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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Thursday, August 23, 2007

Members Present

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

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 40-15(6): A Government-Wide Approach To Consultation

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories and across Canada have fought long and hard to have their aboriginal rights recognized. It is important that all governments, including ours, do their part to recognize and uphold these rights. This means the GNWT must consider how decisions we take might infringe upon our asserted or proven aboriginal or treaty rights.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this House we are formalizing the GNWT's government-wide approach to consultation with aboriginal governments and organizations as an expression of our government's commitment to ensure aboriginal and treaty rights in the Northwest Territories are protected.

We will be implementing a government-wide approach to consultation with aboriginal governments and organizations to ensure the GNWT undertakes consultation in a consistent manner, leading to transparent, accountable and flexible consultation processes for all parties. As part of our work to implement this approach, and because jurisprudence in this area is evolving at a rapid pace, we will develop training materials to ensure our staff have any additional tools and resources they need to keep pace with developments in this area.

This approach will ensure the GNWT upholds the "honour of the Crown" as it fulfills its legal duty, undertaking consultation in a spirit of good faith, ultimately contributing, over the longer-term, to mutually respectful relationships with aboriginal governments and organizations.

This new approach will guide our consultation practices in those instances where the legal duty to consult arises under common law. In addition, it will complement and support the work we are already doing with regard to our consultation obligations contained in land, resources and self-government agreements, interim measures agreements, existing legislation and policy. Although the federal government still has authority over non-renewable resources and Crown land in the Northwest Territories, the government-wide approach will provide for

coordination between the GNWT and the federal government's consultation efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I have written to the leaders of those aboriginal governments and organizations having

asserted or proven rights in the Northwest Territories, informing them of our new government-wide approach. I stressed to aboriginal leaders that, in order for consultation to be truly effective, not only does the GNWT have a duty to consult but aboriginal governments and organizations have a reciprocal duty to engage and participate in the consultation process.

Mr. Speaker, I fully expect our new approach to consultation with aboriginal governments and organizations will evolve as case law develops and as we work with aboriginal governments and organizations to develop consultation processes that meet the interests and needs of all parties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Minister's Statement 41-15(6): Development Of A Macroeconomic Policy Framework For The Government Of The Northwest Territories

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since 1999, the NWT has had the fastest growing economy in Canada...

---Applause

...with an average annual growth rate almost three times the national average. This rapid increase has led to higher income levels in the territory and a labour market operating at close to full capacity.

Looking ahead, the NWT will see the completion of the Snap Lake diamond mine later this year, along with additional investment at the Diavik and Ekati mines. A fourth diamond mine is under assessment. These developments will result in continued strong growth in our economy, placing increased pressure on an already tight labour market and on the NWT's industrial and social infrastructure. Other opportunities, like the Mackenzie gas project, will bring significant economic benefits but also increase pressure on the territorial economy.

Even with good news about the NWT economy, there are some important challenges ahead. Fiscal resources are limited and that affects this government's ability to take steps now to ensure the full potential of economic growth across the territory is achieved while managing its impact and preserving the values that are important to northerners.

Since February 2006, the Department of Finance has been working on a macroeconomic policy framework for the NWT. Last fall, I announced a broad consultation process, including a series of roundtable discussions, asking Members of the Legislative Assembly, government departments, the business community, aboriginal and community governments, social and environmental organizations, recognized experts and individual residents for their input into the development of this framework.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in the economic roadmap consultations for

their valuable contributions. Participants told us that the future economy for the NWT should be balanced, diversified and sustainable, based on multiple industries, building on the traditional economy in the North and involving big and small businesses, large and small communities.

Participants also identified four key priorities for government action and investment:

- Education is the key to ensuring NWT residents can benefit directly from the jobs and business opportunities created by development;
- Communities -- especially smaller communities -- need the capacity to plan, address issues, and make decisions about economic development;
- Improving and expanding infrastructure, especially transportation infrastructure, is essential for people to access jobs in other locations, to reduce the costs of living and doing business and to grow economies in smaller communities; and
- Protecting the NWT's environment means paying attention to the special features of the NWT, including its natural beauty and diverse ecosystems.

Based on the results of the consultations and on economic studies and analyses undertaken in recent years, the GNWT has completed a macroeconomic policy framework. The framework provides a reference point for the GNWT to evaluate the individual and combined impacts of different policy options, to help coordinate policy development and to guide overall fiscal and other policy decisions. Most important, it will provide a roadmap for achieving the kind of balanced, diversified and sustainable economy people in the NWT want and expect.

This framework is meant to improve the economic impact of government decisions. Based on a vision for a future economy that is balanced, diversified and sustainable, it will be used to guide future decisions about government spending, investment, taxation and borrowing. Putting measures in place to track progress and ensure accountability is an essential part of a policy framework. The document lays out indicators of progress so that the government's policies can be assessed against overall economic results.

Later today, I will be tabling both the final report on the consultations and the macroeconomic policy framework.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Ministers' statements. The honourable Member responsible for the Homeless, Mr. Bell.

Minister's Statement 42-15(6): Progress On Homelessness Initiatives

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that significant progress is being made on homeless initiatives by this government and our community partners. The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes the need to support communities in finding local solutions to assist the homeless.

The Framework for the GNWT Response to Homelessness was released in January 2007. With the support of Members -- and thank you, Members -- the ongoing funding for homelessness initiatives were included in the 2007-08 Main Estimates. The framework confirms the social program departments are working

together to increase homelessness support across the NWT, including emergency housing and a transportation fund.

Mr. Speaker, a small community homelessness fund was developed and proposals sought from local community organizations to begin to address some of the challenges in our smaller communities. Up to \$40,000 is available to individual communities to provide emergency shelter options for adults. In addition, up to \$10,000 is available for projects aimed at addressing community homelessness issues.

I am very pleased to announce that some excellent proposals were received and program funding will initially be allocated to eight homelessness-related projects.

Mr. Speaker, the proposals received demonstrate strong community partnerships, the mobilization of local resources and the development of creative solutions to address the challenges of homelessness in small communities.

I would also like to report on progress on Bailey House in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, construction of Bailey House is proceeding on schedule and the facility is expected to open in January 2008. I would like to thank the Homelessness Coalition, the Salvation Army and Diavik Diamond Mines Incorporated for their ongoing commitment and support to this important project.

Many of you attended the signing ceremony held today to formalize the project funding agreement reached between the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, the Salvation Army and the City of Yellowknife for this important project. The NWT Housing Corporation provided a total of \$1.748 million in funding through the affordable housing initiative and the sale of a house. Funding for the affordable housing initiative is matched by the Government of Canada. Beginning in April 2008, the ongoing operations of the Bailey House will be supported by a \$200,000 contribution from the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, the government is making significant progress in addressing homelessness challenges across the NWT. The government looks forward to working with communities and concerned stakeholders, to ensure that disadvantaged residents have access to services and programs that get them back on their feet and that they can move forward to live productive and rewarding lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Minister's Statement 43-15(6): Ground Ambulance And Highway Rescue Services

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to provide my colleagues with an update on the status of the joint work being undertaken by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and the Department of Health and Social Services on ground ambulance and highway rescue services.

Over the past several years, community governments and other stakeholders have raised concerns about the lack of a comprehensive, coordinated system of ground ambulance and highway rescue services in the Northwest Territories, and about the need for clarity with regard to

service levels, responsibility for service delivery and associated funding.

Municipal and Community Affairs and Health and Social Services are working together to address this matter through a two-staged approach. This process will address short and long-term issues. In the short term, the departments are providing funding to address immediate pressures experienced by some community governments in the provision of these services. One-time funding of \$200,000 is available on an application basis for communities who provide these services. Six out of seven eligible community governments applied for assistance by the deadline of August 1, 2007.

MACA and Health and Social Services are jointly reviewing the applications received and funding is anticipated to flow to community governments by the end of August 2007.

MACA and Health and Social Services are also in the process of developing a work plan to achieve the long-term goal of a policy framework where the GNWT legislates and delivers ground ambulance and highway rescue service. This work plan includes several aspects including the development of a service levels model that outlines appropriate service levels depending on the community, the development of an appropriate funding framework, and, eventually, programming that is consistent with the regulatory service levels and funding framework.

The departments anticipate that it may take some time to develop the required policy and legislative framework, given the need for data collection and to undertake the required research as well as to gather baseline data. In the interim, MACA and HSS are committed to continuing to consult with effected stakeholders as required, in order to achieve a comprehensive, coordinated system of ground ambulance and highway rescue services in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Minister's Statement 44-15(6): Statement On Passing Of Corporal Jordan Anderson

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in early July we heard the sad news that a young northerner had lost his life in Afghanistan.

Corporal Jordan Anderson, of the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, based in Edmonton, Alberta, was born in Iqaluit, Nunavut, and raised in Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik, Northwest Territories. He was stationed in Afghanistan where his regiment operated to ensure the safety of local people. On July 4th, a roadside bomb detonated under a vehicle Jordan was riding in and he was killed.

Until that time, the war in Afghanistan seemed a long way away, but it certainly touched the people of the Northwest Territories on July 4th. It is tragic that Jordan's life was cut short, but the life he chose to lead as a soldier had meaning, pride and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, we offer our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Corporal Jordan Anderson. It is because of brave and selfless soldiers like Jordan that the world is a better place. We are proud of him and grieve his loss. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Acknowledgement Of Northern-Born Lawyer Jay Bran

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to mark my final Member's statement in the 15th Assembly by honouring the accomplishments of an outstanding young man from a family in my constituency, Mr. Jay Bran. Mr. Speaker, Jay was called to the Bar of the Northwest Territories on August 10, 2007, becoming one of the few but ever growing group of northern grown and aboriginal lawyers from the NWT.

Jay and his family moved to Yellowknife when he was three years old. He attended St. Joseph Elementary School, William MacDonald Junior High School and Sir John Franklin High School. He played professional hockey in a junior league in Alberta and worked as a corrections officer in Yellowknife before pursuing his post-secondary education which eventually led him to obtaining a law degree at the University of Calgary. I have also learned that he even did a summer job stint in this very Assembly as a Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms.

Mr. Speaker, his mother is someone who is very well known to us. Eleanor Bran worked as an aboriginal language interpreter in the Legislative Assembly. She is originally from Fort Simpson and first cousin to Senator Nick Sibbeston. I think Jay may be too young to know this, but I have had the good fortune to work with not only his mother in the Assembly but also his late father, Barry, back in the early 1980s and with his big sister Lisa in the mid-1980s when she and I worked in what is now ITI when it used to be called not RWED but, before that, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Speaker, Jay also has a brother Derek and another sister Kim. I know if his father were here today, he would show all of us, in his very special way, just how proud he must be of Jay. Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to advise this House that Jay has decided to start his legal career serving his people as a legal aid lawyer in the North specializing in criminal law. He enjoys litigation and, from all accounts, he has established himself as a highly skilled, promising young lawyer already. But I must say I was even more happy to learn that his dear wife, Pam, is a nurse. Pam Baert is a nurse at the OBS unit at the Stanton Territorial Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, given the enormously high demand and value we place in having more northern nurses and legal aid lawyers, this certainly is a power couple indeed. Mr. Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent to finish my statement?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I have the permission of this House when I say we collectively pray and sincerely ask that they will stay in the North, live and work, raise their families and retire here. Mr. Speaker, I also know that Jay's family and especially his wife, Pam, was at his side before, during and after law school. They share every bit of Jay's accomplishment today.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has had the firsthand experience of going through our wonderful NWT

education system in the North, going through law school, which is often compared with the military boot camp, and working in the very challenging but rewarding profession of law, I know there will be many exciting, interesting and rewarding years for Jay and his family. I want to take this opportunity to send my heartfelt congratulations to Jay Bran and his entire family. Certainly, this is a happy event worthy of a celebration in this House by all Members of this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Duty To Accommodate Guidelines For GNWT Employees

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to use my Member's statement to draw attention to a potential gap in the guidelines for applying the duty to accommodate for employees of our public service. The human rights legislation is quite clear that the employer has the duty to accommodate when an employee has an obligation to care for a family member with a disability unless it can be proven that this accommodation causes undue hardship to the employer.

Managers in our public service should have reflective policies that allow them to make these accommodations within a clearly defined set of circumstances. Employees of our public service should not have to resort to making an application under the Human Rights Commission to assert that accommodation.

I believe that the GNWT would like to be seen as a fair and compassionate employer when it comes to a matter of accommodating employees who could not, for example, work a nightshift in order to care for a family member with a disability that would not allow that family member to be left alone at night.

Understandably, without such an internal policy, managers would be in the unenviable situation of trying to arbitrarily decide on requests that would come before them for any number of reasons to accommodate the needs of their employees. I would like to know what committees or decision-making bodies exist within government departments to consider the requests of employees when employees make an application to be accommodated in this way.

In the absence of clearly defined policy, which should be in keeping with the human rights legislation, the possibility of abuse of this accommodation for less than serious or frivolous circumstances could put the manager of that employee in a very difficult situation. They could be seen to be making such decisions in an ad hoc manner.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of employer and employee, in the interest of treating our public servants with fairness, dignity and respect, I believe that such policies, if they do not exist today, should exist. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Newfoundland And Labrador's Hebron Fields Resource Royalties Agreement

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recently read and watched, with interest, the news that Newfoundland/Labrador and Premier Williams had successfully negotiated an agreement with Chevron for the new Hebron fields. I remember, as well, months ago when the negotiations broke down and the oil companies left, saying that the Premier and Newfoundland/Labrador were being unreasonable and asking too much. From what I understand, the Premier stood his ground. He knows, like we do, that the land is their bank. If they are going to allow access to those resources, they have to get the best deal possible. He also knows, as do we, that the world needs those resources and that they have been there for millions of years but the demand is there. They are beating a path to their doorstep of Newfoundland/Labrador as they are to the Northwest Territories. I would like to just acknowledge and recognize the fact that he did stand his ground. He did not feel that he had to be grateful for the attention and benefits that the oil companies were prepared to give him, but that they were equals. They want something that we have. We have an obligation to strike the best deal for the people we represent and at the same time protect the environment.

I believe he did that. I believe there is a lesson there for the incoming 16th Assembly as we look at resource development, at the macroeconomic policy, and the duty to consult, that we keep those things in mind. We do not have to be a humble mendicant shuffling our feet and tugging our forelock as we deal with big business. We have what the world needs, but we also know that we have an obligation to be careful because the land is our bank. We have an obligation for all the generations yet to come to ensure that while we make the maximum use of those resources, we also protect the land and the environment.

We cannot have a macroeconomic policy that does not consider, front and centre, how you keep a healthy environment and healthy people. So we should take a page and learn from the Government of Newfoundland what can be done. We have some good pieces in place with the macroeconomic policy and duty to consult, but let's not forget that we should stand tall and proud as northerners and be able to look these multi-national major organizations in the eye and deal with them from that basis. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Support For Volunteer Sector

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. In Canada, volunteer sectors employ more than 1.3 million Canadians with salaries and benefits packages in excess of \$40 billion a year. Here in the NWT, 53 percent of adult NWT residents volunteer with a group. An estimated 86 percent of us volunteer informally on our own. Collectively, it is estimated that the efforts of all these NWT volunteers contribute an estimated \$50 million in value to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2005 pre-budget consultation documents, a statement was made that the value of the work of volunteer organizations cannot be

underestimated. So last year it was with great disappointment that our colleagues in the federal government cut from the NWT volunteer initiative and many other NGOs across the NWT, but from the volunteer initiative that was underway here, \$160,000, or 95 percent of its funding. Needless to say, that organization had to fold.

I know from being a volunteer and working with other volunteers in the past and in my term here as an MLA, that volunteers will strive, they do believe in what they're doing and they will succeed even in the face of this kind of betrayal, I would say. Mr. Speaker, we cannot take our volunteers and our NGOs for granted. Just two days ago, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment told us of strides that we're making in our income security framework redesign. He mentioned, by name, many of these organizations, 13 of which are volunteer driven. Hundreds of other NGOs play vital roles in the arts, recreation, youth and the professions, and I'm grateful to them all, Mr. Speaker. I plea that this government and future Assemblies loosen up the purse strings, lighten up the regulations and the paper burden and treat these people as the true partners they are, that we need and we value and that we, I will say again, can never take for granted. Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it is no coincidence here, that I chose to speak of volunteerism, which I believe to be as vital and rewarding as any kind of public service. So as I take my leave of this distinguished Chamber, it is with conviction that I say that I want to continue to contribute in some way to the tremendous future of this amazing territory and that while I'm going to be leaving the NWT to be going to school, it is only temporary, it is not good-bye; rather, it is only good-bye for now. Mahsi. Merci beaucoup. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Reflections On The 15th Assembly

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use my last Member's statement of this 15th Assembly to reflect on my just over two and a half years here. It has been a privilege, and I mean that sincerely, to serve the people of Inuvik Twin Lakes. I look forward to the opportunity to reaffirm their confidence in me and come back and do some more battle in the 16th.

I thoroughly enjoyed working with my colleagues on this side of the House, especially those in Social Programs. We had many discussions; we had differences of opinion; but you always acted in the best interests of your constituents and I respect you a lot for that.

Mr. Bell, Mr. Dent, Mr. Handley, you're all leaving this Assembly and I wish you well in your future plans. We've had some agreements; I've agreed with a lot of things you've said. There are some things that you've said that I haven't agreed with and I wanted to agree with you, but then that would have made us both wrong, so I didn't.

---Laughter

I've enjoyed sitting here next to my colleague Mr. Hawkins. It's been an interesting two and a half years, Robert.

To Mr. Braden, our elder on this side of the House, I counted on Mr. Braden a lot for advice and he'd always lean over and tell me what we were doing, so I appreciate that.

---Laughter

I believed him for the first week; after that, I was on my own.

We have a job to do here -- it's not a job, it's something that we chose to do -- and that's almost impossible to do without the support of people that put you here, people that work to get you here. Then once you get in here, Mr. Mercer and his staff really put you to work. I remember my first couple of days here where I went to torture room B and had my own private orientation.

---Laughter

Also without the support of your family, it's almost impossible to do what we do. My wife is up in the gallery there and we've been married for 28 years now and she's had to make a bit of sacrifice for me being gone all the time; at least I hope it was a sacrifice.

---Laughter

So to all my colleagues in here, I wish you all well in whatever you decide to do. To those that are running for re-election, I wish you well and the best of luck. I pray things work out well for everyone in here. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Accountability And Transparency

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is our last meeting. I would like to make a statement. Ever since our last election, we've travelled into various communities, we spoke to elders, youth and community members. We tried our best to work for our people. We have a lot of different jurisdictions in Canada but here in the Northwest Territories, we have different jurisdictions. I wish the best for everyone in this next Assembly. We have to work well together in order to go forward. These are the messages that our communities give us. (Translation ends)

...day of our session. I would like to leave a statement for those who will be returning to the 16th Assembly and carry it forward.

Mr. Speaker, throughout our journey to various communities as MLAs, we were told, over and over, to be accountable to the people that we represent and serve. We are quite unique here in the North compared to other jurisdictions throughout Canada and other parts of the country. We need to be out there simply to listen to the voices of the North. Mr. Speaker, another point that they share with us is simply being transparent, being open. One hand needs to know what the other hand is doing or thinking. So they could either work with it or support such initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, what we witnessed here in this House yesterday on the Deh Cho Bridge is a fine example that would have been smooth sailing if the committee

members had the detailed information in advance. Mr. Speaker, on the other hand, when we get together and communicate with each other, our committee members and local governments such as Gameti School, we can accomplish positive results and good relations that will serve us well into the future. Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that this is a lesson to learn from for the new government and Members of the 16th Assembly. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to use my last Member's statement here today to express my gratitude and appreciation to the many people I've worked with here during my tenure here in the 15th Assembly. Firstly, I'd like to thank my constituents of Tu Nedhe for electing me in 2003-2004 to undertake the very important and challenging task of representing their interests in this unique system of consensus government we have here in the NWT. Secondly, thank you to all of my colleagues here in this House for all of the wonderful experiences and advice on leadership and politics that they have provided me over the last four years; some good and some not so good. Mr. Speaker, I have to point out that the level of respect and dignity that everyone shows to one another in this Assembly is second to none, and I appreciate everybody for that.

I have to also mention the excellent work and work ethic that the Legislative Assembly staff have continually upheld without reservation as we, as an Assembly, could not function without. Many thanks to them for that. I would also like to thank the support staff: the EAs, the CAs, and all the secretaries that have come and gone. Also, all the Members and Ministers for all their support, cooperation and the serious consideration that they provide to resolving the many concerns and issues that are brought to their attention by NWT residents through their MLAs.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I really have to thank my family and the many friends for their continuous support and encouragement that they have shown me for the past four years. I am deeply indebted to them for that and for showing me how the love of a family member, a husband, wife or partner, or just a hug of a child, can make all of this politics seem so trivial, but at the same time so very important to everybody in our pursuit of happiness.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to wish Members who are not pursuing re-election all the best in whatever pursuits that they have and wish all the Members that are seeking re-election, like myself, good luck and I look forward to continue on working with you all in the next Assembly in this fast, exciting, growing economy here in the NWT that I always call home. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Reflections On The 15th Assembly

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the last sitting day of the 15th Assembly, so I would like to reflect

some thoughts over what transpired over the past three and a half years.

When I arrived for MLA for the Nunakput riding three and a half years ago, I did not discuss my candidacy with my wife, Lucille, or my two sons, Bertram and Darren, because it was a spur of the moment decision. To be honest, I did not expect to be elected and representing...

---Laughter

To be honest, I did not expect to be elected and represent my constituents when elected. Mr. Speaker, becoming an MLA and representing your constituents can be a difficult job because we know we can't solve all the problems of our constituents. We can only lobby the government and colleagues to listen to our issues and concerns during business reviews and hope they will include your projects into some budget planning process.

Mr. Speaker, as an example, I lobbied very hard to my colleagues to have an RCMP presence in Sachs Harbour. Although it took three years, the Minister of Justice eventually included this project into the business plan.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. POKIAK: Two RCMP officers will be located in the office we'll be establishing in Sachs Harbour by 2008, although it's one year late.

I also lobbied very hard for the last three and a half years for an all-weather road between Tuk and Inuvik, but recently, over the past few months, to find \$15 million over three years to construct the 22-kilometre access road from source 177 from Tuktoyaktuk just so that the community of Tuk can have year-round access to a gravel source. This morning, Mr. Speaker, I listened, with interest, when the deputy mayor of Tuktoyaktuk was interviewed by CBC and he is obviously very disappointed that this government could not commit any funding towards this project before dissolution of this government. The deputy mayor has spent a lot of time and effort in promoting the construction of the road. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Cabinet will make a strong recommendation to the 16th Assembly to add this as a high priority of the next government. Apparently, the Deh Cho Bridge at \$150 million has precedence and we move forward because Cabinet considers this a national interest. Whose interest is it? Is it the Premier and Cabinet? This bridge, when built, will not serve the people.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, I have your time for Member's statement expired.

MR. POKIAK: Mr. Speaker, may I request unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. 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, colleagues. Whose interest is it? Is it the Premier and Cabinet? This bridge, when built, will not serve the people in the Beaufort-Delta and the Sahtu regions. Once again we, in the Far North, are left out on major projects to connect us to the rest of Canada and we will continue to pay the high costs for fuel, oil and gas, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, on other matters, I would like to thank Tim Mercer, Clerk of the Assembly, and his staff for all the

support they gave me over the last three and a half years. To my honourable colleagues, it was a pleasure to meet, discuss, argue and eventually resolve issues through our committee deliberations.

Mr. Speaker, four Members have decided not to run in the upcoming 16th Assembly. To Premier Handley, Ministers Bell and Dent and our very own dean, Mr. Braden, it was a pleasure to know and work with you and I wish each of you well for whatever the future leads in your life.

To my wife, Lucille, sons, Bertram and Darren, my brother Charles Pokiak in Tuk, thank you for all the support you gave me over the last three and a half years. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, the communities of Tuktoyaktuk, Ulukhaktok, Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour. Thank you for having the confidence and electing me to the 15th Assembly to represent you. When I ran I said what is needed is you needed the confidence of your MLA to represent and speak on behalf of your interests and, more importantly, to keep in contact with constituents. I think I have accomplished that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make one last effort and try to convince the Cabinet to fund construction for an access road to source 177.

---Laughter

Will they make a commitment today to fund this project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Listening To The Voices Of The People

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, being the last day of our sitting of this Assembly, we've still got another week of work yet before the writ is dropped and the Ministers still have their caps on as Ministers until we get a new Cabinet sworn in in October. Mr. Speaker, I was thinking about things to say to the Ministers last night and I was tossing and turning. Gee, I had a hard time to sleep, tossing and turning about what to say to the Ministers.

---Laughter

So I go up and I read a book and, Mr. Speaker, in the book that I read there was a quote there by the author and the author said when you become a leader, you lose the right to think about yourself. I thought about that, what does the author say? I remember an elder in Tulita saying when you become an MLA, you speak for us. You use your talents, your gifts, your passion and you say things for us, not for yourself. If you say things for yourself, your words are weak; but if you say things for your people, your words are strong and can support you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

MR. YAKELEYA: So the Ministers, they represent all of us in the Northwest Territories.

AN HON. MEMBER: Northwest Territories!

MR. YAKELEYA: You speak for us in terms of national, territorial issues that benefit all of the people in the Northwest Territories. I want to say that when this quote came up that it made so much sense.

As Ministers, I want to thank you on behalf of the people in the Sahtu for coming into my region for making some difference, making some impacts and having some sense of where the people in the Sahtu are coming from when we come together in meetings, when you come to visit us at our homes. I know some Ministers came to some old people's homes and sat beside some old grannies or grandpas and sat and had tea with them and looked at them and talked with them, even had translators. The Minister, you know, this morning I went to see an uncle of mine in the hospital right now -- he's probably watching us -- and he said that the Minister made a good decision to support the moosehide tanning, he's supporting it. You don't know what type of decision you made for people in the Northwest Territories, for our culture.

AN HON. MEMBER: Major.

MR. YAKELEYA: It's a major decision and it will pay off in the long run, Mr. Bell.

---Applause

I want to say that Mr. Roland...Mr. Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, honourable colleagues. I wanted to say to Minister Roland, Minister McLeod and Minister Krutko, and the other Ministers, you have made a difference in my people. I know there's some tough decisions and there's policies, but there's also heart. I wanted to thank you for looking in there and making those tough decisions sometimes. Our people really appreciate that.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say to Mr. Handley, I really appreciated his statement yesterday saying I think we have to stop acting like little grandchildren of the Department of Indian Affairs and the federal government, and start being like a government and make our decisions. I think, Mr. Handley, that that's a voice that I've wanted to hear so long that we, as people of the Northwest Territories, have to stand up, like Mr. Miltenberger said, recognize that we are a government, we're up here and we're going to do things in the northern way, made in the Northwest Territories and stop getting treated like a little orphan of the federal government. We are people, we need to be free. Set our people free, Mr. Harper. Thank you.

---Laughter

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Member's statements. The honourable Member from Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously today is the last day we'll all be together as the 15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, it's both a sad day, but also an exciting time for many of us as we head off, some seeking re-election, others seeking new pursuits in life, and I wanted to use my last statement in this House to say goodbye and to say good luck to all of my colleagues that are here today.

Mr. Speaker, I've learned something from each and every one of you over the past four years and I'll miss the team that we have assembled here today. Although, I doubt very much Cabinet is going to miss me as much as I will miss them, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

I hope to see many of you back here in six weeks to carry on the important work of the Government of the Northwest Territories and it's been an honour and a privilege to serve with each and every one of you.

I want to again thank my constituents for all of their support and encouragement over the past four years. Kam Lake is a riding that I thoroughly enjoyed representing. Kam Lake is undeniably the economic hub of our capital city, home to an industrial park, world-class dog mushers and sled dogs, two schools -- Ecole St. Joseph and N.J. MacPherson -- and, with the recently adjusted boundaries, the home to just over 2,700 people. It is a riding that I am going to again be seeking to be the MLA for in the upcoming election. I am very thankful for the opportunity the constituents of Kam Lake gave me four years ago, and I am looking forward to seeing and speaking with them in the very near future.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this has the feeling today of being the last day of school. While it may seem like our last day of school, the real schools will be starting again soon in Yellowknife and in our communities. I want to wish all of our young people and the teachers heading back to school this fall a successful and enjoyable school year. Again, I want to wish everybody good luck and good bye, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to close today's 15th Assembly statement by the same way I came into the Assembly almost four years ago. I have some special thank yous and acknowledgements. Mr. Speaker, although we all mention several times we can never mention everyone, there are certain people that I think that I am going to take the risk and highlight their performance. Mr. Speaker, the Members' secretary, Verna Currimbhoy, has been an incredible support. She has always been there to help every one of us; that is the Regular Members, Mr. Speaker. She works diligently and always worries and makes sure everything is good and handled quite well. Mr. Speaker, her presence upstairs has been a huge asset to this Assembly.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, an MLA doesn't do their work alone. Sometimes, when you are knocking on those Ministers' doors, all you keep getting is shut doors and someone is ignoring your call.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: ... (inaudible)...

MR. HAWKINS: However, Mr. Speaker, it is important to point out the executive assistants, some past and present that I think have made an exceptional impact on some of the work that I have been able to succeed with. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make special mention to Katherine Robinson who worked for the honourable Mr. Dent for some time.

---Applause

Allen Stanzell, with his keen eye for detail in getting back to me.

---Applause

Mr. Doug Pon has worked for Minister McLeod for all the way through.

---Applause

They are fine, outstanding individuals. They made the work here so much more successful and rewarding with their assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the Legislative Assembly security staff are stalwarts: Ray, Dennis and Ian. They have always been great out front here. They are an important part of this Assembly.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, I can't forget to mention the valuable support the constituents of Yellowknife Centre have offered. I have always appreciated them bringing forward their concerns to me, from their advice to sometimes even their criticism on how this government should be doing better. Without that support, MLAs would be lost without that guidance. So thank you to them.

Mr. Speaker, Coady Summerfield has been my constituency assistant for the last two and a half years. His steadfast support and attention to detail has always been appreciated. Every smart man... Mr. Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, as I was trying to say, every smart man always makes special mention of his wife, because she is certainly the backbone of everything. To my two sons, McKinley and Hudson, although I won't be seeing you much for the next six weeks, I will still be thinking of you every day.

To all the Members here, thank you for your support. To all the constituents of Yellowknife Centre, thank you for your support, and good luck to everyone. It has been an exciting roller coaster working with everyone. I am sure I will see everyone back except for the retirees, that is. I will see everyone back in six weeks. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is not too often, since becoming a Member of the 15th Legislative Assembly and serving as a Minister in this government, I have had an opportunity to stand up and reflect on the constituents of Inuvik Boot Lake or the work that I have done on their behalf. I felt this morning and my wife reminded me as she is back home and said, other people are doing it. You need to get up and say something as well.

I tend to try to leave things for back home and talk to the folks there, but I want to say to the people of Inuvik Boot Lake I have to most sincerely thank them for their support

of sending me back here to be their representative in this government. It is truly an honour and a privilege to serve the people of the Territories because I do believe, as I first came here back three terms ago, that this is the people's government. The way we operate here in a consensus style is about the people and we represent their interests when we have our debates in this forum. That is something I look forward and have to say thank you for their support. If the good people of Inuvik Boot Lake want to see me back here again, I look forward to their continued support, as I hope to return and serve the people of Inuvik Boot Lake and the people of the territory and returning here possibly for a fourth time.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, I think along with the people that we represent, whether it is...I remember some grannies, as they say -- but not from Nahanni but from Inuvik Boot Lake -- in the way they talk to you; the elders of our community in giving you advice and telling you that you are doing a good job. Sometimes I have gone back home after being in this setting and feeling that I truly was starting to wear the job. As some people would joke, I entered rooms with a dark cloud over my head, the black hat and the black cape to give the bad news. But, Mr. Speaker, when I go back home and they remind me you are doing a good job; keep working and keep representing us. It is good that I can come back here with a renewed spirit and drive. I hope that continues.

Mr. Speaker, when we are down here, as we have heard around this table, we can't do the job by ourselves. It takes a lot of commitment by other people in our areas. I have never done this as I can recall in the term of a Member of the Assembly, but I am going to ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. For the first time, you may conclude your statement, Mr. Roland.

---Laughter

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. There may be a couple in there, but I always prided myself in sticking to two and a half minutes. I thought I might be able to do that, but I guess I have been a politician for awhile and I have gone on longer as the hair has gone whiter. I just want to say, without the staff that we have to help us do our job, to help us keep us on time, keep us on track and keep us moving, it would be a very long, arduous process. I have to thank them. From the front line staff I have had this term to staff I have had in Inuvik, they definitely help us do our job and help represent the people that we are here to represent as well. Without them, the messages can be long and slow. We need to get back to the people we represent.

Mr. Speaker, as we have heard around here -- Members of the Assembly, many of us with families, some who have just got a hint of families -- as we started, I can recall in my first term as a Member when one of my children was in a bunting bag. The second term, there was another child in a bunting bag. This last term, no more bunting bags. I can say if I come back this time around, for sure no more bunting bags.

---Laughter

As Minister of Finance, I have done my part to ensure that, for the population statistics of the NWT, we get more money.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, seriously, without our families and the support of our families, we would not be able to do our jobs. I have to say to my wife, Shawna, without her support -- and my going back for forgiveness from time to time of missing times -- and respect, that this definitely wouldn't be worthwhile doing the job without family support. So I thank her for that.

Mr. Speaker, it is definitely a privilege to serve the Members in this Assembly and the people of the Territories. One thing I used to sign off with, I will sign off with one more time. Greetings back to my wife and children in Inuvik. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for that very short conclusion to your Member's statement, Mr. Roland. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's the last day for oral questions for me in this House. Can you hear the sigh of relief?

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, the last day as I work in this House I would like to reflect a bit on the past 16 years and first of all, though, pay tribute to my role models, and I had two; they were my parents. Both were very politically active. My mother was a tremendous organizer and backroom strategist; while my dad was the politician. I learned from them. I learned the importance of applying common sense, listening to constituents and the public, and communicating. They taught me the importance of integrity and a principled approach. Their training has stood me very well in my work here and I think would stand anybody well as they seek to do the job in our Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to very quickly extend some thanks. Again, I'd like to thank my constituents. It's been an incredible honour that they have chosen me for 16 years to represent them. I'd like to thank particularly my Cabinet colleagues for the last four years. It's been a very interesting and exciting time to be on Cabinet and be in government in this Assembly.

I've enjoyed working with the Members of the Assembly, some for four years, some for eight years, some for 12 years. Yes, Mrs. Groenewegen, some for 12 years. I know you're hoping to come back as the dean of the Assembly, but we'll see. I hope they don't call you the oldest Member as they have been calling me.

---Laughter

I'd also like to, again, thank the Assembly staff. They have done a tremendous job of making sure that we could do our work here in this House. My ministerial office staff and constituency assistants over the years and, again, particularly my family. I was really surprised to see my wife, Eileen, and son, Tyler, in the gallery today.

---Applause

I'm sure they came just to make sure that I didn't change my mind and announce that I was running again. I also thought I'd better mention it now, Mr. Speaker, because I know that my wife doesn't like to be recognized and I think she might sneak out before recognition of visitors in the gallery, so I thought I'd better say something now.

I'd like to wish all of my colleagues good luck, whether you're seeking re-election or retiring to other pursuits as I am. It's been fun working with everybody here; I really enjoyed it. Mr. Speaker, it's been an extremely interesting time to be in government, in this Assembly and I'm extremely thankful that I've had the opportunity for this public service.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to thank my constituents in the Mackenzie Delta and the people of the Mackenzie Delta for allowing me to serve for the last 12 years. More importantly, my constituency staff which included Liz Wright, Sue Ellen Wilson, Elaine Blake from Tsiigehtchic, and Jean Pascal from Aklavik. Mr. Speaker, in regards to the support that we all get as Members of this House, we can never forget our community leaders, our elders, and, more importantly, our constituents who are the ones that drive us and ensure the reason that we're here is to serve them.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a real honour over the last 12 years in this House in regards to dealing with issues such as the water rise that we had to battle with from floods in our communities, to the crisis of programs and services being delivered. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, again working with our community leaders and our community municipalities to find solutions by working through communicating with each other and finding solutions to these problems. More importantly, working with Members in this House along with our government.

Mr. Speaker, in the last 12 years of this House, there were the four amigos and I think the four amigos, like I mentioned, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland and the dean of the House, Mr. Dent. Again, I'd like to wish Charles all the best in regards to his new career in regards to getting out of politics. I think most people think that's the easy part, but the problem is: don't get back into it. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing colleagues along with Mr. Bell, Baby Bell as he's better known, and I'd like to thank him for his hard work and his efforts that he has put into a lot of initiatives in this House. Again, I'd like to wish him all the best in his endeavours wherever it takes him. Along with the Premier, Mr. Handley; under your leadership you have made a difference to the Northwest Territories and the people of the Northwest Territories and also for bringing our communities, our regions and our community together. Again, that's a challenge on its own. So mahsi cho. Bill Braden, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity for serving with you. Again, I'd like to wish you all the best. I can always recall all those many, many questions that you asked. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Braden, again, I'd like to wish you all the best in your endeavours in moving forward. Again, it was an honour serving with you but, more importantly,

responding to the many, many questions that you've asked over the last while. But I think it's more importantly your wisdom, your knowledge and the importance of the issues that you took to this table in trying to find solutions for the people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the staff of the Legislative Assembly along with the staff throughout government, because without them we know our jobs would not be completed.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of this Legislative Assembly for giving me a chance to serve as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for a short term, and I would like to thank Mr. Speaker for taking on that role and leading us to this point.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff that I had in the different roles that I played along with the Clerks of the Legislative Assembly, with Mr. Hamilton at the reign and now Mr. Mercer, Mr. Inch and Mr. Schuerte. I think it's you people that make us look good and think a lot of times people have to realize that it's the people in the back rooms that are doing all the work. All we're doing is playing to the cameras.

---Laughter

Again, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my staff Clarence EMBERLEY, Corrine Kruse, and, more importantly, the many people I worked with in the different departments: Workers' Compensation Board, the Power Corporation and the Housing Corporation, for all their efforts. So with that, mahsi cho. Thank you.

---Applause

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

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHE: Mr. Speaker...(English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that back in 2003 during the election, I was glad to be elected to the Legislature. At that time I didn't have good use of my aboriginal language and people always said go to the communities, go visit the elders, and that's what I've done. Now I can visit them, drink and have tea with them and listen to them and to their stories. I receive lots of guidance from them. I am very happy to say that there is an actual granny from Nahanni. I have spoken with her and she is very happy, Mr. Speaker, to see that in some small way, I guess, that her voice has been heard. I pride myself and the community that that's how our consensus government works. We're able to go to the communities and listen to the people and sit with them and move their issues and their concerns forward and bring them to this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say, as well, I had the honour and privilege of being on the Regular Members' side for three years. I've gained lots of experience on that side working with the Regular Members and I'd like to tell them now good luck in their terms to come and the things they're about to do, Mr. Speaker.

As well, I also had the honour and privilege to serve one year in this Legislature as a Minister of our government. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my one year as a Minister, I've learned quite a bit and that bureaucracy has a lot to play with here too. I would also like to share my funny story. My first act as a Minister in this government was to sign a letter to Mr. Kevin Menicoche, MLA for Nahendeh.

---Laughter

I said, well, what's going on and they told me that I have to finish a loop. But I, too, would just like to say goodbye to Mr. Handley, Mr. Dent and Mr. Bell, who I've had the honour and pleasure of working with and wish them the best on their endeavours. As well, to Mr. Braden who I've had the pleasure of working with too. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Members' statements. The honourable Member from Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wasn't planning to make a statement today, but I didn't want to be the odd man out. So in the last day of our session I wanted to say a couple words. First of all, that it's been a real pleasure to be here for my two terms and it's been, I guess, quite surprising that we lasted the whole eight years that I've been here, because getting into this job was a real eye opener. I looked at it from the outside for quite awhile before I made the decision, along with my family and my friends. When I got here I realized that there was a lot of people here for the same reasons that I was here: because I wanted to see change, I wanted to see a better community, I wanted to see a better life for my constituents. However, after meeting a lot of different people I started to wonder because one of my colleagues that I met, one of his past times I think was to read the dictionary and find new words to use in the House. I also met some of the more experienced MLAs of day like Mr. Krutko, who taught me how to ask question after question after question...

---Laughter

...whether the Minister was going to give me an answer or not. Of course, Charles Dent, who was here for some time already. I learned to take the opposite position of everything he said...

---Laughter

...and we got along quite fine.

Mr. Speaker, I know everybody here is really keen on seeing this day come and also to get out there to start campaigning. Mr. Speaker, I'm quite anxious to get out there and start campaigning. I was planning to start tomorrow, but unfortunately we've got a bridge signing ceremony to do.

---Laughter

So I'll probably start on Monday or sometime after that.

Mr. Speaker, there's been a number of people that I have been gifted or very happy to meet along the way and a lot of them are leaving in the next while and not coming back.

First of all, the guy that I sat next to for eight years on the Regular Members' side and on Cabinet, Mr. Brendan Bell, who has been recognized by a lot of our colleagues here as very sharp and very hard working. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if everybody recognizes, but Mr. Bell really has a very wild sense of humour. In the last while we've been sitting together and we're just like the two old men from the Muppet Show.

---Laughter

We've watched as people stood up to ask questions and tried to predict what they're going to say and Brendan usually wins and he won more money off me today.

---Laughter

We talk about people's clothes, we talk...

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Okay, okay.

---Laughter

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: So it's really been interesting sitting next to him and I wish him all the best.

Mr. Dent is also leaving us and he's been really a great person to ask for advice on rules and some of the history and I'm sure we're all going to miss his expert little opinions on a lot of things. Although, I've been finding out over the years that some of the rules that he's been telling me I had to follow were not always correct and were sometimes in his favour. So I wish him all the best.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier is also moving on and I really want to thank him for setting a work ethic that I've tried to follow over the years. I've never been able to beat him to work, even though I've tried to come in earlier and he's got a half-hour drive and he's always here, he has the coffee on and he's provided some very good advice for me that I really appreciate and I want to thank him.

I also want to wish Mr. Braden the best of luck. I didn't always like his questioning and his line of questioning, but Mr. Braden has always been very sincere and very respectful and I really appreciate that and I want to wish him the best of luck.

Everybody else here, I'd like to also wish you all the best and hope you do well on your campaigns. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Members' statements. The honourable Member from Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

Member's Statement On Appreciation And Best Wishes

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to say anything today either because I'm not good at saying goodbye, but I, like Mr. McLeod, didn't want to be the odd man out and this would be pretty obvious, especially after he said that.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, almost eight years ago I decided to leave my job as a deputy minister after 14 years and run for office to represent Weledeh. I used to joke, I said I did it because I

wanted the food, because I heard that these people ate shrimp and all sorts of things in here.

---Laughter

So I found out that that really wasn't worthwhile. So I said, well, I did it because I wanted to make a difference in the world and that seemed kind of lofty and pretentious. So I gave that one up.

You know, as people talked to me in Weledeh and said, well, why do you want to run, we think you should run, but why do you want to, and I said, well, because I enjoy working with people. Certainly to me the most satisfying part of this job has been when you're able to help a person. It's something as simple as helping somebody to get their son's employment straightened out and you can tell that they're very thankful. Those things are more important to me than is building a bridge or something, and I hope to be remembered for those kind of things where we made a difference to I'll say the little people that we all represent and I hope we can continue to do that in future governments. That's what government is about.

Mr. Speaker, I think the hardest part for me has been when you're not able to help people, you just have to say no. That's hard, especially when it may seem small to us but it's really important to someone. Again, it may be a very small thing, but that's the hardest part. The second hardest part, of course, is we all have had tough days and when you have to open a newspaper and you know it's not good, maybe oh my God, that's got to be one of the toughest pieces of this job. Certainly the nicest part is when you're able to anticipate it's going to be good news and then you get fooled.

I want to thank everybody here. I want to thank all of you, Mr. Braden, Mr. Dent, everybody, the people who are not running again, Mr. Bell, but those who are coming back as well. You've been great people to work for and the thing that I've appreciated most in here is the honesty and the openness with which people ask questions, make statements and so on. I believe that what you say is what you mean and I've certainly tried to operate...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Handley, your time for Member's statements has expired.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Can I seek consent 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. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the leaders across the Territories that I've had the pleasure of working with, and that's everybody from chiefs and mayors and so on, to Nellie, to Fred, to Frank, to all the people up and down the valley and in Yellowknife, Mayor Van Tighem and everyone.

I want to thank the people in Weledeh in particular. I hope I have not disappointed you over the past eight years. I think there's been great improvements in the very diverse, very dynamic and very vibrant constituency.

My friends; my old friend Michel Paper, I have to mention him. He's a great man and he's a man I've always enjoyed meeting with and talking to. Particularly Hilda. Hilda has been in this Legislative Assembly longer than any other person and I know she's going to be staying on because lots of people will want her to work with them because she's a great person and a great source of

advice to Rick, to Lisa, to the others who have worked with me.

And last of all to my wife, Theresa. I don't know what it is going to be like if I hang around the house too much. I think she will get pretty tired of me pretty fast. She will be wanting me to get out of there and go get a job or something. To her, I look forward to the days that we have to spend together and do stuff around the house and so on, or whatever we are going to be doing. We will see how that works out.

---Laughter

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The Chair has noticed that Members on my right have been out of making Members' statements for quite awhile because they have no idea what two and a half minutes is.

---Laughter

I guess I will settle for being the odd man out. Thank you, Members. Reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 4: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee Report 7-15(6): Report On Transitional Matters

Introduction

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is pleased to present its Report on Transitional Matters. As the 15th Assembly draws to a close, this report captures our recommendation for improvements to the committee processes as well as our thoughts on several ongoing and emergency issues we expect or require attention of the next Assembly.

Committee Processes

Mr. Speaker, many people think of session as the time when Members of the Legislative Assembly do most of their work. However, much of the detail, discussion and decision-making that results in changes to legislation, policies, programs and spending happens in standing committee meetings. Throughout this Assembly, Members have been concerned that many of our constituents seem unaware of the work that committees do, in particular the opportunities they have to influence their work through written submissions and presentations at public hearings.

One of the major obstacles to public awareness and understanding the work of standing committees is that so many of our meetings are held behind closed doors. There are times when information must remain confidential; the meetings must, therefore, take place in camera. However, there have been many discussions when committees have met with Ministers to receive briefings or updates that could easily have taken place in public.

The committee believes it is time that closed door meetings are made the exception rather than the rule. We respectfully recommend that the 16th Assembly establish at the outset a convention that all meetings of standing committees be open to the public unless the committee is satisfied that there is a compelling reason to hold meetings in camera. The details of the convention should

be developed and agreed to by both the Regular Members and Cabinet.

We also believe that more focussed effort is required to promote public awareness and understanding the role of the committees. The soon-to-be launch of the legislative broadcasting system will provide an excellent tool to achieve this as it has the capacity to bring committee meetings as well as formal sessions to the television and people across the Northwest Territories. We respectfully recommend that the 16th Assembly take full advantage of the new broadcast system in order to make committee meetings accessible to all NWT communities.

---Applause

Ongoing And Emerging Issues

Legislative Agenda

Early in the 15th Assembly term, Members agreed to strive for completion of a number of legislative items. Several were achieved. For example, the new Liquor Act, the Tourism Act, the Northwest Territories Hydro Corporation Act, the Workers' Compensation Act and the Public Health Act, as well as substantial amendments to the Child and Family Services Act. However, the government failed to bring several others forward despite consistent probing from committees. These include: the Species at Risk Act, the Wildlife Act, the Planning Act, the Residential Tenancy Act, and amendments to the Maintenance Enforcement Act. We encourage the next Assembly to keep these initiatives as priorities and introduce these items early in the term.

Review Of Boards And Agencies

During the 15th Assembly, a joint Cabinet and AOC Working Group completed a tremendous amount of data, compilation of and policy work towards better coordination of our government's 112 assorted boards and agencies. Further progress on this initiative stalled because the government chose not to allocate the recommended resources. Given the efficiencies that can be realized through better administration of boards and agencies, we encourage the next Assembly to pursue this issue at the earliest opportunity.

Support For Front-line Agencies

Throughout our term, we have heard repeated concerns from front line agencies that they are near or have reached a crisis point as a result of the inadequacy of government support. While some improvements have been made over the life of this Assembly, particularly in the area of multi-year funding, these improvements are not consistent across all the departments and are not adequate to ensure continued operation of many agencies the government depends on to deliver essential services. We expect that this will continue to be a critical issue for the 16th Assembly.

Loan Guarantees

Mr. Speaker, the committee has had several concerns for the provision and management of loan guarantees by the government, most recently for the diamond manufacturing companies and the Deh Cho Bridge project. Concerns centre on how much risk the government undertakes with taxpayers' money in granting these guarantees as in the case of the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation and conversely how it goes about protecting its exposures as in the case of Arslanian Cutting Works. Regular Members received advanced notification of loan guarantees but do not have an opportunity to vote on them. We would encourage the

Regular Members of the next Assembly to approach proposed loan guarantees with caution and to ensure they hold the government accountable for its handling of them.

Corporation Capital Planning And "Carry-overs"

Mr. Speaker, the committee has observed a disturbing potentially crippling trend of soaring cost overruns and delays on capital projects. This makes prioritizing and decision-making about infrastructure investment extremely difficult. The budget voted by the Assembly often bears little resemblance to what is actually spent over the course of the fiscal year.

A consequence of this is that projects are often delayed or extended. This results in carry-overs or previously approved projects have to be re-approved by the Assembly; over \$70 million in 2007-08. The greater impact, however, is for staff that must handle ever increasing workloads.

We encourage the Regular Members of the next Assembly to press the government to develop a new corporate capital planning process that demands more accurate costs and time estimates to allow the Legislative Assembly to make better informed decisions about infrastructure investments and priorities. A review of the causes and consequences of carry-overs would also insist in more efficient project completion.

Infrastructure Projects

At the time of this report, two massive infrastructure projects requiring some level of government investment are being contemplated: the expansion of the Taltson hydroelectric facility and the construction of the Deh Cho Bridge. We would encourage that Regular Members of the next Assembly to press the government to provide a cost-benefit analysis business cases for these projects before endorsing any further investment of public dollars.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to hand it over to Mr. Braden to continue with the report. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Environment And Sustainable Development

MR. BRADEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Lafferty. The committee expects that the environment and sustainability will be some of the leading concerns of the 16th Assembly as resource development continues to grow within the NWT, demand for water by upstream industries increases and the impacts of climate change continue. Earlier this year, committee members initiated formal motions to recognize water as a human right, to recommend the government adopt a comprehensive strategy to address climate change and the important work of the Inuvik Caribou Summit. We encourage the Regular Members of the next Assembly to pursue these issues with the government.

Implementation Of Land Claims Agreements

The Government of the Northwest Territories has many outstanding obligations under land claims agreements, some dating as far back as the Inuvialuit Final Agreement which was signed over 20 years ago in 1984. We strongly encourage the next Assembly to make it a priority to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the government's outstanding land claim obligations and to develop a firm plan and timeline for fulfilling these responsibilities.

NWT Housing Corporation Audit

In early 2006, Mr. Speaker, committee members initiated a request for the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit of the NWT Housing Corporation. A request was made as a result of several serious concerns with the corporation, many of which were documented in our 2006 Report on Pre-budget Consultations. Unfortunately, the audit was not completed during our term. However, we expect the report will be submitted early in the life of the next Assembly. We have found the reports of the Auditor General to be insightful and extremely useful in pointing to areas requiring action and hope that Regular Members of the next Assembly will find likewise.

Whistleblower Protection

At the committee's urging, the Department of Human Resources has recently issued a public discussion paper to explore the options for implementing whistleblower protection. We encourage the Regular Members of the next Assembly to pursue this matter with the government to ensure the work on this issue progresses and public consultations are undertaken.

Review Of Power Rates And Subsidies

Over our term, Mr. Speaker, we have seen both increases in power rates and continuous unsustainable growth in a Territorial Power Subsidy Program. A review of rates and subsidies by the government is underway. We expect that this matter will require the attention of the 16th Assembly early in its mandate.

Auditor General Investigations

Mr. Speaker, further to Auditor General investigations, the Auditor General for Canada is also the auditor for all GNWT accounts. The Auditor General's office is also well versed in audits and investigations of other matters as demonstrated, for example, by its 2006 audit of the Workers' Compensation Board. However, in any given four-year term of the Assembly, perhaps only two of these in-depth audits can be undertaken. Committees of the 16th Assembly might carefully consider which departments or agencies will benefit from compliance, performance and value-for-money audits by our reviews by the Auditor General.

Further, Mr. Speaker, provinces and the federal government are also trending toward automatic five-year performance and compliance audits, especially of their Crown corporations in addition to the annual fiscal audits. With the exception of the NWT Power Corporation, which is covered under the Public Utilities Act, no NWT Crown corporation is subject to this kind of review. It will be well worth considering.

Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy

Every year, Mr. Speaker, the committee meets with the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review her annual reports and has made recommendations to the government as a result of these meetings. The government has yet to move on several of these recommendations, some of which date back to the 14th Assembly. Of particular concern to committee are the gaps in information in privacy legislation for community governments and for the local private sector. The committee encourages Regular Members of the next Assembly to pursue these and other information and privacy issues with the government to ensure they are addressed.

Addictions

Throughout our mandate, this committee has voiced concerns about the need to direct more resources to the prevention and treatment of addictions. Earlier this year, committee members initiated a motion recommending the government implement a strategy to denormalize alcohol abuse, building on the success of its tobacco action plan. The need for such a strategy was most recently confirmed for us as we undertook public consultations throughout the NWT on the Liquor Act and again heard firsthand about the devastating impact of alcohol abuse on individuals, families and communities. We encourage the Regular Members of the next Assembly to press the government to make the denormalization of alcohol abuse a strategic priority.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude the committee's report, I will return it to the chair, Mr. Lafferty. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty.

Conclusion

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this concludes the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on Transitional Matters. We wish the members of committees of the 16th Assembly success in tackling the issues and meeting the challenges they will face during their term in their service to the people of the Northwest Territories.

Motion To Receive And Adopt Committee Report 7-15(6), Carried

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 7-15(6) be received and adopted. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

---Carried

Committee Report 7-15(6) is received and adopted.

Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

ITEM 6: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

I am going to take the prerogative to go first in this one and recognize somebody I don't get a chance to do so in the House very often, but I am very happy to see her here today. I would like to introduce my wife, Davida, who is in the gallery today.

---Applause

Along with her is my constituency assistant, Debbie Mageean...

---Applause

...and my executive assistant, Sue Tkachuk.

---Applause

They are all a very great help to me in doing my job. I am very happy to see them all in the gallery today. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the worker's advisor, Colin Baile. Welcome to the House.

---Applause

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to recognize the Pages that have come up this week to work for Hay River South. They are right here in the Chamber. They are Hailey Lyon and Trudy Hiebert. I would like to thank them for doing a great job in the service of the Assembly.

---Applause

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

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I would like to recognize Yellowknife South constituent Amy Hacala. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to recognize my wife, Judy, who has come down to help us celebrate the last day of the 15th Assembly. Thank you.

---Applause

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, I spoke of volunteers. I would like to recognize two of the community's most dedicated volunteers, Glen Abernethy and Sue Glowach. I would also like to recognize Lynn White, Mr. Speaker, a former director of the Aven senior facility and a key consultant in the recently passed Liquor Act, the work that we just completed yesterday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a strange session. I have been doing things twice about the weddings and now I am doing it again for the Pages. I would like to thank the Pages from Fort Simpson, Hilary Norwegian and Tanis Browning, for helping us here this week. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize my beautiful wife up in the gallery, Mrs. Lucille Pokiak...

---Applause

...and also my constituency assistant, Donna Bernhardt, who is here assisting with the Pages that I have.

---Applause

In the Chamber today, there is Trevor Okheena and out back here is Tyler Inuktalik from Ulukhaktok. Thank you very much.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. 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 a constituent, Ms. Sue Tkachuk, who is with us this afternoon. I'd also like to recognize a former co-worker, Mr. Glen Abernethy.

---Applause

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

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure and honour to introduce my wife of 32 years in the gallery, the longest serving public librarian in the Northwest Territories, Jeri Miltenberger.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It's certainly nice to have an audience in here. Acknowledgements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

ITEM 7: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make special mention of a family here in my riding of Yellowknife Centre who recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. A heartfelt congratulation goes out to Judith and Forrest Krause, who were surrounded by friends and family over the weekend to celebrate this golden occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Krause are long-time northerners, coming to the North for opportunity and excitement and proudly made Yellowknife their home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

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

ITEM 8: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 186-15(6): Centralized Services For Seniors

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Seniors, Mr. Bell. Sorry. The question I have for the Minister responsible for Seniors is: Is the government looking at implementing a one-stop shop for seniors in small communities where they can all go to one building, get all their services, get all their programs that they need, get the services that they need to find out about, in our smaller communities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister responsible for Seniors, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 186-15(6): Centralized Services For Seniors

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday in my statement about income security, the government's plan is to eventually move towards providing all of our social programs, if

possible, through one office in all communities. It will take some time to get there, but eventually that would be the plan.

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

Supplementary To Question 186-15(6): Centralized Services For Seniors

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask if government would make it a priority to look at the seniors first in terms of having this plan here. Give some thought to the strong recommendations that the seniors programs be looked at in terms the seniors can go to one place and deal with all their issues in one spot rather than to look at other buildings where they have to go in their communities as it is done today. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 186-15(6): Centralized Services For Seniors

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government already has a 1-800 number that is delivered in conjunction with the Seniors' Society in order to make sure that seniors are able to access clear and concise information about programs that are available. As I have said, over the next few years we expect that this government will move to ensure that all of its front-line services are delivered through one-stop shopping in the communities. So I can commit to the Member that moving in that direction will be a priority for this government.

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

Supplementary To Question 186-15(6): Centralized Services For Seniors

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the 1-800 number. I would like to see if there's more of a cultural relevance in terms of small communities where the elders -- their primary language is their aboriginal language -- in terms of having something else besides a 1-800 number; somebody in the community that is dedicated just for seniors that has a strong language and can speak to the seniors; one person in the community that can work with the seniors in terms of coordinating some of the programs and services they are dealing with today. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 186-15(6): Centralized Services For Seniors

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be a marvellous opportunity if we could find a way to have a person in every community to deal exclusively with seniors but, as the Members knows, we don't have enough of a demand in all of our communities to have staff available for such dedication. That's one of the reasons that we're looking at service centres, or government service centres in communities where programs like income security programs can be delivered. Hopefully, over time, we can expand the programming that they're able to deliver to include those services for seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 186-15(6): Centralized Services For Seniors

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think there are lots of ways we can look at dedicating this one person. There is lots of work in the region that needs to get to the seniors that I think this government, hopefully, would make some strong recommendations as to how to coordinate some of the approaches and having some of the workers just be dedicated for the seniors. If we don't do something like this, it's going to be very difficult later on. So I ask again if they would look at dedicating some of this work to their staff in the communities. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 186-15(6): Centralized Services For Seniors

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government will work with the Seniors' Society to determine what is appropriate in each community and see how quickly we can move forward with that.

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

Question 187-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today, for the last time, are for the Minister of Human Resources, Minister Dent. At the rate the Members are leaving the Chamber, I might get you all to myself for one hour. Anyway, duty to accommodate. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement today I raised a very important subject. Under the Human Rights Commission there is provision for the duty to accommodate. I want to know how does that right, how does that translate into any policy, procedure or actions on the part of this government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 187-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the human resource manual there is a clear definition of what is expected under the duty to accommodate and it is up to supervisors to work with employees to make sure that duty is actually delivered.

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

Supplementary To Question 187-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So there is a human resource management policy in the GNWT which speaks specifically to the duty to accommodate. Does that policy reflect what it says in the human rights duty to accommodate policy? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 187-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know whether or not it reflects what our human rights legislation says in terms of what is in our policy. It does

refer to the human rights legislation and it says that the employers' obligation to accommodate stems from the human rights legislation. So it does refer to it and it says that it must reflect it. So we have a duty to accommodate our employees for their disabilities and if that's not happening, then clearly we would have an obligation to do that.

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

Supplementary To Question 187-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The duty to accommodate, a guide to employers, actually extends beyond accommodating that employee who may have a condition or a disability. People cannot be discriminated against on the basis of family status and if the employee of the GNWT has an obligation to provide care to a family member that might preclude them, for example, from working a night shift in an institution or in a workplace, then by extension that duty to accommodate goes to that employee in their obligation to their family member. That is what I'd like to determine, if this government adheres to that concept and that belief. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 187-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our policy refers only to the employees themselves. So according to our policy, the duty to accommodate wouldn't automatically extend to another family member. However, the government does have in its human resource policies the opportunity for flex time and, depending on operational requirements, the supervisors are able to work with employees and, if their operation will allow it, can...We can see employees are given different shifts or different hours in order to accommodate. So that is something that is already accommodated in our policies, but it has to depend on the operation and the operational needs of each unit. It's something that can be negotiated between the supervisor and the employee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary To Question 187-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the policy of the Human Resources department of the GNWT has to go far enough so that it does accommodate the member of the family that that employee has an obligation to care for. It sounds like there is a lot of discretionary latitude in that policy that the Minister is referring to. That can be a good thing or it can be a bad thing. I would like to ask the Minister if he feels that supervisors and managers are adequately orientated to this particular policy and that they are equipped with the tools that they need to make a decision to accommodate an employee who must care for a family member who has a disability. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 187-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, our policy speaks only to the duty to accommodate the employee and not the employee's family. Certainly we do have the opportunity, with the flexibility in the policies, for supervisors to recognize employee needs where they are able to accommodate. I'd be quite happy to ensure that the Department of Human Resources offers training sessions throughout the course of the next year to supervisors to make sure that they're aware of the requirements in the duty to accommodate and to also ensure that there's some discussion with supervisors around applicability of flex time. Thank you.

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

Question 188-15(6): Inuvialuit Lands Administration Land Use Application

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I'll give it one last kick at the cat with regard to source 177. Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of dialogue between the Premier, discussions with the former Minister of Indian Affairs, Mr. Jim Prentice, and also a meeting with Prime Minister Stephen Harper in Calgary, and also the Tuk Community Corporation chair, the chair of IRC, and CEO, and also with the Minister of Transportation and his department. I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation, can he give an update on how the application process is going with regard to their submissions to the ILA? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 188-15(6): Inuvialuit Lands Administration Land Use Application

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Transportation has ongoing discussions with ILA to discuss permitting and fees associated with an application to access lands in ILA. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 188-15(6): Inuvialuit Lands Administration Land Use Application

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister, where is that application now? Is it in the hands of ILA right now? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 188-15(6): Inuvialuit Lands Administration Land Use Application

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, we did not hand any application over to the ILA office. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 188-15(6): Inuvialuit Lands Administration Land Use Application

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know some time back, that the department did say that they were going to work with ILA with regard to the permitting process and I'm very surprised that his department hasn't even moved forward with that application process. I understand that there might be a little bit of loss but I think, if I may request, Mr. Speaker, that I think the

Minister should get his department to at least submit that application to the ILA. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 188-15(6): Inuvialuit Lands Administration Land Use Application

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm probably going to have to get into some level of detail here for the Member. He's well aware of the challenges we've had with the ILA and fees and royalty structures in that particular regime. The permitting process necessary for constructing the road from Tuktoyaktuk to source 177 is the application submission will have to have the royalty fees associated with that permit attached. Our estimates, based on the length of the road and the land around the source that we need, runs about \$3 million, Mr. Speaker. That's something of a huge issue for us as a department and us as a government. Secondly, once even upon application of \$3 million, the title to the footprint of the route is not even available to the government after that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 188-15(6): Inuvialuit Lands Administration Land Use Application

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I recall, having worked with ILA prior to being elected here, my understanding with regard to the application process is that all they require at the initial stage is the initial application fee plus the first 1,000 cubic metres so that the application can go forward. I don't know where the Minister is getting that information, but I can guarantee you for sure that all they require is the initial application fee plus the first 1,000 cubic metres. Will he do that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 188-15(6): Inuvialuit Lands Administration Land Use Application

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to have to respectfully disagree with the Member that that is not the case. We are continually negotiating and having discussion with ILA to discuss the permitting fees and the permitting to access the route for source 177. Thank you.

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

Question 189-15(6): Multi-Year Funding For Non-Government Agencies

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the 14th Assembly there was a report that recommended multi-year funding and the importance that it would bring to NGO organizations to create stability and a sense of continuity for their funding source. Mr. Speaker, in the 15th Assembly I was able to work with the NWT Seniors' Society to help get them a multi-year funding agreement, and special recognition goes to then-Minister Miltenberger of the Department of Health. Mr. Speaker, that was a milestone, I'd say, but one that, I think, passed without any thunder and excitement, because it was a big milestone. Mr. Speaker, my questions now go to, I'm going to say, Minister Roland, because I think it touches on both his departments, both Finance and Health. So my questions to Minister Roland today are what is the difficulty to create a process that still

alludes us? What is the difficulty starting a program and a policy clearly outlined that can help NGOs get a multi-year funding agreement in place? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return To Question 189-15(6): Multi-Year Funding For Non-Government Agencies

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Member himself has stated, multi-year funding has been entered into in a number of areas through a number of departments and that continues to be the program we do have available. Each department would look at a case-by-case if they could support that. Ultimately, whether we call it multi-year funding or not, every year has to have its approval through our budget process and the approval of this Assembly. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 189-15(6): Multi-Year Funding For Non-Government Agencies

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Minister must have been answering with his Finance hat on in that situation because the fact is he's quite correct that every year has to be approved. However, the fact is we can set out long-term agreements clearly in writing and, as I've said on numerous occasions, that if we have a bad year in the Assembly where we have to do cutbacks, that proviso could always be written into any agreement. I'll tell you, the NGOs that I speak to welcome that because they recognize that we can't predict every day for how many more years ahead of us. So the fact is, this can and will save us money. Would the Minister agree today to look into setting up a process that we could streamline a system, that any group who wants to come forward and ask for multi-year funding with the provisos required, that he can set up this process so we can get the ball moving on this initiative? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 189-15(6): Multi-Year Funding For Non-Government Agencies

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of multi-year funding has been looked at by departments and, as I've stated, we do enter into multi-year agreements; they are case by case. I can, once again, bring back to my colleagues on the Cabinet side if this is to be reviewed and if there are potential changes that could be made there. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 189-15(6): Multi-Year Funding For Non-Government Agencies

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the answer because I see the Minister recognizes how important this is. Mr. Speaker, he says case by case. The one thing I think will help everyone out there who are in the NGOs would be, for example, if the Department of Finance set out rules and guidelines and anyone could work with the individual department. So would the Minister of Finance take upon the work to design some type of framework that an NGO can go to, maybe a website, click download it and help the application process? Therefore, when it goes to the specific department, we've already streamlined the system so

people can go through it and see if it can work in that particular case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Before I go to Mr. Roland, I'm going to take just an opportunity to recognize a couple of people in the Chamber that I was waiting for this opportunity while they were in here. There's two Pages from my riding, Hay River North: Rena Squirrel at the back and Kayla Maurice right here at the front.

---Applause

They're doing an excellent job for us. Thank you, girls. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 189-15(6): Multi-Year Funding For Non-Government Agencies

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know the Member, whenever he rises on a question, would like to hear a simple plain yes to his questions, but I think at times we have to take a step back and look at the whole process. As we have in the past, we have looked at multi-year funding programs. There are a number of them in place, but there are so many differences between the specific departments and programs; whether they're contract, contribution, that all has to be taken into consideration. I don't think it is as easy as saying one process will work for everyone. But as stated, I'll bring it back to the table for further discussion. Thank you.

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

Question 190-15(6): Review Of Apprenticeship Programs

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, there's been studies that have demonstrated that there is many thousands of tradesmen short across the country. Institutes of technology like SAIT and NAIT are going virtually around the clock trying to train all the apprentices that they're trying to get into the system as we're doing with nurses and other professions to try to meet the demand. In the Northwest Territories, we face similar restrictions and shortages. The college in Fort Smith, the trades program, unfortunately cannot deliver all the programs and all the years of a trades program that are required. There is one instructor for welding; there's one instructor for plumbing; there's one instructor for electrical.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister is: Has there been a review of the requirements in order to have four years of all the trades programs offered in the Northwest Territories? Right now there are severe limitations because of student contact hours, professional development, annual leave and all these other restrictions. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 190-15(6): Review Of Apprenticeship Programs

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we've contracted for a review of the Apprenticeship Program in the Northwest Territories earlier this year and we're expecting to see a draft of the report in late

September. So by this fall there should be a thorough review that will be available to the new government.

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

Supplementary To Question 190-15(6): Review Of Apprenticeship Programs

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's good to hear that that work is being done. This final question then to the Minister is, being as we don't know the results, would the intention be to try to have that information be able to tie into the current business planning process that is unfolding now, as we speak, that will be ready for the 16th Assembly? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 190-15(6): Review Of Apprenticeship Programs

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully it will be done. If I remember correctly, the draft was supposed to be done by the end of September. So hopefully there won't be issues around the review of that and I would expect it could be turned around fairly quickly into final form, which would mean that it should be ready for consideration during the business planning process.

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

Question 191-15(6): Airport Runway Extensions In Small Communities

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation in terms of the issue on feasibility study on the extension of the runways in the small communities. Thank you.

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

Return To Question 191-15(6): Airport Runway Extensions In Small Communities

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Member is correct; the department has undertaken a student to look at all the airport runways in our communities, to look at the length and as well as the 2010 new CATSA requirement for runway lights there, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 191-15(6): Airport Runway Extensions In Small Communities

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister is clear there that the federal government has put some restrictions on runways by the year 2010. I would ask the Minister if the feasibility study will be out amongst our people that are going to be affected in these small communities in terms of what type of provisions that we have to prepare if the Government of the Northwest Territories or the federal government doesn't step in to help extend some of these runways that are desperately needed in the regions, especially the ones with no highway or bridges?

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

Further Return To Question 191-15(6): Airport Runway Extensions In Small Communities

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe all our communities have runways, so I don't know what the Member is talking about. The existing runways aren't impacting any current movement of our freight and transportation of people there, Mr. Speaker, but the runway issue study is to identify the need for extensions in the communities that may have shorter runways and requirements for the 2010 CATSA requirements for longer runways. It is going to have an impact upon our government, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at potentially 16 runways right now and it's estimated between 44 to 170 million dollars to extend them. Thank you very much.

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

Supplementary To Question 191-15(6): Airport Runway Extensions In Small Communities

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister was up in Colville Lake and landed on their runway. I think that, compared to Yellowknife, the Colville Lake runway is like a parking lot and we want to extend. There's lots of activity going on in the Sahtu region. I just got word this afternoon that some more oil and gas activity is going to be happening this year.

AN HON. MEMBER: More?

MR. YAKELEYA: More and more. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister if he would consider, with his counterpart in the federal government, looking at grandfathering some of these clauses in terms of our runways because of the speed of light that this government works and the federal government works in terms of extending these runways to meet the regulations of the MOT's and flying into our communities?

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

Further Return To Question 191-15(6): Airport Runway Extensions In Small Communities

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that right now DOT has no immediate plans to be extending any runways in the NWT, but we do have several runway extensions identified within our current 20-year needs assessment. I just want to add, Mr. Speaker, that the longer runways have been suggested as a solution for supporting air carriers, existing planes. The theory is that a longer runway will allow the aircraft to meet the requirements in all situations is incorrect. Longer runways will not solve aircraft performance requirement problems, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

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

Supplementary To Question 191-15(6): Airport Runway Extensions In Small Communities

MR. YAKELEYA: I don't know; I need to read the Hansard again. Mr. Speaker, the issue here is very dear to my people in the Sahtu region about longer runways. They have told the Minister, they have told this government, they have told me that the issue of the longer runways is critical, critical to their services, critical to the safety of our people, critical to developing our region. We can't get a road right away into our region; it doesn't look like we're going to get any bridges yet; at least look at

helping us with the extension of our runways. By golly, can this Minister do something like that? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 191-15(6): Airport Runway Extensions In Small Communities

HON. KEVIN MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say that we're not not doing anything, Mr. Speaker.

---Laughter

At the Member's request, we've undertaken and pressed forward with this runway extension study. It's something that we're looking at. We're looking at the 2010 regulations as part of the study to see how much of an impact the requirements of the 2010 will actually have, then, thirdly, to identify which communities will require these extensions and work forward to a plan to move towards it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoché. Oral questions. Order. Oral questions. The honourable member from Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 192-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to bring this up again to the Minister of Human Resources here on the last day of Assembly, because the answers to these questions are so important and so serious to a constituent of mine in Hay River who's going to be wanting to hear the answer. One of the grounds of discrimination covered by the NWT Human Rights Act is family. Family status includes the status of being related to someone who requires your care. An employer's duty to accommodate includes accommodating, including family obligations. Family obligations could include requesting altered scheduling hours of work to accommodate caring for a family member. An employer is expected to look for ways to accommodate family obligations. The other consideration is that the family issues is an obligation, not a preference. Caring for an immediate family member with a disability is considered a family obligation. Does the Minister feel, or can he assure me, that the policy of the GNWT reflects this in the human rights legislation? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Honourable Minister responsible for Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 192-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm obviously not a labour lawyer or qualified to interpret the legislation as it might be done before the courts, but I will assure the Member that we will have a look at the human rights legislation. We'll have a look at what the requirements are and ensure that this government is in compliance. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 192-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister concur that public servants of the GNWT should not have to take issues such as this to the Human Rights Commission to get a satisfactory

solution; that as a leader and a role model in employing people in the public service in the Northwest Territories that this government should be setting that high standard and that it should directly comply with the human rights legislation? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 192-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would agree that the government should act as a role model and ensure that it is living up to all of the requirements of the human rights legislation in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 192-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in response to a previous question, the Minister did say that he thought the duty to accommodate did not extend beyond the immediate employee of the government. By extension, this is a family obligation; this is a family member with a disability, not the employee themselves. If the existing policy does not include that provision by extension, will the Minister look at a means of revising our policy and legislation or manual that managers are guided by to ensure it does include this? Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 192-15(6): Human Resources Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've already committed that we will review the human rights legislation and ensure that our policies are in line with that legislation.

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

Question 193-15(6): Role Of Human Resource Officers In Staffing Processes

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister responsible for Human Resources while we're on the topic of revisions of the human resources policy manual. I know the human resources process for staffing GNWT positions places a lot of authority in the hands of the human resources officers, Mr. Speaker, and on a lot of occasions I've gotten feedback from some supervisors that are included in an interview with possible candidates for a position in the GNWT, only to find out that they don't have any say in who gets hired at the end of the day. All this authority still sits in the hands of the human resources officers. During the interviews, these officers are also in these interviews with the supervisors and they have just as high a point rating system as the supervisors, especially when technical questions are coming up that the human resource officer may not be fully aware of in a lot of departments but still have the same amount of weight as a supervisor in giving a rating to the candidate. I just want to know if the human resources manual can be revised to give supervisors a say in who they hire and more emphasis on their ratings on point ratings when they're doing some technical

analysis, technical questions, during the interviews? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Honourable Minister responsible for Human Resources, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 193-15(6): Role Of Human Resource Officers In Staffing Processes

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The goal of involving human resources officers or staffing officers in the process is to ensure that all of the government's rules and regulations and policies are followed. We want to make sure, for instance, that the affirmative action policy is followed as it should be in the process. I would expect that in terms of technical questions, that more weight would be given to a supervisor if they are more knowledgeable about the technical area, so I'll have to follow up with the department and find out exactly how that might be accommodated. Thank you.

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

Supplementary To Question 193-15(6): Role Of Human Resource Officers In Staffing Processes

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll look forward to what the Minister comes back with when he revisits that issue. Just on the affirmative action issue, I just want to ask the Minister how is he going to ensure all people that are possible employees or future employees of the public service, that all the human resource officers in all the regions interpret and understand the human resources policies, especially when it relates to affirmative action, that they all understand and all interpret this policy all the same? I've been hearing conflicting stories about different human resources officers are having different views and opinions and interpretations of affirmative action in our human resources manual. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 193-15(6): Role Of Human Resource Officers In Staffing Processes

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that the Member says he's hearing about a difference in how the affirmative action policy is being interpreted by human resources officers. In fact, what I've heard more often is that since the centralization, that there's been more consistency in how it's applied, because each department often had an interpretation in the past. There is one policy around affirmative action and our staff are regularly updated on how to apply that. So I'm quite confident that we are seeing more consistent application of that policy across the Territories.

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

Supplementary To Question 193-15(6): Role Of Human Resource Officers In Staffing Processes

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just with the role of the human resource officers when it comes to filling these staffing positions, I just want to ask the Minister why the human resource officer holds all the authority in the hiring of new positions here in the GNWT and will only take recommendations from supervisors, any managers, et cetera? Why is all the authority for hiring only in the hands of our human resources officers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return To Question 193-15(6): Role Of Human Resource Officers In Staffing Processes

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make it very clear that that is not the case. The human resources officer is not the person who makes the decision about who gets hired. It is a departmental decision. The human resources officers are involved to ensure that the process follows all of the GNWT policies and that the method of doing the interview and the assessment is done correctly. It is a department decision about the offers, but they have to make sure that they've followed all the processes and that's the role of the HR officer.

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

Supplementary To Question 193-15(6): Role Of Human Resource Officers In Staffing Processes

MR. VILLENEUVE: Just with the human resources officers' roles in the hiring, I know that in the interview process I've heard some constituents coming back to me after their interviews and a lot of them are saying that basically the whole emphasis on their applications to these positions are placed on the interview. Some people get nervous doing interviews; they don't do so well. Ninety percent of the recommendation to hire is based on the interview, Mr. Speaker. Résumés, cover letters, very little emphasis is placed on review of those. I just want to ask the Minister why isn't there a 50/50 split between your interview and your résumé and your cover letter and your reference checks? Mr. Speaker, thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 193-15(6): Role Of Human Resource Officers In Staffing Processes

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, during the hiring process, different weight can be put on different aspects and it's not uncommon for the people conducting an interview to recognize that an interviewee may be experiencing some difficulty with the interview and ask whether they would like to do it again or do it at a different time or handle it in a different way. So the government does make attempts to modify the process to work with applicants to ensure that we are not screening people out simply because they are having a bad day at the interview. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 194-15(6): Review Of GNWT Duty To Accommodate Policy

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the line of questioning from the Member of Hay River South. I am familiar with the circumstance the Member is referring to and I am of the opinion that there is significant latitude in the existing policies and I want to keep in mind the comments made by the Premier in his Member's statement about one of the benefits and joys of our job being able to help people. My question to the Minister is, is this a situation that involves other departments? Would he commit to sit down with the Minister of Justice and the Member for Hay River South to see what is possible within the existing structures? These folks don't have time for protective policy debate that is going to drag on for the last Assembly and is going to satisfy the immediate pressures. Would the government sit down and see what is possible? Would they do that and possibly provide

some relief to a very pressing issue? Would the Minister commit to do that? Thank you.

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

Return To Question 194-15(6): Review Of GNWT Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am always willing to meet with a Member to discuss a constituency issue any time.

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

Supplementary To Question 194-15(6): Review Of GNWT Duty To Accommodate Policy

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister is aware, the time is short and people are off and about. I would ask if the Minister could commit to connect with the Member for Hay River South and possibly the Minister of Justice even before we depart because once the morrow comes, everybody will be going to the four points of the compass. I know this has urgency and needs to be addressed before we all depart, even before supper. I don't think it's going to be a discussion that's going to take a long time. Thank you.

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

Further Return To Question 194-15(6): Review Of GNWT Duty To Accommodate Policy

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we could end question period right now, we could meet right now.

---Laughter

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

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 65-15(6): NWT 2006 Drinking Water Quality Report

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled 2006 Drinking Water Quality Report.

Tabled Document 66-15(6): Volunteer Support Initiative Status Report 2005-2007

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Volunteer Support Initiative Status Report 2005-2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabled Document 67-15(6): Northwest Territories Arts Strategy - Action Plan 2

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled NWT Arts Strategy - Action Plan 2, 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabled Document 68-15(6): A Culture Of Safety: NWT Injury Prevention Strategy 2007-2012 Implementation Plan

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of documents for tabling. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled A Culture of Safety: NWT Prevention Strategy 2007-2012 Implementation Plan.

Tabled Document 69-15(6): NWT Health And Social Services System Annual Report 2005-2006

As well, I would like to table the following document entitled NWT Health and Social Services System Annual Report 2005-2006.

Tabled Document 70-15(6): Charting The Next Course: Final Report On Consultations, August 2007

As well, Mr. Speaker, under Finance, I wish to table the following document entitled Charting the Next Course: Final Report on Consultations, August 2007.

Tabled Document 71-15(6): Charting The Next Course: Macroeconomic Policy Framework, August 2007

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Charting the Next Course: Macroeconomic Policy Framework, August 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabled Document 72-15(6): Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission 2006-2007 Annual Report

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Tabling of documents. Pursuant to section 21 of the Human Rights Act, I wish to table the 2006-2007 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission. I would like to draw your attention to Members to the visitors gallery to Mr. Colin Baile, vice-chair of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission.

---Applause

Welcome to the Assembly. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Motions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

ITEM 16: MOTIONS

Motion 12-15(6): Appointment Of Sole Adjudicators, Carried

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS section 103.(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act provides for the approval of sole adjudicators by motion of this House;

AND WHEREAS it is desirable to have persons approved for appointment as sole adjudicators under section 103.(2) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Mr. Ted Hughes be approved by the Legislative Assembly as a sole adjudicator. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Committee Report 6-15(6), with Mr. Ramsay in the chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): I will call Committee of the Whole to order. I will ask what is the wish of committee? Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Committee Report 6-15(6), Report on the Review of the Information and Privacy Commissioner 2005-2006 Annual Report. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. We will do that after a short break. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): I will call Committee of the Whole to order. We will deal with Committee Report 6-15(6). Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have already highlighted the Report on the Review on the Information and Privacy Commissioner 2005-2006 Annual Report as deemed read and we had some motions to follow that. Mahsi.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you. We will deal with the committee motions. Mr. Lafferty.

Committee Motion 24-15(6): Openness And Promotion Of ATIPP Legislation, Carried

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Premier, Ministers and deputy ministers take a leadership role in changing the corporate culture as far as the interpretation and application of the ATIPP Act is concerned to create a culture of openness from top to bottom. Furthermore, this committee recommends that a new section reporting on ATIPP activities is included in the yearly business plan for each department. This new reporting framework should include information on requests, complaints and how they were resolved, related training and any other initiatives or activities that take place to promote the ATIPP legislation. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Lafferty.

Committee Motion 25-15(6): ATIPP Activities Of Boards And Agencies, Carried

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that ATIPP activities related to boards and agencies be included in a proposed business plan reporting framework and that the GNWT deliver on its outstanding commitment to report back to the Accountability and Oversight committee on its

commitment to a more proactive approach to ATIPP matters. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Mr. Lafferty.

Committee Motion 26-15(6): Comprehensive Response By Second Session Of The 16th Assembly, Carried

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the GNWT table a comprehensive response to this report no later than during the Second Session of the 16th Legislative Assembly. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Thank you, committee. Does committee agree that consideration of Committee Report 6-15(6) is concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, committee. Committee Report 6-15(6) is concluded. At this point in time, I would like to ask what is the wish of committee? Mr. Lafferty.

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

---Applause

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Mahsi, Mr. Lafferty. There's a motion to report progress. The motion is in order. It's not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Mahsi.

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

ITEM 20: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. RAMSAY: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Committee Report 6-15(6) and would like to report progress with three motions being adopted and that Committee Report 6-15(6) is concluded. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Awww!

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills.

Speaker's Closing Remarks

Colleagues, before we rise and conclude this final session of the 15th Legislative Assembly, I would like to take a moment to say a few words. To begin, I would like to thank all Members for allowing me to serve as Speaker for the Legislative Assembly for the last three years.

---Applause

It has been an honour, a pleasure, and occasionally a challenge to guide this Assembly through to its completion. I have taken very seriously the duty to uphold our privileges and your rules. As Speaker, I do not make the rules; I am a servant of them. I have always endeavoured to protect the integrity of the institution and the right of all Members to express their individual and collective will. You haven't always made it easy for me but, in all, I do appreciate the consideration and cooperation that I have received from Members in carrying out these duties.

Needless to say, I will never forget the sight of spontaneous cotton balls appearing in Regular Members' ears, or the badly out-of-key choir of Regular Members singing Trailers for Sale or Rent.

---Laughter

---Applause

These are images that will haunt me for the rest of my days.

The job of Speaker carries with it a unique set of challenges. In addition to acting as referee between talented and spirited opposing teams, the Speaker continues to be, and is always, a Member of this Assembly. Let me tell you, there have been many occasions when I have nearly bit my tongue trying not to say what was truly on my mind. That was certainly the case on Tuesday when Mr. Dent said he only had two unfinished pieces of business.

---Laughter

In all seriousness though, all Speakers throughout Canada and the world face the same challenges in being fair and unbiased in the House while, at the same time, ensuring that their constituents' voices are heard. I have been fortunate during my term as Speaker and have enjoyed the assistance of my fellow Hay River MLA, Mrs. Groenewegen, in ensuring the Hay River issues are represented on the floor of the House. At various times, I have always enjoyed the assistance of other Regular Members to raise issues on my behalf in their statements and questions to Ministers. For those who assisted me in this regard, I am grateful.

Finally, as it is tradition, I have enjoyed an exceptional level of cooperation from Premier Handley and his Ministers in ensuring the needs and concerns of my constituents were addressed. The Premier's door has always been open to me and he and his Ministers and staff have always respected and stayed true to the unique challenges facing the Speaker in the House.

It has been a distinct honour of representing the people of Hay River North in both the 14th and 15th Assemblies. Their interest and well-being have always been my first priority. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly Board of Management, which I chair, who have worked diligently and with great care and concern to ensure the operation

of the Legislative Assembly and the services provided to Members is at the highest calibre possible. Appointments to this board often places the Members in difficult situations. I can say, without hesitation, that all Members who have served on the board, including Mr. Krutko as its first chair, Mr. Bell, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Menicoche and Mr. Yakeleya, have carried out their duties with integrity and nothing but the best interest of this institution in mind. I am grateful of their efforts and proud of the work they have done.

Of the many things this board has achieved, the one I am particularly proud of is the new Legislative Assembly broadcast system to be implemented in the 16th Assembly. This groundbreaking system will allow us to broadcast the sittings of this House and its committees to all communities in the Northwest Territories in all of the official languages of the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

The establishment of the NWT's first Human Rights and Equal Pay commissions, the Electoral Boundaries Commission, the Cultural Enhancement Commission, the Members' Pay and Benefits Commission, the comprehensive review of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, the Election and Plebiscites Act and Members' pension legislation are just an example of some of the achievements of this board.

One of my greatest pleasures as Speaker has been to represent the Assembly throughout the Northwest Territories, Canada and abroad, to ensure that our Assembly is seen and understood as the unique, valued and honoured institution that it continues to be.

Others have pointed out that our system of consensus government is not perfect. Indeed, it is not. I am convinced, however, that our system far exceeds the standards of least/worst set by Winston Churchill in describing the traditional Westminster model. I am convinced that other parts of the world, particularly those parts where democracy is in its infancy, can learn a great deal from the way we conduct the business of government in this great territory. It has been an honour to help spread that message as Speaker.

It has been an honour and an absolute joy to travel to communities, to the communities of Whati, Fort Resolution, Hay River and Sachs Harbour with the Mace of the Northwest Territories and see the expressions on the faces of the school children and seniors when they get a close look at this beautiful symbol of our territory. I have always felt that if this institution is to remain relevant in the minds of its residents, they must experience it firsthand. It is my sincere hope that future Speakers will continue this important initiative.

As others have done, I want to take an opportunity on behalf of all Members to express our appreciation and support for commitment provided by officers of the Legislative Assembly including the Clerk, Mr. Tim Mercer, and his capable table staff, Mr. Schauerte and Ms. Bennett...

---Applause

the Law Clerks, Mr. Boyd and Ms. Payne, and the Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Thagard and Mr. Edjericon.

---Applause

I also want to thank the officers who have served previously in this Assembly including Mr. David Inch, Mr.

Andrew Stewart, Mr. Darrin Ouellette and Ms. Katherine Peterson.

---Applause

Others have made reference to the contribution of various Members of the Legislative Assembly staff in recent days. I am mindful of the old rule that if you can't name every person you wish to thank, don't name any. Each and every employee of the Legislative Assembly serves an important and vital function. Some work more closely with Members than others, but I can tell you that they are dedicated to the mission of this institution and to your success as Members. To each of you, I express my thanks and gratitude. You can be proud of your work and if any of you follow through with the threat of writing a tell-all book, please be kind to your Speaker.

---Laughter

My thanks also go out to the Pages who have served us so well over the last four years. Seeing this Assembly through the eyes of the youth of the NWT has often been illuminating. As you know, starting with the 16th Assembly, the Speaker's office will fully sponsor and coordinate the attendance of four Pages from every constituency in the NWT each year. Not only...

---Applause

Not only will this take some burden off of Members' budgets, it will also ensure fairness and equity to the youth of all regions.

To the contract staff, PIDO, security, Hansard, catering and janitorial services, I thank you as well for your excellent services and your dedication. We could not do our jobs if you didn't do yours so well. Your work takes place behind the scenes, but it is appreciated and valued.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the assistance I have received from my staff; my executive assistant, Ms. Sue Tkachuk, and my constituency assistant, Ms. Deb Mageean. Your assistance is invaluable and I greatly appreciate everything you have done to assist my office, both in Yellowknife and Hay River.

Colleagues, although it has been mentioned many times during the last week, the debt we all owe to our families is a huge one. We could not do what we do in this House, in our committees, in Cabinet or in our constituencies, without their support and their encouragement. To the families and friends who provide such a network of strength for each of us, please accept our sincere thanks. I, of course, want to thank my wife, Davida, and my children and grandchildren for their constant support and love.

When we leave this Chamber today, colleagues, we go in many different directions. To those seeking re-election, I wish you the best of luck. For those who are taking a different road, our very best wishes will accompany you as well. No matter where October 2nd finds you, you can take pride in the work that you have done in this Chamber: considering the passage of legislation and budgets, debating important matters of public policy, giving voice to the issues and concerns of your constituents or holding the government to account. Otto Von Bismarck, a German counsellor once said, "The less people know about how sausages and laws are made, the better they sleep at night." We have made a fair bit of sausage during this Assembly. As Speaker, I often only get to see the final product, as opposed to what happens inside the sausage maker. But I know when I look back on the work of this Assembly, I will sleep very well indeed.

Thank you, colleagues. With that, Mr. Clerk, will you ascertain if the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Tony Whitford, is prepared to enter the Chamber and assent to bills and prorogue the Sixth Session of the 15th Assembly.

---Applause

ITEM 22: PROROGATION

COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (Hon. Tony Whitford): What a wonderful feeling to be back in this chair, colleagues, but it's a feeling.

---Laughter

Monsieur le president, monsieur le premier ministre, messieurs et Mesdames les deputes, mesdames et messieurs, et amis.

It is once again a pleasure and honour for me to be in your presence and to close this Assembly. It seems not that long ago I was here doing the same thing, but from your side of the House, in 2003.

Using this time for a few personal comments before I begin my formal duties, I want to say what a pleasure it has been to watch the important work of our government coming together through your sincerity and hard work.

This year, we witnessed the 40th anniversary of the Government of the Northwest Territories coming home to the North. To some of us who were around 40 years ago, we watched and wondered what would happen, some of us even wondered if we too could be part of the new government.

In these past 40 or so years, the world has watched our territory evolve politically, socially, economically and culturally, and, from time to time, we have led the way in change and other countries have followed our example.

Some of us could only watch; some took more active roles through employment, but, in your case, you have taken on the role as leaders. You have all become the instruments of change and have acted on the people's wishes during your elected terms by making those important changes. To them, we owe you a great deal.

Being in politics is a difficult task not just for the Members, but for their families as well. Without the support of your families, your jobs here would be even more difficult, if not impossible. To them, we owe a great deal and I extend my admiration and gratitude to your families, on behalf of all the North's people.

I know now that some of you have already announced your intention to seek re-election. I want to wish you every success in your campaigns.

Some of you have also announced your intention not to seek the mandate and will pursue other challenges instead. I want to extend my appreciation for your service to your constituents and all people of the North, and also wish you every success in your decision.

It has been an honour to have served and worked with you.

To conclude my personal comments to the Members, I also want to let you know that I have had the pleasure of visiting each of your ridings at least once since becoming your Commissioner. I am happy to report that I have only two and a half communities left to visit by next April. The half is for the community where I was only at the airport and not in the community. I'll get it done.

On behalf of my staff, Phyla Fyten and Raegen Mager, and Barb Paquin -- two are present this afternoon in the gallery -- it has been a pleasure to be in your service during this 15th Legislative Assembly and we look forward to continuing that with Members of the 16th Legislative Assembly beginning in October.

When you first came together, you had a vision of a Northwest Territories where individuals, families and communities could be self-reliant. The work you have undertaken during this Assembly has helped northerners do just that.

The agenda you set for yourselves has been ambitious. Sometimes your deliberations were difficult, but ultimately your work has served to improve the North's general condition and have a positive effect on the lives of northerners. You have achieved your goal and demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the people of the Northwest Territories.

As you look back over your term in office, some important milestones will stand out:

- an important new territorial formula financing agreement and a better government credit rating;
- an agreement-in-principle with four aboriginal groups on devolution, contributing to moving the entire devolution agenda very near to success;
- a Greenhouse Gas Strategy and an Energy Strategy;
- a territorial recycling program, a program which I take advantage of;
- more training and job opportunities for northerners than ever before;
- major improvements to the income security programs;
- a significant increase in the number of senior high school graduates, particularly among aboriginal students; and
- continued support for a responsibly developed oil and gas pipeline.

Of course, there are other initiatives that are still in the works. Tomorrow, for example, I am very pleased to be travelling to Fort Providence for a sod turning celebration for the long-awaited Deh Cho Bridge project.

---Applause

As I said, some of us have been around for 40 years and have been talking about that for 40 years. Tomorrow is a start. I am sure there are many more issues of special significance to individual Members that you will reflect upon in the future.

Assent To Bills

As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I am pleased to assent to the following bills:

- Bill 6, Workers' Compensation Act
- Bill 9, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2007-2008
- Bill 10, Write-off of Debts Act, 2007-2008
- Bill 11, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007
- Bill 12, Public Health Act
- Bill 13, Change of Name Act
- Bill 14, Employment Standards Act

- Bill 15, Liquor Act
- Bill 17, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2006-2007
- Bill 18, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2007-2008
- Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act

Finally, as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I hereby prorogue the Sixth Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, merci, qnanami, mahsi cho.

---PROROGATION

The house adjourned at 16:45 p.m.