particular course that is not offered at their school, such as chemistry or physics, in order to meet the entrance requirements for the postsecondary program they wish to pursue, they may have to take that course either on-line or through other distance education options available to them. A parent may also choose to discuss alternative options with the school and the local district education authority.

3. Who is responsible for paying the cost of sending students to other high schools to take courses that are not offered in our small high schools?

Where a DEA makes an agreement with another school in order to allow a student to attend classes there, the student's home DEA would pay an amount to the receiving school's DEA, to compensate them for educating the student for the year. Generally, the per student amount allocated by the department to the home DEA in accordance with the funding formula is sufficient to cover the costs of educating a student in the other district. The home DEA may, in some cases, be able to assist with funds to home board the student during the school year.

Return To Written Question 6-15(6): Aurora College Nursing Students

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Bill Braden on May 11, 2007, regarding Aurora College nursing students.

1. There were 21 nursing graduates from Aurora College in 2006-2007. Of these, 20 applied for placement through the Graduate Nurse Placement Program.
2. All 20 Aurora College graduates seeking employment through the Graduate Nurse Placement Program were made offers of employment through the program.
3. Of the 20 Aurora College graduates, two declined their offers. The remaining 18 were placed in RN positions through the program as follows:
 - One went to Fort Smith Health and Social Services Authority
 - One went to Hay River Health and Social Services Authority
 - One went to Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority
 - 15 went to Stanton Territorial Health Authority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Return To Written Question 7-15(6): Impact Of Deh Cho Bridge On Public Service Allowances

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Hawkins on May 15, 2007, regarding the impact of the Deh Cho Bridge on public service allowances.

1. How will the Deh Cho Bridge specifically impact the northern allowances paid to the Government of the Northwest Territories public service?

The northern allowance methodology has two components:

- cost of return transportation to Edmonton, including accessibility factor
- cost of living differential between Yellowknife and Northwest Territories communities.

Based on the current methodology used to calculate the northern allowance, a bridge should not have a negative impact on the northern allowance.

The accessibility factor is based on the amount of time that a community has road access. Communities are based on two levels: 50 percent or more of the time with road access or 50 percent of the time without road access. As Yellowknife, Behchoko and Fort Providence fall under the former, a bridge would not change this factor.

If the negotiated methodology remains the same when the bridge is built and the bridge results in lower costs for goods in Yellowknife, Behchoko and Fort Providence, the Yellowknife rate will not change unless the parties specifically negotiate a reduction to it as Yellowknife forms the base rate. If the relativity in cost reductions between Yellowknife, Behchoko and Fort Providence remain the same, there will be no change to Behchoko and Fort Providence.

If the bridge does not result in lower costs for communities not accessed by the bridge, the current methodology may provide for even higher northern allowances in the communities as compared to Yellowknife.

2. What specific impact will the Deh Cho Bridge have on isolated post allowances and other benefits paid to Government of Canada employees in the Northwest Territories?

The allowances provided to employees of the Government of Canada are developed in partnership by employer and bargaining agent representatives at the National Joint Council. Its provisions form part of the collective agreements of the participating parties under the bylaws of the National Joint Council. The provisions also apply to persons not covered by collective agreements, as indicated in the directive or by employer policy.

As this is not a program of the GNWT, it is not known what the impact will be on Government of Canada employees; however, the following components may be affected:

Environment allowance is composed of the following factors: population, climate, barrens/taiga, and access. Assuming Fort Providence, Behchoko and Yellowknife are classified as posts with all-weather road access and assuming the three communities currently receive zero points for the access factor, as they are "less than 402 km from a population centre of 15,000," the bridge would have no impact on the environment allowance.

Living cost differential allowance is provided if the community LCD is above the 115 index level, compared to Edmonton. Yellowknife's 2005 LCD indicates 117.5 with Fort Providence and Behchoko at 132.5 and 122.5 respectively. If the bridge results in lower LCDs, these communities would receive lower allowances.

If, in the case of Yellowknife, the bridge results in an LCD lower than 115, Yellowknife would no longer be eligible for this allowance.

Fuel and utilities differential. The differential paid is based on the differential between the national

composite billing cost for fuel and utilities plus 15 percent, and the calculated fuel and utilities cost at the isolated post. It is possible the bridge could have an impact on the costs of fuel and utilities in the three communities resulting in a lower allowance.

Return To Written Question 8-15(6): Beaufort-Delta Clients Attending Alcohol And Drug Treatment Centres

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Robert McLeod on May 15, 2007, regarding Beaufort-Delta clients attending school and drug treatment centres.

During 2006-2007, five clients from the Beaufort-Delta region attended southern alcohol and drug treatment centres. Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre reports that 19 clients from the Beaufort-Delta region participated in 442 treatment days. Nats'ejee K'eh Treatment Centre is funded by the Department of Health and Social Services.

The cost of treatment for Beaufort-Delta clients attending these programs was approximately \$396,000.

Return To Written Question 9-15(6): Norman Wells Natural Gas Supply

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Yakeleya on May 15, 2007, regarding Norman Wells natural gas supply.

Representatives of the Government of the Northwest Territories have held several meetings with community leaders in Norman Wells to deal with this issue.

On April 27, 2007, His Worship Mayor Peter Guther of the Town of Norman Wells wrote to the Honourable Michael McLeod, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, to request a meeting to discuss this issue.

On May 16, 2007, the Premier, Minister, deputy minister and assistant deputy minister of MACA met with the mayor and deputy mayor of the Town of Norman Wells. At that meeting, the mayor outlined the current situation, the steps taken by the town to address the issue, and the areas where the town may seek the support from the GNWT. The honourable Premier Handley and Minister McLeod noted that the GNWT would like to work in collaboration with the Town of Norman Wells in finding the best way forward.

On May 18, 2007, the Premier convened a meeting of Ministers and deputy ministers to discuss how best to coordinate GNWT activities on this issue. More specifically, Ministers agreed that MACA would take the lead as liaison with the Town of Norman Wells, Public Works and Services would take the lead on technical analysis, and that Industry, Tourism and Investment would take the lead on any discussions that may be required with Imperial Oil.

On May 23, 2007, the Honourable David Krutko, Minister of Public Works and Services, and Mr. Yakeleya, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Sahtu, both met with representatives of Imperial Oil in Calgary, at which time the GNWT's concerns about this issue were raised.

On May 28, 2007, the deputy ministers of MACA and PWS travelled to Norman Wells for a follow-up discussion with the deputy mayor, members of town council and town staff. As a result of that meeting, a joint working group has been established to identify the best solution to an alternative energy source for the town.

The GNWT has agreed with the Town of Norman Wells that further discussions between government officials and

Imperial Oil will take place in the event that the town requests government support in advocating for specific issues or positions with Imperial Oil.

It would be premature to speculate whether residents of Norman Wells will incur costs for conversion of household appliances until the optimum solution for future energy supply has been identified and further technical analysis has been done. The GNWT continues to work with the town on these details and the town has flagged this as one issue that may require attention.

With regard to the potential feasibility of wind and solar power conversions, the Arctic Energy Alliance has been working with the town on development of a longer-term community energy plan, and the issue of alternative energy sources is likely to be considered as part of that process. However, alternative energy sources are not expected to provide a short-term solution for residents and may not prove feasible in the longer term.

The Deputy Ministers' Energy Coordinating Committee has been tasked with reviewing the 1944 Norman Wells Proven Area Agreement and identifying any possible implications for this issue. Further information will be forwarded to the Member when this analysis is complete.

Return To Written Question 10-15(6): Income Security Program Treatment Of Impact Benefit Compensation

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question asked by Mr. Villeneuve on May 15, 2007, regarding Income Security Program treatment of impact benefit compensation.

1. Can the Minister provide a copy of the legal opinion on income benefit agreement payments that stipulates IBA payments should be considered as earned income for income security clients?

A copy of the legal opinion on income benefit agreement payments cannot be provided because legal opinions prepared for the department are protected by solicitor-client privilege. The department does not release legal opinions to third parties, as doing so would breach that solicitor-client privilege.

2. Was this an independent legal opinion or an opinion provided by GNWT legal counsel?

The department received its legal advice on this issue from the legal division, Department of Justice.

3. How do IBA distribution payments differ from Inuvialuit regional agreement distribution payments?

Income benefit agreement payments are pursuant to a contractual relationship between a band and a private company, and are not made pursuant to the terms of a treaty or land claims agreement with the Government of Canada. Distributions made to Inuvialuit beneficiaries under the Inuvialuit Final Land Claims Agreement are made pursuant to the terms of a land claims agreement with the Government of Canada.

4. Why is the IBA distribution payment not considered an integral part of the land claims process by income security?

Income benefit agreement payments constitute a contractual arrangement between a band and a company, which is considered a private contract. IBA payments are, therefore, not treated as compensation payments as is the case with land claims or treaty payments.

Return To Written Question 11-15(6): Highway No. 3 Access Roads

Mr. Speaker, I have a return to a written question asked by Mr. Lafferty on Wednesday, May 16, 2007, regarding Highway No. 3 access roads.

1. Can I request a detailed costs to repair and service the Highway No. 3 access roads, specifically to the Charlo's camp on a monthly basis?

The department's mandate includes the operation and maintenance of public transportation infrastructure in the NWT. This mandate does not extend to privately owned infrastructure.

When Highway No. 3 was reconstructed, the department constructed and/or reconstructed private access roads to reconnect properties where people were living, back to the reconstructed Highway No. 3 alignment. These are private access roads and the responsibility for maintenance and repair of these roads rests with the property owner.

As such, the department does not have any monthly maintenance or repair costs relating to private access roads.

2. Can I also request for copies of meeting minutes or documentations on the previous contractual discussion? Specifically, the community/local private contractor complaints.

The question is very general and could refer to a number of files. However, if what the Member is referring to is related to private access roads on Highway No. 3, the department does not have any contractual arrangements with local or private contractors to maintain these roads. As such, we do not hold the records or documentation regarding private maintenance contracts for these roads.

Return To Written Question 12-15(6): Protected Areas Strategy

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 12-15(6) asked by Mr. Yakeleya on May 17, 2007, regarding the Protected Areas Strategy.

In response to your written questions in the Legislative Assembly on May 17, 2007, regarding the Protected Areas Strategy, I am happy to provide you with an update on the actions taken by the Government of the Northwest Territories to encourage the federal government to approve the extension of the Edehzhie interim land withdrawal and to approve the interim land withdrawal for Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta -- Ramparts River and wetlands -- that the Canadian Wildlife Service applied for in July 2006.

On June 26, 2007, the federal government extended the interim land withdrawal for Edehzhie to October 31, 2008. As you are aware, interim land withdrawals are a temporary means to hold the land while decisions are made through other processes such as PAS and land use plans.

The GNWT has and continues to take actions to promote the implementation of the Mackenzie Valley five-year action plan for the PAS. Some actions to promote implementation of the plan and regarding the two candidate areas you highlighted are as follows:

- In March 2006, the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources wrote to the president of the Yamoga Land Corporation, recognizing the significant regional support for the Ts'ude niline

Tu'eyeta protected area and supporting an interim land withdrawal for this site.

- In February 2007, I met with the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on a number of issues. At this meeting, I discussed our shared responsibility for implementing the PAS with partners. I emphasized that completing a network of protected areas is a critical component to moving forward with the proposed multi-billion dollar Mackenzie gas project and that several candidate areas require action by INAC to move one step ahead. I encouraged the Minister to approve the interim land withdrawal extension for the Edehzhie protected area and the interim land withdrawal request for the Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta protected area.
- In late March 2007, I met with the Minister of Environment Canada when he came to Yellowknife to announce funding for Sahoyue-Ehdacho. I indicated that we fully expect INAC to take the necessary actions to get interim withdrawal requests done quickly.

Recently, the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources wrote to the federal Ministers of Environment and INAC again asking that the outstanding interim land withdrawal request for Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta be completed. The focus of these letters was Canada's budget announcement of \$10 million to create or expand protected areas in the Northwest Territories. GNWT priorities for how the funding should be allocated were identified: establishing protected areas; biodiversity and ecological representation; and managing protected areas. There is an expectation that some of this funding will flow to the GNWT.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ITEM 13: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS

Bill 7: Safer Communities And Neighbourhoods Act

Bill 12: Public Health Act

Bill 13: Change Of Name Act

Bill 14: Employment Standards Act

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Social Programs has reviewed Bill 12, Public Health Act, and Bill 13, Change of Name Act, and wishes to report that Bill 12 and 13 are now ready for Committee of the Whole.

The committee has already completed its review of Bill 14, Employment Standards Act, and wishes to report that Bill 14 is now ready for Committee of the Whole, as amended and reprinted.

Mr. Speaker, the committee has already reviewed Bill 7, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, and wishes to report the bill to Committee of the Whole. The committee wishes to recommend that Bill 7 not be further proceeded with in its current form.

Motion To Move Bills 12, 13 And 14 Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

Further, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Bills 12, 13 and 14 be moved in Committee of the Whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. There's a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bills 12, 13 and 14 are moved into Committee of the Whole for today. Reports of committees on the review of bills. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Bill 6: Workers' Compensation Act

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to report to this Assembly that the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development has reviewed Bill 6, Workers' Compensation Act, and wishes to report that Bill 6 is now ready for Committee of the Whole, as amended and reprinted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Reports of committees on the review of bills. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Bill 9: Write-off Of Debts Act, 2007-2008

Bill 10: Forgiveness Of Debts Act, 2007-2008

Bill 11: Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

Bill 15: Liquor Act

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to this Assembly that the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has reviewed Bill 9, Write-off of Debts Act, 2007-2008, Bill 10, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2007-2008, Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, and Bill 15, Liquor Act, and wishes to report that Bills 9, 10 and 11 are now ready for Committee of the Whole and that Bill 15 is now ready for Committee of the Whole, as amended and reprinted.

Motion To Move Bill 11 Into Committee Of The Whole, Carried

Further, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Bill 11 be moved into Committee of the Whole for today. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. There's a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 11 will be moved into Committee of the Whole for today. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Tabling of documents. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 14: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 33-15(6): Response To Petition 1-15(6), Criminal Records Check

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table response to Petition 1-15(6) provided by the Honourable Charles Dent, Minister of Human Resources, in response to a petition tabled by Mrs. Jane Groenewegen on May 14, 2007.

Tabled Document 34-15(6): Response To Petition 2-15(6), The Abuse Of Alcohol In The Community Of Tulita

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table response to Petition 2-15(6) provided by the Honourable Floyd Roland, Minister of Finance, in response to a petition tabled by Mr. Yakeleya on May 14, 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabled Document 35-15(6): Letter From Gameti Chief Henry Gon To Honourable Charles Dent, Minister Of Education, Culture And Employment, Regarding Delays In Construction Of The Gameti School Expansion

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a document from Chief Henry Gon, of the community of Gameti, expressing concern on Gameti school expansion on August 1, 2007. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

ITEM 15: NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 9-15(6): Setting Of Sitting Hours By Speaker

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, August 17, 2007, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the Speaker be authorized to set such sitting days and hours as the Speaker, after consultation, deems fit to assist with the business before the House.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with the motion today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 16: NOTICES OF MOTION FOR FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 17: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2006-2007

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, August 17, I will move that Bill 17, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2006-2007, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Bill 18: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2007-2008

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, August 17, I will move that Bill 18, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2007-2008, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Bill 19: An Act To Amend The Student Financial Assistance Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Friday, August 17, I will move that Bill 19,

An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Motions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with the motion he gave notice of earlier today. Are there any nays? There are no nays, Mr. Yakeleya. You may proceed with your motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

ITEM 17: MOTIONS

Motion 9-15(6): Setting Of Sitting Hours By Speaker, Carried

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the Speaker be authorized to set such sitting days and hours as the Speaker, after consultation, deems fit to assist with the business before the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. There is a motion on the floor. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. First reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: I seek unanimous consent to proceed with first reading of Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with first reading of Bill 19. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may proceed with first reading. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 18: FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 19: An Act To Amend The Student Financial Assistance Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 19 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek consent to deal with second reading of Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 19. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may proceed with second reading. Mr. Dent.

ITEM 19: SECOND READING OF BILLS**Bill 19: An Act To Amend The Student Financial Assistance Act**

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Student Financial Assistance Act to raise the maximum aggregate of the principal amounts of all student loans that may be made to one person. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 19 has had second reading. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2) and have Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, be moved into Committee of the Whole for tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to have Bill 19 moved into Committee of the Whole for tomorrow. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Bill 19 will be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration tomorrow. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. By the authority given to me by Motion 9-15(6), I hereby resolve the House into Committee of the Whole to sit beyond the hour of adjournment until such time as the committee is ready to report progress, with Mr. Ramsay in the chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order and ask what is the wish of committee? Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, and Bill 12, Public Health Act. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. We will deal with Bill 11 and Bill 12 after a short break. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Good afternoon, committee. I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order. I am wondering, if committee agrees, can we go with Bill 12 before Bill 11? Is committee agreed to that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. We will now turn our attention to Bill 12, Public Health Act. I would like to ask the Minister responsible, Mr. Roland, to introduce the bill, Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to introduce Bill 12, Public Health Act. This bill will replace the out-of-date 1950's act and represents the culmination of several years of work by the Department of Health and Social Services.

In developing this bill, the department identified the following goals:

- to ensure the chief public health officer has the independence to make decisions and act to protect the public's health, while having an adequate organizational support structure;
- to provide updated and appropriate remedies and powers so that the chief public health officer can protect the public's health;
- to ensure that public health emergency functions are appropriately linked to territorial emergency authorities and provincial and national public health authorities;
- to support health promotion; and
- to repeal the Disease Registries Act and incorporate its reporting and surveillance functions for communicable diseases and health conditions into the new Public Health Act.

The bill is based on standard modern public health legislation, taking into consideration other jurisdictions' most recent experiences with public health risks and adapted to suit the uniqueness of the NWT.

Under the bill, the chief public health officer directs a team of public health officials in the Department of Health and Social Services, as well as public health officials in each of the regional health and social service authorities. This ensures the public health officer will have the administrative support it needs and that public health officials have sufficient latitude to act to protect public health.

The chief public health officer will have the appropriate and necessary powers to respond to common health hazards, dangerous communicable diseases and other health conditions and public health emergencies. The chief public health officer will also be able to monitor general public health, by tracking incident rates of such conditions as cancer.

The bill includes a section on drinking water sources and water supply systems, covering approvals, standards and requirements, protocols in case of health hazards and broad regulation-making powers.

That concludes my opening remarks and I'd be pleased to answer questions the Members may have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Minister Roland. I'd now like to ask the chairperson responsible for the review of the bill, Ms. Lee, to provide committee's response. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Standing Committee on Social Programs, in association with the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, conducted public hearings in Yellowknife on June 6 and 7, as well as on August 13, 2007, and in Behchoko, at an evening meeting on June 6, 2007. The committee then split into two committees to conduct public hearings in Fort Smith and Inuvik on June 11, 2007; Hay River and Tsiigehtchic on June 12, 2007; in Jean Marie River and Tulita on June 13, 2007; and in Fort Simpson and Gameti

on June 14, 2007. The committee is grateful to all persons who took the time to make their views known to committee.

The Public Health Act is a rewrite of an act that is over 50 years old. It recognizes modern methods of dealing with public health issues and provides the Minister and the chief public health officer with the authority they need to respond to a public health crisis while respecting, as much as possible, the rights of the individual.

There were no specific concerns expressed on the content of the bill during any of the public hearings; however, during the northern swing, committee members heard concerns from Gordon Yakeleya, the mayor of Tulita, on the lack of readily available parts for the water intake pump and the potential impact on water quality in Tulita. Committee also heard concerns in the community of Tsiigehtchic on the suitability of the present water supply as beavers have been observed in their reservoir and some people are experiencing rashes after bathing in treated water. The office of the chief public health officer is encouraged to work with these communities and the other responsible GNWT departments to allay the community concerns with their water supply.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes the committee's remarks on Bill 12, the Public Health Act. Individual Members may have questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Ms. Lee. I'd now like to ask the Minister responsible if he'd like to bring in witnesses. Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. If you could please escort the witnesses in, Sergeant-at-Arms.

Thank you. Thank you, Minister Roland. I'd now like to ask you to please introduce your witnesses for the record. Minister Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, joining me at the table here, to my right is deputy minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Chuck Parker; further to my right is Dr. Andre Corriveau, at this point, chief medical health officer, Health and Social Services, but that title will change with the passing of this act. To my left is Janis Cooper, legislative counsel, Department of Justice. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland, and welcome to the proceedings this afternoon. We'll now move on to general comments on Bill 12. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Just briefly, I just want to say something that was not included in the chair's remarks, and I'm speaking as a Member, of course, but I think the briefness and conciseness of the chair's report and the Minister's report, I mean statement, does not, they do not speak to the weight and depth and breadth of this legislation. It's quite a substantial piece of legislation that has had many years of work by many, many people, not only in the department but in the medical profession and health care professions and I think that should be recognized. I think because of the fact that this was not a topic of discussion in many of the hearings that we've been to, that's why we don't have a lot of words here in statements, but I think it is a good piece of work and I think we should also give credit to the Member from Thebacha who was the Minister who, when this bill has been worked on from the beginning of this Assembly but

also on this side of the floor, worked hard to make sure that this piece of legislation stayed on the legislative agenda for this Assembly. So I'd like to recognize that and I'd like to thank the new Minister of Health who made sure that that happened, too, and I think that's just important to mention that.

But I do have a question in light of my statement from the standing committee, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering if we should give the Minister a chance, or the chief public health officer a chance, to explain what actions they have taken with regards to the beavers being found in the reservoir because it is a serious issue from the health aspect.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the new act would change the way we've looked at things and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the department and the chief public health officer. At this point, I'll go to Dr. Corriveau to give some detail to that response. Thank you.

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

DR. CORRIVEAU: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, certainly for myself, the introduction of this bill is an important event in my career. As was indicated, there was a lot of work put into it, not just by myself but by a lot of people and even people who preceded me in this position. I think one of the biggest changes that this bill introduces is recognition of due process to implement public health decisions so that in previous, in our old act you'll note for both to appeal decisions, to challenge me in terms of decisions that might be made and, you know, we have now legislation that is modern in scope and concept and will provide those checks and balances for the proper decisions to be made even though it does provide me with lots of latitude to intervene when we feel that there's a threat to the public health.

With regard to the issue of the beavers in the reservoir, I should just point out that those reservoirs contain raw water and basically there's still a treatment process that follows after and I don't think it will always be possible to eliminate any possible wildlife that might, from time to time, enter the reservoir and have to be removed from there. But it would have no impact on the safety of the drinking water. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Merci, Dr. Corriveau. Next on the list I have Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Chair, the bill itself, I applaud the people who were involved in terms of making this a more up-to-date bill and the health system. Mr. Chairman, the question I have is in terms of the concerns that we heard, the powers for the new positions that are going to be in this act here has to speak to a concern from one community we visited in the Sahtu, Tulita, in terms of water intake treatment plant and the quality of the water is not there and it's a funding issue in terms of the Health department somewhat has to bring the standards of quality of water into our communities. How much power does that position the department has to order the department, not so much the headquarters, sorry, the headquarters of that water treatment plant to get the parts? Because these parts in Tulita are from two different countries: one in England and one in the United States, the costs of those to run the budget for that hamlet. So are you going to starve the hamlet or are you

going to put them in a bad position? Someone's going to be held liable. So how, in this new act, are these positions going to support the communities in terms of we want to bring the quality of the standards of water up to a certain standard? Do we have the means to back up our request? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, our role from the Department of Health and Social Services side and with this act stated in a number of circumstances we would be directly involved in the quality of the water after it comes out of the plant and delivered to homes. So the testing and that end would be done and we would make recommendations if we were to find substances that were not acceptable. In our case, within the government, we've formalized a working relationship with a number of other departments, Municipal and Community Affairs being one of them as well as the Department of Public Works and Services. From our aspect, when it comes to the water treatment plant of testing the quality of water once it goes through the facility, we also certify the training of staff that work in those facilities by setting regulations and training requirements. But for equipment, for design of a structure, the infrastructure of the water treatment plant itself, that would be dealt with in cooperation through MACA and Public Works. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. I appreciate the Minister laying out the procedure. Again, it's a question of this new act coming into force if this existing infrastructure is in the communities that requires additional dollars to, once it comes out of the system and in order to improve...the testing fails and they want to improve the quality of water. The parts in some of these facilities are out of this world in terms of the funding in terms of the United States and England. So who's going to be left holding the bag at the end of the day? Is it going to be the community itself or the department? You look at those filters, Mr. Chairman, the cost at this plant, it just eats up their budget for one whole year, the maintenance of this. So I just wanted to ask the Minister, I know this is something that needs to be considered and how strong will this act ensure that support will be there for the hamlet and the communities to have good water coming out of the treatment plants? Someone's going to pay. Who is it? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the area of involvement, again with the new act, clarifies our roles and deals directly with the issue of water and water quality now instead of the way it was done before. We can, with the passage of this act, make orders in response to the water quality if it, in fact, fails. That would be made to the community and working with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs as to what needed to be remedied. As for the budget for equipment, that type of area, that would be a direct relationship with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. Thank you.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you. It's an ongoing issue, so, Mr. Chairman, I'm not going to continue on with that

question. It's an ongoing issue and those other issues will come up. I want to say to the Minister in terms of the other issue of the beavers in the reservoir, I heard this also in Fort Good Hope, so I hope that the Minister, somehow with the powers that we're going to look at with this new act here, helps remediate some of these concerns with some of the smaller communities that have reservoirs and, you know, dust on them and a whole bunch of other issues that finally is getting some attention through this new act here. I want to let the Minister know that those beavers can...Tsiigehtchic and Fort Good Hope on this issue here. So I wanted to ask if he would also work diligently with the appropriate departments to look at this issue?

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as we've heard, quality of water is one that does come up from time to time in communities and the safety of that supply is something that we can get involved with once this act, it clarifies the process and the rules we all operate by. Ultimately, as we've heard from other sources as well, that the piped water, once it goes through the plant, is filtered and takes out contaminants and supplies a quality of water that is acceptable by national standards. If we find problems with that, we will issue orders around that area. I guess in one degree it's a bit ironic that though we hear from time to time that the best tea that you can have is one that's what we call bush tea from local people. You go out on the land and you make yourself some tea and you get the water from the lake, directly from the lake. Well, that lake has all kinds of creatures living in it but we still say that's the best quality, fresh run-off, river, streams and so on. It's when we have reservoirs and we see that becomes an issue because that water's seen as stagnant, collects dust and is not moving is one of the words that we've heard, but we do go through the filtering system, we do monitor the quality of that water that goes through and when we find problems, we'll issue orders to deal with that and we would deal with the appropriate departments to ensure that that quality of water is a quality that meets the standards that is consumable by people. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Next on the list for general comments I've got Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the Minister for bringing this piece of legislation forward, but mostly I'd just like to recognize Mr. Parker and Dr. Corriveau and the Health and Social Services staff that are hopefully listening, recognize the accomplishments and the significant accomplishments that Health and Social Services have achieved in the last number of years in terms of legislation. I think they mapped out probably the most ambitious agenda of any department in government. By the dint of their hard work and perseverance, we've had, I think, groundbreaking legislation in tobacco and midwifery, we've updated the nursing legislation, nurse practitioners, Pharmacy Act, and the Public Health Act is the latest very complex piece that is long overdue to be done, and there are a couple more small ones coming. It's a credit to the people and staff of Health and Social Services and I just want to acknowledge that and recognize it. I don't think people think about it. So to those staff, I'd just like to recognize that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. I have nobody else on the list for general comments. Clause by clause. Is committee agreed to go clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. We'll start on page 6 of Bill 12, Public Health Act. Page 6, interpretation, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Page 9, clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Part 1, administration and enforcement, clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 10, clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 11, clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 11, clause 8.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 13, clause 9.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 14, clause 10.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Part 2, health protection, clause 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 16, clause 12.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 13.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 17, clause 14.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 15.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 16.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Part 3, drinking water safety, clause 17. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for clarification on this, more so on the intent, do we do any...What type of follow-up do we do with water testing and do we broadcast our testing results anywhere? So it sort of speaks to the section as a whole. I suspect community water testing gets sent into some facility like the Stanton Territorial Hospital, gets screened out and...Like, what do we do for public assurance, because the average person wouldn't know where their water quality sits. They just assume, unless there's a flag or a

report on one of the media things, everything's good. So where does the average person get to find out their type of quality, how good their water is? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I guess a number of factors come in. Usually, when we make a public notice, it is in the opposite end, is boil water notices that would go out. However, we do put on the website our results of the water tests that have occurred, on the Stanton website as I am informed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Is there anything further? No. Thank you, committee. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to ask the Minister and staff in terms of safe water drinking qualities. We have bottled water in our stores in our small communities. There has been some research and reports that our drinking water is actually safer than bottled water, but yet we seem to buy bottled water because of some security or some thought in our heads that it is safer and cleaner. Actually, some reports show just the opposite. We have really good, clean water in the Northwest Territories, Great Bear Lake, Great Slave Lake and several lakes around here. Are there any types of studies that show why people still buy bottled water in the stores while their water is just as good or better in their backyards in the communities? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it is fairly common now throughout the Northwest Territories. We see that in almost every community where individuals now go to their co-op store, their North Mart and other places, to get bottled water. It goes a lot to the pace, as I have heard individuals say. The fact of the matter is all of our water sources are tested and they meet the qualifications nationally to be used for human consumption. We meet the requirements. The bottled water sources out there are tap water in the majority of situations if you look at it, if you do the actual looking at it, that have run through one more filter system. There is not much more beyond that. I think it is difficult but it seems to be a growing trend to have individuals buy bottled water. It is much more expensive than you get out of the tap. We have heard people say they don't like the chlorine piece in it, but that is what makes it safe when you do it in the right measurements. It is difficult, but, in fact, as we do our testing, we can prove the water is safe for human consumption. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Is there anything further, Mr. Yakeleya?

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is my last question to the Minister on this discussion here. It is something that we can continue to support. I know in our communities we have some really good water quality. The thought of the day that this bottled water is safer than tap water because it is bought in stores, it is wrapped nice and neatly. It shows a mountain and a little stream coming down. Why in the Northwest Territories and through the department that this new act can say very loud and clear that our water is one of the safest and cleanest waters in the world here? It is free. I want to bring that to the attention of the Minister on this issue here in terms of quality and safe drinking water in the

Northwest Territories. Let's put safety back into our lakes and waters and not scare them to other issues where they have to go to the store and buy this bottled water. That is a comment, Mr. Chair. That is all I have to say.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Yakeleya, for your comment. Next on the list I have Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have just a quick question about water fluoride. Is that an area that we would review or monitor in this particular not just act but section throughout this act? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The work we would do, and again our relationship in this act on how we would provide the testing that is required and the reporting of that is regulated in a number of ways. To give you the proper response, I should go to Dr. Corriveau.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Dr. Corriveau.

DR. CORRIVEAU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The act itself doesn't speak to the issue of fluoridation. At this point in time, it is a decision that is made at the municipal level, so the municipality will decide whether they will fluorinate. It doesn't add to the safety. It has been recognized as an efficient way to supplement fluoride levels that may be too low in certain parts of the country. Fluoride is an important compound to protect the strength of enamel in teeth. It has been shown that below a certain level, the problem of cavities is increased significantly when there is no fluoride or the fluoride levels are too low. But fluoride can also be toxic if amounts are too high. So it is something that needs to be monitored. If a municipality decides to fluoridate their water, then they would work with our environmental health officers and we would monitor their use of the fluoride, but it is not something that is contemplated directly or imposed through this act or any of the regulations.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Merci, Dr. Corriveau. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe it is not appropriate to ask the question because you say it is not involved, but to further pursue this, why isn't it involved in the Public Health Act? One could see it as a toxic substance. Yes, it may help cavities, but it is also found in other areas to be quite toxic to people for their general health. Why wouldn't it have been considered for this act? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as we proceed and this bill gets passed and put into force, we will also have to do work around regulations of that. As Dr. Corriveau stated, we would be working with municipalities if they decided to use a product like fluoride. We would continue to be involved in that sense. But as we go the next step and look at regulations, those items can be looked at and incorporated. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seeing how the good Minister keeps the door open on this topic, which means I can question his comment, then I would like to ask or get confidence from him by saying that they will

include this as part of the review when those regulations are drawn up and we move forward on this issue. I just want to make sure that he gets the fullness of review, considering the importance of the subject it is to people's health. So if it doesn't fall into the bill per se, I can appreciate that and I will respect that. But I want to make sure it is put into the regulations at least through the least examined, under that process. That should be all I need if he says yes.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as we proceed with this and as we work with other departments involved in this along with ourselves, we will take a look at this as one of the areas. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Committee, we are on clause 17 on page 17. Clause 17.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 18.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 18, Clause 19.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 20. Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just had a quick question in regards to the public health warning. How soon will the chief public health officer get a warning from a community outside of the region that have bigger regions when there is a health warning to be imposed? Thank you.

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

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, if I understand the question correctly, is how soon can an issue be put out there and how soon would it be dealt with. That would work in conjunction with our testing patterns as we found problems. Again, for more detail, we will go to Dr. Corriveau for more detail than I can provide. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Roland. Dr. Corriveau.

DR. CORRIVEAU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I understand the question correctly, it is about how soon we can issue an advisory. Well, there is no requirement. I can act independently as soon as I become aware that there is an issue. So there wouldn't be a requirement to have it vetted somewhere else. We would issue an advisory immediately when the problem is found.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Merci, Dr. Corriveau. Anything further? Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess the only reason I was asking is just yesterday I received an advisory that Paulatuk was under advisory for boiling water. So I was just wondering. By the time they hear about that, I wonder if the chief health officer put the advisory out. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Dr. Corriveau.

DR. CORRIVEAU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I can use that example, the environmental health officer became aware of a test result. He notified me instantly that he was

going to issue the advisory and it was issued in a couple of hours.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Merci, Dr. Corriveau. Anything further? Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. We are on clause 20.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 21.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 19, part 4, health surveillance and reportable diseases, clause 22.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 23.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 24.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 20, clause 25.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 26.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 21, clause 27.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 28.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 29.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 30.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 23, clause 31.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Part 5, public health emergency, clause 32.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 24, clause 33.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 25, clause 34.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Part 6, personal health information, clause 35.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 36.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 37.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 38.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 27, clause 39.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 28, clause 40.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Part 7, general, clause 41.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 42.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 29, clause 43.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 44.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 45.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 46.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 47.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 30, clause 48.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 49.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 31, clause 50.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 37, clause 51.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Transitional, clause 52.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Consequential amendments, clause 53.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 38, clause 54.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 55.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Repeal, clause 56.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause 57.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Commencement, clause 58.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, committee. Does committee agree to Bill 12 as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does the committee agree that Bill 12 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Bill 12 is now ready for third reading. I would like to thank you, committee, Mr. Minister and your officials who are here with us. Mahsi.

Thank you, committee. We will just give the officials a few minutes to clear out and we will proceed with Bill 11.

Thank you, committee. I would like to now ask the Minister responsible for Bill 11 if he would now like to

introduce Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007. Mr. Bell.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, the purpose of Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, is to amend various statutes of the Northwest Territories for which minor changes are proposed or errors or inconsistencies have been identified. Each amendment included in the bill had to meet the following criteria:

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

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

Most amendments proposed in Bill 11 are minor in nature and many consist of technical corrections to a statute. Other changes have the effect of repealing certain enactments or statutory provisions that have expired or have otherwise ceased to have effect. The amendments are of such a nature that the preparation and legislative consideration of individual bills to correct each statute would be time consuming for the Government and the Legislative Assembly.

I will be pleased to answer the committee's questions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Bell. I would like to now ask the standing committee which reviewed Bill 11 to make committee's comments on the bill. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight met on June 6, 2007, to review Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act. This act makes minor amendments to a number of statutes. Following a clause-by-clause review, a motion was carried to report Bill 11 to the Assembly as ready for Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 11. Individual committee members may have questions or comments as we proceed. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. I would now like to ask the Minister responsible, Mr. Bell, if he would like to bring in witnesses.

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Minister Bell. We will now escort the witnesses in. Thank you.

Sorry, does committee agree to bring in the witnesses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. Minister Bell, if you could, would you please introduce your witness for the record?

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Mr. Chairman, with me today is Mark Aitken, director of legislation division. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Bell, and welcome, Mr. Aitken, to the proceedings this afternoon. We will now open the floor to general comments by Members.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No!

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Clause by clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007. We will start on page 1. Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, Aurora College Act, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Charter Communities Act, clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Flood Damage Reductions Agreement Act, clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Justices of the Peace Act, clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Local Authorities Elections Act, clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Motor Vehicles Act, clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Public Airports Act, clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Public Service Act, clause 8.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Page 3, Public Utilities Act, clause 9.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Statutory Instruments Act, clause 10.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Summary Conviction Procedures Act, clause 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Youth Justice Act, clause 12.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does committee agree that Bill 11 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Bill 11 is now ready for third reading and I would like to thank you, Mr. Bell and Mr. Aitken, for being with us this afternoon. Thank you, committee. At this time, I would like to ask what the wish of committee is. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mr. Chair, I move we report progress. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. There is a motion to report progress. The motion is in order and not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please, Mr. Ramsay?

ITEM 21: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, and Bill 12, Public Health Act, and would like to report that Bill 11 and Bill 12 are ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

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

---Carried

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

ITEM 23: ORDERS OF THE DAY

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte):
Orders of the day for Thursday, August 16, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Opening Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 13, Change of Name Act
 - Bill 14, Employment Standards Act
 - Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, August 16, 2007, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 17:12 p.m.

