

MID-TERM REVIEW COMMITTEE

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2017

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, October 5, 2017****MEMBERS PRESENT**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Hon. Alfred Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. Wally Schumann, Hon. Louis Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

The committee met at 9:00 a.m.

Call to Order

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): I will call to order the Interim Mid-Term Review of the 18th Legislative Assembly, and I would like to ask Member Beaulieu to lead us into a prayer.

Prayer

MR. BEAULIEU: [Translation] Marsi. I'd like to say thank you while we're here together. Two years now we've been working together, since we've been elected. So that's why we're here: to do a good job today, and we're here to talk about that today. So that's why I want to ask for prayers. Thank you. [Translation ends.]

---Prayer

Review and Adoption of Agenda

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Member Beaulieu. Members, the agenda before you today is one that we have all agreed in Caucus. Do Members agree with the agenda that is before us today?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Agreed. Masi.

Chair's Opening Remarks

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Just some of the opening remarks from the chair. As chair of the Mid-Term Review Committee of the 18th Legislative Assembly, I would like to take some opening comments before we proceed today.

All Members have been provided with the guidelines and also procedures for the Mid-Term Review Committee. We have reviewed these guidelines and procedures in Caucus and have agreed to follow all of them throughout our proceedings today. I will review these guidelines and procedures as a reminder to all Members and to explain our process to those joining us here today; as well, for those who are following our proceedings televised or radio or Facebook Live. In a few minutes we will begin statements by Premier Robert R. McLeod. The Premier will have up to 10 minutes to make a statement on his leadership and performance, as well as leadership and performance of Cabinet as a whole. Following the Premier's statement, each Minister may

make a statement of up to five minutes on his or her leadership and performance. The order for Ministers will be alphabetical by surname as follows: Minister Glen Abernethy; Minister Caroline Cochrane; Minister Robert C. McLeod; Minister Alfred Moses; Minister Wally Schumann; and Minister Louis Sebert. Following the statements by all Ministers, we will commence Members' questions to Ministers. Each Member will be permitted to ask up to two questions to each Minister. Questions must not be longer than two minutes; responses from Ministers also must not be longer than two minutes. No extension of time limits will be permitted. Members are not required to ask their full allotment of questions.

As chair, I will recognize Members wishing to ask questions as they catch my attention. I will not recognize the Members wishing to ask second questions or subsequent questions until all Members have had the opportunity to ask their first questions. Supplementary questions will not be permitted. However, second questions on a same topic are acceptable. The chair and the clerks at the table will maintain a tally of how many questions each Member has asked, and to whom. Once recognized, Members may ask a single question to one or more Ministers. If a Member asks a question to multiple Ministers, it will be counted as a question to each Minister.

When there are no further questions to Ministers, or when Members have each asked two questions to each Minister, we will proceed to questions to the Premier. No questions to the Premier will be permitted until questions to the Ministers have concluded. Each Member will be permitted to ask up to two questions to the Premier. Questions must not be longer than two minutes. Responses from the Premier must not be longer than two minutes as well.

Once questions to the Premier have concluded, Members will be called upon to cast their secret ballot in an open forum. The ballot will inquire as to whether each Member does or does not have confidence in the performance and leadership of Cabinet as a whole, the Premier, and each Minister individually. A ballot box will be placed in front of the clerk's table and two voting booths will be placed on either side of the clerk's table immediately prior to balloting. Each Member will receive one ballot from the clerk's table. Members must be present to vote and Members will not be permitted to cast their ballots by proxy. As chair, I will cast my ballot once all Members have voted. Once balloting has concluded, the ballot box will be taken to the clerk's office, where the ballots will be counted by the clerks at the table. Incomplete ballots will be rejected. Specific vote totals will not be announced. The bells will be rung for five minutes to call Members back to the Chamber once the results are determined.

As chair, I will announce the aggregated results on Cabinet as a whole, followed by the Premier, and then each Minister in alphabetical order. In the event of equality of votes, I will report an expression of confidence. The order of results will be: Cabinet as a whole, Premier Robert R. McLeod, Minister Glen Abernethy, Minister Caroline Cochrane, Minister Robert C. McLeod, Minister Alfred Moses, Minister Wally Schumann, and Minister Lou Sebert.

As Members, we owe a great duty to our constituents in the Northwest Territories. However, in a forum such as a Mid-Term Review Committee, we must consider the entire territory to the best of our ability. I also wish to remind Members that we have publicly committed to conduct ourselves in a dignified and respectful manner throughout this process. The guidelines and the procedures of the Territorial Leadership Committee will be followed where applicable and all Members are expected to conduct themselves accordingly.

Members, we will now continue with item 4, statement by Premier Robert R. McLeod. I would like to call upon Premier Robert R. McLeod to deliver a statement on his leadership and performance and the collective leadership and performance of the Cabinet. I remind the Premier that he has up to ten minutes to deliver his statement. Premier McLeod, you may proceed.

Premier's Statement

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as Members of the Legislative Assembly and as Cabinet Ministers, it is important that we always remember that our job is to serve the people of the Northwest Territories. I was born and raised in the Northwest Territories, and I am proud to be from Fort Providence in the Deh Cho. I spent more than 30 years in public service working to build a strong and self-reliant territory for our people. I am now in my third term representing the people of Yellowknife South and have been chosen by my colleagues to serve on Cabinet in all three terms, including the honour of being selected Premier twice, the first person in the history of our territory to return as Premier. My small community roots and travels throughout the territory have helped me learn what the people care about the most. They want jobs and a strong economy, Mr. Chair. They want safe communities and a good future for their children and grandchildren. They want to be healthy and educated, and they look to us here in the Assembly to support them in those aspirations. These are things that I have been working steadily towards for my entire career, and they continue to be priorities for me today. I am proud of the work I have been a part of as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, as a Cabinet Minister and Premier, and what we have achieved by working together. You will hear in more detail from Ministers today about the good work that they have done to fulfil our mandate, but I wanted to highlight a few areas that are particularly important to me.

Addressing the needs of our people and communities is a priority for me, and I am pleased with the work we have done on this. Some of our achievements including holding health fairs in 18 communities, establishing regional wellness councils, and holding regional and territorial early childhood development workshops. We have completed construction of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link, connecting the people of the Mackenzie Valley to new services and business opportunities and positioning our territory to be a leader in the knowledge economy. We have begun to address homelessness with Housing First pilot projects in Behchoko, Fort Simpson, Aklavik, and Yellowknife. We have partnered with the K'atloodèche First Nation and K'asho Got'ine to provide housing for their residents and establish local housing organizations in Gameti, Whati, and Fort Liard. We are addressing the needs of elders with new seniors' supported independent living units in Aklavik, Fort Liard, Fort McPherson, Fort Good Hope, and Whati, and we are responding to the need for long-term care beds with plans for facilities in Norman Wells, Hay River, and Yellowknife in the next three years, as well as additional facilities in Inuvik and Fort Simpson. We are investing in new health facilities in our communities, including the \$300-million Stanton renewal project, which is on schedule to be completed during this government. We are successfully bringing government closer to the people that it serves through our single window service centres and through Cabinet open houses in every region.

We are also doing significant work to address the issue of climate change and the high cost of energy in the Northwest Territories. In addition to completing renewable energy projects in six communities, we have also been working to outline our government's long-term approach to energy and plans for addressing climate change. Early next year, we expect to table a new energy strategy and a climate change strategic framework, both informed by extensive public engagement. We continue to invest in jobs and the economy, Mr. Chair, particularly through infrastructure investments to support further economic development and diversification. This includes the \$20-million Canyon Creek Road in the Sahtu, the Tlicho all-season road, and work to increase access to the Slave Geological Province, and completing the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Next month, Members will have the opportunity to be part of the opening of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway. The Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway will bring new opportunities to the people of Tuktoyaktuk and complete a decades-old vision of connecting Canada by road from sea to sea to sea. We recognize that diversification is critical to the sustainable economic future of our territory and continue to work to expand economic opportunities in all regions and

communities. Just one example: our efforts, including trade missions to China, have significantly grown Aurora tourism and helped make tourism one of the fastest growing renewable sectors of the economy. Finally, Mr. Chair, creating certainty around Aboriginal rights and land ownership in the territory would be a major accomplishment for us, and we continue to make progress in all regions. Most significantly, our government was able to make innovative new offers to the Akaitcho and Northwest Territories Metis Nation earlier this year, and I am hopeful that deals are very close. We also continue to pursue negotiations with the Dehcho First Nations, and I remain hopeful that we can find a path forward there.

Mr. Chair, when Members voted unanimously to adopt the first ever mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories in March 2016, we all made approximately 200 commitments to the people of the Northwest Territories that we said we would complete during our four-year term. Nearly halfway through, we have made progress in all areas of our mandate. We have completed 53 commitments, and another 145 are in progress. Only two of our 200 commitments are in the planning stages. I am pleased with that progress, Mr. Chair, and confident that our record speaks for itself. I am also pleased with the work that my Cabinet colleagues have done during the first half of our term. We have a good team that combines the unique strengths of each individual to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. I look forward to working with them under whatever circumstances Members decide on today.

I do recognize, though, that we cannot rest on our achievements or lose our focus. I also know that there is always an opportunity to do better. Today's mid-term performance and mandate progress review is an important opportunity to check our progress and recalibrate our efforts for the remaining two years of our term. Mr. Chair, we all share responsibility for the achievements and accomplishments of this government. Every Member has a role to play and can take credit for what we have done. I look forward to hearing from Members today about how they think we have been doing and which areas need a renewed focus. On behalf of Cabinet and myself, I thank Members for their support and contributions to date, and should Members express confidence in my leadership and Cabinet's performance, we will continue to work with you to create the strong, healthy, and prosperous Northwest Territories our residents expect and deserve. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Premier McLeod. We will now proceed to statements by Ministers. I remind the Ministers that they will have up to five minutes to deliver their statements on his or her leadership and performance. We will begin with Minister Glen Abernethy. Minister Abernethy, you may proceed with your statement.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER ABERNETHY'S STATEMENT

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to stand up today and reflect on what we have achieved together over the past two years. The government's mandate provided an ambitious road map, but I believe that we have made substantial progress in a number of areas that are priorities not only for this Assembly, but for residents of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Chair, I have travelled throughout the Northwest Territories, I have met with community leaders and stakeholders, I have listened to the concerns of representatives in this House, and it is clear that concerns about the impacts of mental health and addictions on our community is a priority for all. Last fall, the Department of Health and Social Services completed a Mental Health and Addictions Strategic Framework that sets the stage for enhancing the range of programs and services that are available to our residents. Last week, I tabled the first of three action plans to be completed under this framework. The Child

and Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan outlines concrete achievable actions that will take over the next five years in partnership with government departments as well as external stakeholders. These actions will make a real difference in the lives of youth across the Northwest Territories.

Another priority that in the government's mandate speaks to taking action so that seniors can age in their communities. Mr. Chair, we have delivered on this priority. We completed a major long-term care review that identified key areas for action. Our Continuing Care Services Action Plan outlines how we will enhance and improve services available for elders, including expanding homecare services and vibrant day programs. New investments in homecare have allowed us to expand services in Yellowknife, Inuvik, Hay River, and, for the first time, offer homecare services in five Dehcho communities, but we also need to take care of elders who are no longer able to live independently. The government has rolled out a detailed plan to address the projected shortfall of 250 long-term care beds over the next ten years, and their funding is included in the capital plan to make good on that commitment. In the next three years, we will see an 18-long-term-care-bed facility open in Norman Wells, a 48-bed facility constructed in Hay River, a 72-bed facility within the old Stanton Hospital in Yellowknife, and plans underway for facilities in Inuvik, as well as Fort Simpson.

Mr. Chair, just over one year ago, we achieved a major milestone with the establishment of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. Integrating six existing authorities has allowed us to implement improvements to care and services delivered to people across the entire Northwest Territories. We have already made significant progress in establishing consistent standards of care across the Northwest Territories. We have improved our ability to deploy staff in situations of physician shortages, as well as community crisis response. We have seen how implementation of territorial electronic medical records is helping to ensure that patients no longer fall through the cracks and are no longer required to keep telling their stories over again as they move between regions. With the establishment of the new regional wellness councils and the Health and Social Services Leadership Council, regions now have a voice at the territorial level and can bring their issues and concerns forward in ways that they could not in the old system.

Mr. Chair, we have made great strides in addressing the challenges of aging infrastructure. Hay River and surrounding communities are now benefiting from a state-of-the-art regional health centre, the new health centre in Fort Providence opened last year, and we are poised to move into the new health centre in Fort Resolution. The new Stanton Territorial Hospital project is on time and on budget and will serve residents from across the Northwest Territories and the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I am incredibly proud of the work that has been done in the health and social services system to respond to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to address disparities of health outcomes for Indigenous people. Our commitment to building a culturally respectful health and social services system is being realized through the rollout of cultural safety training for frontline workers. We are in the early stages of piloting elders-in-residence programs at Stanton Territorial Hospital and in the Sahtu and the Dehcho regions. We are working with the Deline Got'ine government to implement a traditional healing project.

Mr. Chair, none of this work is accomplished by working in isolation. As a Minister, I have invested a tremendous amount of time and effort in reaching out to communities and stakeholders. I value the knowledge and wisdom of the people in our communities. I value the partnerships we have created with our government departments, our Indigenous governments, and with non-government organizations. I value the perspectives of my colleagues in this house,

and I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your contributions to improving health and social services for all residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Minister Abernethy. We will now hear from Minister Caroline Cochrane. Minister Cochrane, you may proceed with your statement.

MINISTER COCHRANE'S STATEMENT

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, almost two years ago, I stood in front of my colleagues and explained why I felt that I would be an appropriate choice to become one of seven Ministers for the 18th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. I was honoured and humbled with the vote of confidence shown to me at the beginning of this Legislative Assembly, and not once have I forgotten the responsibility I carry for the residents of the Northwest Territories. We've all worked hard towards achieving the mandate commitments, and I appreciate the endeavours of my colleagues from both sides of this House, as well as the amazing dedication of my personal staff, department heads, employees on the ground, and those behind the scenes. In regards to gender equity, we have made some progress. As of January 2017, gender equity on NWT public boards and agencies reached 50 per cent. We also completed two women in leadership workshops and are reviewing the feedback to develop a made-in-the-North curriculum that will equip women for a broad range of leadership roles. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has enhanced its support to community and Indigenous governments through online courses and training designed specifically for Indigenous governments. As well, we have modified the accountability framework tool and the asset management framework to better assist in capital planning and identifying training needs. We continue to provide a host of supports to encourage wellness through physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and community leadership. Evaluations have been completed on some of the youth programs to ensure that we are providing services that meet their needs.

Mr. Chair, I have held high expectations of all of my team, and I am exceptionally proud of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. The corporation has expanded community property management services to provide better service and increase jobs in communities. We are addressing homelessness through support of the City of Yellowknife's Housing First project, building semi-independent units, and constructing shelters in three other communities. We have also constructed more seniors' units, and provided information seminars to assist seniors to age in place. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has made a significant shift in direction. Over the last two years, I have watched the transformation of programs, policies, and even employees as we move beyond simply providing housing supports to a place of supporting people to obtain, maintain, and retain their homes. Mr. Chair, all the work that we have done has been in a spirit of transparency, accountability, and collaboration. MLAs provided direction through the mandate, and we have worked with community and Aboriginal governments, stakeholders, and residents to help shape our approaches and meet the needs of residents. Almost 1500 replies to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's survey have provided the background for policy and program enhancements. We have built solid relationships with provincial and territorial counterparts, and federal Ministers. These partnerships have resulted in funding specifically dedicated to addressing the needs of the Northwest Territories, and I am confident that we will see even more long-term federal investment. Mr. Chair, I have taken the mandate of this Legislative Assembly seriously, and my team has worked hard to live up to the expectations placed on us. Our successes are the result of a commitment to work together with partners, stakeholders, and residents. I look forward to continuing to work with these amazing people as we all strive to provide the best services for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Minister Cochrane. We will now hear from Minister Robert C. McLeod. Minister McLeod, you may proceed with your statement.

MINISTER MCLEOD'S STATEMENT

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, when I put my name forward for consideration as Minister at the start of the 18th Legislative Assembly, I outlined the key qualities that I possess and would carry with me during my term as Minister. I am confident that I have approached my work as Minister as I said I would.

I treat people with respect and maintain an open and transparent relationship with MLAs, Ministers, committees, Aboriginal governments, federal Minister, and non-government organizations. I am straightforward and honest. I believe in fairness and the equitable application of government policies and programs and remain committed to ensuring identified policy gaps are addressed in a timely manner. I believe in the committee process. It adds value to the work we do, and ensures input from all MLAs are considered. My commitment remains true and I will continue working with these principles. Mr. Chair, I would like to proceed with highlighting some of the key deliverables from my respective portfolios.

As Minister of Finance, my main responsibility is to ensure the financial resources of this government are well-managed. When we began the 18th Legislative Assembly, we had some significant financial challenges. We had to make difficult choices, including implementing reductions and revenue initiatives, and managing our growing expenditure needs. These actions were necessary first steps to better align our expenditures with revenues, and together we have begun to correct our course. Mr. Chair, one of the major initiatives for the Department of Finance has been the Mackenzie Valley fibre link. The completion of this project is evidence of the 18th Legislative Assembly's commitment to strategic investment, diversification, and modernization towards a high-tech future. The fibre link brings affordable, high-speed, telecommunications to communities along the Mackenzie Valley and enables our government to offer improved service delivery. The completion of the fibre link not only builds on the GNWT's mandate commitment to help modernize the economy and enable growth in all sectors, but also positions Inuvik to be one of the leading sites for tracking and receiving real-time data from polar-orbiting satellites which should lead to further growth of the remote-sensing and commercial satellite industry.

Mr. Chair, early in the 18th Legislative Assembly, we fulfilled the commitment to increase the Northern Residents Deductions. I was pleased the federal government agreed to this increase and will help offset the high cost of living in the NWT, and we will continue to raise the issue at every opportunity. Challenges for the Department of Finance include the renewal of our Territorial Formula Financing arrangements, implementation of carbon pricing, and taxation and issues associated with the legalization of cannabis. I am confident that in my role as Minister of Finance that I have made strides in advancing our issues at the federal level and will continue to do so.

Mr. Chair, as you know, the 2016-2020 Water Stewardship Strategy Action Plan has been finalized, and I have tabled the first progress report. As per the action plan, the department of Environment and Natural Resources has released mixing zone guidelines in cooperation with the land and water boards. The department has also finalized, or is working towards finalizing, transboundary agreements with Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, Saskatchewan, and Nunavut. As part of the overall strategy, the department also continues work to update and modernize the Waters Act. In addition to this piece of legislation, the department is updating the Environmental Protection Act, the Environmental Rights Act, the Forest Management Act, and proposing new legislation for protected areas. This demonstrates GNWT leadership on land and water resource

management since devolution. Mr. Chair, ENR has also been developing an NWT climate change strategic framework. Together with Infrastructure, we have held six regional engagement workshops on climate change and energy, and have made those reports available to the public. That input combined with the recommendations of the OAG audit will inform the final framework document scheduled for tabling in February 2018. As Minister, I remain committed to an open, transparent, fair, and straightforward relationship with this House. I encourage and welcome your input and assistance in making the hard decisions that face all of us in advancing the mandate priorities of this Assembly for the people of the Northwest Territories.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Minister McLeod. We will now hear from Minister Alfred Moses. Minister Moses, please proceed with your statement.

MINISTER MOSES' STATEMENT

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am pleased to report on our achievements in Education, Culture and Employment during the first half of the 18th Legislative Assembly. Mr. Chair, as Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and as Minister responsible for Youth, I am especially proud of the work we accomplished as a result of the Right from the Start Early Childhood Development Framework.

We have increased operating subsidy rates to create more affordable childcare spaces, we eased the burden on operators by offering simplified licensing and funding application processes, and we have made changes to allow for multi-year agreements.

The passing of Bill 16 established junior kindergarten for four-year-olds in 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. This is something that we all can be proud of. I have visited children in junior kindergarten classrooms around the Northwest Territories and their energy and enthusiasm give me great hope for the future. Because of our actions, children in the Northwest Territories are getting a better start to their educational journey. In high schools, I want to make sure that all students have the opportunity to learn and excel in a multitude of subjects. Distance learning continues to bridge the gap by offering programs that were previously not available in rural and remote communities. I am excited to keep expanding this innovative program. While the factors that influence student outcomes are complex, there is strong evidence to show that giving teachers more time to prepare, assess, collaborate, and professionally develop their teaching practice is critically important. Bill 16 gives teachers this flexibility through the Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices initiative. Our partnerships with the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association and the Northwest Territories Superintendents Association were significant in reaching this milestone.

Mr. Chair, we must ensure our residents have the skills and training they need to enter the workforce.

The Skills 4 Success 10-Year Strategic Framework aims to improve employment success for all Northerners. We have already completed many key actions including releasing and implementing the Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Strategy. This plan details how training, apprenticeship, and certification opportunities will be improved in skilled trades and industrial occupations across the Northwest Territories. Another part of our actions under Skills 4 Success is working with Aurora College on their renewed strategic plan. Currently the strategic plan has been put aside to allow for other informing work to be concluded. This will make the outcome stronger and enable Northerners to benefit from college programming offered in response to labour market needs.

To fulfil our mandate to increase immigration to the Northwest Territories, the Government of the Northwest Territories has launched a marketing campaign promoting the Northwest Territories Nominee Program. The launch of the ImmigrateNWT website was the first action to increase the number of immigrants working and investing here. I am pleased to report that Education, Culture and Employment's target to increase the number of approved applications by 25 per cent each year has been fully achieved. As well, Education, Culture and Employment and Industry, Tourism and Investment released the first ever Northwest Territories' Immigration Strategy. This strategy supports population growth and addresses labour market gaps and skills shortages, while safeguarding employment for our northern residents.

Mr. Chair, language is the foundation of our culture and heritage, and it expresses the uniqueness of who we are as Northerners. Negotiation with the federal government to provide additional money for official languages has been successful. We received a substantial increase: we now receive \$19.6 million for Indigenous languages and almost \$22.5 million for French through the unprecedented multi-year agreement.

The updated Aboriginal Languages Framework: A Shared Responsibility was tabled in May. This work would not have been possible without the support and expertise from language communities and Indigenous governments.

Mr. Chair, as Minister, I have worked hard with all our partners. I am proud of our achievements to date and certain that with the guidance of Members we will meet our remaining mandate responsibilities by the end of the 18th Legislative Assembly.

Mahsi cho. Quyanainni. Merci beaucoup. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Minister Moses. We will now hear from Minister Wally Schumann. Minister Schumann, please proceed with your statement.

MINISTER SCHUMANN'S STATEMENT

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment and Infrastructure play an important role in delivering our mandate to advance economic growth in the Northwest Territories and reduce the cost of living for our people. Natural resources are the foundation of our economy. In the first two years of our mandate, we have invested approximately \$3.4 million under the Mineral Development Strategy to support ongoing geoscience, marketing, Aboriginal capacity building, and the Mining Incentive Program. Our NWT Geological Survey continues to enhance publicly available geoscience, some of which has contributed to the most staking we have seen in years. Mr. Chair, we have completed community engagement sessions of our territory's first Mineral Resources Act and we are on track to ensure the unique needs of our territory are reflected in the legislation before this Legislative Assembly dissolves.

Mr. Chair, we have also made significant progress on an important priority of all MLAs: economic diversification. By supporting entrepreneurs, businesses, and business associations across the NWT with improved programs and services, as well as generous grants and contributions, we are growing areas of our economy to create better opportunities for residents to succeed. We committed to improving our tourism and parks facilities, Mr. Chair. We invested nearly \$7 million to grow the capacity within the sector. Our investments have been reflected in the best-ever year for the NWT tourism sector, now worth more than \$200 million to our economy. Mr. Chair, we released an Agriculture Strategy in March to encourage local food production and commercial capacity. It gives us the foundation to guide the expansion and growth of the business of food in our territory and over time will help address the cost of living,

improve food security, foster healthy families, and enhance capacity-building programs for our youth. We have also introduced a strategy to revitalize the Great Slave Lake commercial fishery, backing our commitments with funding to build a new fish processing plant in Hay River and plans for a collection point in Yellowknife. We have committed to growing a profile of NWT art at home and abroad. Our revamped NWT Arts website is delivering on this commitment by connecting the world to the NWT-made art.

Mr. Chair, with my Infrastructure portfolio, we have achieved progress on our mandate in the first half of this government that will benefit residents across the Northwest Territories. All Members agree that we need to address the cost of living and we have made strides in reducing energy costs and transitioning the territory to alternative energy production. Mr. Chair, we committed to a comprehensive public engagement on energy and climate change. That informed the development of the draft Energy Strategy. It sets out the long-term vision for energy security in the territory. We have supported alternative energy projects in communities here and now, with two solar installations completed in Inuvik as well as one in Aklavik. Biomass systems were installed in several GNWT facilities and a combined heat and power pilot project is under way in Fort Simpson. A feasibility study looking at building liquefied natural gas storage for power generation in Tuktoyaktuk was completed. Mr. Chair, access to secure, affordable, environmentally sustainable sources of energy is essential to the prosperity of the Northwest Territories and we've continued to work to find markets for the Taltson Hydro Expansion.

We have also made significant progress in expanding the transportation system. Construction of the Canyon Creek all-season access road has commenced, creating employment for Sahtu residents while providing access to traditional lands for recreation, tourism, and business development. Mr. Chair, conditional approval of the Tlicho All-Season Road has also been received. The project will provide all-weather access to Whati, while improving winter access to Gameti and Wekweeti. Most recently, expressions of interest for the Slave Geological Province Corridor and the Mackenzie Valley Highway were submitted under the National Trade Corridors Fund. These transformative projects will help create jobs and business opportunities, while increasing access to our territory's extraordinary natural resource potential.

Mr. Chair, I believe in working together. Of the 38 commitments I am responsible for, seven commitments were completed, while the remaining 31 are at varying levels of progress. Mr. Chair, this work would not be possible without the support of Regular Members and their respective standing committees. Our success is not measured on one individual, but on the collective efforts of both sides of this House and the commitment and dedication of public servants to improve the lives of residents and ensure they have the ability to find success in their lives. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Minister Schumann. We will now hear from Minister Lou Sebert. Minister Sebert, please proceed with your statement.

MINISTER SEBERT'S STATEMENT

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I was asked to improve access to justice for residents of the Northwest Territories. I am proud to say that through innovative action and the support of this Assembly, we have made progress in this area. We have expanded the Outreach Legal Aid Clinic allowing residents access to free confidential legal advice for up to three hours on any single legal issue. This expansion makes it possible to offer more in-person clinics in our communities. We have also expanded the Mediation and Parenting after Separation and Divorce programs. Our mandate also set goals for supporting the RCMP and our communities in developing policing action plans. We now have plans in place that reflect local community safety priorities for every community in the Northwest Territories. I am

keenly aware that the relationship between community, RCMP, and our government is of critical importance to how we keep citizens safe. I have worked hard to maintain an open and collaborative relationship with the new commanding officer of "G" Division.

Our mandate also set out goals to strengthen initiatives to address the crisis of family violence, including the continuation of A New Day program. Transitioning A New Day program from a pilot project to a long-term program was not without challenges. Of utmost importance to me was ensuring that the program was flexible to meet the needs of participants, provide greater opportunity for success, and be sustainable for the future. The changes made improved the program. The transition to the new service provider has been smooth and all supports are in place, including well-qualified, culturally competent, and experienced facilitators. I want to acknowledge Members' support of this program. The objective of having the best programs available to prevent and reduce family violence is one we all share. I also want to acknowledge the role that Members have played in supporting our extensive engagement program with the public and stakeholders on cannabis legalization. We want to make sure that we understand the views of Northerners and I look forward to discussing what we heard with committee in the near future.

As Minister of Lands, I continue to work with the Premier on a number of land issues with the federal government. Together we have shared our concerns about participant funding and reducing regulatory duplication in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, as well as on proposed changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. In March, I tabled the Recreational Leasing Management Framework. We are hard at work on implementing the framework's action items and are working towards fulfilling this mandate commitment. Over the summer, we also engaged with Aboriginal governments, stakeholders, and the public on the review of the Commissioner's and Northwest Territories Lands Acts. Work is also underway on developing a Yellowknife Periphery Area Management Plan. Our Aboriginal engagement process has started, and we hope to have a draft of the plan ready for public review in early 2018. This plan will provide direction and guidance on how to manage recreational lands outside and around Yellowknife, 'Ndiłq, and Detah. Mr. Chair, I have heard the concerns of residents and Members on issues of land ownership, and I have made it a priority to seek out solutions. I have given clear direction to the department to return with options on how to resolve issues with equity leases, and I look forward to discussing these with committee in the coming year.

Finally Mr. Chair, open and transparent government has been a top priority of our government, and I was happy to take a leadership role in helping bring forward an open government policy, ombudsman legislation, and changes to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. As lead Minister for open government, I visited every constituency in the Northwest Territories and personally hosted 16 open houses in 14 communities. True democracy involves working with citizens and stakeholders, not just for them, and this progress will lead to a more engaged and involved public to ultimately support and enable the development of better policies, decisions, programs, and services. Mr. Chair, I look forward to working with all Members of this Assembly to advance all of our priorities.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Minister Sebert. That concludes the statements from the Premier, Ministers on their leadership and performance, as well as collective leadership and performance of Cabinet. At this time, I would like to recognize former Members: Mr. Anthony W.J. Whitford, former Commissioner, former Speaker, former Minister, Sergeant-at-Arms, honorary clerk at the table, and also with us our former Member Wendy Bisaro, 16th and 17th Assembly Member. Welcome. Members, just being mindful of interpreters: obviously, they will

need a break from this. The chair is going to call for a short recess, and we will be back ten after 10:00. Masi.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Members, we just went through the statements from the Premier and Ministers. We will now proceed to Members' questions to Ministers. Members' questions to Ministers. I remind everybody that each Member is permitted to ask up to two questions to each Minister, no longer than two minutes each. Responses by the Ministers must not be longer than two minutes as well. We'll proceed. Are there any questions? Member Green.

Members' Questions to Ministers

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Earlier this year, the GNWT signed a new healthcare funding arrangement with Ottawa. It offers less money, even with the special allocations for specific purposes such as homecare, at a time when the cost of providing healthcare and the demand for service is growing. My question for the Minister is: what is your assessment of this gap, and how are you going to close it? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The money that we are getting from the federal government, when you look at the Canada Health Transfer and the new monies for the individual pots, is less than we would have received if they had maintained it at a six per cent growth rate for CHT. This is certainly a challenge, but we are working on a number of mandate items within this government. We are looking at seeking additional resources for many of the activities that we are undertaking, things like homecare, things like midwifery services, and things like community counsellors in communities throughout the Northwest Territories. We continue to work with the federal government to try and get a better understanding of how we can utilize these funds, but clearly it is a challenge. Many of these funds are what are often referred to as boutique funding because they have a real short time period. They start one day and they end a number of years later. We are going to use these dollars to help actually build some capacity within the system, training and putting in new programs that we can use those dollars to help design, to make real changes for people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions. Next on my list: Member Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON'S QUESTION

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, a lot of people have commented to me that today will be an interesting day. Spoiler alert: it won't be. The Ministers' statements we heard today are no different from the Ministers' statements we hear during session. The MLAs everyone expects to ask questions will ask questions and the Ministers will answer them in the same manner they've done for two years. This is essentially just another sitting day, albeit a longer and likely less productive one. For those who have paid any attention to the proceedings in this House, there will likely be nothing new. However, Mr. Chair, what most people do not know is what happens when we're not in this Chamber. Residents generally are not aware of how Ministers handle the constituents' issues that we bring to them, how their offices respond to

our requests for information, or about the battles that some Ministers have with their departments and with other Ministers when they attempt to change the status quo for the benefit of the territory. All of this will factor into my decision today.

Mr. Chair, with all that being said I would like to start with a general question addressed to all Ministers. If you receive a vote of non-confidence from the majority of this Assembly today, will you step aside, or will you be defiant and force Members to remove you? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there are established protocols for how an individual can be removed from this House and from this Chamber. The only way to remove somebody from Executive Council is through an open public vote in this Assembly. Given the protocols that exist, the protocols that have been agreed by this Assembly, I wouldn't resign. I would take the criticism. I would work with Members to make improvements where appropriate and hopefully be able to do a better job moving forward, but I wouldn't resign. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The MLA has asked an interesting question, and I have to agree that if we do get a vote of non-confidence it would be hurtful, in all honesty. I believe that I have worked hard over the two years. I believe that I have a lot of work to do. I came with a purpose. I have been working towards fulfilling that purpose, so no. I have to say that if I do get a vote of non-confidence that I would want to see who actually believes that I need to step down. In all honesty, we all take feedback, and we need to be able to take that feedback and improve our work, but to step down is not what I came for. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, one of the things we have talked about a lot in here is transparency, and if any of us, or if I were to resign, that would go against what we have been talking about for the last two years. I would not resign. I would wait for a motion or revocation, which is far more transparent and is something that we are preaching and we should practice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, being a Minister takes a lot of hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. Over the last two years, I've made a lot of investment into increasing relationships with our partners to accomplish a lot of the goals and achievements that we have done. A very interesting question by the Member. No, I would not look at resigning if I received a vote of non-confidence. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I share the sentiments of my colleagues that you've already heard from. Members may recall that when the rules committee came forward with their plans and suggestions around the whole issue of the midterm review, I did file a minority report. I was particularly concerned about the secretive nature of the vote we are facing today. Therefore, no, I would not resign, and if Members opposite wish to remove us, they can do so in an open vote. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. After hearing all my colleagues, I agree with everything that has been said today. When we all ran to be Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly, we know this is a consensus government. We all want to work collectively for residents of the Northwest Territories and do the best things that we can. There is a lot of work to be done in this Chamber, and there continues to be a lot of work done, and I think everyone has done a great job bringing forward the work that's been done so far. We have one of the largest mandates ever in the history of the Northwest Territories. We are collectively working towards fulfilling that for the residents of the Northwest Territories, and as my colleague said, the Minister of Finance, I would not resign just based on openness and transparency that we talk about continually in this government. I would want to have an open and fair discussion in this Chamber to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Questions to Ministers. I have next on my list: Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for Minister Abernethy. On December 9, 2015, MLA Abernethy put his name forward to serve as our Premier. In his candidacy speech, Mr. Abernethy said "we have a new energy, new ideas" and "the status quo is no longer acceptable." Can the Minister tell us what he has personally done to change the status quo here at the Legislative Assembly over the last two years, and what further work remains? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I remember intimately what it's like to be a Member of this Assembly and not sit in on the Executive Council side. It can be very frustrating for Members when they don't feel like they are getting information, or there are surprises that occur in the House. I do not support surprises for anybody in this Assembly on either side, so I've worked very hard over the last two years to make sure that Members are informed on issues related to health and social services. I have gone extra steps to make sure that we are providing them with detailed information when crises are occurring in communities, and providing them updates on a regular basis. I'm trying hard to work with MLAs on a regular basis to make sure that their input is incorporated in things that are actually happening in this Assembly. Outside of this Assembly, we have also tried to do things differently. I believe that there are answers, and good, great ideas in communities on the issues that are facing them, and I think it's really important for us to really engage with stakeholders. When it comes to things like developing a framework and an action plan for things like disabilities, I have gone to the stakeholders and asked them to be part of the design of frameworks. I have asked them to actually help hold the pen. This is not something that has happened very often in this Assembly. It happened once before on the anti-poverty framework and action plan. These are things that are important to me, and working with Members and working with stakeholders, and giving them opportunities to take their consideration, and listen to what they are saying, and use those ideas to make change is different than things have been done traditionally, and I think it is a good way of doing business. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Education, Minister Moses. When he was on this side of the House, he made many statements into the proposed junior kindergarten program at the time. He sought additional funding for educational

authorities, going so far as to request an extra supplementary appropriation to "offset these costs and let education authorities out there know we will support what they do, whether they had a surplus or a deficit." Further, he supported a motion to get dollars for the implementation of junior kindergarten and that whole early child education initiative, and even went on to question whether or not Cabinet takes it seriously, what Regular Members were doing. Now, when we embarked on continuing the junior kindergarten initiative, the Minister resorted to the exact same plan, which left a funding gap that took years to resolve. My question for the Minister is: what experience did he gain on this side of the House criticizing that program? Why did he continue on with the same plan? Why didn't he work with his department to make it a better plan that would be supported by the majority of Members, and when Members raised opposition to the plan because it left our school boards out in the cold, why did he continue along with it? Why was it such a battle to get full funding for junior kindergarten? There's still a question to that full funding. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the Member's comments and questions. Yes, when we first looked at implementing junior kindergarten, there was concerns, and my experience is we waited until we got the comprehensive report that was released in the 17th Legislative Assembly. As you heard in my opening comments, I did visit schools as a Regular Member and as a Minister, and looked at the junior kindergarten classes. We heard from education authorities. We've developed a really strong relationship with education councils, listened to the concerns, but also listened to the concerns of committee, and moving forward, working with my colleagues on this side of the House, working very hard to find a solution and that's where we looked at fully funding junior kindergarten. It is all that experience working with our education councils, with Members on that side, and committee, and finding a solution. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Education. During the last couple of years, one of the key things that occurred with the Department of Education was the close-down of the Teacher Education Program and the social work program. This upset many students. This upset many people that were hoping to, mature students, especially students that already are married and have children that the best place for them to attend school was in Fort Smith, and... However, those programs were shut down. Even the community of Fort Smith was upset over it. There was lots of letter writing going back and forth in the community, over to here, and then at the end of the day, the board was dissolved. I'd like to ask the Minister: who, and by who I mean a person not a department... Which person made the decision to close those two important programs down? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, we did put a hold on those two programs until the foundational review was completed. The students in those two programs will continue to get support to complete the programs in Fort Smith, as well as the social work program. They are getting work from our department. They are getting support from staff at Aurora College. Plus we continue to support students that are taking a degree, granting programs for education, as well as social work, outside the territory. These discussions were

brought forth in the May-June sitting. I listened. We worked with Aurora College, and we decided to put those two programs on hold until the foundational review was completed. We did not shut them down. We stopped. What we did shut down was enrolments into the access program, and we will wait for that foundational review to come out. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S QUESTION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chairman, we all know that in the early days of this Assembly that there was a kind of a contention and some tension between Regular Members and Cabinet relating to the fiscal strategy and the budget process at the time. One of the things that we have as an opportunity through that process is the opportunity to stand up and provide a reply to the Budget Address. My question is for the Minister for Health and Social Services, Minister Abernethy. While all of us Regular Members took advantage of that opportunity to stand up and give our thoughts, positive or negative, it was our opinions and our views that we were sharing on the budget at the time. Minister Abernethy had his right to do that, and he stood up in this House and gave his reply to the budget address. However, as most know, it did not seem to be a reply to the budget address. It was more a criticism of Members and their replies to the budget address. I would like to ask the Minister: if he had the opportunity to do it again, what would he do to change, if anything? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm an MLA as well as a Member of the Executive Council and I've been around for a few years in this Assembly, and I do have to say that that budget process was one of the more frustrating budget experiences that I have been around for. This is a consensus government. This is supposed to be about working together. If you go back and read that statement, I made some criticisms and maybe I was a little harsh and I apologize that, but I was also hard on Cabinet as well. I did indicate that we have an obligation as Cabinet to work with the Members of this Assembly, to work together to find compromise and it seemed like we were both having difficulty in that process at that time. I was frustrated. I might tailor my words slightly differently and be a little bit more soft in some of my approach, but I do acknowledge that I did criticize both sides of this House. We're supposed to work together in the best interests of the people of the Northwest Territories. That takes compromise. That takes work. Some of the statements that were being made... In my mind, some of them were not exactly accurate. It was frustrating, so I made a statement. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY'S QUESTION

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is to the whole Cabinet. We heard earlier on the accomplishments and the targets achieved from the Members across the floor, and now we know what is there. Now I'd like to discuss what is not there. My question: which department or departments within your portfolios can you explain that needs the attention of what is not achieved, aside from the presentation we heard earlier? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that is a hard question to answer, what we have not achieved, because a lot of the stuff that's within my portfolios is well under progress. We are working to achieve them. We have a number of initiatives. Like I said in my statement earlier today, I had 30-some commitments of the mandate, and we are working to achieve those. If I wanted to speak about specifically one particular commitment that has been left behind a little bit, I guess, would be the Petroleum Resources and Oil and Gas Act, and there is a reason for that. It has to be dovetailed in with the energy strategy that we are working on. It has to fit in with the climate change framework that's being proposed with this government. With the downturn of the economy in the oil and gas sector, it was one I think that was not quite brought forward in a timely manner that maybe in different Assemblies possibly could have been, but with the sector down right now... We are trying to figure out how we can capitalize on this energy sector to help facilitate bringing the cost of living down for residents of the Northwest Territories. I think out of all the general ones that I have that are in progress, that's the one that sticks in my mind that we need to be working on, but there is a reason for it, which was my explanation of what I've just said. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think one of the greatest challenges that I have faced in my time as Minister is dealing with the issue of equity leases. I was aware of this issue in private practice before I became a Minister and certainly was made further aware of it by members of my profession who contacted me soon after I became a Minister, seeking a resolution of this serious issue. I had thought that it might be simpler than it has turned out to be. I didn't realize when I first looked at the issue that there were literally hundreds of equity leases; I think around 250 in the Northwest Territories. Certainly, when I did my travels to the communities, concerns about equity leases and the need for people receiving certainty in their land tenure were brought to me. We are working on this matter. I will be working with the department to bring options to Cabinet, and hopefully we can come to a satisfactory resolution of this matter before the end of this term. It's a very important issue, particularly in the smaller and more remote communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do have a four-year mandate in front of us here. We are halfway through. There are a lot of good things that the Department of Education has done to meet their mandate commitments. Obviously, two years in, you're not going to meet all of them. I am looking forward to addressing some of the other ones, especially around post-secondary education. There's work that we can do, we've had questions in the House about it, working with our post-secondary institutions and our partners to address other learning opportunities for our northern residents, obviously creating jobs in small communities, developing skills and training for our Northerners so that they can enter the workforce. We've got a lot of things under education renewal that when we get them implemented and running, we are going to see a lot of really good impacts there moving forward as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, one of the biggest challenges that we faced when we all got elected, I think even before we sat down in this Chamber, was the fact that the federal government made an announcement of a \$34 million decrease to our Territorial Formula Financing. I would have to say that we are fortunate that they gave us \$24 million back, but we are still short \$10 million. I think that has been our biggest challenge, and that's one that we will continue to work on. With regards to the other portfolios I have, there are some

challenges in there. There's some things we want to see going forward, but we still have two years left in the mandate. We have a couple more business planning cycles left and a couple more budgets. I think you will see some of the initiatives come forward then. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I had stated in my Minister's statement at the beginning of today, I hold high expectations for all of my team. I know that they are out there watching, so just letting you all know that no one is getting off easy. We still have a lot of work to do. I will be putting a greater focus on every department. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has important legislation around public safety that we need to get addressed. Women in Leadership, we are still only two out of 19, so we have huge work to do with that to get women involved in politics. Of course, like I had said earlier, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, I'm really excited, actually. We have a lot of work to do in policy renewal and we also are looking at an educational component. Every team member out there, it's been great to work with you, but we have a lot more to do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Department of Health and Social Services had 84 different milestones within the mandate that we're following here in the Government of the Northwest Territories: 43 of them have been completed; 26 are on schedule; but yes, some of them are clearly behind. Outside of the ones that have been behind, there are some things that obviously I think are frustrating for myself and for Members. For the Members in Yellowknife, I think one of the things that has been frustrating is the fact that it has taken us so long to get a sobering centre up in place. This is an area that I am keenly interested in and pushing the department very hard, but I am frustrated, as I think everybody in this territory is, with finding the location and getting that location up and running. We're still committed to getting it done, but it is clearly something that has been frustrating. Another area that has been frustrating for me is an area that I am passionate about, and I think Members who have been around for a while know, is moving forward with Building Stronger Families. We are on the fourth year of a five-year rollout of Building Stronger Families. We have to fundamentally change how we provide child and family services here in the Northwest Territories, and in my opinion we're on the right track, but it feels painfully slow. I've accepted that we have to take time in order to get this right, that we have to test the different tools that we've put in place and make sure that they work, rather than rushing the implementation and ending up with tools that are really no better for families here in the Northwest Territories. I'd love to see this go faster, but I'm committed to getting it right. I am frustrated, as I think everybody in the Northwest Territories is, about how long it has taken us to get to the point where real change is evident, but it's coming. We're rolling into our fifth year, and we'll see some real change shortly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member Nadli.

MR. NADLI'S QUESTION

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning. One of the priorities of the 18th Assembly was to settle outstanding land claim agreements here in the NWT. We all understand: if we conclude the land claim agreements throughout the NWT, it will create of course a level of certainty and bolstering of course the economic climate in the NWT, but we also have to be aware that in some respects we're led by the federal policies. One of the significant, more likely principles, that guides this whole process is section 35 of the Constitution Act. My question is to

all of the Members of Cabinet. In your view, what are the GNWT impediments to negotiating outstanding land claim and self-government agreements? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I believe the Member said "impediments." I would like to see them all come to the table. I would like to see them get land claims settled. I don't know what the impediments might be. Maybe they're reluctant to settle. I know there's been offers out there. I recognize the importance, in this day and age, of getting the land claims settled, because I don't want to see the people across the NWT lose opportunities because the land claims have not been settled yet. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the question on the land claims and impediments and work that's being done. I think we really need to build a strong working relationship with the Indigenous governments throughout the Northwest Territories. I believe this government, under our leadership, has progressed us in that area, with all the bilateral meetings that we're having with all the governments across the Northwest Territories and continuing to work with the federal government to address these issues. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we're all interested in settling land claims. We have seen the success in those areas that do have settled land claims, and more generous and comprehensive offers have been made recently. We're hoping for a favourable response to those initiatives because, as I say, it is really to the benefit of everyone. I know that in the area of lands knowing what the regime will be in your region certainly would be a great help to landowners. As I say, those areas that have settled their land claims are moving ahead. Certainly this government is interested in the completion of the program, as it were, so that all land claims could be settled, and all residents, including industry, could have certainty moving ahead. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have had an opportunity to talk to Aboriginal leaders across the Northwest Territories, and this issue often comes up. One of the things that I have heard from a number of our partners and the individuals that we're negotiating with is that the reliance on the old Dene Metis claim as the foundation of negotiations does not necessarily make sense in this day and age. The Premier and the departments have worked hard with the federal government and those that we're negotiating with to move away from the Dene Metis claim as sort of the foundation and looked at new ways of producing an agreement or finding ways forward. I think that was incredibly important, not relying on the way things were done in the past, but trying to do things differently. The Premier has worked with the federal government, brought in some individuals to do some work on how we can move forward together, united, in the best interests of all people in the Northwest Territories. It is a long process. It is a detailed process. There are a lot of questions that need to be asked, whether it is land quantum or what areas an individual government's going to take on as far as mandate. The work is under way. We all know it's not going as fast as we'd like it, but it is moving forward. Now that we have a new way of moving forward, I'm optimistic that we are going to see more progress in the future, and I'm excited by the opportunities that that presents. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Great question by the Member. As he's well aware, he and I have both been on both sides of the table. I think if you want to get right to the meat of this question, there's a lot of issues internally amongst Aboriginal groups. There has got to be consensus-building amongst themselves to bring some of these things forward, to have a position where they can stand together to bring issues forward as a group and deal with the federal and territorial government. Overlap issues is another big one as an impediment. I think a lot of people that don't realize it, don't follow it. Particularly, the South Slave region is probably the most contentious overlap issue area in all of Canada. There are so many groups that need to be dealt with, and thankful to the Premier and his great leadership, he's got the federal government at the table to bring new offers and new ideas on how we can settle these things. I think the biggest impediment is, as I've said in my opening statement, that, as Aboriginal peoples we have to get ourselves organized and have a united front on what our actual position is to be able to sit down and deal with the territorial and federal government. It's been frustrating, as I've said, as a negotiator when I was at the table, but I think a lot of things have changed under the leadership of the Premier now and the federal government with regards to how they are reaching out to try to settle this. It is something that is the number one priority of this government. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The issue of land claims is really important to all of us. As a Northerner whose family business was in mineral exploration, and still in mineral exploration, I've taken a keen interest in the needs of people in that field, and I recognize that it is the major economic driver within the Northwest Territories. It is impacting mineral exploration and new monies coming into the territories so it's a priority. As the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, I know that it's also a priority because municipalities are waiting for land claims to get finished so that they can deal with their land needs as well. It is important for all of us. I believe that some of the issues that are affecting it is that Aboriginal governments want to get it right. They have one chance at this, and so it is really important for them that they try to get things as they need, because they might not have another chance at it. I recognize that it's a difficult decision for their leadership and something that we have to support. I do want to give credit where credit belongs. Our Premier has cleared his docket. It is his number one priority. I am hoping that it will be his legacy when he leaves here, that he will have the Aboriginal governments settled, and I know that he is working hard towards that. Like I say, I need to give credit where credit is due, and our Premier, it is his number one priority, and he is working hard at finishing these. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list is Member Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK'S QUESTION

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I didn't write anything, but I represent four coastal communities, and sovereignty in the Arctic, in my region is important as far as infrastructure. As well, they are all Indigenous people, mainly Inuit. My questions are for all of the Ministers, Mr. Chair. I've been lucky to have a couple of tours with the Ministers in my region, and I just want to say that tours like this are important. We need to ensure that we host Caucus and other meetings like that around the territory, mainly in the smaller communities where sometimes access to information is very limited and very much so, and sometimes very slow. My question to the Ministers is mainly: can you highlight achievements, as well as how you have refined the working relationships, with Indigenous leaders, not just with the Inuvialuit, but as with the Gwich'in and other Indigenous groups around the territory as well? I think it is

important for the government to be involved and, like I said, refine that working relationship and have liaisons between the government and the Indigenous groups to show more of a presence on both sides. My question is: how are the Cabinet Ministers and their departments going to reach out and connect more closely with Indigenous governments? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was actually honoured to be able to travel to some of the communities within the MLA's region, although I recognize I still need to get to Sachs Harbour. We got weathered in at the time. Each region, when I was travelling, I noticed has different needs and different beauties, actually. It really reinforced that the Northwest Territories is really beautiful. We need to appreciate what we have here. It is not all rock. What have we done, though, to support Aboriginal governments? The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs works hard with Aboriginal governments. We developed the online training and the training components in partnership with the federal government to provide support so Aboriginal governments can govern their people properly and as they need to. The Housing Corporation has also worked really closely with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to support not only our housing needs, but their housing aspirations. We work very diligently with Aboriginal governments. Like I had said when I first took on, accreditation is about working with people. It is about getting constant feedback, and it is important that Aboriginal governments have feedback into what we are doing to govern the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As a Member of the Executive Council, and having the opportunity, I've been to all 33 communities these last two years in the Northwest Territories. A number of my files allow me to interact directly with either Aboriginal governments at a land claim level, or at a local level, or a band level, and this interaction is very important as the population of the Northwest Territories is 50 per cent Indigenous. As many of the people watching on TV know, most of our communities are small and remote communities, and are led by Aboriginal people. There are various different degrees of leadership in these communities which is very important to understand when we're travelling around when we are dealing with issues. We've a good interaction with them. I think as Cabinet we have our bilaterals with the Aboriginal groups in the Northwest Territories on a grander scale and their issues, and we continue to do that. That is very informative on government-to-government relationships on how we build and try to prosper the Northwest Territories for our residents. But also, when you start digging down into some of my portfolios, you can even get right down to some programs like the CAP programming, the Community Access Program, where we deal with right down at the local level on how we can work with Aboriginal governments to help facilitate projects within the community, and bring awareness to job training, and economies and such. These are very important relationships to this government, and particularly when I'm at FPT tables and travelling around the country, I try to explain to people of Canada the importance of the relationship that this government has with Aboriginal people, and how we interact with them, and how we are leaders in this country in how we deal with Aboriginal people in the great country we live in. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As my colleague had mentioned, we do have these bilateral meetings with all Indigenous organizations. Usually, out of those bilateral meetings through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, we set up more face-to-face direct meetings where you get down to the issues of educational challenges within a

community or within a region. We have started those. I know on the community tours, we do get a lot of questions as well and sometimes we work on looking at setting up another meeting with the community groups to address the issues. We are working very hard to build that strength and that collaboration of work. One other thing we do through our department is through official languages. We do fund directly Indigenous governments so that they can take on the ownership and responsibility, the strength in our official languages throughout the Northwest Territories, as well as some of the residential school training that we offer, and we usually get leadership to participate in that. I know through our bilateral meetings, community tours, that's already strengthening the relationships and the trust-building with our Indigenous governments, and continue to look forward to it over the next two years to build on that strength. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's a couple of different ways that we do this. From a system point of view, we have gone to a single authority here in the Northwest Territories with the exception of the TCSA and Hay River. There are members on the regional wellness council from all over the Northwest Territories, and the chairs of those wellness councils have the ability to provide regional and community-based input at a territorial level which has never existed before. It is pretty exciting, and we are starting to get some good results. Of course, there are growing pains with any new transformation, but we are starting to see some positive results.

From a Cabinet point of view, Members have already talked about our bilateral meetings which we hold on a regular basis. From a ministry point of view, from Health and Social Services, I've tried to do something a little different than it's been done before. It has never been done to my knowledge, but I've called together a meeting of Indigenous leaders on an annual basis to talk about shared priorities and areas where we can work together to benefit their people, but also the people of the Northwest Territories. There are a lot of areas where we could work together, whether it's wellness initiatives or suicide prevention initiatives or other initiatives. Those partnerships at the community but also with the Aboriginal governments, is vital to making things happen. I've called these leadership meetings on an annual basis. We've had some good results. One of the things that came out of that, that I am particularly proud of, is the Indigenous Knowledge Advisory Group. That was really interesting because the actual members of the Indigenous leaders that we pulled together, they all identified staff who had worked with the department to develop a terms of reference. That terms of reference is done, and we're getting nominations from the different Aboriginal leaders, and we're putting this group in place which is going to provide some real great information on how to move forward with traditional knowledge, traditional healing, but also battling and trying to break down the barriers we're experiencing with systemic racism in our system. It is those relationships with those leaders that I think has really given us some headway in these areas. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As has been mentioned, this government, this Cabinet, often has bilateral meetings with Aboriginal organizations, and those are very important so that we can deal with them in a government-to-government way, and hear their concerns, and hopefully allay their concerns. Apart from that, the Department of Lands as I mentioned earlier when we are dealing with frameworks, leasing frameworks, Yellowknife periphery area management plans, of course, we do consult with the Aboriginal groups, which is quite appropriate. Apart from visiting the individual communities as I mentioned, the Cabinet often goes out to communities to meet on a bilateral basis with Aboriginal governments. I am expecting that to continue and I am hoping that we will have continued success. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think of all the departments within the government, the one that has pretty well the closest ties with the Aboriginal people and the Aboriginal governments would be Environment and Natural Resources. A lot of work we do, we rely on their traditional knowledge, and with the initiatives and LPs that we bring out, we use to consult with the Aboriginal governments, receive their feedback amongst other people in the Northwest Territories. We have membership on a lot of the land and water boards, the wildlife boards, and we work with the Aboriginal governments. On the finance side of it, since devolution with the resource revenue sharing, the Aboriginal governments that have signed on to devolution have been able to receive some money as part of the agreement with the Aboriginal governments that have signed on. That goes back to an earlier question that I was asked before, and I replied, there were some missed opportunities there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON'S QUESTION

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Ministers and the Premier for their speeches and that, and they talked about working together and the importance of working together. I truly believe in that. They talked about consensus government, and I do have a difference of opinion with Cabinet on what consensus government I believe is, and sometimes we miss out on it. As you are aware, I represent six communities, especially the small communities. Again, when I sit there and I try to work with Cabinet, there's been some challenges, pushback or whatever. I would have to comment positively on how they developed the committee on rural and remote communities. I think that's a great step, but it's two years in. We're two years in, so we're coming down to it. I thought about this, and I looked at this, and I am going to be asking the same question to all Ministers here.

Mr. Chair, besides the Mandate documents, can each Minister explain what they and their department have done to make residents of smaller communities a better place to live and reduce their cost of living? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the things that we've implemented, Mr. Chair, we actually piloted in a lot of the communities in Nahendeh, was around early childhood funding and the changes that we made to early childhood subsidies. We funded a lot of the daycares. That helps out families but also gives the child the greatest chance from the start. We've also funded them through languages programs, small community employment program funding over the years, especially with the influx of the \$3 million. Two communities in Nahendeh had access to those fundings as well. We are also looking at creating distance learning education to help some of the small communities in Nahendeh to be able to take academic courses that they weren't previously able to take. I think the big one moving forward, though, in looking forward to working with the rural and remote communities is in the small community employment program. I know we're two years in and the committee just got started, but I think that committee can make a lot of positive impacts for job creation, skill development, and training for our residents in small communities which the Member has a few in his riding, and look forward to working with the Member, and the rural and remote communities, as well as the leadership in Nahendeh to address job creation in small communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Great question. My department, in particular ITI, has a number of initiatives that we work on this. Agriculture is the first one that comes to mind that would help to bring the cost of living down in the small communities. We have the Small Scale Foods Program that we have done in all 33 communities. We have the community gardens that we have done in all 33 communities. These sorts of things are definitely directly related to helping do that. We are working with the federal government to develop a national food policy which we hope is going to clearly support bringing down the cost of food and subsidies in the area of small communities, so we are working greatly with the federal government on that. As I mentioned earlier today, the CAP program is another one, I think, that is directly related to economic development to help and create employment and economic opportunities within the program that is delivered out of the Department of Infrastructure. That one is well taken up. It is always expended completely every year. We have \$1 million that is directly invested into that. The traditional economy: we work along with ENR to try to facilitate that with the fur buying program to help support the hunters and trappers in all small communities in the Northwest Territories in particular. That is one of the best programs I think that we have in the government to help support people in the small communities. You know, as far as how we are trying to diversify our economy, the Great Slave Lake Fishery initiative. We want to expand that into small communities. We had an opportunity this year to go to Tsiigehtchic to help residents understand how they can get into the commercial fishery, and we are open to do that to all regions in the Northwest Territories. There's a number of initiatives that we have within the Department of ITI that help supports these types of things. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as the previous speaker had mentioned, there was a fur harvesters program which through ENR and ITI is a great program for supporting small communities. On the finance side, I think that putting this government in a position where we are able to make infrastructure investments or match federal dollars for infrastructure investments. We've seen firsthand the contribution it has to small communities and small community employment. Also, I would like to mention that this summer, we had 347, I believe, summer students that were hired across the Northwest Territories. One of the challenges I put to the department is to ensure that we have all 33 communities in the Northwest Territories with summer students next year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When I think about support for small communities, actually, a lot comes to my mind. Within the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, we have put money into small communities. We put a lot of money into small communities. In fact, that's reflected in our core needs report. The difference between 2009 and 2014, how the core needs in small communities have actually gotten better at the cost of bigger communities such as Yellowknife where the core needs have increased because of that, so I need to look at a balance as well. Small communities as well... Doing the housing survey; that is about asking the people, what do you want versus us sitting up here in our nice chairs and deciding what is best for people. It is on the ground. It is asking the people, what do you want, and listening to them, and revising our policy and programs because of that. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs: it's all about supporting small communities and communities in general. They provide extra support to small communities in regards to their community leadership and the supports they can do. They also provide great programming for youth. They provide leadership programs, and not only physical activity but leadership so that we can actually get more youth that are actually role models to the communities. The more role models

we have, the healthier communities are; positive role models, not negative, of course. Women in leadership: doing the workshops. Women are huge decision makers in communities. Many communities, women are underrepresented. The more workshops that we do, the more women that take leadership roles, the better, the healthier, the communities will be. I believe that all departments that I oversee have done a lot for small communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As is the case with other Ministers, I've had an opportunity to go around to many of the smaller communities including the Member opposite', smaller communities that I had the opportunity of visiting this summer. Some of the concerns I heard during those visits, not only in his riding but in other ridings, was the importance of land tenure and ownership. People want to have the ability to improve their houses, build their businesses, and they need certainty as to the ownership, and that is why we are hoping to address this issue of equity leases which hopefully will improve the economic situation in small communities. In the area of justice, one of the programs that has been quite successful is the legal aid outreach which has been delivering legal services to the more remote communities, and hopefully reducing the cost of those legal services that otherwise could probably be only obtained in the larger centres. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Member's question seemed to be more focused on things that aren't in the mandate, so I'd like to talk about a few of the things that may not appear as direct lines in the mandate but are part of core business, or part of some of the things that we're doing. Ultimately, many of the things that we're doing in Health and Social Services are tied directly to the mandate in some capacity. There's no question that it is a challenge to ensure that residents in our small communities have equitable access to programs and services that are available to residents in the larger centres. During my time as Minister, I've made it a priority to get into as many communities, all communities, from the Northwest Territories to meet with residents, to hear from them, to hear about the issues that are important to them, but also to hear from them on recommendations on how to make improvements, because I truly believe that communities are the experts who can provide us real solutions, real local solutions. In that light, we've done a couple of things differently in the Department of Health and Social Services. We're trying new things. We've been working with the community of Tsiigehtchic to put in a pilot program where we could train local people to do local work and provide emergency response when there are crisis in the communities. When there have been some suicide and other challenges in communities, we have gone to communities. We have sent them the extra capacity into the communities to help the communities go through those crises, but we haven't directed or led those particular initiatives because the communities have some of the best ideas. We want to work with the communities. In two different communities in the Northwest Territories, Fort Good Hope and Fort Simpson, Fort Good Hope provided us with a plan on how they wanted to move forward, and how we can be partners in addressing those issues. We're still waiting for a plan from Simpson, but they're working hard on a plan to help them address things like suicide and other things, and we want to work closely with them when they roll out that plan. Mr. Speaker, it's about working with the communities, hearing from the communities, taking their ideas. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. I have next on my list: Member Blake.

MR. BLAKE'S QUESTION

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I know it's on the minds of many people throughout the territory. The Ministers are given a great responsibility through their departments, and I know I've heard many people say this, so I'd like to ask the Ministers: within your departments, are you taking a lead role in decision making, or are you simply reading the lines that the department gives you? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

---LAUGHTER

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Can't take it as notice, can we?

---LAUGHTER

No, I think one of the reasons is that we are where we are is our ability to take a lead role. I think it would be evident quick enough if we are just reading the lines that are given to us. We do have meetings with our departments. If there are some things we do not agree with, we let them know. If there are some items that the Members have raised with us, then we raise that with the departments. There is a lot of pushback between the Ministers and the department, and I think that's a healthy relation, like the relationship we have with the Regular Members. There's some give and take. There's some back and forth. We can't always agree on everything, but that's what makes this an interesting building to work in. The short answer to the question is, no. Personally, I take a lead role. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think anybody who actually knows me, knows that I am not particularly a mouthpiece. I may talk a lot, but I'm not a mouthpiece for other people. I listen to the MLAs in this House; I listen to the people of the Northwest Territories. My role as a Minister is to bring political change, and change to the departments of Health and Social Services and the other departments that I have been responsible for. I know I do drive the departments crazy once in a while trying to bring these initiatives forward, pushing them forward as fast as we had, but I provide political direction to the departments. When it comes to answering MLA responses on constituent issues, there are some legislation limitations, and I'm not prepared to break legislation, but if there are barriers or problems with dealing with constituent issues, we need to work together to change those policies. We need to work together to change those pieces of legislation. When it comes to constituent issues or program issues, I am bound by the policies that exist, but I'm prepared to change them when appropriate, and when it's providing political direction, I'm giving the direction to the department. I do accept their wisdom and their experiences because some of them have different training than you and I have, and we do have to respect those people that are in the system, but the political direction is coming from me, from this Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, we do listen to the MLAs in this House, and we also listen to the expertise that is provided by our departments, but ultimately, the political direction that we provide is ours. We are responsible for it. I am fortunate that at least one of the departments that I work with, Justice, I have long experience as a lawyer: approximately 40 years. In Lands, I have to rely more on their expertise because I am not as familiar with the department. Ultimately, however, the decisions are ours, and I provide political direction to them, and I do not simply always agree with what they suggest. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a feeling that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is laughing at this point. Do I take a seat and just leave things status quo, or am I the decision maker? MLAs notice that we have a five-day return thing for BFs for enquiries that are coming from people. I often send them back. I am sometimes late, often late actually, because I don't like the answers, and so I send them back to the departments and say, like, give me a right answer, give me something that actually makes sense, not the status quo as to how it has been. The whole transformation of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation... I don't want to pretend that was easy. That was huge. Nobody likes change. It is normal that people kind of like status quo. I have pushed that corporation hard and they are amazing. They have done outstanding work. No. Like I say, you can all stop laughing now in the corporation. I do take a leadership role. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm proud to stand here and say I take a lead role in making the decision making because first of all I was elected to be a Minister by all 19 Members here, and that's the role that we are assigned to: to make decisions on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, and particularly the departments we were assigned to. My previous life, I was a private business owner my whole life. I had to make decisions about running a company, employing people, and their well-being since I was 18 years old, and I'm very proud to stand here and say that I've done that, and I work very hard at doing that. I feel that that type of experience has brought me to where I am today, to be able to lead these two departments on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories. I think one of the things that hasn't been captured when we talk about the lead role playing and the decision making that we have to make is that when I am talking to constituents, a lot of people don't understand the process. A lot of the hardest decisions that we have to make, and decisions we have to make are in that Cabinet room amongst all my colleagues on this side of the House, and those get very contentious sometimes. They are probably the hardest place to make some of these decisions that we need to on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories. I am proud to say if I don't think it is right I will stand up to not just my Cabinet colleagues but even to the Premier if need be on a decision that has to affect the people of the Northwest Territories, and I believe that, yes, I do take a lead role as a decision maker. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the first things that I think you need to establish is a good working relationship with your department and the regional centres to build that relationship, build that trust, work on their expertise, their knowledge. A lot of them have been employees with the government for a number of years. However, to find solutions, you do have to question the department, and you question the department not only with your experience, but also with experience and comments and direction from Regular Members, from Indigenous governments, from our partners that we work with on a regular basis, and I think we've done that. We listen to people in the Northwest Territories. We bring that back to the table, and we give direction to the department to make those decisions. As you heard Minister Schumann say, some of those decisions come to the Cabinet room and rely on Cabinet expertise, and knowledge, and input as well to make those decisions, but some of it also comes from working with committee and listening to committee. I think over the last two years being Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, we have seen some significant changes. Some of them might not have been very welcomed at the beginning, but those changes are going to make for a brighter future, better outcomes, better results for residents, for our families, and

that's direction I've given as Minister of Education, Culture and Employment since I've been the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Minister. Next on my list: Member Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S QUESTION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, my question is for Minister Moses, Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Chair, public representation through boards has been an important part of ensuring that government hears from and includes representation of the public. This is a crucial part of our democracy, and to public openness and transparency that we have committed to as a government. The Minister decided to dissolve the board of Aurora College even before review of its operations. In the interests of democracy and transparency, and in the interests of public representation, I would like to ask the Minister: would he do anything different today if he had to make that decision again? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Previous to disbanding of the Aurora College board, we did meet with them on a couple of occasions, and moving forward with the questions and the work that was brought forward in the May-June sitting, and looking at the review of Aurora College and the suggestion to do a foundational review, I felt that it was in the best interests to put in a public administrator to oversee the foundational review and work with the Aurora College staff to make sure that we have the best programs in place to ensure the best outcomes and best services for our residents that want to take post-secondary education here in the Northwest Territories. No, Mr. Chair, I would not do anything different. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY'S QUESTION

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm being mindful of the workload the Ministers have. Taking into account the many beyond-our-control challenges facing our mandate: the remaining term until the writ is dropped, our ministerial mandate, our physical position, and TFF income... Being mindful of all those factors really faces the energy of success. My question to all of the Ministers is on communications. What will you do to improve communication of departmental strategies and action plans over the remaining term so we have a clear idea of the direction our government's going for the respectful benefits to our constituents? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, when it comes to initiatives within Health and Social Services, I have already said it and I will say it again. I am not a big fan of surprises. I am not a big fan of surprising myself but also surprising my colleagues, so I work pretty hard to make sure that information is getting out to them on specific issues and initiatives. But when it comes to sort of the larger picture initiatives or things that we're moving forward, we have actually as a Cabinet been working on a communications staff positions here to help improve overall Cabinet communication, get information out, and more of a government approach. The Department of Health and Social Services is clearly working with the central communications group to try to improve the communications and have more consistent communications. This is work of all of us in Cabinet. This is work of all of the staff in the

Executive and staff in all of the departments. We can do better as far as getting information out to the public and I think the direction we are taking as a Cabinet is going to take us there and make it a little more seamless, a little bit more comprehensive in our communication, but at an individual level, I am still committed to providing Members with updates on department-specific initiatives, things that are happening in the communities that are a surprise, or if there are emergencies, so that they're aware and not surprised when they go out into the communities and are talking to their residents. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, one of the things we heard right at the beginning of this Assembly was the communication between this side and the Regular Members, and I think we've taken steps to improve that. We have conversations with Members all the time, and we have taken steps to improve our communication with the public as well, ensuring that our message gets out there. As far as our communication with the public on what we plan to do for the next two years, we have the business planning process that we go through with the Regular Members and we have two more budgets coming up, so we'll have an opportunity there and even beforehand to communicate with the Members what some of the priorities may be for the next two years. Then, as we go through the budget cycle in February-March, then there's an opportunity again to communicate that publicly. Anything we do, we try to give Members a heads up, and where the opportunity exists, we will send out public notices as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think communication is important, and I've worked with my department to see how we can increase communications with all our partners, as well as with Regular Members, committee, all Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly. One way we're going to do that is we are going to develop plans to monitor, evaluate, and be accountable to this government, but be accountable to our partners as well. We have a lot of big projects that are coming out over the remainder of this government: junior kindergarten, STIP, small community employment fund. We're going to monitor that, we're going to evaluate it, we're going to keep Members up-to-date, but we are also going to make sure that our partners in the Northwest Territories know what's working, and if something is not working, how do we fix it, and work together to find solutions. It's got to be lateral accountability too. We take a lot of responsibility at the department, but we have really good partners that I think also need to be accountable to us so that we can find good solutions and be effective and efficient. That's where we're moving forward with the department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Along with my colleagues, we have worked with Cabinet here to have corporate communications, to how to get the message out there better, along with our departments and their communications staff. I think the question is: how are we going to communicate the strategies and action plans going forward for the next two years? There's a number of ways if we do all this, and one of them starts, top of mind for me, is the Intergovernmental Council that works with the Premier on what's going on with the Northwest Territories, what's important to Aboriginal governments. That's the first one. I think that comes as top of mind like I said. Public engagement is a great big one. As Minister Sebert's well aware, the cannabis legislation coming forward is one of the most engaged ones we have ever had in the Territories and I think that's dependent on committees as well. When they go out and do their legislative proposals, when they go out and discuss this with the public, that engagement is very important. There's a number of different things there, but even

communications, moving these strategies and action plans forward is all dependent on public engagement and their interest. A lot of times, people say the government doesn't do a very good job communicating, but even you can throw all the good stuff out there, the great work that we're doing as a Legislative Assembly, but if the public doesn't have an interest in this, and some of these meetings aren't very well attended. Open and transparency: the Minister travelled to 16 communities, I believe, and some communities, we had one person from the public attend. It's hard to blame the Minister when there's not public interest in some of these things. I think a lot of it is appetite of the public. I know we're working very hard to try to figure out communications, and how do we get things out in a better manner, and reach out because we are a very spread-out territory with 33 remote communities, and because something is heard in this Assembly doesn't necessarily mean it reaches all 33 communities, so we need to continually work on this. Not just the 18th Assembly, the 19th, the 20th... We going to have to continually do the work—

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Minister. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs actually deals with communications with their stakeholders in the way that I know best which is actually engaging them, bringing the stakeholders together and, as a group making decisions. As I stated earlier, I see this process actually as a place to get feedback, a place to decide what we need to work more on, and what we need to improve our own skills on. I have to say that computers is one of my weaknesses. I grew up in an age when manual typewriters were out there, and I can type like a devil—

---LAUGHTER

but I have a hard time navigating computers. I've just nailed down Facebook, and now I realize I have Twitter that I have got to figure out.

---LAUGHTER

What that gave me is that I'm not the abnormality, I believe. I believe that there is a whole generation of people that struggle with communications and websites, so when I actually went onto the housing website and trying to figure out programs, I couldn't navigate the programs. We have a lot of work to do. One of the pieces that I need to do is to make sure that our departments have websites that, actually, people can navigate, people like me who are a little bit old and don't know the social media as much. It is one area that I need to work on. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Whether formally in committee meetings or informally by simply walking down the hall, I'm always open to ideas and suggestions from the Regular Members. With respect to the broader public, as was mentioned, as Minister for open government I visited 14 communities with staff and our helpful consultant, and heard from the public. Sometimes not huge numbers, but we did visit every single riding. Similarly, with respect to the upcoming cannabis legislation, we have been seeking the opinions of the public. Staff has gone out to nine communities and I believe there have been more than 1100 online submissions. I am engaged both with the Regular Members and Cabinet Ministers, of course, but also with the public. That has been illustrated by my visiting many communities with respect to the issue of open government, and also having staff visit communities to assist us in the upcoming cannabis legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Climate change is arguably the most pressing environmental issue of our time. We in the North experience the effects of climate change most severely as temperatures warm and permafrost and ice disappears. It's not enough to study or adapt to climate change. We also have to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. The government is working on a climate change framework, I'm aware of that, and also on an oil and gas strategy. How does the Minister of ENR balance these competing interests in Cabinet? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member is correct. Climate change is something we have been experiencing firsthand, and it's something that we have to adapt to, and we have all heard the federal government make their announcement on carbon tax and their desire to try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They say it is about to get to 30 per cent of your 2005 levels. I think we are well ahead of that. We've also been proactive knowing that the federal government made the announcement, and we want to ensure that we can do what we can to have very little effect on the people of the Northwest Territories through the carbon tax. We've seen climate change firsthand here in the Northwest Territories and I think our biggest challenge is trying to adapt to it and work with those across the Northwest Territories to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. I think this government's got a number of programs and initiatives in place to help address that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. I have next on my list: Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Earlier today, my colleague Mr. Simpson asked a question about would the Ministers resign and honour the results of this process, and they said "no." They have cited a need for transparency and accountability, and yet in the Territorial Leadership Committee, which this process is modelled after, secret ballots were fine. Vote totals could be kept secret, but the process used to judge confidence has to be public. I find that very disingenuous to the reason we are here today, which is about accountability in ministerial performance. My question for each of the Ministers is: given that they are seeking greater transparency and will not honour the results of today's vote, will they commit to revising the Territorial Leadership Committee so that all leadership decisions in this Assembly are public on the floor of this House? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this question was actually asked, and we had a significant amount of debate about it in early days of this Assembly. I have no problem standing by any vote that I make in this House. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Very interesting question, because when we're voting for the leadership of the Executive Council and the Premier of the Northwest Territories, I think that's a little bit of a different situation than having a secret ballot of trying to kick somebody out, where we have all said we want to bring it to the floor and have an open and transparent vote. These are two different issues. One is we're picking the leadership of the territorial government, the six Cabinet Members and the Premier to make decisions on behalf of

the people of the Northwest Territories. This is a political body. Political ideas are exchanged here. It's politics at the end of the day. If you want to kick somebody out in a secret ballot and not stand up and say in revocation why you want to kick this person out and give that person an opportunity to speak to that is two different things, in my opinion. I stand by my decision that I would rather have a secret ballot for Cabinet and the Premier and have an open process for trying to kick someone out of Cabinet. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As this is a new process, hasn't ben been done in over about 20 years with the mid-term review, it was discussed at length with all Members during the terms of reference to see how we would be voting in this open and transparent style of government. With the streak of ballots during the mid-term review, I think that's another discussion that needs to be discussed by all 19 Members if we are going to look at the TLC and make it an open and transparent way of governing as well. At this point, I would keep the TLC process the same way it would be. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I mentioned earlier, as one of the members of the rules committee, I opposed the secret ballot at the mid-term review for reasons that I set out in my minority report. I think we should look at the whole TLC process. I'm not speaking for Cabinet, of course; just for myself. I think if we had a consensus that it should be open, I would certainly suggest as Minister of transparency now that that would likely be something we should look at for the next TLC process. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT C. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in any election that you have across the Northwest Territories, be it hunters and trappers, municipal election, territorial election, you go into a voting booth and you vote. I agree with that. As the Territorial Leadership Committee, as we elect Ministers of this Cabinet, we go into a voting booth and we vote. But if there is a movement to have a vote of non-confidence or confidence, then I was firmly of the opinion right off the start that if you have non-confidence in any particular Member, then you should stand up, look that Member in the eye, and say "I have no confidence in you" and would expect that Minister to resign. We do it through revocation. We do it through revocation. When we've removed someone in the past, we've had an open vote. I would stay with the terms of the TLC.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As stated earlier, if a vote of non-confidence came on my way, I would not step down. It's really important to note again that we only have two women here, and it's been many, many years since we had a woman on Cabinet, so you would have to take me out screaming and kicking. I will not give up this seat easily. However, in saying that, I do want to say that I am about change. That's been my whole career. I think that we should look at the terms of reference, I think we should look at our processes, but I do not think it should be a decision just made by myself or made by Cabinet. I think that is a Caucus decision that we should be looking at as all Regular MLAs to make decisions on how we change the rules and procedures. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. I have next on my list: Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have questions for three Ministers, all the three Ministers sitting to the left of the Premier. I had initially had a lot of discussion on layoffs at the GNWT. I found that as we moved through the process the layoffs were very selective. I find that layoffs are devastating to the families and the employees that are receiving layoff notice. I find that layoffs have a very adverse effect on markets, whether it is in a market community like Yellowknife or in other markets of Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik, and so on. I also find that layoffs adversely affect the economy. In addition, I find that if people who are laid off in the GNWT, who have arrived here as maybe single people or couples and now have families of five and are leaving the Northwest Territories, then that has a negative impact on the transfer of payments versus what would be saved as far as the actual salary that is saved. Quickly to my question: do these three Ministers, when they are doing layoffs, do they do any evaluation of the position being laid off, as in all these points that I considered? Do those Ministers take a look at those points when they're doing layoffs? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think that this question may have been asked before, and it was something about doing a socio-economic impact of layoffs. There's a number of reasons a position would be identified for layoffs. In the two years since we have been elected... Well, in 2016-2017, we had 124 positions that were reduced by the NWT. Fifty-six employees were impacted by these layoffs: 40 of the 56 were redeployed; five retired; and 11 were laid off and took a layoff option. There's a number of things that the department looks at, but it's unfortunate that sometimes it's a part of doing business where people move around the country for jobs. It's unfortunate we lose any people in the Northwest Territories because they were laid off, but at the end of the day, we like to try to think that we had worked with employees to have every option available to them and layoff is the final. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What I'm thinking about as soon as this question comes up here is the amalgamation of the two departments and how that proceeded to make the Department of Infrastructure. This was something that's brought two huge departments together. I personally am not selective on who gets laid off or the positions that are brought forward to be given layoff notice. I know the department did a great job accommodating the people within and spreading them out within the Northwest Territories as the Minister just said, but there is an evaluation process to do that, and we take all that stuff very seriously. This question is more than just: are we being selective on who is getting laid off? This is about the leadership of the Government of the Northwest Territories. We've had to make changes. We've all been elected based on change for the greater part of this Assembly, and it was something that was unfortunate that we've had to do to streamline things. As leaders, we're chosen to make decisions that need to be made. At the end of the day, we brought these two departments together for the benefit of the residents of the Northwest Territories to make it a more efficient, streamlined organization within the fiscal landscape that we presently have. But I do not personally make decisions on who gets laid off, and the Department of HR does a great job trying to accommodate them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think all of us realize how painful layoffs can be, particularly those of us who live in the smaller communities because it's not as though we do not

know the people that are unfortunately laid off. These decisions are not made in any arbitrary or random manner. There is a careful evaluation made of our needs going forward. As Minister McLeod mentioned, there were layoffs, but ultimately there were, the numbers he mentioned, only 11 that took the layoff options. I am not downplaying what that would have meant to those people. Certainly, it was a very serious event in their lives to be laid off. I understand, however, overall that the civil service is no smaller than it was when we started two years ago. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list: Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I was a bit worried that there's a few of us that have not asked a lot of questions, and we're going to get jammed up here at the end. I have a question for Minister Cochrane as the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. We certainly heard a lot in this House about new federal infrastructure funding programs and how that will help the NWT with energy megaprojects and Roads to Resources. I am not convinced that these are going to always fly with the federal government, and they certainly, I don't think, are going to make any meaningful contribution to greenhouse gas reductions, or perhaps even help us with housing needs. I would like the Minister to explain and commit to the preparation of proposals for federal infrastructure funding that will better enable us to meet our climate change and housing needs. Is she prepared to make that commitment? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has been working diligently with the federal government to try to address the housing needs within the Northwest Territories. We are not working alone in that. We are in partnership with the other two territories because it's important that all the territories stand together. We have unique needs that all three territories share that are different than the southern jurisdictions, so we have a tri-territorial partnership. I know that I was asked to be able to share that. That is a public document. It is accessible. We have been negotiating. We've gone down there, and because of our negotiations with the federal government, we actually got \$300 million just recently for the three territories to address the needs of northern residents. They also have made a commitment that they would look at base-plus funding which is a new move because before it was always based on per capita funding. The territorial government and the federal government are working hard to address housing needs within the Northwest Territories. I am always open to feedback from the Regular Members. If they have ideas that they'd like to share with me, I am open to hearing their suggestions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list is Member Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON'S QUESTION

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would just like to make one comment. I looked everybody in their eye and told them what I was going to do here today. Let us not say "secret ballots" whatever. I can stand up in the House and say what I am going to do. I just want to make that clear.

I also had a second question but my colleague already asked it, so I am going to talk about what happened after the selection of Cabinet. I was advised by the Cabinet, and one particular Minister, "You have got to go down that hallway and start working with people, talking to people,

talking to the Ministers to get your questions and concerns answered." I took that word and have been doing that. However, when I asked all the Ministers this question: can the Minister describe how they have worked with Ordinary MLAs and come down to our side of the hallway, and met with our concerns and our issues to see how we are doing with things? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am always happy to hear from MLAs, and I often do drop down to your side of the hall and to hear your opinions. You will recall, of course, that just a couple of weeks ago, we were up at Reindeer Station, and there was a full discussion of many of the issues, and nobody shied away from that discussion. You had access to us. We heard all of your ideas and took many of them with us. I think that openness will continue. Certainly, for me. I can say that I will continue to meet with you whenever you want. Very happy to come down and speak to you in your office, and I am sure that I speak for the Cabinet in that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, early in the life of this Assembly, I think even before the TLC, I think I talked to a lot of new Members and said, "Make sure regardless of where you are sitting, whether you are on the Cabinet side or the non-Cabinet side, go up and down the hallway and talk to people because this building is about relationships. This building is about working together." I do. I feel like I do get down the hallway. I talk to Members in their offices. I am thankful that most of the Members come to my office on a regular basis and talk to me about issues that are important to them, whether we are talking about a constituent issue which is a little different than a policy or a program or a legislative issue. I have travelled with Members to their communities. I have spent time with them in their communities talking to their residents. I do believe that it is critical for Members on both sides to work together, and to spend time going down and talking to each other in their offices, and it is two-way. I feel like Members have felt like they could come to my office. My office door is always open, and it will remain open regardless of where I sit in this building, and I am looking forward to continuing to have that relationship where people feel comfortable, hopefully feel comfortable coming to my office, and I feel comfortable going to theirs. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Relationships. That is what it is all about, this job. It is not just with the Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly. It is about having relationships with all people of the Northwest Territories. We have to be very approachable, be able to have conversations, but the biggest thing I think as a Minister, in particular, is you have to have the ability to listen. Listening is the best way of communicating. In my ability, one of the things that my Cabinet colleagues will probably tell you is I tend to probably sit there and listen more than I do talking. I have been to all 33 communities of the Northwest Territories in the last two years already. I have not got to go with every Member across the floor on their constituency things, but I have gone with a number of you to your communities and hear what the residents had to say in the Northwest Territories. We take that back and use those as part of our deliberations and considerations on how we move things forward. I think my biggest strength is to be able to listen to what people have to say. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would be the first to admit that I do not go up and down the hallways of the Regular Members on a regular basis. Being an out-of-town

Minister when I do get to Yellowknife, there are other meetings that I have with other organizations and partners that I work with closely to address educational concerns, and however, I do communicate through e-mails, phone calls, correspondence to committees. As Minister Abernethy said, when I am in town and I am in my office, the door is always open. I do get Members that come by and sit down, talk about the issues, and even just discussions. I also travel to the communities on community tours. I have attended constituency meetings with Members, and willing to continue to do that in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as the longest serving Member of this House, I feel sometimes that with my past experience, and I think I have tried to provide advice to a lot of the Members when they first got elected as to how it works. Communication is big. I would like to think I have a relationship with all the Members over there. I have Members coming into my office and we chat, and we have a lot of opportunities to communicate. I go down the hall once in a while, maybe not as often as I should, but we have plenty of opportunity to communicate. I am also a Member of the "outdoor Caucus," so I have an opportunity out there to communicate with some of the Members as well.

Ministers have said, communication is key in the work that we do, and I think I have taken that to heart. I do take to heart the fact that I am the longest serving Member in this Assembly, and I have tried to provide advice to Members about experiences I have learned from the past. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do believe actually that I have a good working relationship with most of the MLAs. I do walk down the hall, not only because my nephew actually needs a ride home but also to talk to people as well. I receive phone calls late at night, and I have spent hours talking to Regular MLAs on the phone in the evenings. I am not opening that up to everyone else as well. It is not nice all the time when it is midnight and I am still on the phone. I recognize that I do not know everything. I am old enough that I feel comfortable enough to say that I have areas to grow in, and when I know that there are Regular MLAs out there that have expertise in different fields, such as youth sports or politics, I go to those MLAs and ask them for their advice because those are areas of weakness, and I respect their expertise, and that only helps me grow as a better person and a better Minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list is Member Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK'S QUESTION

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was a very entertaining conversation, and the song, "You are always on my mind" comes to mind after listening to the Ministers. Mr. Chair, earlier I spoke about Indigenous governments, and Indigenous people, and communities across the territory. My next question, the direction I am going, for all the Ministers in their department, in their respective departments, I know there has been a lot of engagement with the Inuvialuit, with other Indigenous groups especially in my region. The Members mentioned earlier that given a vote of non-confidence, they would not resign. Maybe there is something of a lesson learned coming from things like this, and what else can we do better, and where can we improve, and where can we accelerate, and sometimes drive policy faster than other places in Canada? We are certainly in a position to do that with this government seeing how we work with

other Indigenous organizations in the territory. Mr. Chair, my question to the Ministers are, in all their departments that they lead is: what will you do next in the next two years, and then the next five years, ten years, moving forward, so that this Legislative Assembly is at its best standing as we change leadership in the next term, and as well further down the road, and how are they going to plan to work with the Indigenous organizations collaboratively? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As Members know, over the last few years, we have implemented a lot of strategies, action plans, initiatives that we are going to have to monitor and evaluate over the next two years, so that gives us direction to make evidence-based decisions for the next government that is coming in. I am very excited with the work the Department of Education has done, and the work that we started with Indigenous governments, with the IRC as well. Monitoring, evaluating, and making sure that the decisions that we have made as a department and as a government continue to be pursued, supported with resources financially, human resources, so that we see success, so that we see our Northerners getting the jobs. We see our Northerners getting educated. We see success in early childhood. We are going to monitor, evaluate, and then at the end of this government, we usually develop a transition document, and hopefully all the initiatives that we have started, have implemented within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will continue to be supported in future governments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the things I would like to see before the end of this government, I think we have already started the work, and then as we transition into a 19th Assembly, I would like to see the financial situation improve so that there is an opportunity for the 19th Assembly to make a lot of investments that would benefit the people in the Northwest Territories, and I think we are well on our way. We just need to continue to do the work for the next two years.

On the Environment and Natural Resources side of it, caribou is a big issue. One of the things, and I have given a shout out to the Aboriginal government before. I thought they showed a lot of leadership in governing themselves as far as the harvesting of caribou goes. I would like to see, not only the next Assembly, but 20 Assemblies down the road, I would like them to still have the opportunity to practice what we have been practicing for many years. I think through the leadership shown by many of the Aboriginal governments, I think that is going to happen. There is a number of other initiatives that I would like to see this Assembly complete within the next two years, and as we go through the business plans and in our conversations with the Members, I think we will have an opportunity to work with them on advancing some of the issues and priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, none of us are guaranteed to be here beyond the next two years. The next Assembly could be 18 or 19 new Members with new ideas, new initiatives, but the things we do today, the things that we do in this Assembly do have lasting impacts on people of the Northwest Territories. It is important that we work together to get these things right. There are things that I would like to see concluded in the life of this government, and I will talk about Health and Social Services, specific things, that will carry on beyond. One of the things that we need to get done is we really need to lock down and get the work done in the long-term care facilities. We have a plan but we need to get those buildings

built and those people employed. That is going to create employment in all regions of this Northwest Territories. Hundreds of new jobs that do not exist today that will exist outside of Yellowknife, in Hay River in Inuvik, in the Deh Cho, in the Sahtu, real jobs. As I have travelled around the Northwest Territories, I have talked to leaders about employing local people, training local people for local work. There are huge opportunities here, and Health and Social Services, although it is a social provider of services, it is also a massive economic driver. We employ more people in Health and Social Services than any other department in the Government of the Northwest Territories, so these things that we are doing will have long-term impact on people of the Northwest Territories, both from employment but from a high quality care. There is lots of work to get done. I am excited by the opportunities that it presents, and I am excited to work with Members to make these things a reality before we are gone in two years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. How would we work with Indigenous organizations collaboratively in the life of the Assembly in years to come? First of all, my portfolios all based greatly around economic development, and our commitment is to work to help support the growth of Aboriginal governments and Aboriginal people, and also help them build capacity. These are very important to the people of the Northwest Territories, in particular, Aboriginal organizations going forward because we need these types of supports and capacity going forward to make a better Northwest Territories for everybody, and concluding particularly Aboriginal governments and their people in their regions. My department is working very hard on these sorts of things, and we will continue to do that.

I think one of the other things that we need to do collaboratively with Aboriginal governments and people in the Northwest Territories is collaboration around federal issues. Our issues sometimes do not exactly match up with theirs, and in a lot of cases, they do. They have particular issues around some federal issues that we need to work with them collaboratively moving things forward along with the federal government. I think that will continue on well past this Assembly because every federal government has their own agenda going forward.

That being said, it comes back to some of the stuff we have already talked about today. We need to help some of these Aboriginal governments settle their land claims, get on with self-government, get those concluded so they can bring certainty to their organizations and their people and to continue to work on the betterment of residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. How will we support Indigenous governments even after we are finished here? I went to university as an adult single parent with two kids, and as an Indigenous woman, it was actually when I took Indigenous studies that I learned about the trauma that happened with Indigenous people, things I did not know about, things that were kept a secret growing up.

I also learned about self-government 20 years ago and the healing process. I heard that, I took that to heart, and I believe that. All of the years that I have practised, outside of these Chambers as well, I have focused on self-government and giving Indigenous people the right to self-determination and the right to define their own paths and their own healing.

I am not waiting until the next Legislative Assembly. I have been doing work. The Housing Corporation has done a community initiative that we work with Aboriginal governments, not only the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, but there are other Aboriginal governments that have come

forward, so that we can work in partnership to address their housing needs and meet the needs of the Housing Corporation as well.

We are doing a communication strategy, and we are revising our workshops for women in politics so that we actually have a mentoring piece, and I am hoping that will carry on. I know that I am committed to mentoring other women in leadership, and I am hoping that the other solo woman here will actually provide more time after as well. I know that we are both committed to seeing more women in leadership. MACA has just finished the online training components for Aboriginal self-government so that they have the skills, and we are always looking at revising and updating it. I think that we have worked hard to support Aboriginal governments now, and when the time comes, the transitional report will have my recommendations as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly the settlement of land claims is an absolute priority of this government. Of course, we have to work with the Aboriginal governments on that, obviously, and we also often have to work with the federal government. With respect to the settlement of those claims, that will give certainty to the residents and the industry in the Northwest Territories and will enhance our economic future.

With respect to my departments, in particular, the Lands Department, we are working on regional land use planning in the Northwest Territories, consulting with our Aboriginal partners, and hopefully moving ahead. Again, these plans, whether it is a land use plan or a land claim and self-government, will give certainty to the residents of the Northwest Territories and enhance our economic future. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Colleagues, at this time, the chair is going to call for a lunch recess, and we will back at one o'clock. Masi.

---LUNCH RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Good afternoon, Members. We left off from questions to Ministers. We'll continue with that. I have next on my list, Member Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S QUESTION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we all know that when we started at this Legislative Assembly, the first couple budgets, as I mentioned in an earlier question, held quite a bit of contention and consternation. We felt like we were fighting a battle rather than working together. Members, of course, clearly felt that it was their job to uphold and protect the mandate. Certainly, the government had felt that it was their responsibility to get the fiscal house in order.

We know that, Mr. Chair, as I mentioned this kind of had a massive back-and-forth effect between us. I think the biggest problem, Mr. Chair, was that we felt like we were not a part of the decision-making process and that we weren't included in it. My question is for the Minister of Finance, Minister McLeod, I'm wondering. He had the opportunity again: would he do anything specifically to change the process again and especially as it relates to having MLAs be more inclusive in the process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this was a process that this Assembly has viewed for a while. There is the business planning process that we go through where members have an opportunity to have input into the budget. We recognize the fact that

we had some mandate items that we were looking out for. Members would write back to the finance minister with their suggestions of the budget. Some of them were incorporated. Some of them were not. Some of the things that cabinet wanted in the budget were incorporated. Some were not on the advice of committee, so the process we used right now as far as involving committee, and we have our conversations as we spoke of earlier this morning. We have our conversations with individual Members of this assembly. The process we use, I think, is one that serves the consensus style of government that we operate under very well. We'll continue to use that process. Again, there is opportunity for input from all Members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Colleagues, I'd like to draw your attention to visitors in the gallery. We have with us Mr. Michael McLeod, former member of 15th, 16th Assembly. Welcome. We also have a delegation, members of House of Commons, standing committee on finance. Welcome to our Assembly.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the City of Yellowknife has recently unveiled its municipal budget and they are asking for a tax increase in order to pay for an increased amount of service demand, particularly around social services. I'd like to ask Minister Abernethy how is he going to work with the City of Yellowknife to offset those increased costs. At this point, we're asking Yellowknife taxpayers to support what many consider to be a territorial responsibility, which is providing social services to our poorest residents many of whom come to Yellowknife to access those services. How is the Minister going to assist the City of Yellowknife so Yellowknifers don't have to look forward to increasing amounts of taxes on a municipal level to pay for these services that again are rightfully a territorial responsibility? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I know there is some housing money that does go to the city for their Homes/Housing First Program and a number of the other things that they're doing. That wouldn't necessarily hit the taxpayer, but I do know that as by way of example, the city is funding the Safe Ride Program. They haven't approached at this point asking us for money, but we do hear the concern. Ms. Green did bring up that question in the House the other day. Since then, I've had a conversation with the Department of Health and Social Services to see review some of the pots of funding that we have available to see if any of our wellness money or other money might be something that the community of Yellowknife might be able to take advantage of in order to help them not put those costs on to the taxpayers. That's work that we're doing right now is exploring some of those funds. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the government is advancing three road projects during this Assembly. This is a question for the Minister of Infrastructure. The road that's likely to have the greatest economic impact to my view is the road to the Slave Geological Province. This road has the potential to expand and extend the economic viability of the current diamond mines and to connect prospective mining developments to markets, yet the road that is the top of the government's list is one that stops 50 kilometres short of a potential mine that itself has only an eight-year life span. Why is the road to Whati this government's top road priority? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This Legislative Assembly has a mandate for three highway corridors. The Whati, Slave, and the Slave Geological. The Whati is not our number one priority. The situation with the Whati road, it was a P3 project. It was submitted to the federal government under that basis along with our business plan. It was selected through the federal government's process to conditionally fund the Whati road conditional on us getting through the Environmental Assessment Project so there's no tier ranking on these highway systems. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, Member Nadli.

MR. NADLI'S QUESTION

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to all of the Ministers. Can you provide one example of an achievement you are most proud of and how you help small communities? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're particularly proud of the expansion of the legal aid outreach services. There are, of course, lawyers who are located in some of the bigger centres but they are not in the smaller communities. This program allows people to access legal services even if they are living outside of communities where there is an easy access to lawyers. We are proud of this program. It does fill that gap also of need for legal services between having a lawyer for such things as real estate and at the end, legal aid.

In such areas as wills and estates, relations with landlords, and so on, this service has been particularly helpful to the citizens and particularly the small communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think probably the biggest achievement is the passing of Bill 16. It allows four-year-olds to enter the junior kindergarten system in all of our communities, all 33 communities across the Northwest Territories. Not only it is giving the four-year-olds a better chance at life and early life but Bill 16 also introduced Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices which gives our teachers the time to prepare, collaborate, have professional development done in all our communities as well. I have better quality education for our students. Not only is that a great achievement in our small communities, all 33 communities, but I also worked on building a partnership with our education authorities, the NWT Superintendents' Association, as well as the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think through the exercise that we have gone through over the last couple of years, I think we have been positioning this government very well to make investments in infrastructure that, I think, would benefit the small communities. Working with the enhancements to the Small Community Employment Fund pot of money, through working with Regular Members, we were able to enhance that pot by about \$3 million. Again working with Regular Members, that pot has been specifically targeted for small community employment. I think that just realizing some of the decisions that we have had to make and we made them and what benefit that they might have to creating employment in small communities and communities across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, one of the areas that I am particularly proud of, and I think this entire Assembly should be, is the work that we have done to support wellness at community level through our wellness funding that we do provide to the communities that they use for things like on-the-land programs and other things that we are doing.

Building on that, I think something that is very exciting is the work that we have been doing with Indigenous partners to actually develop an evaluation framework for on-the-land programming, which is something that has never been done before. That will actually help us and help the Aboriginal governments that are delivering these programs assess those programs and make sure that they are adding value and that they are providing these supports that the communities and the individuals want.

Another thing that I am proud of, and I think the Assembly should be, is the amount of Healthy Living Fairs that we have actually been taking out to communities throughout the Northwest Territories and actually working with communities in the delivery of these programs, sharing very valuable information on healthy living, early childhood development, and healthy families. This is exciting work that is happening, and I really applaud the Aboriginal Health and Community Wellness Division of the Health and Social Services for being so incredibly proactive and working with the communities on a daily basis. Thank you, Mr. Chair

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The community that has probably benefited the most from my agenda so far is the road to Whati, securing the funding for the road to their community. As a small community, that is going to make a big change in their community.

As my whole portfolio holds a number of things, I think the number one thing that we have done in Infrastructure and ITI, in particular ITI, is our economic diversification agenda. We have moved a number of initiatives forward that I think are going to benefit the communities around tourism, in particular; the agriculture strategy, as we move that forward, we have talked about how we are implementing those in communities across the Northwest Territories; the traditional economy; and also, the NWT Arts and moving that initiative forward. Particularly that one, because there are a lot of traditional crafts that are done in the communities, and we try to bring their stuff to market, not just to residents of the Northwest Territories, but to the whole world. The department is doing a great job on that. As the Minister of Finance said, we have the Small Communities Fund that we are bringing forward, and I think if we use that along with some of the cap funding, we can make a really big difference in some of the small communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the work that I have done that makes me the most proud of the support that we have provided to small communities was actually giving small communities a voice. One out of ten residents in the Northwest Territories actually replied to our housing survey. Every single community replied to that housing survey. We are doing things, we are listening to them, and we are making changes, and within a cultural context. Within the new seniors' homes that we have been building for the last few years, we have a gathering space for seniors to be able to socialize, which is really important for their well-being. We are looking at other things that we can incorporate into our seniors' units, such as smoke houses on the outside and things that are culturally appropriate. At the beginning of the next session, you will hear some of the policies that we have made changes to with housing, and again, two of my favourites that are coming up here are: the new housing design that is

actually for multigenerational people. I have heard that not all people feel that they are overcrowded. Not all people want to have their own little white house and nice white picket fence. Some people like to live with their family members. I am addressing that and working with that. The other thing that I am really proud is going to be the lease-to-own. Not everyone in small communities can get a bank mortgage, because of things like not even having a bank in their community or having bad credit. We are actually working with people to give them leases to own, because ownership in your housing is key. It gives pride. It works to save us money, and it works to give pride in the community. Of all the things that I am proud of is the work that we are doing with housing to address the needs of small communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. I have next on my list, Member Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON'S QUESTION

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, a few of the Ministers touched on this earlier, but I want to address this question to everyone regardless. It is about how Ministers deal with constituency issues. There are some Ministers who I know that, when I have a legitimate constituency concern, they are going to treat it as a priority. For example, I have had many constituency issues related to education. I have come to trust that Minister Moses's office will deal with these issues immediately, and they will be solved even if that means going above and beyond and finding creative solutions.

For some MLAs, the way Ministers handle constituency issues might not seem like an important consideration for a Mid-Term Review, so this might seem like a softball question, but I have seen the positive and direct impact that assistance from Ministers' offices can have on a constituent's life. However, sometimes I will not hear back from a Minister for weeks on an issue. I am not even sure if they read the e-mails I send or the ones that are sent back to me from their offices. I often feel like I am getting a boilerplate response, and there is no effort put in on the part of the Minister. Ministerial assistance and engagement with constituency issues also educates Ministers about the issues that our residents are facing. If I bring the same type of issue over and over again, and it just gets forwarded on to the department and whatever comes back is rubberstamped, then that Minister does not see what is going on on the ground and how their policies could be changed to better serve residents.

I want to know: when a constituency issue is brought to a Minister's office, what is the policy for dealing with it? For example, do Ministers even read the e-mails we send? Do they read the responses from the department? Do they ever send the response back saying they want something better? I would like to hear each Minister's step-by-step process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I read every MLA e-mail that comes across my desk. When they come across my desk, I then forward it to the department with an indication of what I hope to see or what I expect to see in a response, recognizing that there are policies and procedures out there.

We do have a five-day turnaround. Sometimes we cannot meet the five-day turnaround based on the complexity; so our protocol requires us to send an update to MLAs saying we need more time. Yes, absolutely, from time to time, given the large number of e-mails that come across my desk from MLAs, sometimes we are late, and I apologize for that, but for the most part, we get within the five days. If we do not get the five days, you do get the heads up.

Sometimes e-mails come back after I have given direction, and they say what I expect they are going to say and provide the supports we need. In those situations, I will send those e-mails, and I do send those e-mails out on my own behalf for the most part. There are times when the MLAs' requests come back and what I see from the department is, in my mind, completely unacceptable. It does not answer to the question, it does not even come close to answering the question, or it is just, frankly, too policy-based without any compassion. I do send those back, Mr. Chair, on a regular basis, looking for more. As they became more familiar with me over the last couple of years, I find that a lot more of the e-mails are coming that are more in kind or in keeping with what I hope to see from the department in responding to the MLAs. We need a compassionate system here, Mr. Chair. That is what we are trying to do.

I do take the Member's point, and I said this earlier: the input we are getting from the MLAs from their constituents actually helps inform change within the system. If we do get something over and over and over again, it does ask the question: is there something wrong with the policy? Is the policy right? Is it time for a review? Is it time for a change? Some of those questions that come on a regular basis do result in real change in programs and policies within this government. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, when we get constituent issues from the Members, we usually send it out to the department. I usually send it off to the department, and we will get a response back. There are times when, along with Minister Abernethy, the response is not one that we were expecting, was too bureaucratic, or was too policy-driven. Again, that goes back to my earlier comment this morning. If we hear about it being policy-driven, then maybe the policy needs to be looked at. Sometimes you need to use common sense in dealing with a lot of these constituent issues.

We get issues from constituents in most ridings actually e-mailed directly to us. What we try to do sometimes is make the Member aware that I have got this e-mail from your constituent. They may be able to provide more insight into that particular issue, and there are times when the request requires a lot of information that goes beyond our five-day turnaround. For the most part, we have been trying to give Members a heads up that this is going to take a bit longer than the five-day turnaround, and then, we will provide the proper information. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Usually when we get a constituency issue, we start that process of trying to find a solution on the same day. In some cases, we will need more information, and if we cannot get it out of the Member, in some cases, the Member will share the constituent's phone number with us, or the person, and we will follow up with them directly. In some cases, the constituent just needs to go back to their caseworker or the regional staff to find a solution. If timeline is urgency, we do mark it down as a priority, and try to get the information as quickly as possible, but we look at every avenue to find a solution for the constituent, and that means working with the Member very closely, and in some cases, working with the constituent. The office does try to get a solution as quickly as possible. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair, when we receive a request, I usually review with my ministerial assistant, and we then send it to the relevant department. I would like to think that we are always getting answers within five days but I know that is not always the case. When we do not get back to you or the person who is putting in the concern within five days, we obviously

should be indicating the reasons for that. Sometimes issues are complex, but I do believe that in most cases, we do respond on a timely basis. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When I first started in the Legislative Assembly a couple of years ago, housing was identified as, if not one of the major needs in the territories, if not the number one need. I am taking a moment to address the federal government because I am completing my mandate commitment to lobby for northern housing.

How do I address constituents? Housing was a number one need, and therefore when I first started, I was reading every single e-mail that came through, not realizing that I was getting hundreds of e-mails every week. In all honesty, I stopped reading the initial e-mails, and I started transferring them to the departments, and I still read every single e-mail that comes back with the reply from the departments, and I look at the initial questions to make sure that they are addressing them properly. We do try to be timely, although in all honesty, sometimes we are late. Sometimes, you will get an e-mail from my office that says, "We need more time." That might be that the question is very difficult, but a more higher probability is that I did not like the reply, so I have sent it back to get back to them, and give me something that I can actually stand behind and agree that that is the right philosophy. Yes, sometimes, we are late. We get a lot of e-mails, but I make a point of reviewing every single e-mail, and making sure that they answer the questions to the satisfaction of where I want the departments to go as a leader. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do not know if there is much I can add to this because we have all made our point, and yes, we have a procedure in place that does this. We have a five-day response. I believe the Premier went and implemented a tracking system because there were so many overwhelming e-mails, particularly for Minister Cochrane, and Minister Abernethy, and their departments. They get hundreds of e-mails a day, where I probably only maybe get 10 or 20 e-mails a day, and most of them are not constituency issues. They may have something to do with the Department of Infrastructure or contracting and these sorts of things.

My colleague across the floor, we share a community. I think we have a very limited number of constituency issues compared to probably the rest of the Northwest Territories, but the procedures are put in place, and the Premier has implemented this tracking program, and we try to adhere to the policies. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Education. Junior kindergarten implementation has had many issues including a \$1.7 million shortfall in funding to the district education authorities, unresolved issues such as busing, and the impacts of early childhood programs including Aboriginal Head Start and Montessori. Rather than debate this, and I do not want the Minister to go there. I want to give the Minister a chance to see what lessons he may have learned. What would the Minister do differently if he had to start over again with junior kindergarten implementation, and how would he apply these lessons to future initiatives? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the big lesson we learned in junior kindergarten, and actually Bill 16 altogether is communication; that we inform Members. We inform Members as well as education authorities, councils, parents, about the implementation of junior kindergarten moving forward. It was a good lesson learned, and good feedback from Members, as well as Cabinet, and our partners. Moving forward, I think we can build a better partnership communicating with anything dealing with education, and make a better and smoother transition on any of our future initiatives. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. I have next on my list, Member Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in her candidacy speech for Cabinet, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs said, "My vision for the 18th Legislative Assembly is to address many of the issues long talked about but not acted on." One of those issues is to how to close the multi-million dollar funding shortfall for communities. In her mandate letter, the Premier directed the Minister to develop a strategy to close the gap in funding levels to meet municipal core needs. My question is: what has the Minister accomplished in this, and will the Minister be able to complete this strategy during the remainder of our term? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The funding gap for community governments is actually a very serious issue that we do need to address. Yes, we are working on a strategy, and we will have that completed within the next year actually. Not by the end of my term, before the end of my term.

We have gotten some money from the territorial government for operating the maintenance. The gap is actually more, right at this time, in the capital monies. Thank you to the federal government who have left the building, that they actually, when they give infrastructure money, we are prioritizing the capital needs of communities based on the funding gap, so it is not the ideal solution at this point. We will have a strategy coming up, but in reality, we do have fiscal restraints, or not restraints, fiscal realities that impact all of our departments, but it is not something that I have taken lightly, or that I have forgotten. It is a priority of mine to address. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for two Ministers: Minister Abernethy and Minister Cochrane.

Mr. Speaker, the small communities in the Northwest Territories want to retain their elders. They want their elders at home. As everyone knows, the elders' population is diminishing, and as they get older, the elders then are usually sent to a central location into a long-term care. I recognize that long-term care cannot be provided in all the communities because of the economies of scale, but there are huge benefits to keeping elders in their home, in their communities, and in their home; otherwise we are referring to aging in place.

Maybe just a little background. I feel that there is a shared responsibility. I do not want a response that there is going to indicate that there is something in place because there is not

anything in place. What I think we need to do for aging in place, we need to develop both a program from Housing that keeps elders in place that are able to function in their home for ten years; and then also having a program that has continuing care as well. I will come down to a question. Do the Ministers know that using 2017 dollars, the value of you keeping 300 elders in their homes, in their communities, is worth almost half a billion dollars? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we know the value, not just financial benefits, but the human benefits, of keeping people in their communities. Everything the Member said is correct. This is something that this government is committed to. This is part of my mandate, and this is something that we are working on. We have come forward with a continuing care action plan, which actually articulates programs that we are going to put in place at a community level, including moving forward with community and family caregivers, which I know the Member thinks is exciting, and I think is exciting as well.

This continuing care action plan is not a Health and Social Services document alone. In order to help people stay in their communities, it is going to take partnership. It is going to take the Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services. I know that in the continuing care action plan there is direction for the Housing Corporation to actually work on some of the programs that they have that will allow seniors to make renovations to their homes so that they can stay there longer. This could include things like ramps. This could include things like grab bars. This could include widening doorways if there are mobility issues. These are things that the Housing Corporation is currently working on.

When we work together on independent living units in the communities, we have actually worked together, and the new design includes program space so that we can actually provide some high-quality day programs for residents, not just the ones living in the independent living units, but those that are living in their own homes or in their family's homes, so that they have a place to go where they can receive some supports. We have already begun enhancing homecare. We put homecare positions in communities that have never had them before, like in the Deh Cho region.

We are looking at doing the homecare review. We are doing the RFP on that right now so that we can go out and do a review to figure out where we need to put our resources for maximum benefit so that we can really help people stay in their communities. I have received a lot of input from the Member on this. I have received input from the Members on this side as well as that side. I think we are going to in the right direction. A lot of work is still required. We are two years through our mandate, we have got two more to go, and a lot needs to happen, and a lot will happen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As an Indigenous woman, our elders and our seniors are very important to us culturally, and I think that crosses all cultures in all honesty. They are our knowledge keepers, and we need to value them. We need to make sure that their last days are actually in a place that is respectful and has dignity.

I think the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has done a lot. We have built seniors' units in communities that have a cultural component to them. We are looking at a new multigenerational design of a home that will accommodate for larger families to be able to care for their aging members, with ramps, et cetera.

We have implemented, thanks to the lobbying of the Regular MLAs, the additional funding for seniors. They can still apply for the CARE Major, CARE Minor programs, up to \$100,000 for CARE Major. They can still get the CARE PM, Preventative Maintenance program, but they can also get special funding to address the needs of seniors.

We are doing a study within this new year, actually, about what their needs are, and not only what their needs are and how many seniors are out there, but what do they want? What is it they want to see in their homes? I think that is a missing component that we need to address.

I do value our seniors, very much so. I value my elders. One thing I should also state is that I have walked down the streets of Yellowknife, and I see some of the seniors in buildings that I think are unsafe. One of the projects we are looking at as well is: can we do a seniors' housing unit that is not based on income, but actually addresses just a seniors' housing unit, so that all seniors can live in that, market seniors and low-income seniors? Safety is what I am looking at. I take it very seriously, and we will be focusing in more depth on how we can support them, not only to give them a house, but a house that they want to live in. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S QUESTION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my next question is for all of the Ministers. Earlier today, we had some federal representatives in the Legislative Assembly, and they had the opportunity to watch our unique form of consensus government.

Mr. Chair, this form of government and this House always comes under fire and is constantly criticized. Is the best form of government to represent the people of the Northwest Territories? I am sure everybody gets a barrage of questions along the lines of what they would do to improve consensus government during election time. I know I have. I would like to raise that question in the House, only because these are the Members that we have chosen to essentially run the government. As it relates to the government's performance in general, I would like to ask the Members: what have you identified as one of the gaps or challenges in consensus government, and what would you do to change that and improve it? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, first of all, I believe in consensus government. For the population that we have, I believe that we well represent our ridings and our constituencies in a consensus government system. I have seen a number of changes over the years to consensus government. At the beginning of the 18th Assembly, there were some suggestions, like the mid-term review, for example. The transparency that this particular government has is something that we have improved on.

To improve it in the future? That is a good question. We all find little tweaks when we first gather as a group of 19 to discuss our priorities and mandate for the coming Assembly, and we find little ways that we could tweak our style of government. I really cannot think of any off of the top of my head. I know communication is something that we talk a lot about. Public involvement is another one that we talk a lot about, and I think we have taken some small steps to address that.

As Members come into the 19th Legislative Assembly, I am sure they will have a discussion. They will bring fresh new ideas and thoughts towards how they could improve consensus government. I do believe it is a system that works well for the Northwest Territories, and it is an

opportunity, as we go through the budgeting process, where we all have a chance to see the budget before it is brought into this House for debate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With consensus government, I really believe that it has equal representation from our smallest communities right to here in Yellowknife. In terms of gaps, as Members know, this is my second term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. I have not seen any gaps. I know that it takes a while to get things moving through the House at times. I do believe that it can be strengthened through communication and collaboration between Regular Members, committees, Indigenous governments, our other partners, and Cabinet. I cannot really see any gaps, but to improve the process, better communication and better collaboration of work amongst all partners of all governments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I believe in the principles and tenets of consensus government. I believe it can work if all Members believe, and I think we have Members that do believe in consensus government. It is by no way, shape, or form perfect. There is no form of government that is perfect.

As a Cabinet Member, there are things that do frustrate me about consensus government, and I will tell you one of the things that annoys me the most. If you were in a party system, you have a platform. You run out on that platform. You say, "over the life of this government, we are going to X, we are going to do Y, we are going to do Z, and we are going to do it first year, second year, third year, fourth year." We have difficulty doing that in this system because we run through business plan processes; budgets are approved every year. You cannot really assume you know what you are going to get in the third or fourth year of this Assembly as far as a budget.

I have done work in the department. We have done work on a number of initiatives that are mandate-driven, and we are ready to roll out, and we are planning to roll out in the fourth year of this Assembly, but I cannot saying we are going to roll that out absolutely because we still have to go through all these processes. I have raised this with my Cabinet colleagues: we need to find a way to be more proactive and say, "hey, this is part of our plan. We are going to do this in the life of this government. We are going to fund it in the life of this government. We know how much it costs, and we are going to get it done," even though it still has to go through some of the planning processes.

It does get awkward because we cannot speak for future years, and that is a frustration of this system. I sure would like to be able to come out and say, "you know what? We are doing X. It's going to happen the fourth year. It's going to be funded, and we are going to make it happen"; but it still has to go through six or seven processes before we get there. I find that frustrating. I am sure others do as well. We want to be proactive. We want to be leaders. We want to get these things done. They do not all happen today, but we should be able to talk about tomorrow, and in this system, it is a little bit more difficult than it would be in a party system.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When I first came here two years ago, I had a lot of questions about consensus government and thought that perhaps the party system might be better, but I've changed my mind over the last two years working with all of you. As for improvements while I'm on the rules committee, which when I joined was told met once or twice

a year, well, more like once or twice a month, we've done good work on a electoral reform mid-term reviews so there are changes going on all the time. I know that the committee system has been opened up. I think we would all like a freer flow of information and that things would be kept secret or in camera only if absolutely necessary and our default option would always be open. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm realizing this mid-term process is really about picking out my weaknesses. I already told you I'm not very good at social media, so let's talk about politics. When I first came in, I came in for the work. I did not know politics. I did not know and in fact, I knocked on a door in my constituent and I apologize to the man. In my riding, who was a Premier, I did not know Joe Handley, you know, honestly, so I did not know the difference between consensus and party politics. I learned that. That is a steep learning curve that I took and I was open, so it actually gave me – I was open. I didn't know the difference, so I was open to hearing. What I heard though is that party politics does not work for small communities. Having one voice does not always work for smaller places that they can't skip. The initiatives actually won't address their needs within those communities and I adhere to that. One policy does not work for all people. We need to make people's needs the priority, not the party politics.

The biggest gap of not having party politics is that I have no one to blame. I have to take all the responsibility on myself. I can't say it's about a political stance, so for me, the biggest gap is that I'm on my own as a Minister. I have to take responsibility for my own faults, my own actions, and that is a benefit because I get to define my own path as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know what, for a long-standing time I was in Metis politics. I always believed that consensus government was the true form of politics for the Government of Northwest Territories and the people. I've never believed in the party politics system as Minister Cochrane just said because I believe it needs to represent all of us. I think we have a shared responsibility as all Members of this assembly to represent the people of the Northwest Territories and not hide under any particular colour or brand or party.

One thing that drives me crazy though about politics since I've come here and I'm being totally honest. I've come from the private sector. When you can make a decision and move on that decision on a timely matter and be able to implement it as quickly as you can and come to a government system, and that's more because I come from the private sector my whole life. That part drives me crazy.

We have a system, I think, that works with the people of Northwest Territories. My fear was always party politics would suppress the voice of the small communities as well. I've always said that. I've argued that continually with a lot of my Metis colleagues who believe in the party system, but you know, it's an ideology that is based on personal preference and my preference is we have a system that works for residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Look, I'm having so much fun here. I'd like to get a referral to rules so that we can extend question period every day in the House, but more

seriously, my question is for the Minister of Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment: there's been a lot of upheaval and loss of visitor service capacity in Yellowknife with the closure of the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre. It's my view that this was completely preventable if adequate and comparable support had been provided by ITI. Can the Minister describe his vision for tourism in Yellowknife for the next two years? How he's going to get there and whether he will dedicate funding to get us there? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, I don't focus particularly right on one city as his question is related. Tourism is a territorial-wide initiative. It's one way we are going to diversify our economy and help build Aboriginal businesses and corporations to be part of the tourism industry in a government-wide initiative. Specifically for the City of Yellowknife, we are working directly with the City of Yellowknife and moving this initiative forward. It's unfortunate that the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre had financial challenges around running their operation and they've made a decision to walk away and shut down. We've taken the building back as part of that initiative and taken that off their hands so there's responsibility for them on that part. We will work closely with the city. Tourism is a big part of our industry in the Northwest Territories as I said in diversifying our economy. It's injecting 200 million dollars into it. The City of Yellowknife does reap the biggest benefits of it because it's the central location of where people come. We're spending \$7 million across this initiative territorial-wide and we will continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this question is for the Minister of Justice. In his mandate letter for the Minister of Justice, the Premier asks him to, "improve our social response to crime reduction by examining and analyzing social indicators, conducting research on what works to reduce crime, and identifying any gaps and territorial programming." My question for the Minister is: how is this work progressing? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of our successes in this area is the integrated case management operation. I can advise this house that we will be receiving an evaluation report shortly. This has assisted members of the community who have multiple needs and I think it is an important and successful program. ICM is working well and hopefully, it will work well into the future. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi cho, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the Minister of Infrastructure. Mr. Chairman, the GNWT could spend \$200 million on infrastructure. Staying in NWT economy that could be worth two or three times that amount, so have a significant impact of \$400 to \$600 million on GNWT economy annually if that money could remain in the Northwest Territories using economic terms like the invisible hand multiplier effect and how the money works in the economy. I'd like to ask the Minister if he would look at or if he would

commit to looking at all ways of keeping the money in the Northwest Territories for all of the contracting that goes on by the GNWT. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have lots of large projects within the Department of Infrastructure. We have a fiscal policy that we have to follow when we tender these things out. We looked at all multiple ways that we can have NWT residents participate in all contracting opportunities in the NWT and be it a road project or a large building, these sorts of things. We have MOUs that we have signed with Aboriginal governments around business opportunities with them. We will continue to support those moving forward. We are in discussions with some of them right now and also signing new MOUs around that process, but we have a fiscal process that we follow, a framework. We will continue to work on that, but we do on a case-by-case basis try to have this money reach as many GNWT businesses and residents as possible when we're contracting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Government Operations has worked on several files related to the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. We've asked for certain changes to be made, such as to the NGO fund. We've made recommendations there. We've made recommendations to performance audits. Oftentimes, the department disagrees with us despite the fact that the committee made up of representatives of thousands of Northerners are asking to work with the Minister on these things. The answers back are often unsatisfactory, so I'd like to know if the Minister, over the second course of her term, will endeavour to have a better working relationship with this committee, especially around performance audits and around long-standing issues like the NGO Stabilization Fund and the amendments to the CTV Act. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wasn't aware, actually, that the standing committee felt that we didn't work well with them on the performance audit, actually, because we have implemented all of the recommendations from the Auditor General and we are implementing recommendations from the standing committee on that, as well. So that's kind of news to me to start with.

The CTV Act, we've been really engaged, and we've heard the Members on the CTV Act. We are working with the City of Yellowknife and the tax-based communities on getting a hotel levy tax, and also an energy retrofit program. So I'm not sure; if there are pieces that I'm missing on that, then please bring that to my attention because I'm not aware that I'm actually missing more on those as well.

So, yes, I'm more than willing to work with the standing committee. In fact, when I started, I thought it would be a different process. I thought we would actually sit down together and bring up issues and be able to sit and brainstorm like normal workshops facilitation goes on. I didn't realize that the process that I had to bring something forward and standing committee gave me their feedback and then I had to come back. If I was to change things in government, that would be one thing I would change. I think it would save us a lot more time if we could actually sit around a table and hash things out and then go back and do the work.

Yes, I am more than willing to work with standing committee, and if there are things that within the audit or the CTV Act that I have missed, then please bring that to my attention because I'm not aware of them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. In your mandate letter the Premier asks you to develop financing options for long-term care facilities, propose a regulatory framework for long-term care, develop and implement an action plan for enhanced home and community care services, and develop and implement an action plan for expanded palliative care services. Of this list, just one item has been accomplished, and that's the continuing care plan, which is a plan looking for resources. Can the Minister tell us whether he will be able to complete the rest of the tasks on this list in the life of this Assembly? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as I indicated earlier today, there are over 84 individual items that fall under the mandate in the government right now. We have completed many of them. We are in process of many of them, and yes, we are behind on a couple, but I am committed to getting all of that work that the Member described done. I am committed to moving forward every mandate item that is in this document for the Department of Health and Social Services. I will be working closely with committee to move those forward. I believe, you know, we're only two years in, Mr. Chair. We've got two years left. We have done an awful lot of work in the first two years, and there's an awful lot of work left in the last two years. I'm committed to getting that done, and I look forward to working with committee to make it a reality. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Lands. Part of our mandate commitments included development of a "sound financial security system to prevent public liabilities." During our watch of NWT resources, the Cantung Mine went into receivership and Cabinet took out a special warrant to buy Mactung. I cannot recall seeing any new policy, regulations, or legislation that could possibly protect us from new public liabilities from resource development. Can the Minister explain why there's been no visible progress on this important mandate commitment to prevent public liabilities? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair. The amounts of money that are paid in as security for these projects are being constantly reviewed by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Members will know there has not been all that much mining or other industrial activity that would lead to a need to enhance those amounts. We are looking at this constantly, as I mentioned, and if there are legislative changes needed, we will certainly bring them forward, but we think the present system is working quite well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S QUESTION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chairman, my question is for Minister Schumann. Mr. Chair, the Yellowknife Airport Improvement Fee and the Airport Revolving Fund were brought in at a time when the economy was sluggish, and the fee certainly raised a number of concerns about contributing to the increasing costs of living, as well as the increasing costs of doing business. The Northern Air Transportation Association, many airlines, the NWT Tourism, the Chamber of Mines, and of course plenty of individuals shared their opinions and views and their concerns about the effects of this fee. The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment made a number of recommendations, including considering a phased-in approach. I would like to ask the Minister, if he had the opportunity again, would there be any changes with regard to the parts of the process leading to the establishment of that fee? Would he make any changes? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess this goes back to the question we had earlier today about leadership. When the department came to me about implementing the revolving fund, I sat there and I went through it with the officials, and I made a decision. I believe we made the right decision. This is going to help spur economic growth, particularly in the Yellowknife Airport and the surrounding region. The costs that are going to be passed on to the residents of the Northwest Territories are very minimal; I believe when I was in front of Committee of the Whole I said I don't want to do a phased-in approach because we might as well rip off the band-aid and get right to it. I believe it's the right decision that we made as a government, and it's freed up other capital so we can put it towards other initiatives that this Assembly wants to do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In your Department of Finance mandate letter, the Premier directs you to implement the government's new Financial Administration Act in order to improve government-wide planning and accountability. How have you improved accountability in the Department of Finance while you've been Minister? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe that, through the process that we go through in the Legislative Assembly with the business planning process and budget planning debate on the floor of this House, I think we've gone to improve the transparency within the Department of Finance and there are a number of other - in our meetings with Regular Members we continue to keep them updated as to some of the initiatives we have on the go, and as far as the financial administration, a lot of the departments, when they come forward, when their requests are reviewed by our policy analysts over at Finance, there's always a question there of whether it abides with the Financial Administration Act. So we continue to do the work to be as transparent as possible and to keep this House informed as to all that's going on within the Department of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Finance. For at least the last two years, and probably longer, GNWT has raised more money from taxes on alcohol and tobacco than we get to keep from resource revenues as a result of devolution. Rather than get into a debate about what other benefits we may be getting from resource development, I want the Minister to discuss what he has done with regard to tax fairness and what he intends to do in the remainder of our term on tax fairness. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, with the discussions we have in this House all the time about the cost of living across the NWT, I think one of the biggest accomplishments for tax fairness across the Northwest Territories is the fact that we haven't raised personal tax for years and have people pay for some of the challenges that we have been facing, because we all recognize that there is a high cost of living in the Northwest Territories. We do review our taxes; I think we made a couple of recommendations through our business planning process that we've gone through, but we will continue to ensure that the taxes are fair for all residents across the NWT. Again, I remind Members that one thing we do not want to do is increase personal income tax and have that burden beared by the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is a mandate commitment to lower taxes on small businesses. At this point two years into our term, no progress has been made on that that I have seen, or that the standing committees have seen. Can the Minister of Finance indicate when he is going to be prepared to either table a tax plan, or share a tax proposal with Members of this House on lowering taxes for small business, or somehow reducing the tax burden on northern businesses? Many of these businesses in Yellowknife are located in my riding, and they depend on government spending and government support. We put that tax plan in the mandate to do exactly that, to support those businesses and make sure they have a competitive edge when competing against larger southern contractors. This is an important part of our mandate. We have seen no progress to date. I would like to know when the Minister is going to have something to share with us? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Member is correct. It was one of the mandate items that we will reduce taxes on small businesses. We have four years of this Assembly. We still have two years left in our mandate, and we have looked at it a couple of times. I think it was a 1 per cent decrease to taxes of small business. I think that was the number that was thrown around. At this point, it is a relatively small impact on the road to do business across Northwest Territories, and we believe that there are better ways to support small business across the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. There is language in the mandate about diversifying the NWT economy beyond the traditional pillars of mining, and oil and gas, into areas such as tourism, agriculture, filmmaking and so on. In order to develop these alternatives as solid contributors to our GDP, we need investment, yet investments in the last budget were modest at just \$12.5 million in total. My question to the Minister is: what is he waiting for? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A number of these initiatives, the commercial fishing strategy, the agriculture strategy, these things, we are moving these forward. Particularly, the agriculture strategy, we have laid out the first one for the Northwest Territories. It is a blueprint for moving this forward. We want to help develop and implement the agriculture strategy. As I have said, this is a blueprint that we have laid out. There are actions that have to be taken to move this thing along. We have a working group with the Department of Health and Social Services; Lands; ENR, to move that one along. The fishing strategy, we are in conversation with the fishing federation. We have to make a decision at some point if we are going to stay involved in that or not. We are creating a marketing plan for exporting fish out of the Northwest Territories, so there are a number of things that has to be done. The groundwork has to be laid out before we can just start throwing money at these things, so we are doing our homework to find what is the best way to move these initiatives forward, and we will continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board. We have this weird situation, Mr. Chair, where we now have deputy ministers sitting as the board of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, so we have some control over what they propose to the Public Utilities Board. We also appoint the Public Utilities Board, and we also provide direction to them. The last time the Minister provided direction to the Public Utilities Board came completely out of the blue. Regular Members had no idea that this was going to happen. It is just a very unusual situation. I am hoping the Minister can help me understand what his vision is for the future of the Public Utilities Board is over the next two years? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board has a very important role in reviewing the rates that different energy providers and distributors want to charge residents across the Northwest Territories. That is the Power Corp. as well as other organization like NUL. There are more than one organization that they are reviewing the rates from. As long as there is multiple organizations, multiple power providers, I think it is in the best interests of the people of the Northwest Territories that we have this independent body reviewing the numbers that are being proposed by these different distributors and power providers.

At this point in time, there is no anticipation of removing the board or getting rid of the Public Utilities Board. As a note, Ministers have given direction to PUB in the past. We can give direction, general policy direction, not specific direction, but general policy direction prior to them

going into reviews of different applications which is what we did in this case. I have answered questions to this effect to the Member previously. I, of course, would love to have been able to provide the Members more update, but the information came to us that required a fairly quick decision. We made the decision and immediately gave the MLAs a heads up. We will certainly endeavor to give MLAs more heads up in the future because like I said before, I am not a big fan of surprises. Sometimes, situations do arise that need immediate response, and that was the situation in this particular case. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Lands. Mr. Speaker, the land lease policies considered by committee to be a disruptive type of a policy. It is a policy where individuals need to have their land lease in order to apply for housing programs as an example, and other legal things that are needed for land; however, it is extremely high. I talked about this in the House, too. Some of the elders would be required to pay a huge amount. Elders have to apply for the small little programs through the Housing Corporation every year just to sort of bandage up their houses. I would like to ask the Minister if he has made any changes to the land lease policy so that it fits the economic realities of small communities? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, there are really two types of leases the government is involved in, in the Northwest Territories. There are equity leases which I have referred to earlier, and I will be coming to Cabinet shortly with some options that will hopefully resolve that situation. With respect to the normal leases, the department looked at lease amounts that are charged elsewhere, and it was determined that a fair lease amount would be 10 per cent of the assessed value. Now, certain people such as elders do receive a discount of 50 per cent on that amount. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. As we hear often in this House, the core housing need is 20 per cent, or almost 3,000 households in the NWT, and these problems encompass affordability, suitability, and adequacy. The Minister has committed to reduce the number of households in core need by 250 per year for the next three years, and I am wondering how that is going to work. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, at the beginning of the next session, I will be tabling a document on how we are going to address the core need within the territories which is one of my requirements, so that will be coming forward. There are a variety of needs. There is not one brush that paints all. So if it is suitability, or affordability, or adequacy, then we need to look at different programs for them. If it is a matter of getting them into a bigger unit; if it is a matter of actually helping to pay some of their expenses; or if it is a matter of fixing up their homes so that it is safe, we are looking at a variety of programs. As I mentioned earlier,

the biggest need at this point, we have done amazing in the smaller communities, brought down our core need based on the 2014 survey compared to the 2009 survey. It actually did not do well for the municipality of Yellowknife, so we will actually be looking at implementing a subsidized rent program that will be coming out again at the very beginning of the next session. I look forward to actually presenting on the new initiatives and the new policies that we have worked on; and through the next two years, there are a lot more policy changes that we still need to do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Traditionally, Ministers of Finance have met with NGOs, the business community, and the public in seeking input into, and explaining our budgets. I can personally recall meeting with at least four different Finance Ministers at such consultations before I became an MLA. Budget dialogue 2016 was a website-based consultation process, and that happened during a period of major cutbacks. Does the Minister intend to undertake any meaningful public engagement around the remaining two budgets? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Mahsi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Member is correct. There was a time when there was some budget dialogue that went around across the Northwest Territories, and I remember being part of a Regular Members committee that actually split into two groups and did budget dialogue in the north and southern parts of the Northwest Territories. We were able to get some valuable feedback out of that process, but that process took place long before the business plans were even developed. Our business plans are in the process of being developed right now. I believe we have business plans coming up in November. If there is commitment to do some budget dialogue, to actually add some value to it, it would have to be done before the business planning review has even started, so we can incorporate what some of the comments we get back. There is processes through the website, and in talking to your MLAs, and in meeting with people out there, but I would have to find out. I do not know if we have time this year because the business plan is being developed. I can commit as we go forward to probably the last year of our last budget, then, there may be an opportunity there to take it out on the road, but then we would have to do it before our business plans are developed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mr. Chairman, I am familiar with some of the work where we would call territorial doctors' pool. What I am looking at is a situation of how, having doctors living in the Northwest Territories that serve the Northwest Territories is important not only to the people they serve but also just in general to the economy. There are lots of positive aspects. I have thought about ideas. If you need two doctors in the Sahtu, you hire four doctors and they all work half-time in the Sahtu, and they work half-time in the hospital here because a lot of the doctors need to work in both places. They need to work in a hospital environment. They work in pediatrics. A lot of the doctors need to maintain some sort of designation by working in certain

areas, and they can do general practitioner work as well. I would like to ask the Minister, how far along the road has this department gone to bring that type of pool into the Northwest Territories, a territorial doctors' pool? How far are they from not using locums in the Northwest Territories as doctors? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before my time as Minister of Health and Social Services, there was a Minister of Health and Social Services who thought it was a great idea to move to a territorial pool of physicians across the territories. I think he is sitting across the hall right now asking me a question. It was fantastic direction because the net result of that is by having a territorial pool of physicians, having all the physicians as employees of the one organization as opposed to multiple organizations, they all had some responsibility or authority to engage with the territorial system. We have been able to build on that, and as a result, we have been able to actually get more physicians hired and located in the Northwest Territories than we have ever been able to before. We used to struggle miserably trying to find permanent physicians in places like Beaufort Delta and Inuvik. We actually have been able to find and retain some doctors in those communities. Yes, there is always turnover, but we are getting people to hire in. We are still having some difficulty, though, in the smaller communities like Behchoko and Norman Wells where we still have to rely on some locums. We are exploring those exact types of scenarios that the Member has described about maybe finding some people that are maybe located in Yellowknife and I guess a locum type support in Norman Wells but being the consistent person going back and forth. We still are not all the way there. We are having difficulties finding individuals who want to do that, but at a territorial level, the direction to move to a single medical system, I think has paid off significantly because we do have a stable core of doctors in Beaufort Delta. We almost never had that. We have had much better luck getting physicians in places like Fort Smith and Hay River in particular. Yes, more work needs to be done. We believe it is still a valid process, and we are trying to find people that might be interested in doing exactly the things the Member has described. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Justice. The mandate letter doesn't direct the Minister to revamp the program for men who use violence in their relationships, and nor did the assessment of the program completed a year ago, yet a revamp is what this program got despite pleas from regular MLAs not to fix what wasn't broken. How does the Minister's approach to A New Day demonstrate his commitment and willingness to work with Regular MLAs in the spirit of the openness and transparency he touted in his candidacy speech? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we all recognize this as a very serious issue. It is part of the government's initiative and partnership to prevent and reduce family violence. The original A New Day program, of course, was a pilot project, and when that pilot came to the end of its term, or prior to its coming to the end of its term, we did ask for an evaluation of the program. As a result of that evaluation, some changes were made to the program, which in our view, improved it. For example, men who had left the program were allowed to re-enter the program later on. Based on that, we did make some changes to the program which we think led to an improvement. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Department of Lands has a number of ambitious challenges before it. A key part to developing our economy is making land accessible for agricultural purposes, sorting out legislative gaps, and coming to some sort of common leasing system. We have more than 250 leases that all have their own individual terms. The Minister in his time in this portfolio honoured a deal that was made by an assistant deputy minister long since passed, without consulting this government, and without respecting essential policy of his department. I think that is scandalous, Mr. Chair, and I would like the Minister to tell us what his vision is for Lands? Every time these questions are put to him, he shrugs his shoulders and says, "It is complicated. It is challenging. We are working at it." We need some clarity. There are people across the territory, whether it is Yellowknife or smaller communities that depend on a coherent system of land management in the Northwest Territories. Our agricultural strategy will fail if we do not have cohesive land policy that can make it work. What is the Minister's vision for land in the Northwest Territories, and can he at least commit to developing a comprehensive plan to deal with these issues, and will he also commit to no longer honour deals that are not part of government policy? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a multi-headed question. I don't know really where to start. The Member opposite has correctly identified that there were 250 or so equity leases. As I have mentioned earlier today, we are looking at this situation very carefully. I do want to resolve the matter. It is an issue that arose long before I became Minister. I was well aware of it in my prior capacity as a lawyer. I certainly heard from members of the legal profession about it, and I had hoped initially that there would be an easy solve to this. There isn't, because the leases, as has been pointed out, are different. Despite all of that, we are looking at various options, and I will be bringing options forward to Cabinet that will hopefully resolve the issue of equity leases. With respect to the issue of Cassidy Point, yes, that is an exception to government policy. However, my understanding about this matter is that a promise was made by the government, and it is the honour of the Crown that such promises be followed through, and that property ownership be granted in Cassidy Point. Perhaps in the future, similarly positioned people who have equity leases possibly may be able to also acquire ownership. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Blake.

MR. BLAKE'S QUESTION

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mr. Chair, back in the 16th Assembly, decisions were made to take long-term care facilities out of smaller communities like Aklavik, and focus on regional centres. Many residents in the NWT would like to have these facilities back in our smaller communities. Does the Minister see this happening in the near future? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, by definition, a long-term care facility is a level 3-4 facility that is providing 24/7 medical care, nursing care, and other supports for individual with high needs. The facility in Aklavik, by way of example, was not a long-term

care facility as defined in the way that I've just described. It was more of an independent live-in unit that actually had a home care position staffed out of that unit. We aren't putting long-term care units in the smaller facilities as a result of capacity, but also it is mostly a safety issue because the individuals who are residing in long-term care facilities have a much higher acuity, a much higher medical need, and require really what is 24/7 care. But with the Housing Corporation, we are working to put independent living units in some of the smaller communities as an important part of the continuum of aging in place.

In those designs, in order to recognize that there is programming that is also needed at the community level, which we have talked about today and many times previously, the Housing Corp. is actually incorporating space in these new designs that will allow for programming to take place, where we could have our staff come in and help by providing day programs and other things. In short, Mr. Chair, the answer is no, we are not planning to put long-term care facilities in smaller communities throughout the Northwest Territories. They are very expensive to build. We have to make sure that they're safe. They have to meet infection control protocols, and they have to be able to provide 24/7 care. Long term, independent living units we are absolutely looking at, and I believe there is room for that across the territories. We are looking forward to working with Members and the Housing Corp. moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I've spoken in this House before about what I have used, legislative inertia, and I want to pose a question to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. A big part of that backlog of work I think comes from that department, as well. Earlier today and earlier in the House, as well, she talked about moving forward with some municipal legislation, one of the pieces being the Cities, Town and Villages Act, to empower communities to be able to levy local improvement charges, in particular.

In her statement, she talked about how they had been undertaking months of consultation around this issue. I don't know what that "months of consultation" is really all about, because NWTAC has been on board with this for a long time. The city even provided draft language on what the change had looked like. I don't understand what the problem is here, why there needs to be more or why we have to do months of consultation. What kind of assurance can the Minister provide that this important piece of work is actually going to get done in the next two years? Merci, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs does try to engage with as many stakeholders as possible, and I do support that they do that work. I think it is important that we hear from all people who are affected. The Cities, Town and Villages Act was supported. The recommendations were supported by the NWT Association of Communities at an AGM. However, as soon as that AGM was finished, there were some municipalities that actually approached the department and said that they had concerns, so we did have to go back to them to hear what their concerns were. We have met with the City of Yellowknife and the tax-based communities over the last few months. They are in support of it, but we are still finishing up the piece because there are other stakeholders, as well.

I know that we have met with the Chamber of Commerce; they are in agreement with it. We are meeting with the hotel association to find out where they stand with it, so we are right at the end

of the stakeholder engagement. I can promise that that legislation will be put forward before two years, and as long as there is no contention from the other side, it will be passed within two years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. In his mandate letter to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, the Premier said, "meaningful dialogue and engagement with residents of the NWT must be an ongoing priority." In fact, whether it's the expansion of junior kindergarten, the introduction of reduced instructional hours, cuts at the college or the introduction of a new ministerial directive for French language education, there has in fact been a real absence of meaningful dialogue and engagement.

The public uproar around each of these initiatives is unprecedented in the 18th Assembly. My question to the Minister is: why should he retain his portfolio? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I mentioned over the past few years, we have done a lot of work, have made a lot of achievements and accomplishments within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. An earlier question was what would I do differently around implementation of junior kindergarten? I did mention communication was what we heard, and we are committed to communicating with all our partners. We've built some strong relationships with our education authorities: with our NWT Superintendents Association, NWT Teachers' Association, as well with our Indigenous governments over the years. We're going to continue building those partnerships, and continue to work on improvement or communications and making communications better so that we can make more smoother transitions for future initiatives in education. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, Member Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S QUESTION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation. Mr. Chairman, since day one of this Assembly, since the first day we came into this House, it seems as though there has been one challenge or another with regard to the Power Corporation. In the early days, the Minister made the sole decision to dissolve the public representative board for the purposes of saving \$1 million. He assigned an internal government board. Later, we'd seen the battle with ATCO for service provisions. There was the making of guarantees, or call it "promises to lowering rates" in Hay River, while rates in Yellowknife continue to rise.

The previous president, for whatever reasons, departed, and of course now, the latest is the generator catastrophe. Mr. Chair, we need leadership for this government-owned entity. We expect it from this Minister. My question is: does the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation believe he has provided good leadership in managing this corporation? What will he do to provide principal leadership and direction going forward? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I do feel that I have provided leadership for the Power Corporation. I am in constant contact with the CEO. The issues that have been

raised are of great concern. The Member opposite raised the issue of the board. Yes, I did replace the board. That saved \$1 million, \$100 per household in the Northwest Territories. There have been other issues that have come along, but it's important to remember with respect to the power rates in Hay River, that was an initiative of the Town of Hay River. They've decided to seek out alternate providers. We believe we can provide that power for less. I'm sorry; I've received a signal that my time was up. I hadn't thought I'd gone on that long. I will continue.

Yes, the generator issue has been a thorn in our sides. I would not classify it as a "catastrophe." When the contract was initially let, it was let to Viridi Power which did have a good reputation, had many previous similar contracts, as I understand it, with the government of the United States. As I mentioned the other day, although I was pessimistic for a long time about the contract, it does seem that there is a greater likelihood of success than previously. We do have an inspector; the generators are going through a final inspection. Unfortunately, they're not yet at the Canadian border, but I am optimistic.

Going forward, of course, there are always issues with respect to the Power Corporation. We all want to keep rates down, but with a stable or declining population, that is difficult. Ultimately, I'll be working with other Ministers to seek out new customers. That would seem to me, really, to be the only way to reduce rates. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi cho, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have questions for the Minister of Finance. This is a fairly general question, but I want to direct it to the Minister of Finance, at any event. I'm interested in the strategic spending of the GNWT. Mr. Chairman, in the House, I have talked about how there's some strategic spending that's available in the NWT. I used a couple of examples; I used the example of the guardianship program that's run in Australia where for every dollar they spend, they save \$3.70 in social spending. The same group that did the work for me used the example of the Nihat'ni Dene in Lutselk'e. Their numbers were for every dollar spent; they were saving \$2.50 in social spending.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance if there is any policy or any program or any initiative on the part of his colleagues and himself when they are spending GNWT dollars, if this money is directed – if he directs the departments to ensure that they're spending money strategically. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Robert C. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like to think that we are spending our money strategically, and Members used a couple of examples. We used some examples over on this side, as well, if we make an investment into work projects or projects that will generate some work. There's some strategy to that, and the Member and I both know that your rent collections go up; your income support goes down. That would be part of it and as well in the health and social services field, if you're spending money on prevention, then that should be classified as strategic spending. That should have an effect on the money that you spend on health and social services.

I like to believe that anything this government does with the money we have, we spend it strategically, and we look for what the long-term results may be down the road and what effect it might have on the people of the Northwest Territories, because we fully recognize that, and Members raised it a number of times on strategic spending. He's given some good examples, and we like to think we practice that, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for Ministers. Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. It appears that no matter what our government seems to do, the use of Indigenous languages continues to decline in the Northwest Territories. I'm not saying we're not trying; I'm not saying that the work is not good that's being done in the communities but no matter what our government seems to do, we don't seem to be making a difference. What does the Minister intend to do to reverse this trend, and what can he bring to the job to get it done? Merci, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with the Member, and that's why we worked hard with the federal government to sign this official languages agreement, to increase the funding for Indigenous languages as well as the French. We've also released an NWT Aboriginal languages framework and action plan to address these issues. We have more funding going to Indigenous governments because they know how to spend the money. They know where the money needs to be invested, so we're actually giving them a majority of the dollars.

Our Aboriginal secretariat is doing a good job to address the issues, so we've got a lot of investment into Indigenous languages as well as the French language, and over time with these new investments, we're hoping to start to see a revitalization of Indigenous languages across the NWT with our nine Indigenous languages. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I represent the largest industrial centre in the Northwest Territories out in Kam Lake, and my constituents are always bringing concerns about procurement. I want to make sure that northern procurement policies of this government keep money in the North as much as possible. I've talked to the Minister of ITI multiple times about procurement reform, procurement analysis, looking at procurement, suggesting reforms for procurement. He has rebuffed my efforts, to date, and I know it's not a mandate commitment.

I know he hasn't heard any complaints except for the ones that I've shared in this House, but I would like to know if he's going to help me help my constituents the remainder of this term by either coming to a constituency meeting and speaking to him directly, telling them there's no problem with our procurement system, or actually sitting down with me and working on procurement reform in a way that's fair, balanced, and ensures a maximum value for money that government dollars are going to Northerners. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member is correct; I have rebuffed him a number of times. I think it's three times I've rebuffed him on this question in the House, maybe four, but he shared some information with me yesterday after a question that he gave me in the House. I will have a look at some of that information, what they're doing across the country around procurement, and I will gladly sit down and have that discussion with him when I finish reading the documents that he presented to me. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for Ministers. Next on my list, I have Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, I keep calling you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Chairman. That took 40 seconds.

---Laughter

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the Minister of NWT Housing Corporation. Mr. Chairman, many times I spoke about the lack of community housing development plans in the communities of the NWT. In this housing development plan, we should be drawing out the needs of the various nuclear groups: the seniors, what the seniors' needs are, what the singles' needs are, families', and couples', and what types of housing needs they have to determine their core need level.

I will use an example: Fort Resolution has approximately 200 units. They have approximately 30 per cent core needs, so they have 60 houses that are in core need. Recognizing that public housing tenants are kept artificially out of core need with that program, I would like to ask the Minister if they have done any work towards doing a housing development plan, and if not, why not? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister Cochrane.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to start by saying that I am very, very proud of the work that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has done in a short time. In two years, we've actually changed, transformed a whole agency that used to be about just housing services, and now we're moving into a social program that provides support. So I do want to say that they've worked hard.

I think that we've done a couple of things. We did the survey, and with the survey we actually have identified within every single community what their priorities are. We're working with Aboriginal and community governments, very closely, actually, to determine what their needs are and how we can best support them. We will be coming out at the next session with the core needs; I don't know the name of the document, but it's a core needs. It's about how much it would cost to actually address the core needs.

So, yes, we've worked very hard. Will I do another plan in the next two years? That, I can't really commit to, in all honesty, because I have committed to revising the programs and the policies, and that right now is my priority. If I can get through that work, and it's a huge amount of work, then I can look at more planning, but I think the days of planning need to be put aside and we need to get the work done. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment and Public Works and Services. So our government has more than doubled the Mining Incentive Program that provides public subsidies for exploration. In contrast, our funding for Arctic Energy Alliance has actually declined. Can the Minister explain this contrasting investment pattern when we have obligations with regard to climate change and investment in energy retrofits creates more jobs per dollar invested than any form of non-renewable resource development? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We put more money into MIP for resource development in the Northwest Territories; that was one of the mandated things that we wanted to do as the 18th Legislative Assembly, was to bring mineral development back to the Northwest Territories, and we continue to do that. Arctic Energy Alliance is a very important part of my portfolios under Infrastructure. This is something that's going to be something very important moving forward around our energy strategy, our climate change strategy moving forward. As I've said in the House, we have lobbied the federal government and the Minister of Infrastructure for some more funding, and I think there are some great opportunities. I think I've been on the record as saying we're going to try to get an extra million dollars for the Arctic Energy Alliance moving forward, and I believe in this agency and the great work that they're doing for the residents of the Northwest Territories. We will continue to work on both of these things and initiatives moving forward for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Any other questions? Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Chairman, in 2014 the Member for Inuvik-Boot Lake asked the then Minister of Education to put more money into a social work program. As Minister, he cut the social work program. I asked him a question earlier: who made the cuts to the Teacher Education Program and the social work program? I'm looking for a person, here, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask, and I want to be very clear, I'm asking the Minister which person decided to make the cut to TEP and the social work program? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Minister Moses.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We did look at the programs and did a review of Aurora College programs earlier in this government. My staff and the staff of Aurora College looked at data, looked at success rates coming out of these two programs. As I mentioned earlier during the session, the graduates that were coming out of the programs were very low and a recommendation came to my office. I approved the recommendation to reduce these two programs and continuing to support the students who are in the two programs to completion. So it came to my office and I approved the recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Any other questions? Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I always try to get the last word here, maybe, but I have one more question. It's my last one for my Cabinet friends, and this one is to Minister Sebert. During his candidacy speech to serve in Cabinet, MLA Sebert said, "I don't think this is time for excessive restraint." So what happened? Can the Minister explain his current perspectives on our fiscal strategy and what he sees happening over the remainder of our term? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Well, there is no excessive restraint. There is reasonable restraint by all of this government. Also, at that point I had never had the honour of sitting here. I'd never gone through the books, I'd never heard the very substantial concerns that have been expressed

around Cabinet about budgets. I was looking at our overall financial situation the other day, and we have quite a bit of debt. It's almost per capita the same rate as Ontario, where that seems to be a crisis. Despite that, we still have moved ahead on very many programs, and I think we're all proud of those programs, and in the end I don't think the restraint we've shown is excessive. I think it's proper. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for Ministers. Any other questions from Members? I see none at this point. I believe that we've concluded the Members' questions to Ministers. Before we proceed to the next item, the chair is going to call for a short recess. Masi.

---SHORT RECESS

Members' Questions for the Premier

MR. SPEAKER: We left off with the conclusion of questions for Ministers. Now we will proceed to Members questioning the Premier. I remind everyone that each Member is permitted to ask up to two questions to the Premier, no longer than two minutes each. Responses must be no longer than two minutes, as well. Members' questions for the Premier. Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, earlier in our deliberations, we had that question from the Member from Hay River North, asking each of the Cabinet members if they would resign if they were to receive a vote in non-confidence. All the Cabinet members said they would not resign if they received a vote of non-confidence in a secret ballot. I would like to ask the Premier if he would ask the members of Cabinet if any Ministers were to receive a vote of non-confidence, I would like to ask the Premier if he would ask that Minister to resign, or strip that Minister's portfolios. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Member for his question. For many years, this Legislative Assembly has been in place. This is the 18th Legislative Assembly. We do have policies, procedures, and conventions that we follow, and every instance – in my case, when I became Premier, it was not at the TLC forum. When a motion was passed in the House, if I recall correctly, the motion was moved by Minister Abernethy. That is the convention and those are the rules of the House, and we have always followed them. As Premier, if people have wanted a Minister removed, they would have to move a motion in the House and everybody would vote on it. That is the procedure that I would follow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for the Premier. Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I find the Premier's answer is somewhat disingenuous. We elected him with a secret ballot in the TLC, and the motion was confirmation of the TLC work. I don't follow his reasoning that if the Minister or Ministers lost confidence of the House, that he would not then act on the advice of the House as it were, so I am not appreciating the distinction that the Premier is making there. Why would the Premier want to keep a Minister in whom the House generally doesn't have confidence? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are in Committee of the Whole. Motions are made on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. In the 17th Assembly, it was the first time in the history of Assembly where we didn't lose a Minister, so there were no motions in House to remove Ministers. In previous governments, when a Minister was removed, that was done through a motion of the House, and that has been the case and I have not seen the rules change.

The rules committee met many times and those rules were not changed, and it is still the case. In the past, when a government was in session and the Premier and Cabinet, when a Minister was removed by on the floor of the House through a motion, then the Premier would take action. It has always been the Legislative Assembly that approves the Ministers and the Premiers, so if the Legislative Assembly moves to remove a Minister, then I would take the appropriate action if I was still Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NAKIMAYAK'S QUESTION

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for the Premier. I have next on my list, Member Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in this most recent sessional statement, Premier McLeod talked about his vision for a healthy and prosperous Northwest Territories. He talked about people getting a good-paying jobs built on the foundation of responsible resource development. He also talked about residents breaking free of colonialism to achieve self-economic determination. These are powerful words, Mr. Chair, and a powerful vision. Before Christmas, we saw colonialism is still alive in the North when the federal government declared a unilateral moratorium on oil and gas development in the Beaufort Sea. Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the Premier to expand on his vision of the North, and explain what he is doing to ensure that Northerners have real authority to make their own decisions about their economic future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ever since 50 years ago – actually, this is the 50th anniversary of the Government of the Northwest Territories moving to Yellowknife – when the government moved from Ottawa to Yellowknife, that was the first step in achieving decision-making by Northerners. With the devolution in 2014, we further took control through Lands and Resources, and there was also a provision through the devolution agreement where 60 days after implementation. We would begin to negotiate the offshore and co-management of oil and gas, so we were taken aback when the federal government unilaterally imposed a moratorium and it ignored three areas.

One was we had a devolution agreement. There is a land claim with the Inuvialuit that requires a consultation constitutionally protected. Also, we were concerned that Bill 55, where the federal government is looking at – they can take, identify, and establish marine-protected areas without consultation with anybody. We are working with the Aboriginal governments to look at what we can do in terms of dealing with the oil and gas moratorium. It has had negative effects on the other parts of the Northwest Territories. For the first time since 1936, there has been not one drop of oil being produced for the past six months, and it looks like for the foreseeable future. We have to work together and we have to look at resource development as still a very important part of our economy, including mining, and jobs are very important. The Northwest Territories has been the only jurisdiction in the past 15 years whose population has been declining, so we need the good jobs for our people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for the Premier. I have next on my list, Member Blake.

MR. BLAKE'S QUESTION

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. People in the Mackenzie Delta need jobs, Mr. Chair. Employment rates in Fort McPherson and Aklavik are barely over 40 per cent, and many people are living on less than \$15,000 a year. High school students in my region need good jobs to look forward to when they graduate, but there just aren't that many of them out there. It could take them years to find a job in the region. We should be creating jobs in our small communities, Mr. Chair, and I would like to ask the Premier: how is government to work with the regular Members to make progress in these areas, and give our residents opportunities for employment in our smaller communities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This area of economic development in small communities is a top priority of our government, and we continue to support those programs. We have re-established the committee on small communities, where members of Cabinet will work with Members of the Legislative Assembly representing small communities. We have identified \$3 million to provide funding for opportunities in small communities, and our economic development programs recognize that we have to become more self-sufficient and create more employment in the communities.

Our programs are designed in that regard. Our hunting and trapping programs, our traditional programs, are some that provide funding directly to the communities and are some that our government fully endorse. We also have to work to create an investment environment so that the Northwest Territories is seen as a good place to live, work, and invest in. In working with the private sector, we can also create jobs in the communities. I believe that with land claims being settled, we will work very closely with the Aboriginal governments so that we can provide the economic measures that have been negotiated and that Aboriginal governments expect. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for the Premier. I have next on my list, Member McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY'S QUESTION

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is no secret that the past few years have been hard on the people of the Sahtu region. Oil and gas exploration has come to a standstill. Even what little activity was going on stopped when Imperial Oil production in Norman Wells ceased because of line 21 pipeline shutdown. It has been almost a year since the shutdown, and we are still waiting on maintenance and repair approvals. Meanwhile, people are having to leave the community to find work elsewhere when we are sitting on the richest oil and gas reserves in the country.

With no oil and gas production in NWT for the first time since the 1930s, residents are assuming, "What is our future?" and "What message are we sending to industry?" My question to the Premier is what he will do to revitalize this industry in our territory? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As a government, we are very concerned about the state of oil and gas in the Northwest Territories. We recognize that in this economic downturn, it is the time to get ready and prepare for when we can expect the commodity prices for oil and gas to improve. First and foremost, I believe we have been working with industry so that we can see the pipeline maintenance continue, so that it can be done as quickly as possible so that the production can restart in the Norman Wells oilfields.

We are also working really hard with the Inuvialuit to restart negotiations on the devolution on the offshore, and we are also participating with the federal government to a five-year review to remove the permanent moratorium of oil and gas in the Beaufort. All those things will help create an investment climate for oil and gas. We are also developing an oil and gas strategy. We have a committee that is working on an Arctic corridor that we think will allow us to have more investment. There were studies done where we looked at what we would do when we can't go east, west, or south. We have the benefit; we have significant amounts of oil and gas, and we also have access to tidewater. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Questions for the Premier. I have next on my list, Member Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON'S QUESTION

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize to the Premier because I was going to ask him the same questions I asked the Ministers, but after hearing all the conversations here and in his opening address, I do have a question with regards to leadership. With some Ministers not performing – if they are not performing to task or to the level they should be, what is your role in making sure they perform better and work with us ordinary MLAs? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the past and until recently, we have worked through the protocol that we have signed off on. We have had a regular what we call “fireside chat” where we could discuss on a confidential basis any concerns that MLAs may have, and we have worked together to improve in certain areas. Communications and responses to constituent issues were a big issue, so we have taken that very seriously. We are tracking all those communications and I can report that we try very hard to adhere to the guideline of responding within five days.

I can report that since October of last year, there has been 1,301 constituent inquiries from MLAs, and if there are other areas of concern, my door is always open. If there are any cases like that, we can work together, too, because we're always interested in improving on our performance and the only way we can find out if there are areas to improve on is if we hear from the MLAs, and we can work much better to improve the delivery of programs and services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for the Premier. I have next on my list, Member Nadli.

MR. NADLI'S QUESTION

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's pretty clear that, you know, what was listed as the number of priorities for the mandate, there are about 200 of them, and it's pretty clear that's the agenda of the House, but, you know, matters that are not on the mandate, and part of the mandate, as Premier, how will the Executive Council address those matters that are not part of the mandate? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We know that there are instances where there are issues that come up that are not on the mandate, and in a few instances, we've dealt with them and worked with committee on them, so if there are areas that the Member has which he feels are of urgent consideration that are not on the mandate, then certainly I believe that the process is flexible enough so that we can all work together on addressing them. I'm not aware of any

specific ones that are not on the mandate that the Member is referring to, but I believe that there is enough flexibility in the mandate process to allow us to deal with them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for the Premier. Member Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S QUESTION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, lately everybody's heard me talk a lot about the NWT Brewing Company in this House, and it's interesting because it's been an opportunity where we can take essentially one company and put it under a microscope and look at the many challenges that it has faced from its conception to now. In its early days it ran into issues with regard to permitting and the like; later on there were concerns around taxation of their product. There has been concern about access as it relates to liquor licencing and having family hours, and then more recently, of course, there has been the decision by the Liquor Licencing Board with regard to having to have the product moved out to the liquor warehouse, have a fee applied, and then licensees could purchase it from there.

These are all the things that are often referred to as, I'll call it bureaucratic barriers and/or red tape. The Premier is aware that we have had times where the CFIB has continually graded us with an F as it relates to our inability to reduce red tape. I would like to ask the Premier: in support of small business and diversifying the economy, how will he break down some of these barriers and improve the government's support for developing small business? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Reducing red tape has always been a priority of this government, and this is an area where with devolution we felt that there was significant advancement in reducing red tape. With regard to small business, legislation is passed for a purpose and we as a government are held to a higher standard in meeting the requirements of the legislation; but certainly, in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness, we are very prepared to review and change our legislation to facilitate. We fully support value added in the Northwest Territories. In this instance, it's beer; we would much rather have beer made here in the North rather than imported from the South. This is something that we support; there are not too many areas where we've been able to have value added in northern manufacturing, so whatever we can do to help facilitate that, we are very prone to do so. I think the responses that we heard from the Minister of Finance would certainly support that, and I think this is something that could be seen as a success story when we go to revisit it again in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for the Premier. Next on my list, I have Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, Cabinet's role in consensus government is often described as a minority government that depends on support from Members on this side of the House to get business done, which is why cooperation is so important, yet in some cases motions will pass with the majority support of the House that then become resolutions of the House and they are not always supported by Cabinet. This mid-term review motion was one of those, and I can think of a few others. When that happens and the House passes a motion, how does the Premier take it into consideration? Does he accept it as an adopted motion that Cabinet must then adhere to, or does he accept it as mere advice to Cabinet?

The reason why this is important is the expectation from Regular Members is, if we are able to exercise a majority vote in the House, it means the majority of representatives of the people of the Northwest Territories support a particular decision and are encouraging the government to take that decision, and our expectation is that Cabinet will follow through with that. If that's not the case, I think it's important, at least from the perspective of this Premier, I think it's important that our constituents know that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the way the orientation that all MLAs have when they become elected, I think it's called something about a sausage-maker, and I think that in this case that still applies. I mean, a lot of motions that are passed, if we do not vote on it or we abstain, it's because it's seen as recommendations to the government, and then the government a lot of times needs time to review the motion that's been passed and to respond. Most of the motions, we have to respond within 120 days, and so it's dealt with accordingly.

In this case, referring to a motion that the Member is referring to, as I said earlier the process and the convention to remove a Minister is to have a motion in the House, and the process and practice has been that the Premier takes action when the Legislative Assembly passes a motion to remove a Minister. That's the process we've followed, and I think that, if that's going to change, then there would have to be a different process that we'd have to go through. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for the Premier. I have next on my list, Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. During questions for the selection of Premier back on December 16, 2015, MLA McLeod said, "I commit here to meeting with leaders within 45 days and presenting new offers within 90 days." New offers to the NWT Metis Nation and Akaitcho Dene First Nations were made on May 24th and 25th of this year respectively. There was no involvement or consultation with Regular MLAs as part of that process.

He also committed to, "establishing a joint committee of Cabinet and Regular Members to provide oversight and give direction to the negotiating process." This group does not provide oversight and give direction, and has met a total of two times so far. Completion of outstanding land rights agreements should be a priority for our government. What assurance can the Premier give that he will deliver completed land rights agreements by the end of this term, including working more closely with Regular MLAs? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can certainly go back and read the whole section back to the Member, but he's already done that. We are committed to working very hard to try to achieve settlement of all land claims in the 18th Legislative Assembly. We have to recognize there are three unique parties to the negotiations: the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the appropriate Aboriginal government. We recognize that there are significant issues and challenges that have led to most of these agreements being under negotiation for over 20 years, 25 years, and it was felt that just making an offer within 45 days would be an empty gesture.

We're working with the Government of Canada. We hired ministerial special representatives to look at the processes, and they came back and made recommendations as to how we could

have a way forward. Our negotiators have made offers to the NWT Metis Nation and to the Akaitcho governments, and I think they were well-received. Recently we received a response from the Dehcho. We've met with the federal government, and with clarifications, we're expecting to issue a similar offer. We're also working with the joint Cabinet committee as per the terms of reference, and we will continue to do so. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. I have next on my list, Member Blake.

MR. BLAKE'S QUESTION

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there are 27 small communities in the Northwest Territories, including all the communities that I represent. People in these communities face different challenges than people living in regional centres or Yellowknife. Food and power costs more than it does in larger communities, and they don't get the same kind of programs and services that are available in the bigger communities.

In my communities, people have to deal with frequent ferry disruption, face significant housing challenges, and an ongoing lack of jobs. I know the Premier comes from a small community himself. I'd like to know what his vision is for making sure that the people who live in my communities, and other small communities in the territory, have access to the same kind of opportunities and benefits that other people in the Northwest Territories do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know I've made the statement many times, especially to the federal government, that one shouldn't be penalized for where they live. I certainly had great empathy this summer when I was up in the Beaufort, and I saw the clouds of dust on the Dempster. It reminded me of the old days on the Mackenzie Highway.

We see providing services to small communities as a priority. We want the communities to be healthy communities, sustainable communities, and that was part of the rationale for re-establishing the joint Cabinet and standing committee on small communities, where we have six MLAs and three Cabinet Ministers who all work together to improve in those areas. I remember the days going up to Fort Providence where the ferry would be out twice a year for substantial amounts of time. I know it was a difficult period with the increased costs, and I think that's an area that we need to look at, because it affects a whole region.

We talked to the federal government about the fact that we need more investment in the region. If you're going to take away trillions of dollars of oil and gas and leave it in the ground, we need an economic strategy to replace that, and we are working with them on an Arctic framework development policy which will allow us to work together in those small communities in our territory. This is an important area for us, and we're going to continue to work very hard to improve the delivery of programs and services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. Member Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU'S QUESTION

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi cho, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'm following up on my last question and answer to the Premier. I have a question for the Premier. If a Minister loses the confidence of the house with a secret ballot non-confidence vote, would the Premier direct Cabinet to vote non-confidence and honour the results of the Mid-term Review? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is a secret ballot, but we operate under the tenets of consensus government, and the pillar of consensus government is Cabinet solidarity. If we lose that, then there will be anarchy. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. I have next on my list, Member Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON'S QUESTION

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is the Premier's second term. It's not an easy position being the Premier. You travel all the time. You work extensive hours. To run for Premier twice, Premier McLeod must have a vision for the territory. I'd like to know: what will be the Premier's legacy when we look back in 20 years? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Member for the question, and I've been very clear since day one. The reason I got into politics was because of my family. I have a son and two grandchildren. I grew up here. I want this to be a good place for them to grow up in, to live here, and to work here. That's the very simple answer, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. I have next on my list, Member McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY'S QUESTION

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I commend the Premier on that recent response. The lack of infrastructure is one of our biggest challenges facing the NWT and, more importantly, the communities of Sahtu. For more than 40 years, people in my region have looked forward to the day when they can be connected to the Mackenzie Valley Highway. With isolation, Mr. Chair, comes limited opportunity, dependence and physical burden to the government programs, and elements of depression.

We are tired of waiting. We are tired of paying high prices. We are tired of the effect the lack of infrastructure is having on resource development. The people in my region want the same privileges as the residents of Yellowknife, being able to drive in and out, or the other regions. People want to see the region open for exploration and development and, more importantly, as well, the jobs created to bring home family income. Mr. Chair, I ask the Premier to explain to my residents what his government is doing to help advance the Mackenzie Valley Highway extension to the Sahtu region. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This has been a priority of the government for some time. We've done a lot of work on the technical aspects of it. We've also done a lot of work on developing a business case for the highway. We recognize the important role it would play, and we've been working very closely with the Government of Canada. We make very regular crusades to Ottawa to plead our case.

Ever since the system of winter roads has been in place, we've continued to invest in the Mackenzie Valley Highway. I think they've put in a significant amount of bridges. I think I've lost count; there have been about over 37 bridges put in. We continue to advance wherever we can in that area. We had put in a submission to the Government of Canada. They've come back.

They have said they put it on pause now. They've indicated that we can apply in other infrastructure funds. We have put in expressions of interest for funding for not only the Mackenzie Valley Highway. We will advance as much as we can and if we have to, it's not our preference, but our preference would be to see the whole section built from Wrigley to Norman Wells, but if we can get portions of the funding if that's available, then we would seriously look at it. We're very pleased to see the group committee from the Sahtu also helping us work on this important project. I think, together, we can make some important advances. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Questions to the Premier. I have next on my list, Member Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON'S QUESTION

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the Premier for his previous answer to that or the way there. Today, we had the opportunity to meet with the standing committee of finance, the federal parties, and it was great meeting. I found it very interactive. However, you know, presently, the Cabinet goes down to Ottawa and tries to lobby those people down there. In previous governments, they had GNWT days. All caucus went down there to lobby the federal government to let them understand our concerns and our needs.

In talking with the honourable Members who are part of that finance committee, that's what they are encouraging. They said, you know, it's great that Cabinet comes and they're hearing the message but they need more people to hear it. I'm not looking for more trips. I'm not trying to put more costs on to the government, but we need to get our message to the people of Canada, the politicians down there. Will the Premier look at working with ordinary MLAs so the next time they go down, a number of us go down there with you guys to give our message to work with them as a team so we can make this place, which my children grow up in and my grandchildren grow up in, a better place for the future. I want to grow up old here, so I'm hoping that the Premier will be able to help us on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the comments from the Member and that we've learned and recognized over the past that where you're very focused with some very specific objectives, you can be very effective and I think we need to agree on the most important thing that we need to focus on and certainly, I think we can look into doing it.

In the past, it's cost some money and the Minister of Finance has indicated that he would be prepared to help us in that regard. I think that this is a very important time, especially with the fragile state of our economy. I think it'd be a good time to go to Ottawa and make our case. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. Next on my list, I have Member Green.

MS. GREEN'S QUESTION

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the City of Yellowknife is the second largest government in the Northwest Territories. It provides services to the largest Aboriginal community in the Northwest Territories to a population that comes from every community. Many of the issues that exist in Yellowknife are territorial issues. They are not City of Yellowknife issues. To that end, I'm wondering what the Premier has done to develop a government-to-government relationship with the City of Yellowknife to address territorial issues. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The government has been operating on an as and when basis with regards to committees. We do have interactions with the city at different departmental levels. Yellowknife MLAs meet regularly with city council before session.

I think it's come to a point where a more significant interaction is required. Just recently, we had received a letter from the mayor and council outlining a whole host of areas in which the city is operating where it appears to be territorial issues as the Member indicates. We're very prepared to sit down with the city as a Cabinet and the appropriate Ministers because we take responsibility for those areas that are the responsibility of the Government of the Northwest Territories. We don't shirk our responsibilities, so we would be prepared to meet with them. If we can set up a process to work together, to improve and make most of these difficult issues to improve, we would be quite prepared to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. Next on my list, I have Member Nakimayak.

MR. NAKIMAYAK'S QUESTION

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to commend the Premier on his earlier comment about leaving a legacy. Coming from an Indigenous background, I know that for Inuit and for other Indigenous groups remain who we are, we must continue to harvest and co-manage our lands and resources whether it would be living resources or mineral resources of any type. I think all of our actions then and even now and moving forward are very important to the people in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Chair, there are seven regional Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories that have their own rights, responsibilities, and priorities in addition to the Government of the Northwest Territories. Since the devolution of lands and resources in 2014, some of those roles and responsibilities have changed. The GNWT has now a bigger role to play in managing lands and resources in the Northwest Territories. At the same time, settled land claims mean that Indigenous governments like the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation are major land owners in the territory and have their own authority to decide how their lands in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region are managed and developed.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask the Premier to talk about how this government works in partnership with Indigenous governments to benefit all residents of the Northwest Territories while respecting the rights and wishes of Indigenous people and governments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We operate with Aboriginal governments in a number of areas. As predicated on the respect, recognition, and responsibility policy that we've developed for our dealings with Aboriginal governments, we have signed intergovernmental MOUs with almost all of the Aboriginal governments where it's a formalized process where we agree to meet on a regular basis to discuss areas of most importance to Aboriginal governments.

We also have established an intergovernmental council where we meet with the Aboriginal governments that own land, major land holders in the Northwest Territories where we have agreed to manage the lands in the Northwest Territories for which each government has responsibilities on a collaborative basis. It's a process that started with the advent of devolution. Our government has been the chair. We have a process where we work together and we're

looking at moving the chairmanship around among the different participating governments. I think that it'll provide some consistency and some collaboration and understanding of what everyone's doing in the areas of land management. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. Next on my list, I have Member Nadli.

MR. NADLI'S QUESTION

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've just experienced a very beautiful summer and time has passed and fall is here. Naturally, change is inevitable. My question is to the Premier. What advice can he give to new members of the executive council? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's a very interesting question. I think we had several new members of executive council. I guess the most important one is to read all your material, expect to work very long hours, and to put in the time to learn your portfolios. It is very important to establish networks and to surround yourself with the brightest, smartest people that you can find to help you achieve the objectives of the government in your areas of responsibility. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. Member Testart.

MR. TESTART'S QUESTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As honourable Members of this House know, I'm a big fan of process, of transparency, and of accountability. The Premier has had a very respectable career, and I applaud him for it. He's been here for three terms, two of those terms as Premier and all of them on Cabinet, as he said earlier.

After all of that experience, especially working very closely within the machinery of government, I'd like to echo a question my colleague Mr. Vanthuyne asked of the Cabinet, which is: what challenges exist within consensus, and how can we improve it? I know we've done a lot of work in this Assembly, but from the Premier's own perspective: what works best, what doesn't work, and how can we fix it? In particular, I'd also like to ask my question of: would he commit to having an open Territorial Leadership Committee vote rather than a secret ballot vote? It seems to be the direction this Cabinet is taking on leadership matters. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the most part with consensus government, I think we're able to achieve some significant objectives. My colleague in Yukon wonders how we can get anything done, especially when he looks at our budget process. They have a majority government. They do up their budget, they slap it down on the table when session starts, and 28 days later, whatever the level of debate is, they pass the budget. He said he can only remember one instance where there was one change made in the budget, as opposed to our process, where there are significant fingerprints on the budget. I think that some areas that we're constantly working to improve on are communication and working with committees on decision-making, and I think that we need to continue to work in that regard.

With regards to the TLC and the vote, I think that's a discussion that should be had. I think if you're looking at that, you might as well throw out whether we should move to a party system or not as well. We might as well look at all of those issues. I think of the Boundaries Commission.

I'm not sure when that - I think it's every second government. For all of those things, if that's what the Members want, then we can have that discussion. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions for the Premier. Member O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY'S QUESTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. During questions back on December 15, 2015, the Premier promised to "have a discussion and a public forum like this on how we would address our fiscal situation." I'm not aware of any such public forum that was held on Cabinet's fiscal strategy of \$150 million in reductions and layoffs. In fact, our first two budgets created huge divisions between Regular MLAs and Cabinet and took an extraordinary amount of time to resolve. My friend on the other side, Minister Abernethy, actually raised this himself today. In my view, the time spent on the budgets could and should have been spent working on important mandate matters. How will the Premier handle the remaining two budgets with regard to public engagement and working with Regular MLAs? Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I recall, both of the budgets in the past two years have been approved by this Assembly, and so we have a process that I think has been working. Business plans will be reviewed with the Members. The Minister of Finance has indicated that we have a consultation process, and we'll be looking at doing something more in depth before the last budget of this government.

We can certainly have a discussion with the Members with regards to where they want to go with this. There are some substantial new initiatives that are coming forward. A lot of it is outside of our control, but we're always ready to have a discussion on these kinds of issues. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. Member Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE'S QUESTION

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to just step back again and go back to some question around consensus government. We've asked a few different forms of questions along these lines today. I think that's reflective of how important our form of government is.

One of the questions that was not asked, however, and it continually gets asked during the election times leading up to elections is that our Premier is not publically elected. I want to ask the Premier today what his thoughts are on potential for publically electing a Premier. We're one of the, I think, only two jurisdictions in the country that doesn't allow the public to elect our Premier. Does he believe that that's something that we should consider, and if so, how would we go forward in doing that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. The Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you. I've thought about this periodically. We could do it like you elect the President of the United States, for example, where you would have an electoral college, I think, where those running for Premier would have to campaign on a territorial basis, which would be significantly more expensive.

When you look at it, let's compare ourselves to the provinces, for example. When a Premier is elected, they're usually the leader of a party. You look at Alberta, for example. They had the NDP government and Social Credit. I think they have UCF now. With somebody runs for the

leadership of a party, it's not representative of the whole province. It's just selected by the members of, if I can single out a party, the NDP or the Liberals. They select a leader, and then they go to an election. If they get 30 per cent of the vote or 50 per cent of the vote, and they get enough voters to elect them, then they become the governing party.

I don't know if that's any better of a system in terms of representation, whereas here, we represent all of the population of the Northwest Territories. This way, when the Caucus selects a Premier, I think it's a fair and representative way to do so. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi. Questions to the Premier. Are there any more questions? I see none at this point. I believe we have concluded with Members' questions to the Premier. We will now proceed to item 8, balloting. At this time, Members are asked to proceed to the Clerk's table to receive their ballot. Please proceed to the voting booth to mark your ballot, and then place them in a ballot box located in front of the Clerk's table or in the back. Mr. Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The vote is just by a simple "X"; is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): That's correct. Members, any other questions on the balloting? If not, the Members can proceed with their voting.

---Balloting

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Members, I declare the voting closed. The ballot box will be taken to the Clerk's office where the ballots will be counted by the Clerks of the table. The bells will be rung for five minutes to call Members back to Chamber once the results are determined. Masi.

Announcement of Ballot Results

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Masi, Members. We're just returning after our ballots. Members, it is my duty as chair to announce the results.

Members have expressed confidence in the performance and leadership of Cabinet as a whole.

Members have expressed confidence in the performance and leadership of Premier Robert R. McLeod.

Members have expressed confidence in the performance and leadership of Minister Glen Abernethy.

Members have expressed confidence in the performance and leadership of Minister Caroline Cochrane.

Members have expressed confidence in the performance and leadership of Minister Robert C. McLeod.

Members have expressed confidence in the performance and leadership of Minister Alfred Moses.

Members have expressed confidence in the performance and leadership of Minister Wally Schumann.

Members have expressed non-confidence in the performance and leadership of Minister Louis Sebert.

Chair's Closing Remarks

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Lafferty): Members, thank you for your patience and active participation as we undertook this important mid-term review process today. As Members of this Assembly, we committed to conduct this Mid-Term Review early in the life of this Assembly. We have upheld that commitment by conducting the first Mid-Term Review since the 12th Assembly. This meeting of the Mid-Term Review of the 18th Legislative Assembly is concluded. We are adjourned.

The third session of the 18th Legislative Assembly will resume on October 17, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. Masi.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned 4:45 p.m.