

15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

Report on Pre-Budget
Consultations

Chair: Mr. Kevin Menicoche

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Kevin Menicoche
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Chair

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MLA Kam Lake

Robert Villeneuve
MLA Tu Nedhe

Norman Yakeleya
MLA Sahtu

COMMITTEE STAFF

Doug Schauerte
Deputy Clerk

Colette Langlois
Director,
Research Services

Darha Phillpot
Committee Researcher



Northwest
Territories

Legislative Assembly
Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

October 17, 2005

SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is pleased to provide its Pre-Budget Consultation Report and commends it to the House.

Kevin Menicoche, MLA
Chairperson

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT
PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION REPORT**

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PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is pleased to present its first report on Pre-Budget Consultations.

The Committee held hearings in Fort Good Hope, Fort Simpson, Hay River, Inuvik, Lutsel K'e, Paulatuk, Trout Lake, Whati and Yellowknife between August 25 and September 2, 2005. Following the Yellowknife hearings, the Committee Members split into Northern NWT and Southern NWT groups in order to visit as many communities as possible within the short time we had available.

These were our first pre-budget consultations, and we were not sure what to expect, or if people would even be interested in talking to us. As it turned out, the response was very positive. Meetings were well attended, and many people expressed support for what we were doing. In every community, we heard from representatives of local governments, frontline workers, NGOs, business and individuals speaking on their own behalf. We were especially impressed with the number of youth who attended our meetings and the few who spoke to us very convincingly about their priorities and ideas. We hope to have even more participation by youth in future meetings. It was very encouraging for us to see the numbers of people who did come to meet us. Our only regret is that we could not accommodate all the requests for additional meetings and longer stays in some of the communities we did visit.

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

- What government programs are most important for you?
- What are the biggest concerns in your community today?
- What kind of government spending would help your community the most?
- Are there things government is spending money on in your community that are not doing any good?

Keeping the discussion going was never a problem, and, as a result, some of our meetings went very late into the evening, with many people patiently waiting hours to have a turn at the microphone.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to make presentations to us or to send us written comments. A list of their names and organizations is attached to this report. We especially want to thank the people who traveled from other communities such as Wrigley and Tsiigehtchic to be at our meetings in regional centres.

These consultations would not have been a success without local people who provided us with meeting places, catering, accommodations, interpretation, transportation and sound services. Often these people who set up chairs and tables, feed us, drive us around, give us a place to sleep and make sure we can hear and understand each other go unrecognized, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

In the course of these consultations, most of us visited at least one community we had never been to before. Although we are elected to represent our constituents, we are also expected to be involved in decisions that have a territory-wide impact. Having the chance to see other communities and meet each other's constituents helps us to do a better job. We would therefore like to thank all the communities we visited for making us feel welcome and for letting us get to know you better.

Why Pre-Budget Consultations?

From the beginning of the 15th Assembly, our Committee has struggled to find a way to give members of the public a meaningful opportunity to influence the Government's business plans and budget. In the past, we do not think enough people and organizations have had a chance to tell MLAs about their priorities and views of how government should spend its money.

The Government's budgets are not made public until February. By this time, it is too late to make major changes, and even minor adjustments can be difficult to fit in. However, the work on the budget begins several months earlier. Standing Committees get their first opportunity to see and to question potential cuts, new spending and other budget changes when they review the Government's draft three-year business plans. This takes place over a two-week period in

September, when there is still room for changes. Committees use this time to discuss government-wide issues with the Premier and Minister of Finance, and then meet with the Minister and senior staff of each Department to go over the draft plans in detail.

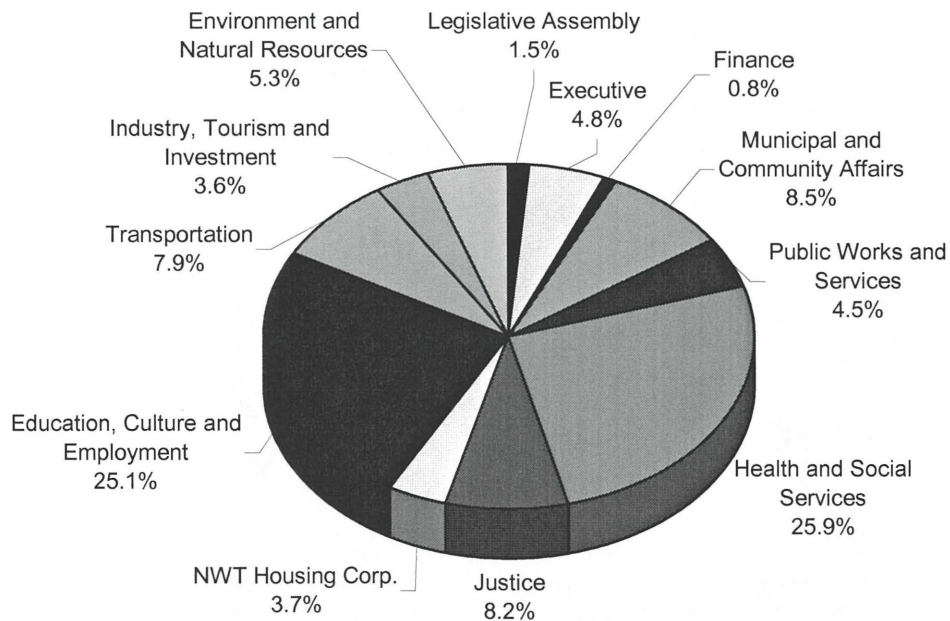


*The Northern Group
meeting in Paulatuk*

This September, the timing of the pre-budget consultations allowed Members to ask the questions and raise the issues we heard as we reviewed individual Departmental business plans with the Ministers and senior staff. Although we have an obligation to keep the details of our discussions on the draft business plans confidential, we would like to assure the public that we did use the opportunity to try to influence the Government to align its plans more closely with what you told us, and to encourage the Government to keep going where it is already heading in the right direction. You will also be hearing your comments reflected in statements and questions by individual Members during upcoming Sessions of the Legislative Assembly, in future reports by Standing Committees, and in the debate on the budget that will happen next February and March.

We would like to caution, however, that patience will be required as many of the issues you raised demand long-term solutions and are far beyond what can be addressed in one year's budget and business plans. We look forward to working with the Government over the remainder of our mandate on longer-term approaches and strategic investments toward reversing the negative trends you have identified and achieving the goals you have set for us.

**Operations Expenditures by Department
2005-06**



GENERAL COMMENTS

The Committee found a number of common themes throughout our consultations.

By far the majority of issues people brought to our attention were in the social programs area. In every community, we heard requests for more adequate, affordable housing, better prevention and treatment of addictions, and help to deal with the high cost of living. Concerns for particular groups, such as elders, women, persons with disabilities and youth, crossed a number of different areas, particularly education, health and employment. As reflected in many sections of this report, throughout our consultations, the Committee heard a great deal of concern for youth especially and the need for them to have safe activities and places to go. More than one person pointed out that it is disappointing, to say the least, that although we are spending roughly half of our billion dollar budget on Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment, we are still a long way from achieving our goals in a number of key areas and we have stalled on implementing the Social Agenda.

Outside of the social programs area, two of the more common priorities were dealing with rising energy costs and supporting economic development, particularly in renewable resource sectors.

One message that came up in one form or another everywhere we went was that there is a lot the Government could do differently to better support frontline organizations and workers. This is a key issue that affects many different program areas as will be discussed in the next section of this report.



*Members of the
Southern Group
in Trout Lake.*

The Committee is well aware that until we can establish new revenue sources, the Government's ability to respond to requests for new money without taking away from other programs will be very limited. As stated earlier, we also realize

that some issues will require many years of investments. However, we want to emphasize that we did not only hear about problems and funding shortfalls. We also heard several examples of programs that are already working well and ideas for new revenue sources, saving money or better ways to spend the money we do have.

WHAT WE HEARD

Support for Community and Frontline Organizations

The Committee heard from several territorial and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and frontline agencies working in a broad range of areas such as literacy, youth, family violence, addictions and homelessness. While they told us a great deal about their specific program areas, as will be related in later sections of this report, they all had a lot to say generally about the working relationship between themselves and the GNWT.

The value of the work these organizations do cannot be underestimated. If they were ever to disappear, there is no way that Government could step in to fill the gap. As it is, these are the organizations that pick up the pieces when government programs such as income support, legal aid and the education system let people fall through the holes in the safety net.

Not only are these organizations experts in their program areas, they are experts at stretching every dollar as far as it will go. In the words of Ms. Lydia Bardak from the Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition "In the non-government sector, we have an amazing, amazing amount of collective experience, commitment and dedication. We do that with very little or next to no resources." For example, the NWT Seniors' Society told us that their work has been valued by an independent consultant at \$1.5 million if it were being done by Government. Yet their budget for this year is roughly \$100,000, and they have repeatedly been denied the additional \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year they need to fulfill their mandate and to keep up with rising costs. We heard similar stories from several other groups. As Ms. Lyda Fuller from the YWCA said of negotiating funding with the GNWT, "It's not a process of saying what do you need to keep this service running and moderately healthy. You get targets and the targets are the same as you had last year or sometimes less, and then you have to structure your budget to meet that target."

A particular concern of several NGOs is the lack of forced growth funding in recent years. Like everyone else, they and their staff are immediately impacted when the costs of insurance, utilities, fuel and food go up. Although the Government budgets for this in its own operations, it is not consistently doing the same for NGOs. For example, Mr. Bill Enge from the North Slave Métis Alliance

told us that their core funding is still at 1995 levels. Forced growth funding to raise staff wages to keep up with the cost of living is also lacking. We were told that, in the past, the GNWT provided some additional funding to NGOs every time the public service received an increase. This has not happened in the last few years. Like many employers across the territories, NGOs already have difficulty recruiting and keeping trained staff. They are at a particular disadvantage, shared by many community governments as well, because the wages they can offer are falling further and further behind everyone else. Inuvik Family Counselling Services told us their workers have more qualifications than GNWT staff in the same field but are paid less and receive less program support. We heard that workers are burning out, not only from the high stress of constantly dealing with clients in crisis, but also from having to work at more than one job to make ends meet. This is impacting the effectiveness of programs and services.

Another major problem for NGOs is the lack of multi-year funding, which limits their ability to make long-range plans and commitments, including providing job security for their staff. Many NGOs have been operating effectively for several years and believe they have long since proven themselves and are now deserving of some trust from the GNWT. As Reverend Haydn Schofield from the Hay River Ministerial Association said, "Why doesn't somebody trust us enough, come look at what we're doing, look at our proposal, come and see the centre, look at our history, and then trust us enough and say we will give a three-year project or three-year funding for an assistant?"

Funds for necessary building repairs and maintenance are also insufficient. With budgets already being stretched so thin, NGOs are hard pressed to deal with a furnace that suddenly quits working or a sprinkler system that needs replacing. The Hay River Family Support Centre suggested a special fund that NGOs could access to deal with these types of situations.

Many NGOs expressed frustration with the complexity and inflexibility of program funds and the constant struggle to match them to their clients' actual needs. To get funding for a program or service, NGOs often have to pool together money from multiple departments and/or levels of government. Each funding source has its own program criteria and reporting requirements. Often one funding source will want to know that another funding source is on board before committing to a project. The burden of coordinating all of this falls on the NGOs, in addition to their day-to-day jobs of providing programs and services. Ironically, as one presenter commented, funding for coordinator-type positions is usually the first thing government cuts.

Even knowing what resources are out there can be a challenge. Several people, particularly in the youth field, told us they are never sure where to go for funding. In Paulatuk, Ms. Frances Wolki spoke about how small communities lack the

knowledge to access dollars, which are often already spoken for by the time they have a chance to make a request.

Aside from finding sources of funding for projects, NGOs often struggle to match program dollars to clients' actual needs. Securing funding depends on being able to massage projects to fit within programs instead of the other way around. As was pointed out in the presentation by the Hay River Community Youth Centre, sometimes very worthwhile activities just do not look all that grand on paper. Some NGOs, like the Hay River Family Support Centre, also fear losing funding for core programs if they expand too far beyond their original mandate, even if the intent is to provide needed services to the same core of clients.

The GNWT's programs and funding practices also fail to recognize that real clients typically have more than one issue to deal with. An individual may be unemployed, and coping with a disability and an addiction, or they may be in trouble with the law and homeless. As Ms. Arlene Hache from the Centre for Northern Families told us, because they are in the frontlines, NGOs find themselves forced into a position of helping people they do not have the resources to help, for example, by filling some of the gaps left by the legal aid system. Several NGOs suggested that with a little additional funding they would be able to fill some of these gaps and provide a more holistic service. Too often they have seen the GNWT spend money on strategies and office renovations instead of giving those resources to the people who know how to get the job done. The perspective of several NGOs was captured in a comment by Ms. Hache who said that although the government works hard, "I just believe that they don't know how to support communities and families the way that is effective. That's all it is."

This brings us to another request from NGOs, which is to be included more often in planning and decision-making. They believe they have a great deal to offer, especially in suggesting how resources can be used most effectively, ensuring there is no duplication of services and setting priorities so that resources are not spread so thinly they are no longer effective. Ms. Hache told us that federal dollars often go through the Departments and Boards and get allocated before community groups have a chance to put forward ideas. She gave the example of funding that was used to renovate a clinic to make it suitable for drop-ins, rather than building on the service already being provided at the Centre for Northern Families.

Several presenters mentioned Yellowknife's Homelessness Coalition as a good model for cooperative decision-making, which they hope can be copied in the future. In Lutsel K'e, we heard how Social Agenda funding is working and helping community organizations to pull together.

Many NGOs depend to a great extent on volunteers. The NWT Seniors Society identified a need for more support for volunteers and the volunteer spirit, which they are concerned is declining. A strong volunteer spirit is needed for the continued success of many NGOs and the overall well being of communities. In the words of Mr. Alvin Armstrong, "You can't get anyone to do anything unless they're getting paid." He suggested volunteer groups should have priority for funding over organizations that pay honoraria.

The Committee notes that much of what NGOs are asking for - multi-year funding, program flexibility and more inclusive decision-making - is not about more dollars, but about a better working relationship. Despite our fiscal situation, these are areas where we should be able to make improvements. As Mr. Dave Harder from the Salvation Army said, "Help us to do the work we are already doing."

With respect to the calls for additional funding, the Committee heard a great deal of evidence that money provided to NGOs is money well spent. As Ms. Suzanne Robinson from the Inuvik Literacy Committee said of her program, "For the amount of money we put it together for, it's real bang for your buck." We were continually impressed by what people were able to accomplish on shoestring budgets.

Support for Frontline Workers

The Committee also heard concerns about the level of support provided to frontline workers. Wages are low, and many NGOs and community organizations do not have adequate funding to provide benefits. Staff and volunteers are burning out. The Status of Women Council wrote to us with a recommendation that the GNWT make a renewed commitment to implementing the Social Agenda, including strengthening and increasing the frontline resources in NWT communities, with particular attention to non-government and volunteer resources. As the Status of Women Council noted, the majority of frontline workers and volunteers in the wellness field are women, and their already heavy workload will likely continue to increase with the social impacts of industrial development. Training and professional development dollars are often the first to be cut when budgets are tight, but are needed to meet current and future demands.

There was concern that many frontline workers, especially addictions workers, are not given enough coaching and supervisory support. Ms. Bardak also suggested they do not have enough decision-making authority, which limits their ability to participate effectively on community inter-agency groups. It is frustrating for communities trying to work together on local issues when a key player has to keep going back to their regional office or headquarters for approvals.

This mirrors what we heard directly from community residents, who told us they can do the job and want more local authority over programs. In Whati, Ms. Mary Anne Jeremick'a insisted local people have good ideas and the capacity to deliver but are too often held up by inflexible program guidelines and rules such as degree requirements. "What about the degree that our people have learned from the land?", she asked. Another Whati resident, Mr. Alphonse Nitsiza, said, "The problem with bureaucrats running the communities for so many years is people at times have become dependent on the system and do not want to do anything for themselves anymore. Now we have to undo that." And as Chief Charlie Nitsiza said, "What we want to do in the communities is put the program together ourselves to fit the community." Chief Nitsiza's comment was echoed by people from Trout Lake to Paulatuk.

Inadequate support for frontline workers was most noticeable in small communities where the need is probably greatest. In Trout Lake, the Committee heard that the home care worker has a full-time caseload with twelve elders and others to look after, but is only funded part-time. She is also short of equipment and supplies. In Paulatuk, Mayor Ray Ruben and Ms. Marlene Wolki told us that their health care workers are in a very stressful position and need help to do their jobs. The situation is at the point that people are worried the nurses are so busy they could make potentially serious mistakes. They also mentioned that the doctors and nurses who are sent to their community seem to be the ones with the least experience. Mayor Ruben suggested a possible solution would be putting the nursing staff on short-term rotations, for example, three to four months, but sending the same pool of staff on the rotations so they would still have a chance to become familiar with the community and its residents. He also suggested that community involvement in staffing both nursing and teaching positions would help to ensure that they got the right people who would be able to work with their community.

One of the basic resources frontline workers need is a suitable place to do their job. The Committee was therefore appalled to learn that the income support office in Paulatuk is located in the school. Not only is this potentially humiliating for the clients who need to visit the office, it sends the wrong message to youth. The income support worker told us students walk by and joke about when they can come to her for assistance. This situation is clearly unacceptable, and we are concerned there may be similar situations in other communities.

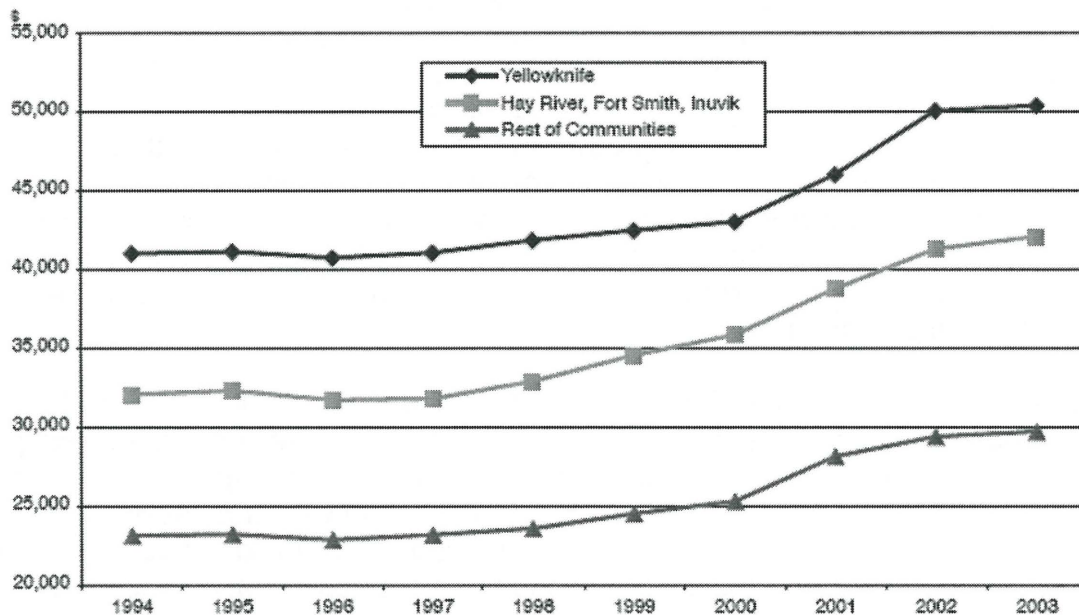
Cost of Living and Poverty

The cost of living was an issue everywhere we went. It impacts on individuals, on businesses and other employers who need to attract and keep workers, and on small communities who want to stay viable and not lose all their young people to larger centres. Fuel and housing prices are the two areas of most concern,

and are discussed in more detail in later sections of this report. Food and freight continue to be very expensive, especially in the smallest, most isolated communities. Chief Dennis Deneron of Trout Lake told us the cost of charters, which are needed to fly groceries and other supplies into the community, has doubled. This is a serious concern in a community where jobs are scarce and people are already struggling to make ends meet. In Whati, we heard from the school principal that some students come to class hungry because their parents cannot afford nutritious food. As the Status of Women Council warned, “The NWT will pay a large price in the future for social programs and the justice system, if we do not invest more in families with children now to ensure a basic quality of life.”

Youth, who cannot access income support or public housing on their own, are especially vulnerable. Several Yellowknife agencies have identified a need to establish a Youth Coalition modeled on the Homelessness Coalition. As Ms. Bardak told us, “We have a large number of kids who are not in school and who are not employable and not engaged generally.”

Average Income, by Community Type
 Northwest Territories, 1994-2003



While people are seeing a growing gap in quality of living between larger and smaller communities, they are also concerned about what is happening within communities. Although many people have been able to take advantage of opportunities in resource development, government and other sectors, many have been left behind. As Ms. Angie Lantz told us in Lutsel K'e, “there’s a big gap between the employed and the unemployed. What is happening is it’s

dividing the community in a bad way". This comment was echoed by Alternatives North, who reminded us that not everyone will, "be able to rise to self-reliance by the simple provision of opportunities."

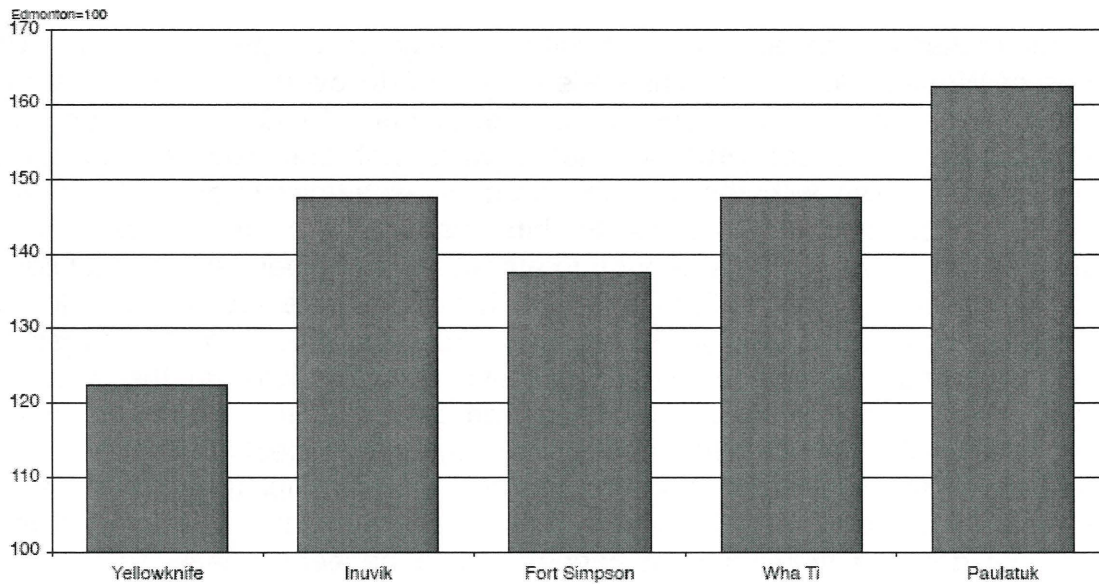
Several presenters raised concerns with the income support program. The Status of Women Council recommended a complete overhaul, involving public consultation with income assistance recipients, NGOs and Aboriginal organizations. The concerns we heard were not only with the levels of assistance, but also with the way the program is administered. The YWCA reiterated past recommendations to hire enough workers for reasonable caseloads, pay those workers enough to attract skilled helpers and do real social work with clients. As we discussed with Ms. Fuller, we are all familiar with situations where individuals have had to make due without their cheques for weeks or months at a time through no fault of their own. In the words of Ms. Fuller, "it shouldn't take six months of work by four staff people in an agency to get one client a replacement cheque when somebody steals their cheque and cashes it. It shouldn't happen that a house in the community that has people with disabilities living in it gets their fuel cut off in the middle of winter, and then work gets done to help that not happen and it happens again the following month. It shouldn't deny help to a woman who is living in an abusive situation and force her to come back into the shelter instead of finding an apartment somewhere, and meanwhile her 17-year-old son lives in a vehicle."

Specific suggestions we heard were to address the high cost of living and poverty were to:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to eliminate poverty (Alternatives North)
- Immediately eliminate the National Child Tax Benefit clawback on income support (Alternatives North and the Status of Women Council);
- Immediately increase income support allowances for food and make provisions for basic necessities such as phone service, toiletries, school expenses and household cleaning and personal care items. (Alternatives North and the Status of Women Council); and
- Lower the corporate tax and payroll tax burden (YK Chamber of Commerce).

Another suggestion came from Ms. Evelyn Coleman of the Territorial Farmers' Association, who told us we could do much more to grow and produce food right in communities, either using arable land where it is available or running greenhouses and livestock operations. As she said in reference to a \$4 onion in Aklavik, "There's no reason food in the NWT should cost that much anywhere when we have the ability to grow it."

Living Cost Differentials
Selected Communities, 2000



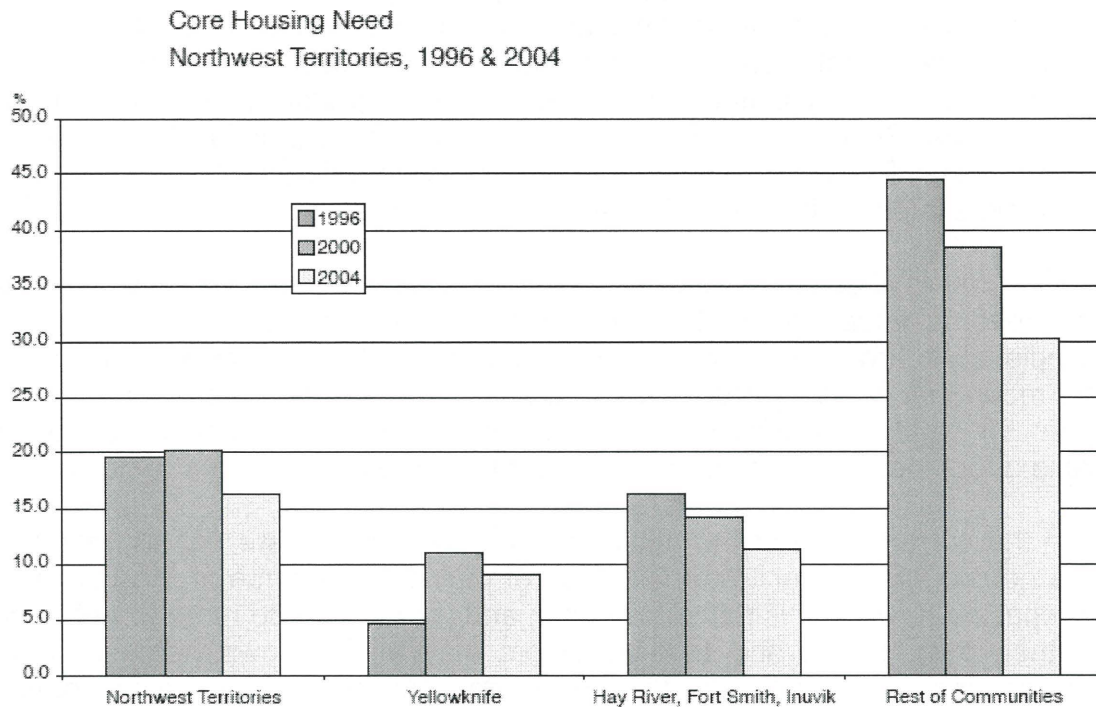
Adequate, Affordable Housing

The lack of adequate and affordable housing is a crisis in many NWT communities that we were told is contributing not only to homelessness, but also to social problems, crime, young people leaving smaller communities for good and difficulties recruiting and retaining nurses, teachers and other workers.

The affordability of private rental housing was discussed in both Yellowknife and Inuvik. As Ms. Barbara Beck wrote to us, "The average single parent or single person store clerk or waitress cannot rent an apartment due to extremely high rental rates. ...People do want to work but cannot afford an apartment on their minimum wage job. If you do not have a place to live – how can you work?" In Inuvik, Ms. Sharon Spinks told us that government needs to take a stand and suggested rent control as an option to protect tenants from gouging.

Everywhere we went, we were told about long waiting lists for public housing. People in Fort Good Hope, Inuvik and Trout Lake specifically mentioned the shortage of housing for single people and young families. Too many young adults are forced to either leave their community or continue living in overcrowded homes with their parents or other relatives because there is nowhere else for them to go. Several people also mentioned the shortage of housing for seniors and persons with disabilities.

On the other side of the equation, we heard from Fort Simpson businessman Jan Van Der Veen about his difficulties accessing funding programs for landlord residential rehabilitation and new rental housing developments.



The age and poor condition of the public housing units we do have was a serious concern in several communities. As one Inuvik resident pointed out, much of our housing stock is over fifty years old and probably not up to standard. Local housing authorities find themselves in an impossible position when the small amount of modernization and improvements funding available is not enough to cover even the most necessary repairs. Ms. Debbie Gordon-Ruben of Paulatuk explained to us, “One of our units is condemnable but there is a family of twelve living there – where are we going to move them?”

The Committee was especially disturbed by the condition of the elders’ home in Fort Good Hope which is in such a state of disrepair that a woman in her eighties has to resort to putting blankets on her doors and using her cook stove to stay warm, while her neighbours are forced to sit wrapped in blankets waiting for the heat to come on.

Some people fear the situation will get worse as the public housing program is transferred from the NWT Housing Corporation to Education, Culture and Employment. The NWT Seniors’ Society told us they doubt the Department has the ability to provide a “quality sensitive service” considering all of their other responsibilities. Ms. Hache recalled how special allowances such as those for

layettes and people with diabetes disappeared from the income support program when it was transferred from Health and Social Services.

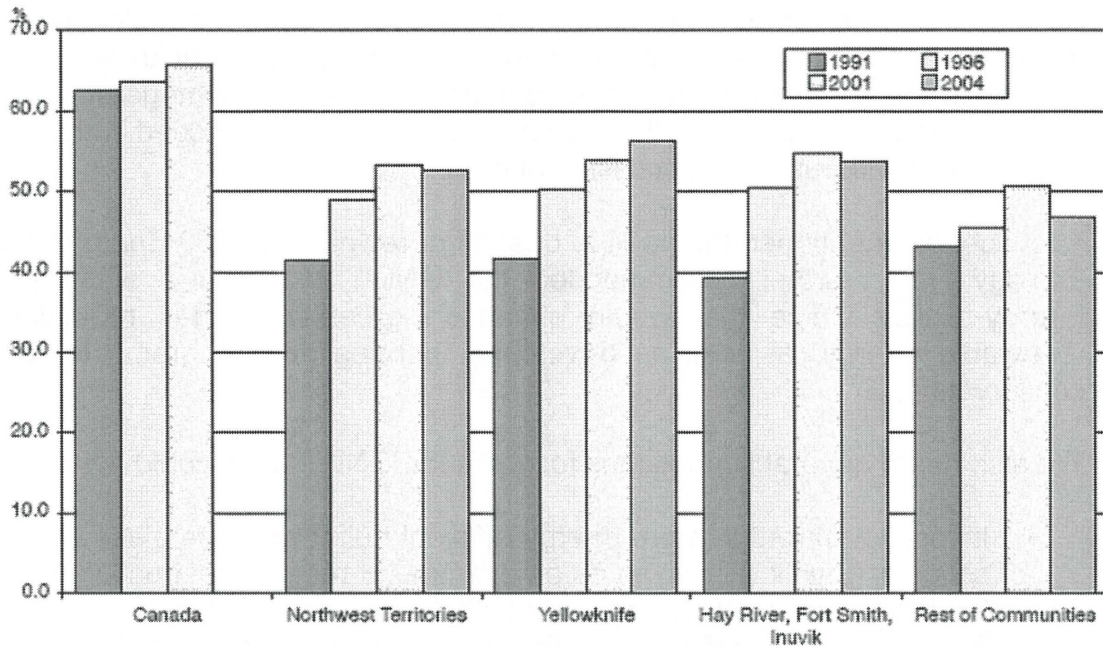
A few individuals asked for changes to the rent scale. Suggestions included basing the rent scale on net, rather than gross income; setting lower rents for elders and people with disabilities; and setting a different scale for trappers, casual and seasonal workers. One individual expressed frustration that the current rent scale penalizes working people by making them pay more. The Hay River Seniors' Society stressed the need for fairness, pointing to the current situation in Hay River where seniors in the private rental market are paying more than seniors in public housing who have larger units.

We also heard that some working people are at the point of getting evicted because they have not made rent payments. When people go from being unemployed to having a good income, their rent can take a drastic jump. Higher rents mean that arrears build up faster and quickly become unmanageable. The Centre for Northern Families suggested that more could be done to educate people about their responsibilities to pay rent when they can afford to do so.

Given the current state of the public housing system, we are not surprised that some people, like Mayor Peter Clarkson of Inuvik, have come to the conclusion that what we have now is not sustainable, and we need to do more to get people into their own homes and to help elders stay in their own homes. Mayor Clarkson recommended that the NWT develop a comprehensive housing strategy that includes energy efficiency, lot development and a move to private ownership.

For such a strategy to succeed, we would first need to address some significant barriers to home ownership. For example, individuals in Hay River, Paulatuk and Fort Good Hope told us about the difficulty they have affording maintenance on their homes, or in some cases, even finding local people who have the time to do the work. If a Paulatuk elder's furnace breaks down in the middle of winter, they have to be able to get it fixed. They cannot be expected to pay for a maintainer to fly in from another community or wait for the local maintainer to finish work on the public housing units to find time to help them. Heating and utilities costs, which are discussed in the next section of this report, are also a barrier to home ownership for some people.

Percentage of Owned Dwellings
 Northwest Territories & Canada, 1991-2004



Energy

In its presentation to the Committee, Ecology North criticized the GNWT for not taking energy and environmental issues seriously, especially climate change. The recent jump in oil prices has created an opportunity for conservation and energy issues to become a top priority for all of us.

The Committee heard pleas from several individuals to help them cope with the rising costs, through new or increased rebates or subsidies or lobbying for reduced federal taxes. Some people told us that even before fuel prices rose, the subsidies we already had were inadequate. The Territorial Power Subsidy Program subsidizes residential customers so they pay the same rate as Yellowknife on their first 700 kilowatt hours each month. Any consumption above 700 kilowatt hours is charged at the community rate, which can be several times the amount of the Yellowknife rate. In Paulatuk, we were told that many people's monthly power bills are several hundred dollars. This is because the average household energy consumption is roughly 1100 to 1400 kilowatt hours, well above the 700 kilowatt hour subsidy level. The Seniors' Fuel Subsidy program was also criticized in Whatì, because elders who have adult children or other relatives living with them do not qualify for the subsidy, regardless of what those other adults are actually contributing to household expenses.

Several people recommended that programs encouraging conservation would be a better solution than straight subsidies, which are not sustainable. Suggested

examples of such programs included incentives for people to buy more energy efficient appliances and furnaces and even converting back to woodstoves.

Ecology North advocated for cheaper, renewable, more labour-intensive locally provided energy sources, such as wood. Alternatives North acknowledged that we will likely need more hydro development but warned that mega-projects lead to mega-disruption, and that the Government should not proceed with the Bear River project without more discussion of other options.

A few people mentioned the need to dust off or rewrite the 2003 Energy Strategy. Ecology North further recommended the GNWT establish a well-resourced Energy Policy Office that would champion greenhouse gas reduction and renewable energy, as well as developing policies and programs to promote conservation.

We also heard several suggestions for ways the GNWT itself could conserve:

- Investing upfront in more energy efficient buildings – the glass wall on the school in Inuvik was given as an example of recent construction that could have been made much more heat efficient; (several presenters)
- Replacing old inefficient appliances in public housing units; (Mr. Tyler Katz)
- Building multiplexes instead of standalone units for public housing; (Ms. Sharon Katz)
- Running the ferry at Tsiigehtchic once per hour instead of on demand; (Mr. Tyler Katz)
- Using high efficiency vehicles for GNWT business where large pick-ups are not required (Mr. Tyler Katz)

Early Childhood Programs

The importance of early childhood programs as an investment that pays off down the road for children was a frequent topic in our consultations. As the NWT Literacy Council said, these early investments “are much more effective than program interventions made later in life. A long-term commitment, a more comprehensive approach and improved integration are needed if early childhood programming is to be effective. A piecemeal approach and unstable funding will not achieve the intended result.” The shortage of affordable, quality early childhood programs is also a barrier for many parents, especially women, trying to make productive choices by working or furthering their education. As the Status of Women Council wrote, “Access to child care is an essential factor in achieving economic equality for women and in maximizing the potential of the NWT labour force.”

We also heard in both Lutsel K'e and Trout Lake that the lack of suitable facilities and/or trained staff prevents them from taking advantage of the federal Aboriginal Head Start program. Residents of Lutsel K'e were especially concerned because the community hall they are currently using for day care showed high levels of radon in tests conducted several years ago and has not been adequately monitored since.

The Status of Women Council recommended a review of the NWT Child Care Program in order to eliminate barriers and improve access to child care services in NWT communities. The review would involve a collaboration of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and stakeholders and would include assessing the impact of lack of access to reliable child care on women leaving education, training and employment. They further recommended a major initiative to improve access to quality, licensed, non-profit child care services in the NWT.

Other specific suggestions were to:

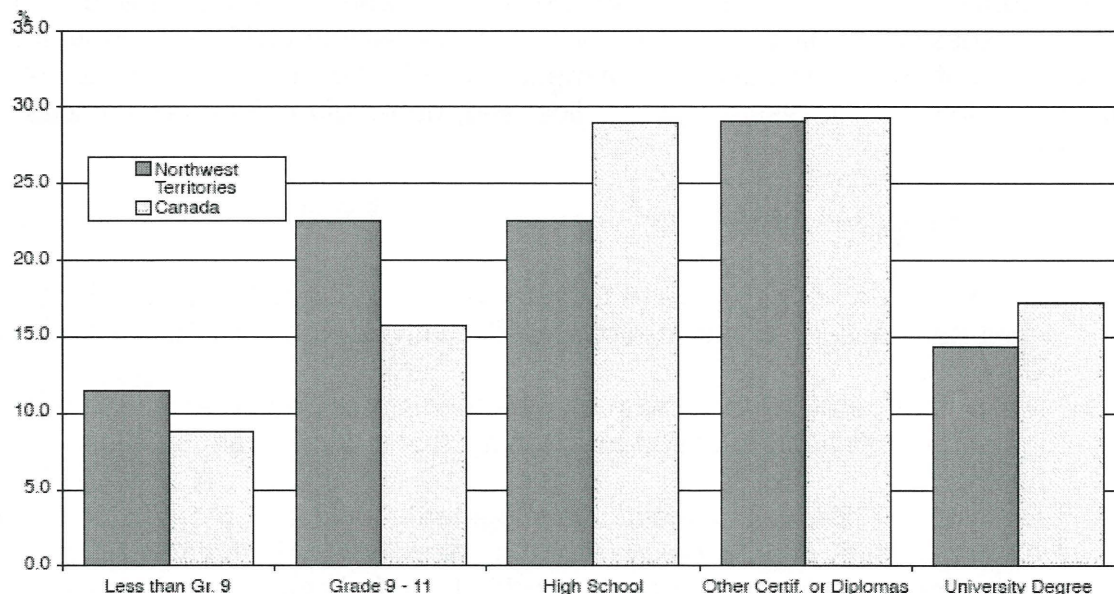
- Continue to lobby the federal Government for a fairer basis for allocating child care dollars to the territories (Alternatives North; Status of Women Council);
- Make the operations and maintenance funding for day cares space-based instead of attendance-based to avoid fluctuations in revenue (Alternatives North);
- Develop an Early Childhood Development certificate program through Aurora College, including a work co-op component (Alternatives North);
- Eventually require at least one certified staff member per license, and provide the necessary assistance to get to that standard (Alternatives North);
- Allow day homes to be operated in public housing (Status of Women Council);
- Provide a program of capital grants to enable construction of childcare centres in communities that have no available building or space for a centre (Status of Women Council).

Literacy

As we heard from Mr. Ken Latour of Hay River, literacy is internationally recognized as a key indicator of the health of societies. Many groups expressed disappointment that funding to this critical area has been cut in the last two budgets, just as awareness campaigns were succeeding at raising interest, demand for programs was on the increase and the capacity of communities to deliver their own programs was developing.

People in Inuvik, Hay River, Lutsel K'e and Yellowknife told us that literacy programming is one area where we are beginning to see results. As the NWT Literacy Council stressed, a long-term commitment is needed, or we may lose ground. Family literacy programs have been especially successful in some communities. The Council requested increased funding for community training and programs, which would, for example, allow programs to run for longer periods. Current funding is \$3,000 per community.

Population 15 & Older by Highest Level of Schooling
 Northwest Territories & Canada, 2004



There was also significant concern that Aurora College lacks adequate resources to deliver effective adult literacy programs, and requests for more funding to this important area.

Requests to enhance literacy programming included:

- Strengthening the Literacy Strategy and looking at ways to fill the remaining gaps, especially programming for out-of-school youth; (NWT Literacy Council; Mr. Ken Latour)
- Funding for literacy research and resource development; (NWT Literacy Council)
- Core funding for the NWT Literacy Council; (NWT Literacy Council; Mr. Ken Latour).
- Looking at financial literacy training as well (John Howard Society).

K-12

Several people pointed out areas that are under-resourced in the K-12 system. The most common concern was the lack of support for children with disabilities beyond the primary level. Many of these children need one-on-one assistance to succeed, and despite the *Education Act's* inclusive schooling policy, the supports are not there to make that happen. As the NWT Teachers' Association wrote to us, many of their members "are stretched to the limit, physically and emotionally, by the sheer numbers and severity of special needs in their classrooms. The problems are immense. The numbers of our students who need assistance above and beyond what is currently available is beyond the means and resources available to most of our schools, especially those in the smaller communities." A related issue brought to the Committee's attention was the lack of resources to deal with students with behavioural problems, who often end up getting expelled. High pupil-teacher ratios in some schools contribute to this problem.

There were also general concerns about how schools are funded. The NWT Teachers' Association pointed to the problems caused by applying a one size fits all funding formula to small, isolated community schools. We heard an example of this in Lutsel K'e, where we were told that enrollment, on which funding levels are based, can vary a great deal from year to year for a number of reasons, including parents leaving temporarily to attend Aurora College.

The Committee also heard requests for more relevant programming in schools, including Aboriginal language and culture, NWT history, small engine repairs, land claim agreements, on the land programs to teach traditional skills and more exposure to the trades.

The quality of higher grades was a concern in Lutsel K'e, Fort Good Hope and Paulatuk. In Lutsel K'e, we heard support for sending high school students to larger communities and a request that this be funded even if students go out of territory. Ms. Edna Tobac, a Fort Good Hope parent, told us that students who have completed Grade 12 are not ready for further education and still need to do upgrading elsewhere before they can consider university. As an example of how students are being "pushed along", she told us about a student receiving seven credits for a two-week program. She was especially concerned about the quality of education for the sciences, because of the lack of specialized teachers in those subjects. Mayor Ray Ruben of Paulatuk also raised concerns with social passing, and pointed to the absence of a school counselor, which he considered an essential for students' success.

Post-Secondary Education

Student Financial Assistance and trades and apprenticeships were the two most-discussed topics under post-secondary education.

The Committee heard comments from a few individuals that the level of funding under the student financial assistance program is not enough, especially for tuition and living expenses such as childcare and housing.

The Committee was also informed of two specific gaps in the Student Financial Assistance Program. We heard from the North Slave Métis Alliance that Métis students are being denied eligibility under the University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEP). While this is a federal program and the decision to exclude Métis was made by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the North Slave Métis Alliance requested that the GNWT consider filling this gap as it did with extended health benefits. In Fort Simpson, Ms. Lorraine Menicoche-Moses suggested that because there is not enough money in the UCEP program to go around, it should be allocated by region instead of on a first come, first served basis.

We also heard from Ms. Lillian Crook from the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities that people with intellectual disabilities have not been able to access student financial assistance in order to be able to attend specialized schools in the south because they have been told their programs do not qualify.

In Fort Simpson, Mayor Raymond Michaud spoke about the severe shortage of trades people that will become a crisis as demand from the non-renewable resource sector rises and people retire. As Mayor Michaud said, "If we were to look tomorrow and spend money on every journeyman that we have in the Territories right now that does not have an apprentice, four years from now you wouldn't have a problem. If we do not invest any funding in the apprenticeship program, four years from now we're going to be in dire straits." Several people, including Mayor Michaud, spoke about the importance of training and hiring local people, who are more likely to stay and work in the community for the long term.

Other specific suggestions the Committee received for improving post-secondary programs included:

- Providing core funding to Aurora College for all trades programs instead of relying on soft funding from industry and other partners (Mayor Peter Clarkson, Inuvik);
- Putting conditions on government tenders and resource development permits requiring the use of apprentices (Alternatives North);
- Applying affirmative action criteria to apprenticeships (Alternatives North);

- Internet training centres in communities capable of supporting post-graduate work (Mr. Wes Hardisty, Fort Simpson); and
- An Aurora College Campus in Yellowknife (Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce).

Employment and Training

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Committee heard concerns that not everyone is benefiting from the opportunities created by the NWT's heated economy. Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and women were the groups mentioned as still facing barriers to employment. Small communities especially are challenged to find meaningful work, especially for the younger generation. Suggestions we heard from people included:

- reinstating "make work projects" in smaller communities (several presenters);
- creating jobs in traditional communities for both the traditional and modern economy (Ms. Barbara Beck);
- expanding employability programs for people with disabilities, which are currently working well in the North Slave and Fort Simpson regions, to the rest of the NWT (NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities);
- making the GNWT a model employer for persons with disabilities (NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities); and
- providing consultation and support to address the needs of women with disabilities in training and employment programs (Status of Women Council).

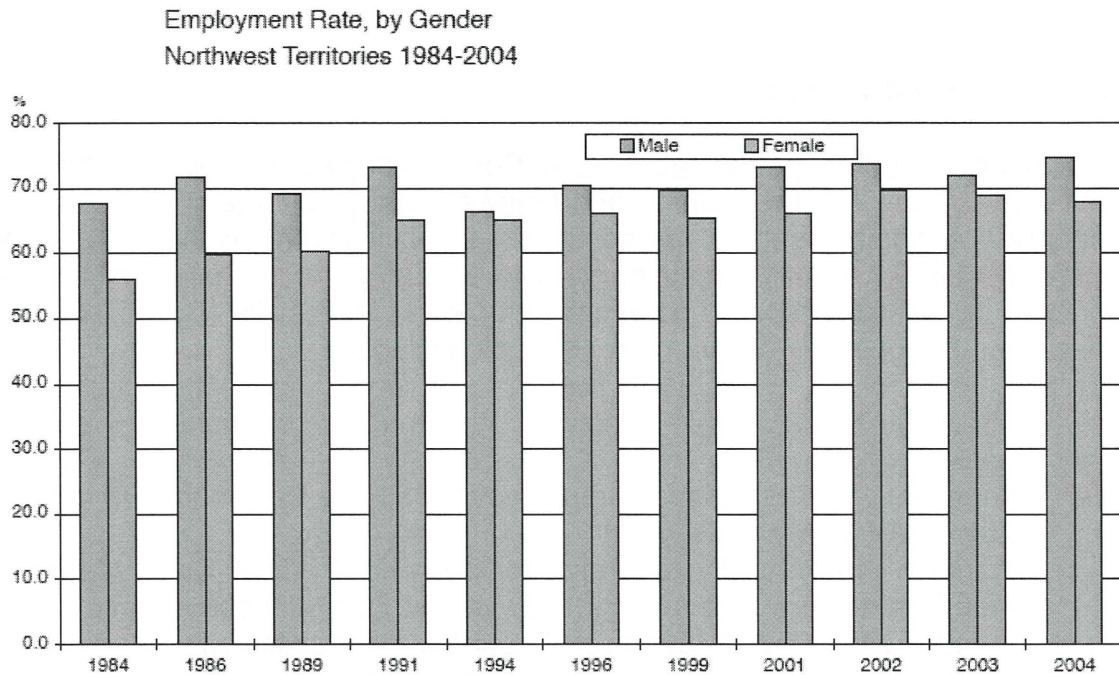
It is critical that we work at removing these barriers. As Ms. Cecily Hewitt from the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities said, "the more people are employed, the less we're struggling with things like income support."

The Committee also heard a number of concerns with the GNWT's own Affirmative Action Policy, which, as Alternatives North reminded us, is long overdue for a review.

The Committee heard positive comments about past and on-going training initiatives such as partnerships between business and the GNWT, adult education, summer student funding and the financial support provided to the Status of Women Council for the Women in Mining, Oil and Gas project.

The summer student hiring program has a number of benefits, especially for smaller communities, and people were concerned that its funding was cut last year. The program provides not only a good source of labour for community organizations such as municipal governments, but, as we heard in Whati and Trout Lake, gives youth in small communities especially something productive to

do with their time. One individual suggested that more on-the-job training might be a way to engage some youth who have dropped out of school.



As the Native Women’s Association reminded us, people bring their other challenges with them to training such as literacy, language, program costs, abuse, addictions, mental illness, FASD and disabilities. Ms. Lena Pederson from the Association explained, “helping people with personal problems while assisting them in their learning is holistic and successful.” For example, she told us, in some cases, people may need help filling out government forms. This adds to the already heavy workload of instructors. A little support for this extra assistance could reduce costs elsewhere in the system.

As several presenters pointed out, training programs also help communities to build their local workforce so they are not continually trying to recruit and retain people from outside to fill critical positions in their local governments and organizations. There is also a demand for more local training opportunities, to help people overcome some of the barriers they would face if they had to relocate for their education. For example, as Fort Good Hope Sub-Chief Robert Kelly told us, people who want to go away for a year to take a program would have to give up their house, and may not be able to find another one when they return.

As with employment, access to training programs is still not equal for all groups. Specific suggestions for improvement were to:

- develop a strategy to increase the number of NWT women in trades and technical occupations, and resources for the delivery of trades orientation and access programs specifically for women, recognizing additional needs such as child care and mutual support/mentoring (Status of Women Council);
- give people with intellectual disabilities who have completed training programs access to internships through the northern graduate employment program (NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities).

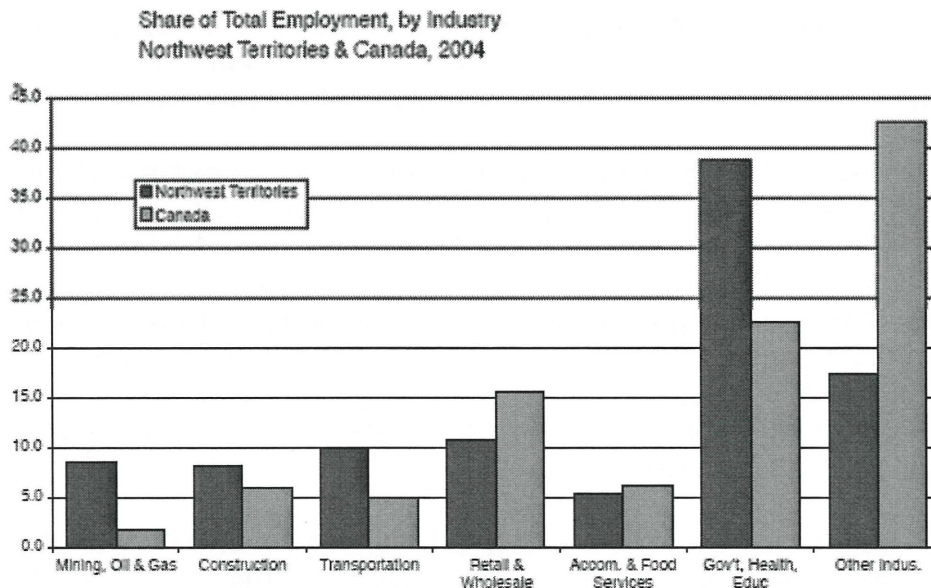
Another issue raised by the Status of Women Council is workplace harassment, which they wrote, "has wide-ranging, severe and costly impacts on the victim, the workplace and the employer." The Council recommended to us that the Government's business plan include the goal of preventing and addressing workplace harassment, including awareness and prevention activities. They also recommended amendments to the *Labour Standards Act* to provide a process for workplace harassment complaints and remedies similar to current Quebec legislation and the inclusion of workplace harassment under workers' compensation and safety legislation.

As mentioned earlier in this report, businesses, communities and other employers are experiencing a number of challenges in recruiting and retaining employees. Even if we succeed in removing barriers and integrating more women, persons with disabilities and Aboriginal people into the workforce, we would still find ourselves with a labour shortage which will only worsen as more resource development projects come online. The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce suggested the GNWT could help to alleviate this situation by doing more to market the NWT as a desirable place to work and live. They also recommended an Aurora College campus in Yellowknife, to help stem the tide of young northerners who go south to technical schools in Alberta and do not come back.

Economic Development

Several presenters provided ideas for how the GNWT could do more to support economic development. Two individuals mentioned the need for a new Economic Development Agreement with Canada so that the NWT does not continue to lose out on federal dollars. Hay River businessman Rocky Simpson spoke about the difficulties businesses have accessing capital, especially working capital, and pointed to the untapped potential of the small business sector in the NWT. As he told us, decisions in the oil and gas industry are made quickly and businesses often lose out on opportunities because they cannot get financing in place fast enough. Mr. Van Der Veen wrote to us about the need for literature on business assistance programs to be more up front about what is expected from businesses and what criteria will be considered in decision-making.

Several presenters cautioned against relying overly on Government or non-renewable resource development and stressed the importance of developing other sectors as well.



The NWT Tourism Association pointed out that, “Tourism offers Northwest Territories residents the ability to stay and to grow their businesses and careers in their home communities and to maintain a lifestyle on the land.” They requested that the GNWT provide more resources for product and infrastructure development and marketing. A specific suggestion for tourism infrastructure from Mayor Clarkson of Inuvik was to complete the Mackenzie Valley Highway to Tuktoyaktuk so that tourists could drive a highway loop connecting to the Dempster.

The Territorial Farmers’ Association called for a vision for agriculture and an updated economic impact study of the sector. They asked for the vision to address the future and potential for agriculture in all regions of the NWT; current and future land requirements, taking into account activities such as greenhouses and livestock operations that are not necessarily dependent on access to fertile land; economic sustainability and value; and the building of knowledge, skill and resource capacity among producers and potential producers at the community level. As mentioned earlier in this report, the benefits of a stronger agricultural industry could include lower food costs as well as local employment. Ms. Coleman also made us aware of a study that found people in the agricultural and renewable resource harvesting economy spend 95% of their income in the community they live beside. As she pointed out, this sector, unlike mining, oil and gas, “isn’t here and gone tomorrow and it doesn’t leave the social impacts that those industries are going to leave on our economy and our people.”

The Association's other specific recommendations to assist the agricultural sector were for Government to identify arable land and plan to ensure it is not used for other activities, establish an Agricultural Land Reserve designation, support projects to demonstrate the economic value and commercial viability of agriculture, amend the *Motor Vehicles Act* to allow farm vehicles to travel on NWT highways without being registered and develop an appropriate property assessment and taxation treatment for agricultural lands. Along with several individuals from other communities, the Association called for assistance for hunters, trappers, farmers and the fisheries to offset rising costs, for example, an off road gas rebate.

Another idea for sustainable development came from Mr. Tyler Katz of Tsiigehtchic, who suggested the GNWT look at taking advantage of the North's intellectual capital and develop a university, which, twenty or thirty years from now, could be producing world class research and innovations.

Some presenters suggested we could do more to take advantage of opportunities in manufacturing. As an example, Mr. Rocky Simpson pointed to the shortage of oilfield trailers in Alberta and British Columbia, which could be manufactured in the NWT and exported to fill this gap.

Most of what we heard about non-renewable resource development centered around concerns that the GNWT is not doing enough to prepare for social and environmental impacts. As Chief Nitsiza said in Whati, "[translation] everytime you resolve the job problem, social problems arise at the same time." Chief Deneron had similar comments in Trout Lake. The Native Women's Association told us the Government is putting too much emphasis on industry and not enough on social issues. In the words of Alternatives North, "there needs to be planning for and investment in health and social services, infrastructure and programs so that all northerners including the poorest and least powerful in the smallest communities can cope with the change that is coming."

Lack of information and discussion was a common concern. Fort Simpson resident Mr. Wes Hardisty suggested the GNWT should undertake a baseline study of youth. Alternatives North asked for a realistic and critical assessment of the state of people for the upcoming pipeline project. The Native Women's Association pointed to the lack of resources even to get together and talk about the impacts. As Mayor Peter Clarkson said, the "GNWT needs to stay engaged to ensure the Mackenzie Gas Project happens in a socially and environmentally responsible way."

Elder John Lewison of Fort Good Hope spoke to us about his negative experiences with Imperial Oil and Norman Wells businesses, who treat trappers the same way as large resource companies. He talked about the need for

industry to develop better working relationships than currently exist with local people. As Fort Good Hope Elder Thomas Manuel said, “when this pipeline comes, all these workers have to work well with our children.”

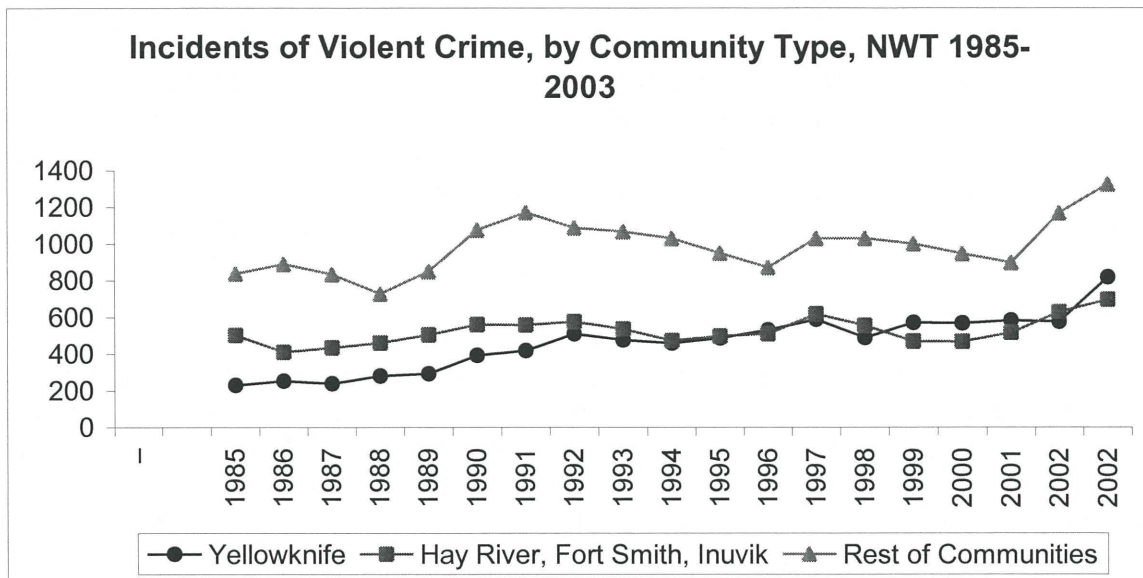
Several presenters in Yellowknife, Whatì and Lutsel K'e suggested that we have not yet even dealt with the impacts from the diamond mines. Many presenters drew a direct link between the mines and the worsening crack cocaine problem in Yellowknife and other communities. As Mr. Bill Enge pointed out, the federal government has promised \$500 million to deal with the pipeline but has provided \$0 for the mines. Ms. Lantz spoke about the impact of the mines on caribou around Lutsel K'e.

Some disagreed with the GNWT's emphasis on non-renewable resource development altogether. Pointing to the acceleration of mining and oil and gas development over the last ten years, and high suicide rates, poverty, scarcity of meaningful work in small communities, loss of culture, language and environment and disruption of families, Ecology North told us “there is a complete disconnect between economic development ... and what northerners need to actually improve their lives.” They recommended instead a shift to environmentally sustainable community-based development that will strengthen local economies, keep people at home and improve social conditions.

Justice

Several people in the smaller communities we visited were surprised and disappointed to see the amount of money being spent locally on corrections, much of which is used transporting prisoners back and forth to the Yellowknife Correctional Centre. As Ms. Frances Wolki commented, “You send them to Yellowknife, what good is that? ... What are they learning? They don't get to build on their self-esteem, self-worth.” People in both Whatì and Trout Lake asked for more support for local Justice Committees. Several communities asked for resources for on-the-land programs for people who have committed less serious crimes, especially for youth at risk and young offenders, including funding to build permanent facilities such as cabins. Many people spoke about the need for offenders to reconnect with traditional values, which is not happening in custody. “Not in jail, ...” said Elder Jim Pierrot of Fort Good Hope, “you'll never make them understand.” His comments were echoed by people in Whatì, Paulatuk, and Lutsel K'e. Others wanted to see people learning skills and working for their communities. Ms. Wolki's suggestions included sending offenders to outpost camps to hunt for elders and other community members, and training them on housing construction and maintenance projects. Ms. Tammy Proctor, a young Fort Good Hope resident, suggested, “these kids that are getting into trouble, breaking into places, instead of putting them to jail and doing nothing, just spending taxpayers' money, put them to work. They want

this recreation centre, okay, they build it for free, then that's their community service."



For offenders who do go to YCC, the John Howard Society suggested there should be more education and training programs. As Ms. Bardak pointed out, some repeat offenders spend years in jail, "dead time" that could have been used to teach them skills to make them more employable. She also indicated that as with addictions, there is a need for long-term supports for people released from custody to help them reintegrate into society.

Presenters from Wrigley, Fort Good Hope and Hay River raised concerns about the numbers of RCMP available to deal with resource development issues, especially drugs. One Hay River resident suggested having roadside searches on the highway between the NWT/Alberta border and Enterprise, and putting more dogs capable of detecting drugs in our airports. A Fort Simpson resident also had a concern that the GNWT's renewable resource officers are not able to effectively enforce our laws and stop poaching because they have so many other duties.

The plan for a new NWT Law Courts building in Yellowknife was a controversial topic. The Canadian Bar Association provided a detailed presentation making a strong case for the need for the new building. However, the Committee also heard from several individuals in smaller communities about their own lack of justice programming and facilities, which they see as a higher priority.

Family Violence and Sexual Assault

As the Committee heard from NGOs such as the Hay River Family Support Centre, which provided us with shocking statistics, family violence continues to devastate the Northwest Territories. In the words of the, NWT Seniors' Society "We will have stronger and healthier communities when incidents of abuse, neglect and violations against the family, which of course includes older adults, ceases. Stronger communities will be able to participate in the wage economy and bring more resources to the North. We will see students who can attend schools, women who can become participants in an equal opportunity workforce, and older adults who can support and mentor the family as a healthy unit."

The Status of Women Council recommended to us that adequate resources be provided for transition houses and to develop safe homes in communities where the need is identified. The Council further recommended that transition houses be funded directly by the Department of Health and Social Services, rather than through the health and social service authorities, as there have been some instances of authorities not passing along all of the funds designated by the Department for a particular transition house. Further, as both the Council and the Hay River Family Support Centre indicated, abused women and children are often moved to transition houses outside of their region, which supports the argument to fund this as a territorial rather than a regional program.

The Council also recommended implementation dollars for programs and actions to address family violence as recommended in the 'Coalition Action Plan on Family Violence 2003-2008'; continuation of public education and training on the new *Protection Against Family Violence Act* in 2006-2007 and a particular focus on the special needs and barriers of women with disabilities within family violence programs.

The Council reminded the Committee that the NWT rate of reported sexual assaults is six times the national average and recommended a major new GNWT initiative, in collaboration with all other stakeholders, to address the high level of sexual assault and sexual abuse in the NWT.

In the words of the Council, "How can we expect to truly benefit from economic development when this cycle of violence continues? Until individuals and families can lead non-violent lives and children can grow up safely, the extra income from increased economic development may only make the problem worse. Preventing and responding to family violence and sexual assault and abuse should be a top priority of the territorial government."

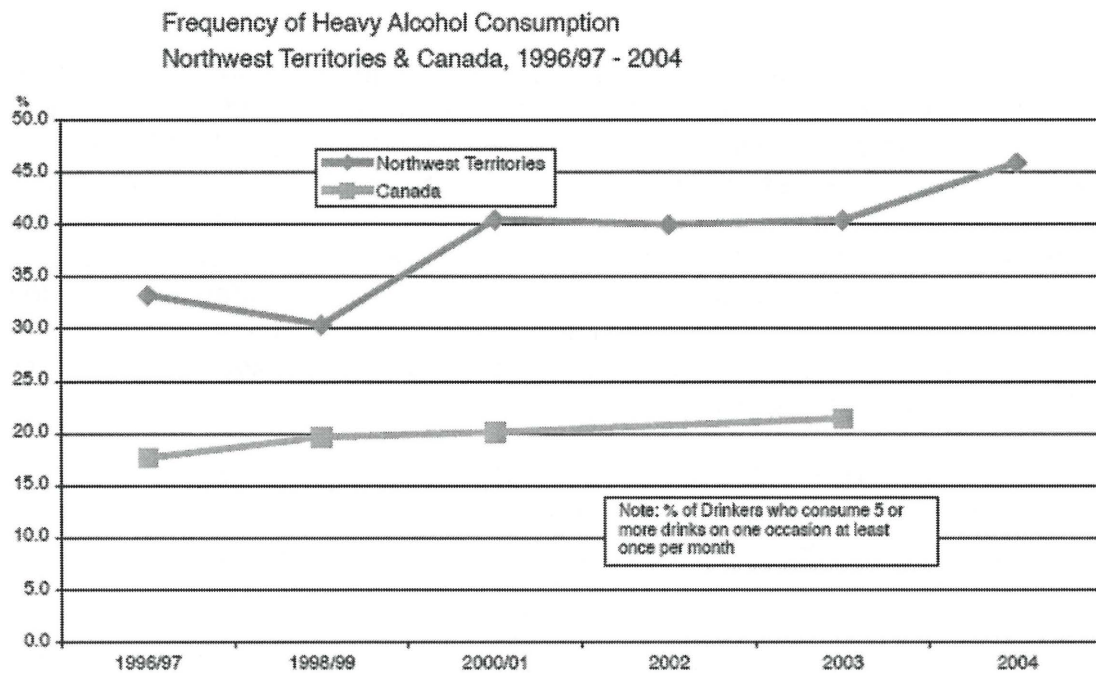
Addictions

The Committee heard about and saw the human suffering caused by addictions in every community where these consultations were held. While alcohol continues to destroy individuals and families throughout the NWT, people are also very worried about the increasing availability of crack cocaine and the potential for crystal meth to gain a foothold in NWT communities. People are especially concerned about youth, and many spoke of the need for prevention, including on-the-land programs for youth at risk. In Whatì, Elder Louis Wedewin, who told us the only problem for elders is their worry for young people, said, “[translation] We don’t want our young people to die in the street, we want them to die peacefully and respectfully.”

In Fort Good Hope, Ms. Edna Tobac noted the GNWT expects net revenues of approximately \$20 million from liquor sales and asked why this money is not specifically allocated to addictions. She also suggested requiring a permit to buy large quantities of liquor in order to discourage bootleggers.

Nearly every community we visited requested that people have access to treatment closer to home and family supports, either through a regional treatment centre, on-the-land programs or both. Several individuals and groups such as the Native Women’s Association spoke of the need for a holistic approach, including supports for family and follow-up. As Dr. Ross Wheeler said, “We don’t need more money, but we need to spend it differently. There are the people here in town who could do a good outpatient program, but we all work for different authorities and different agencies. ... We have trouble enough dealing with the people in Yellowknife, and it’s virtually impossible to deal with people from the communities because you bring them in for any kind of outpatient thing and there is no place for them to stay, so they go back home ... to unstructured aftercare.”

The Committee heard directly from many people working in the addictions field who highlighted the importance of aftercare and told us that the real need is not for new buildings, but for more support resources in the communities in the form of social and youth workers, addictions counselors, opportunities for meaningful work, capacity building and “clean and sober housing”. As Mr. Harder said to us, “We need to develop this continuing care model where we move from just putting people through residential treatment and they come out the other end and we expect them to be all put back together and ready to function in the community, when many of those people have chronic living problems, addiction being one of them. ... What’s needed is something beyond that to help them practice the skills that they are learning, to have a safe environment to come back to, to have a peer support system in place, and those kinds of things can be done with very little money put into it.”



The use of Stanton Territorial Hospital for detox was identified as a service that could be carried out at less cost elsewhere. For example, Ms. Hache told us the Centre for Northern Families is already functioning like a detox because most of their clients have addictions issues. What they need is not a new building, but a boost to their existing resources, for example, funding to hire a nurse. Several organizations expressed frustration that \$600,000 originally slated for detox was withdrawn at the last minute.

Health Services

The Committee heard examples of several successful programs, for which people hope funding will continue or even increase. These include: mental health, health promotion, new public health units, healing camps, elders' day programs, healthy babies, diabetes, healthy food in institutions and public service announcements. A number of presenters stressed the importance of prevention rather than continuing to treat symptoms, and the link to residential school healing as well as recreation, culture and language programs, especially for youth.

Lack of funding for ambulance services came up in both Hay River and Fort Good Hope. In Fort Good Hope, as in many other NWT communities, there are no ambulance services at all which means that people must do their best to transport the injured and sick to the health centre on their own. In Hay River, Deputy Mayor McMeekin explained that the Town provides ambulance services with a corps of volunteers to a large area extending well beyond their municipal

boundaries. The \$25,000 they receive is not sufficient for the maintenance and fuel, and their vehicles need to be replaced.

We also heard concerns about the lack of needed treatment for children with learning disabilities and behavioural problems. The principal of the school in Whatì told us he has had difficulties accessing professional help, such as psychologists, for children who need it. An Inuvik parent described to the Committee in detail the battle she had just to get her son's Central Auditory Processing Disorder diagnosed, which eventually required her and her son to spend six months in Calgary, and her on-going frustration at the unavailability of the treatment he needs, particularly speech therapy. She also spoke about the importance of early diagnosis, and her concern for other children with the same condition, quoting studies that suggest the number could be as high as 20%. As she said to the Committee, "My son got that because I argued for it and I pushed for it. What happens to the rest of the children who are in the same boat?"

Other specific requests for additional health resources were:

- to expand the long-term care facility in Fort Simpson and build a new facility in the Sahtu region;
- healing centres and/or camps;
- reduction of the amount of co-payment for dental services under the non-insured health benefits program for items such as dentures;
- additional resources for medical escorts and interpreters, especially for unilingual elders; and
- flexibility for Hay River women to give birth in High Level, which is closer than Yellowknife, if the services cannot be provided locally.

The Committee also heard concerns about boards and funding arrangements. Ms. Hache expressed frustration with what she referred to as a "shell game" between health and social services authorities and the Department in terms of responsibility. This frustration was echoed by Dr. Wheeler, who told us that while the Department considers the Salvation Army to be a treatment centre, the Yellowknife Health and Social Service Authority refuses to fund it accordingly. One Fort Simpson presenter suggested getting rid of the Boards altogether.

In Inuvik, the Committee was told about concerns with the funding to the regional health board, which serves all eight communities in the Beaufort Delta as well as continuing to provide some services to the five Sahtu communities. Ms. Arlene Hansen explained that their Board serves a large region with a scattered population and always has a shortfall. Although they have asked the GNWT to examine their books to identify potential savings, this has not happened. A specific concern she raised was the formula for doctors in smaller centres. Although they are paid the same as Yellowknife doctors, they have less access

to specialists, are on call more and have fewer services such as cell phones and vehicles.

Programs and Initiatives for Specific Groups

In addition to the comments and suggestions made on specific topics such as Employment and Training and Family Violence, the Committee heard requests for targeted services and initiatives for elders, women, persons with disabilities and newcomers.

The Committee heard more help is needed to assist elders with wills and other legal documents and financial planning. Lack of transportation is also an issue in many communities, which contributes to isolation and depression among elders and creates barriers to developing seniors' groups that could help. The NWT Seniors' Society suggested vans that are used for youth and other activities could also be used to help elders get to their appointments and to events in the community. The Society also recommended the establishment of a Seniors' Secretariat to coordinate programs and funding for elders across Government.

Both the Status of Women Council and the Native Women's Association identified a need for leadership initiatives for women, including young women, to address barriers and encourage their participation. Both also recommended sufficient resources to encourage women's participation on boards and committees, which may include compensation for childcare. Another priority of the Council is to see the GNWT implementation of gender analysis to review current policies and programs, and incorporate gender analysis as an integral part of the development of all new policies and programs.

The Committee heard from groups and individuals speaking on behalf of persons with disabilities in several communities, and a number of specific concerns are included in other sections of this report. Sadly, as Ms. Rita Cazon told us in Fort Simpson, many people with disabilities feel like third-class citizens who are shoved aside. This is a loss to all of us. As Ms. Hewitt said, "A number of people with disabilities have talents, have skills, have knowledge. They want to be contributing members of our society here, and our society would be enriched if they did have the opportunity to contribute." Council representatives did express support for the recently developed Disability Framework and their hope that it will be adequately resourced and implemented.

The Status of Women Council also drew our attention to the barriers faced by newcomers to Canada, including access to employment, housing and other services, recognition of credentials, language, racism and climate and cultural changes. While the federal government has much of the responsibility for this area, as the Council acknowledged, there are many GNWT programs and policies that are significant for newcomers. The Council recommended a

dedicated GNWT position or function for matters related to immigration and newcomers, and a review to determine the ways in which the increasing diversity of the NWT and the arrival of more newcomers will impact on GNWT programs which may lead to new policies and initiatives.

Municipal

The Committee heard a great deal about challenges faced by community governments. In small communities we were told about the difficulties of maintaining even basic services. In Trout Lake, we heard the current funding is not enough for isolated communities as it does not take into account costs such as having to fly in mechanics to repair equipment and equipment insurance. The water/sewer funding has stayed the same even though the population has grown and the cost of fuel is rising. In Paulatuk, we heard about the challenge of dealing with 10 to 15-foot high snowdrifts in order to be able to keep the community serviceable. Mayor Michaud of Fort Simpson spoke at length about his municipality's struggles with the funding formula as the NWT's only village.

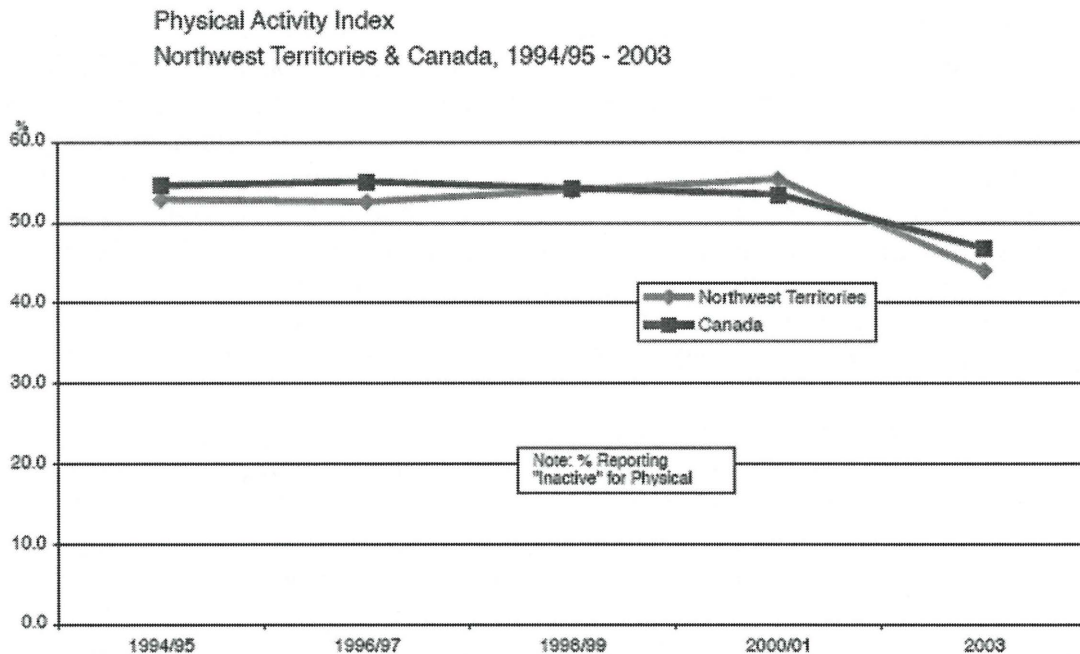
Municipal government representatives in both Fort Simpson and Hay River expressed support for recent funding provided to them to prepare for the pipeline, but also voiced concern that it is not enough. As Deputy Mayor McMeekin of Hay River said, "Unless we get some sort of assistance in the near future, Hay River could be headed from a family orientated community with manageable growth and economic development to a community that could find itself in the exact opposite position." The Town has therefore requested funding for a three-year term pipeline coordinator position. Mayor Peter Clarkson of Inuvik suggested municipal governments should get a share of property taxes on facilities just outside of their boundaries to help cover off the additional demand on municipal services and infrastructure arising from those operations.

We heard concern from some community governments about the Government's plans for allocating the recently announced Northern Strategy dollars. Mayor Michaud stated that the requirement for the village, the band and the Métis to all work together was creating confusion and delay. Mayor Clarkson asked for a fairer, consistent process for allocating federal funding that does not penalize larger communities. Fort Good Hope band councilor Paul T'Seleie suggested that funding should have been distributed where it was needed most.

A priority for every community was investment in recreation, especially for youth. As Lutsel K'e resident Ms. Mary Rose Casaway said, "I strongly believe that if your kids are in a structured recreation program, they stay out of trouble, they stay away from drugs and alcohol." Several people listed the benefits of recreation, including better overall individual and community wellness, less crime among youth especially, and recruitment and retention of staff. Mayor Clarkson suggested funding formulas should require residents of non-tax-based

communities to also contribute to their local recreation facilities for fairness to residents of tax-based communities, and also to promote pride of ownership and respect for facilities.

Dust control and lot development were also common municipal priorities.



Infrastructure

For some years, the GNWT's capital budget has been far short of actual needs, and the Committee was therefore not surprised to hear comments about the poor condition of GNWT buildings in some communities. However, the Committee was dismayed to learn that many buildings are still not accessible for persons with disabilities. As Ms. Cazon told us in Fort Simpson, not one government building there is wheelchair accessible. In Trout Lake, residents expressed concern that the steps to the Health Centre are dangerous and too steep for the elders.

The Committee heard several requests for the GNWT to work more closely with communities on capital projects. New buildings such as schools have a significant impact on communities, and people want to be involved from the design stage to ensure new buildings meet their needs. Even smaller projects have an impact on communities. For example, in Lutsel K'e, Ms. Florence Catholique commented that she was surprised to see the local school being painted when she thought there were more important priorities for that building. In Trout Lake, band manager Ms. Ruby Jumbo commented that \$50,000 recently

spent on renovating showers at the health centre could have been used to fix the steep steps or rotting logs instead.

Alternatives North also suggested the development of information and communication infrastructure should be more of a priority for Government.

General GNWT Practices

A common complaint among communities was that the population estimates the GNWT is currently using are far too low. In Fort Good Hope, we heard the number might be off by over 250 people, nearly 50%! This is a serious concern as these numbers are used to distribute funding.

Another concern that was raised more than once was the need for better coordination and communication among GNWT regional staff from different Departments. For example, in Trout Lake, we heard sometimes two or three GNWT charters or vehicles come into the community in a single day.

A further suggestion made by Chief Dennis Deneron and other Trout Lake residents was that the GNWT could save money by hiring local people to do work instead of paying for charters and accommodation to bring staff in from Fort Simpson. Chief Deneron pointed to several projects around the community, including the hall where we were meeting, as proof of the skills available locally.

Other comments we heard were:

- Especially for core services, the GNWT should exercise caution with public private partnerships, due to lack of hard evidence they will save taxpayers money and the risk of compromising quality and accessibility (Alternatives North)
- The GNWT should fund multi-year projects in a way that allows the local delivery agency to carry them out in a way that makes economic sense, for example, by borrowing funds to fast-track projects and reduce administration and mobilization/demobilization costs. (Mr. Jack Rowe, Hay River)
- The GNWT should support community businesses by using hotels and buying food locally (Mr. Mike Canadian, Wrigley)

Revenue Raising Ideas

The Committee is aware that the requests heard in our pre-budget consultations collectively represent a significant increase in spending, which we cannot afford within our current resources. Some people, such as Ms. Lorraine Menicoche-Moses in Fort Simpson, did think we should be able to raise more revenue from resource development. One group, Alternatives North, came forward with

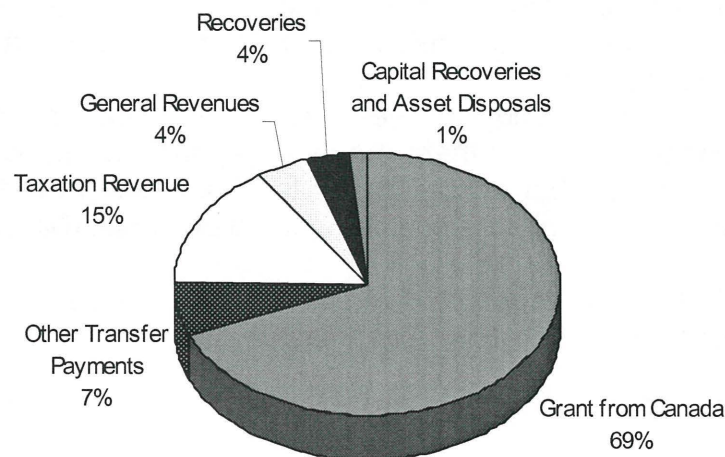
several specific ideas that could be implemented even in advance of devolution. In their words, “Northerners, to put it bluntly, are giving our resources away to corporations, many of which earn more profit in a year than the entire budget of our government. This we do against the backdrop of ever worsening social problems and statistical evidence that places us at the top for negative social indicators.”

For the longer term, Alternatives North recommended the establishment of a heritage fund to mitigate the boom and bust cycle, help with the transition to renewable energy sources and stabilize public revenues and spending. They also argued current royalty regimes are too low and recommended the GNWT be prepared to raise royalties once it gains control of them.

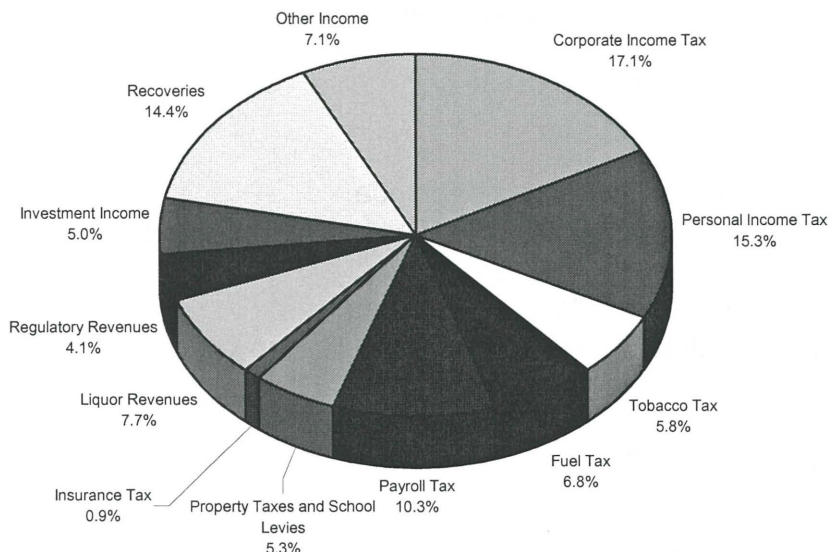
Their shorter-term suggestions, all of which have precedents in other jurisdictions, are:

- Government equity in resource development operations such as mines;
- High profit surtaxes;
- Hydrocarbon production taxes;
- Capital investment taxes, similar to those in most other Canadian jurisdictions;
- Appropriate property tax mill rates for resource development; and
- Fee for service regimes for programs undertaken for the benefit of or as a result of a specific industry-driven need.

Total GNWT Revenues by Source 2005-2006



GNWT Own-Source Revenues 2005-2006



CONCLUSION

In concluding our report, we would like to pass on some words of encouragement we heard from presenters.

As Mr. Alphonse Nitsiza of Whatì said, “we cannot look at the negative all the time. There’s a lot of achievements... There’s a lot of good people who work so hard and are not being recognized.”

His comment was echoed by Ms. Lydia Bardak, who said, “we’re only 42,000 people. This is manageable, this is doable. ... And while some of the people come with multiple and complex issues, there’s a lot of people who are fine, they’re healthy, they’re well. ... We can do this.”

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

APPENDIX 1

Accountability and Oversight Committee Pre-Budget Consultations List of Presenters

Thursday, August 25, 2005

Yellowknife

- Floyd Roland, Minister of Finance
- Alvin Armstrong, Jim Wylie, Terry Villeneuve and Barb Hood, NWT Seniors' Society
- Bill Enge, North Slave Métis Alliance
- Steve Meister, Lana Roeland and Marino Casebeer, Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

Friday, August 26, 2005

Yellowknife

- Cate Sills, Lisa Campbell and Helen Balanoff, NWT Literacy Council
- Ben McDonald and Suzette Montreuil, Alternatives North
- Bob Bromley and Doug Ritchie, Ecology North
- Byrne Richards, Lydia Bardak, Dave Harder and Dr. Ross Wheeler, Addictions/Housing Issues
- Cecily Hewitt, NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities
- Arlene Hache, Centre for Northern Families
- Robin Witherspoon, David Grindley, Danette Jaeb and Linda Unger, Northwest Territories Tourism
- Paul Smith, Canadian Bar Association – NWT Branch
- Lyda Fuller, YWCA of Yellowknife
- Steve Peterson, Federation of Labour
- Lena Pederson and Audrey Zoe, Native Women's Association
- Lydia Bardak, John Howard Society

Monday, August 29, 2005

Inuvik

- Sharon Spinks, Resident
- Gerri Sharpe-Staples, Resident
- Suzanne Robinson, Inuvik Literacy Committee/NWT Literacy Council
- Peter Clarkson, Mayor
- Arlene Hansen, Resident
- Alana Mero, Family Counselling Services
- Sharon Katz, Tsiigehtchic Resident
- Karen English, Tsiigehtchic Resident
- Ty Katz, Tsiigehtchic Resident

Fort Simpson

- Ray Michaud, Mayor
- Rita Cazon, Council for the Disabled, Deh-Cho Region
- Lorraine Moses, Friendship Centre
- Wes Hardisty, Arctic Indigenous Youth Alliance
- Bernice Swanson, Resident
- David Moses, Chief, Pehdezeh Ki
- Mike Canadian, Economic Development Officer, Wrigley
- Walter Blondin, Local Businessman

Tuesday, August 30, 2005

Paulatuk

- Ray Ruben, Mayor
- Albert Ruben, Councillor
- Debbie Gordon-Ruben, Councillor
- Millie Thrasher, Resident
- Mary Ruben, Resident
- Tom Caines, Senior Administrative Officer
- Francis Wolki, Resident
- Andy Thrasher, Resident
- Marlene Wolki, Resident
- Phoebe Ruben, Income Support Worker

Trout Lake

- Dennis Deneron, Chief, Sambaa K'e Dene Band
- Joe Punch, Elder, Former Chief
- Victor Jumbo, Band Councillor
- Dolphus Jumbo, Band Councillor
- Ruby Jumbo, Band Manager
- Norman Jumbo, Community Support Worker
- Edward Jumbo, Elder/Formal Chief
- Maggie Jumbo, Resident

Wednesday, August 31, 2005

Fort Good Hope

- Arthur Tobac, Yamoga Lands Corporation/Resident
- Fred Rabisca, Senior Administrative Officer
- Addy Tobac, Resident
- Jonas Kakfwi, Elder
- Paul Tseleie, Band Councillor
- Junior McNeely, Resident
- Edwin Erutse, Sahtu Secretariat

- Alfred Masuzumi, President, Elder's Council
- Robert Kelly, A/Sub-Chief, Councillor
- John Louison, Elder
- Rosie Grandjambe, Elder
- Thomas Manuel Sr., Elder
- Harold Cook, Councillor
- Tammy Proctor, Resident
- Jim Pierrot, Elder
- Edna Tobac, Resident
- Kenny Shae, Resident

Lutsel K'e

- Pierre Marlowe, Elder
- Florence Catholique, Resident
- Angie Lantz, Chair, District Education Authority
- JP Rabesca, Elder
- Albert Boucher, A/Chief
- James Marlowe, Resident
- Chris Clark, Program Manager, Childcare Centre
- George Marlowe, Elder
- Susan Catling, A/Band Manager
- Bernadette Lockhart, Business Person/Band Councillor
- Mary Rose Casaway, Resident
- Arthur Rabesca, Resident

Thursday, September 1, 2005

Hay River

- Hayden Schofield and Bernie Black, Hay River Ministerial Association
- Rocky Simpson, Local Businessman
- Crystal Ball and Annette Rideout, Family Support Centre
- Dean McMeekin, Deputy Mayor
- Frederick Beaulieu, Métis Local, Secretary Treasurer
- Lillian Crook, Council for Persons with Disabilities
- Kevin Wallington, Community Youth Centre
- Anne Peters, Resident
- Alan Browning, Soaring Eagle Friendship Centre
- Ken Latour, Literacy Coordinator/Small Business Operator
- Evellyn Coleman, Territorial Farmers Association
- Alvin Armstrong, Hay River Seniors' Society

Friday, September 2, 2005

Whati

- Charlie James Nitsiza, Chief
- Louis Wedawin, Elder
- Jimmy Rabesca, Elder
- Alex Nitsiza, Elder
- Mary-Ann Jeremick'ca, Resident
- Bill Hurley, School Principal
- Alphonse Nitsiza, Housing Coordinator, Tlichu Government
- Peter Beaverho, Elder
- Donna Moore, Economic Development Officer, Tlichu Government
- Freddy Simpson, Resident

APPENDIX 2

Accountability and Oversight Committee Pre-Budget Consultations Written Submissions

- Barbara Beck, Yellowknife
- Jan Van Der Veen, Fort Simpson
- Jack Rowe, Hay River
- Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories
- Alternatives North
- Territorial Farmers Association
- Northwest Territories Teachers' Association