



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2nd Session

Day 2

14th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, February 23, 2000

Pages 25 – 46

The Honourable Tony Whitford, Speaker

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2000

MEMBERS PRESENT

Honourable Roger Allen, Honourable Jim Antoine, Mr. Bell, Mr. Braden, Mr. Delorey, Mr. Dent, Honourable Jane Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Nitah, Honourable Jake Ootes, Mr. Roland, Honourable Vince Steen, Honourable Tony Whitford.

ITEM 1: PRAYER

Oh God, may your spirit and guidance be in us as we work for the benefit of all our people, for justice in our land and for constant recognition of the dignity and aspirations of those whom we serve. Amen.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

MR. SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Whitford): Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board, Mr. Handley.

Minister's Statement 2-14(2): Budget Process

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been five short weeks since 19 MLAs of different backgrounds and viewpoints were sworn in to form the 14th Legislative Assembly. In that five weeks, these new MLAs have held their first session, met with the DIAND Minister, resolved a strike, and grappled with the potential delay of a mega-project. They also found the time to hold a week-long strategic planning and priority setting workshop, to organize and install their standing committee system and to hold a two-day Cabinet strategy session.

Mr. Speaker, busy as the last five weeks have been, it is going to get even busier. There is an urgent need to complete our initial orientation and planning discussions and move on to consultation and decision making. There are fiscal, economic and social crises that must be dealt with. And there are several early conclusions we have already reached.

The first conclusion is that we cannot do what needs to be done without first building trust and effective partnerships with aboriginal governments, with the federal government, with industry and with all other Northwest Territories stakeholders.

The second conclusion is that there is no short term fix to most of the issues we face. These issues developed over a long period of time and solving them will take the education, understanding, acceptance and participation of a lot of people. In some areas we have already made progress and plans are ready, but more needs to be done and, as the Report of the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services suggests, we need to get on with it.

The third conclusion we have reached is that without new sources of revenue our ability to get the job done is going to be severely limited. We need to secure the resources needed to achieve our goals. Otherwise we will end up tinkering around the edges of our economic and social issues while they only get worse.

Mr. Speaker, based on these early conclusions we have developed an initial plan of action.

The government will immediately request meetings with aboriginal governments and the federal government to discuss common issues and solutions.

In March, 2000 the government will bring in its full budget for fiscal year 2000-2001. This budget will be designed to move forward on a few of the early decisions of the 14th Legislative Assembly and it will ensure we do not exceed our borrowing limits or, in any avoidable way, worsen our fiscal situation or create a fiscal crisis.

Over the next few months, priority will be given to working through Caucus to complete the development of the 14th Legislative Assembly's goals, priorities and strategies. This work will need to be performed in close consultation with aboriginal governments, and with other Northwest Territories stakeholders. Once completed in May or June, this agenda of the 14th Legislative Assembly will be publicly tabled and discussed. The directions established by the new agenda will guide further government initiatives this year and the development of business plans and budgets for the 2001-2002 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, this is an ambitious timetable. For it to succeed, we will need to be focused in our work and we will need the participation and contribution of many parties. But that is what operating in a consensus system is all about. We are all in this together and we must all be part of the solution.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Mr. Antoine.

Minister's Statement 3-14(2): Signed Dogrib Agreement-in-Principle

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, later today I will table in this House a signed copy of the Dogrib Agreement-in-Principle.

I had the pleasure of signing the agreement-in-principle on behalf of our government in a ceremony held in Rae on January 7, 2000.

Grand Chief Joe Rabesca of Rae Edzo, Chief Joseph Judas of Wekweti, Chief Archie Wetrade of Gameti and Chief Charlie Nitsiza of Wha Ti signed on behalf of the Dogrib Treaty 11 Tribal Council. The Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew signed on behalf of the Government of Canada.

This agreement is the result of three years of intensive negotiations.

I want to congratulate once again all the people who made a contribution. Negotiations for the final agreement have begun and there are critical issues which still must be resolved.

The Dogrib, the Yellowknives of the Akaitcho Territory Government and the Deh Cho First Nations have important work to finish regarding boundaries or overlap agreements in traditional areas of shared usage. There are taxation issues and concerns of how the Dogrib First Nations Government will be financed.

The parties are working on the terms of a ten-year intergovernmental service agreement, which will define in some detail how programs and services in the areas of health, education and social services will be delivered to all residents of the Dogrib communities.

The Dogrib leaders would like to have a final agreement for their general assembly this August.

I can assure all of my colleagues in this House and the Dogrib leadership that this government is committed to finalizing the Dogrib Agreement as soon as possible.

It is essential that we take the time to negotiate a good agreement, an agreement that is complete and capable of being implemented to the satisfaction of all the parties.

The Dogrib, along with ourselves and the Government of Canada, are breaking new trail as we work together to achieve the first land claim and self-government agreement in the Northwest Territories.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. The Member for Hay River South, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen.

Minister's Statement 4-14(2): Recruitment and Retention

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update the Members of this House on the Department of Health and Social Services' continuing efforts and achievements in building a strong and stable health and social services workforce in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Members of this House are well aware of the challenges we face concerning the shortage of health and social services professionals in the Northwest Territories. This shortage has been a regular story in the news both here at home as well as nationally. It is common knowledge that we must compete with other jurisdictions across Canada and North America for the same pool of professionals. And while a great deal of media attention has been given to nurses and physicians, Members of this House need to be aware that we are also experiencing shortages of social workers and other health and social services professionals who make up our workforce.

As Members may recall, Mr. Speaker, the department received additional funding in November of 1998 to implement a

recruitment and retention strategy. At that time, we were experiencing critical staffing shortages in nursing and social work. Some health centres had to be closed because we did not have enough staff to maintain a safe and appropriate level of service.

A strategy was created to implement short and long term actions to address this critical shortage. This strategy moved beyond the continuous cycle of short-term hiring and into a position where we were bringing long-term stability to our workforce.

I am pleased to report that we have made great progress in just 15 months. A working group that includes representatives from the department, health and social services boards and professional associations has been putting this strategy into action. And while we sometimes have to wait to see if our efforts are successful, I am happy to be able to report to this House some areas of actions that we have undertaken.

In order to fill our immediate vacancies, the department, boards and professional associations have teamed up to develop an aggressive marketing campaign to reach professionals in the south:

- Department and board staff regularly attend job fairs to promote our health and social services system and career opportunities. They select events which draw professionals with an interest in the kinds of career opportunities we offer.
- We have also developed resources to promote who we are and what we have to offer. Examples of these resources are on display in the Great Hall all this week and I invite Members to take time to look at the display.
- We have a set of advertisements that are placed in professional journals and selected newspapers across the country. Again, staff are selective in where these ads are placed in order to attract people who are interested in the type of professional practice we offer.
- This spring we will launch a recruitment page on our public web site to enhance our national and international search efforts. The department and boards already get e-mail from interested professionals. This site will improve our electronic correspondence and will take this one step further by providing a "one-stop" shopping career approach. This site will have job postings, information about our

boards and professional licensing requirements. People around the world will be able to view employment opportunities and apply for these positions on-line. And with on-line service, we will be able to respond to interested professionals in a matter of hours, rather than days or weeks.

Of course, all of these activities are about improving our methods of recruiting. We also must consider what professionals are looking for and what we can offer that other jurisdictions cannot. For example, our long-term doctors, nurses, and social workers tell us that they enjoy working in the North for the following reasons:

- We offer a diversity of practice that is unmatched in most of Canada or the United States;
- The level of teamwork, collaboration and dedication within and across the various professions is high; and
- Professionals can develop personalized care for individuals and families - people do not disappear into the system like they can in the south, and our workers experience the rewards of maintaining close contact with their clients, often seeing them get better.

We know from our front-line workers that these are highly desirable features for many in their profession, and that people will move to places which offer these opportunities. Our marketing strategies must highlight these strengths.

Are these efforts paying off? I believe they are, Mr. Speaker. Since January of last year, the number of vacancies for full-time nurses across the Northwest Territories has fallen from 18 percent to under seven percent. For social workers, vacancies have fallen quite dramatically in just the last four months - from about 23 percent to just over four percent.

This is good news. It has taken the edge off of our staffing shortage. But we cannot relax our efforts because keeping these vacancy levels down requires on-going commitment. This means finding ways to keep the staff we hire. To do this, we must consider income, working conditions and quality of life.

As Members know, the previous government implemented a temporary market supplement for nurses. This pay increase meant that the Northwest Territories offers nurses one of the highest income levels in Canada. As well, we are presently working with the Northwest Territories Medical Association to examine alternative forms of payment that would result in competitive and fair payments, and consistency for all physicians across the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, working conditions and quality of life are extremely important to our efforts of retaining staff. The long hours and issues of personal safety while on the job are

causing staff to leave. We have made progress in these areas as well.

- A few weeks ago, the department, boards and Northwest Territories Medical Association signed an agreement with the Alberta Medical Association to provide temporary replacement services for our physicians. This arrangement improves our physicians' quality of life as they can now take planned breaks for professional development or holidays.
- We have also joined with the Union of Northern Workers to improve workplace conditions for our front-line workers. The department and the union recently held a workshop attended by various professional associations, the RCMP and government agencies. At this workshop, participants identified issues that related to personal safety and well-being while on the job. This workshop is an important step to resolving these issues.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that developing a "home-grown" workforce is an investment that will pay dividends in the future. I am pleased to report to the Members that the department has made great gains in this area.

A completely new program - the Northern Development Program - has been created to provide hands-on assistance to northern students in their pursuit of health and social services careers. The program provides support to northern students with financial assistance, mentorship opportunities, summer employment placement assistance and marketing of new professionals to our boards. I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that 37 northern students received bursaries in the past year. Additional information about the Northern Development Program is available at the display in the Great Hall.

Staff of this program also worked with various boards to launch the Health Careers Orientation Program in July, 1999. This initiative gives high school students the opportunity to shadow health and social services professionals, providing students a great introduction to these professions and incentive to pursue these careers. In our first year, 12 high school students participated in the program, but we expect that number to triple this year.

Another area of success is the Aurora College Nursing Program. Members may recall how well our first graduates did on their national exams. This program is an important step towards developing a "home-grown" nursing workforce. We hope that in the near future, Aurora College can also offer a Bachelor's degree in nursing.

Mr. Speaker, these are only highlights of our progress. There are many other activities I would like to speak to but it is obvious that the department, with its partners, has made a significant commitment to improving our workforce.

This commitment will continue with the development of a comprehensive human resource plan for our system. It will build on the successes of our recruitment and retention strategy and provide a broad framework for human resource planning in all of our health and social services professions.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wish to emphasize that the gains we have made are significant, but long-term stability of our workforce can only be realized with the active support of this government. Members can help by getting the message out to communities about our Northern Development Program, and by supporting our workers.

I look forward to keeping this House informed of both the issues and successes in this area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The Honourable Jane Groenewegen, Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

Minister's Statement 5-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in light of the high level of interest expressed by Members yesterday with respect to the review of child and family services by the Department of Health and Social Services, I would like to provide Members with a brief overview of this important study.

The Child and Family Services Program involves a number of different program components such as prevention, intervention, children in care, foster care, adoptions, medical foster care, treatment group home care and support services to families. The program is administered by the Department of Health and Social Services, under the authority of the Child and Family Services Act.

This Act is a relatively new piece of legislation. It was passed by the last Assembly and proclaimed in October, 1998, following 10 years of community consultation, including the Family Law Review.

As Members are aware, the number of children and families involved with the Child and Family Services Program is increasing dramatically. Currently, the Northwest Territories takes children into protective custody at a rate of two to three times that of the prairie provinces. Social workers are reporting an increase not only in the number of cases, but also in the complexity and severity of the child protection issues they are dealing with in the communities.

Mr. Speaker, there has never been a formal, comprehensive evaluation of child welfare practice in the Northwest Territories. Last fall, the department decided to contract with the Child Welfare League of Canada - the pre-eminent national child protection organization in the country - to undertake a review of the Child and Family Services Program.

The review was sole-sourced and later today, as promised, I will table the terms and conditions of that contract for the information of Members and the public.

The child and family services review is focusing primarily on the child protection component of the program. The review is comprehensive in its scope. It is meant to be a program evaluation and functional review of child welfare practice in the Northwest Territories. The reviewers have examined caseloads and practice standards, supervision, monitoring and competency based training requirements for child protection workers. In this context, the review will provide a blueprint for both the present and future needs, priorities, resource requirements and supports needed to ensure improved community-based child protection services with the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, I want to be able to assure Members and the public that child welfare practices in the Northwest Territories are appropriate and responsive to the needs of our children and families, and that they meet best practice standards which are in place elsewhere in Canada and North America.

Our residents, and especially children who are in need of protection from neglect and abuse, deserve the best support we can provide. The department has taken the initiative to subject itself and this very important program to a rigorous review. This is a quality assurance initiative that will provide valuable advice in the best interest of services to families and children.

I am confident the report will document the very difficult and complex challenges facing our social workers every day as they do their best to meet the needs of children and families. Child protection work is extremely emotional and, as evidenced by our recent discussions, generates considerable debate and concern.

It is important not to lose sight of what child protection is all about - the protection of children from abuse and neglect.

MR. SPEAKER: The time allowed for Ministers' statements has elapsed.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mrs. Groenewegen, you have unanimous consent to conclude your statement.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I encourage Members to consider the review methodology and the resumes of the Child Welfare League of Canada review team. I am certain you will be impressed with the level of professional expertise and experience they bring to the project. I also would like to inform Members that, in addition to Mr. Corbin Shangreux, a First Nations child welfare consultant, the review team also includes a Northerner, Ms. Gay Hansen, who is a former deputy minister of Social Services of the Yukon. Ms. Hansen has also worked in the Northwest Territories. These members are well aware of the northern and aboriginal context and could hardly be considered culturally disconnected southerners.

Mr. Speaker, I plan to table the Report of the Review of Child and Family Services in this House this spring. I would like to thank Members for their interest in the review and I look forward to your continued support in ensuring that our child protection system is of the highest possible quality and meets best practice standards.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely heartened by the level of interest that the review is generating. I believe that all Members share my concern that our child protection system should provide the best possible support and services to children and their families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 3, Members' statements. Mr. Krutko.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Water Quality in Fort McPherson

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement today is about something we all take for granted – water. Water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink. I think we take for granted the ability to pick up a glass of water and drink it without having any second thoughts as to what is in the water and where it may have come from.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue I have raised in this House over the last four years, the issue of the water quality in Fort McPherson. I have not spoken publicly on this issue in some time, but I believe it is now more grave than ever. There is a chemical in the water system in Fort McPherson called THM, or trihalomethane.

The concern comes when the water is mixed in with chlorine, because it causes a reaction. As everyone here knows, all water in Canada has to be treated with chlorine. The community of Fort McPherson has made statements publicly on this concern through the airwaves, and the newspapers.

I have been doing my best to ensure that this issue is dealt with through the means that I have. I have raised this issue with the Minister of Indian Affairs, and with our Member of Parliament, the Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew, and with the newly elected Premier, the Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, along with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

To try to find a quick solution to deal with this problem, and to ensure this will be done with our best efforts, realizing that we do have some restrictions and restraints in the process of reaching a conclusion, I would like to make the public and the people of Fort McPherson aware that this issue is high on my agenda. It has been brought up with the Minister of Indian Affairs, who, along with the federal department of Indian and Northern Affairs and this government must work to ensure that this public issue is dealt with as an emergency crisis.

With that, I will be asking the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs questions on this matter later on. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement On Child and Family Services Review

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the Child and Family Services Review. I have strong concerns about the process, and the steps being taken.

I speak as a Northerner who is concerned about child welfare issues. I have spent 15 years in the health and social services field, many of it in the child welfare area, and as a MLA, I spent the last three years of the 13th Assembly on the Social Programs Committee.

I am interested in northern solutions to northern problems. I am interested in using the tremendous amount of skill, talent and northern expertise that we have developed in this area to reach those solutions.

What I see is a sole-sourced contract with an outfit from Yonge Street, totally bypassing any Northerner's involvement in this, except for the visiting of eight out of 33 communities and what can only be described, in my opinion, as a cursory public involvement given the incredibly short and compressed timeframes.

The Department of Health and Social Services has been telling us for at least two years they are working on this. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that what we see here is a compressed attempt to make up for two years of inactivity in this area, knowing they are going to be coming before the Social Programs Committee again, of which I have the good fortune to be a Member, to have to speak to this issue.

They will have to tell us why they are trying to deal with it in six weeks, with incredibly complex issues, doing 100 case audits of child welfare cases. Let alone all of the structural and program issues they are going to deal with. I submit, Mr. Speaker, it is physically impossible unless it is done in the most cursory and superficial way.

It is not rigorous. I look forward to the Minister tabling this report and standing up to tell us how she has managed to do all of this in six weeks in any in-depth way that is going to speak to these very fundamental issues that she said, and I agree with, are very emotional and important to all Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, I am not reassured by the Minister's comments. I know she has to defend this, but I do not think it is going to be adequate. The time is too short. The people may be well-intentioned, but the time is not there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Member's Statement On Evaluating GNWT Performance and Spending

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the decisions of this government go well beyond our government. They impact the daily lives of those whom we govern. That is why we must take proactive steps now to ensure we do not hit the debt wall. Once again it must be said it is time for government to look at the way it does business.

This, Mr. Speaker, has been said many times during the previous Assembly. Now is the time to have a look inward, to see if government is actually serving the people, or has it become a nightmare of rules and regulations which is starting to feed on itself. I believe the door has been opened that will allow us to do this much needed review.

Change is a difficult process, even at the best of times. It is even more difficult when times are tight. A question we must ask ourselves is if we cannot even keep up to today's ever-increasing expenditures, how can we afford more regions with an increased bureaucracy without making huge changes to the way government carries on with its daily business?

The Members who have been re-elected from previous assemblies are aware of the difficult choices that had to be made to deal with a budget shortfall. The choices will not be any easier this time around if we do not look at evaluating the programs and services that this government provides to its residents.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the situation we find ourselves in, as a government, requires we look for new ways and ideas. For example, can we afford as many boards and agencies as we have? Is it time to take a stand on how many dollars are spent on administration versus programs? In every community there are numerous groups that provide services on behalf of government. All have an administration component. Let us take a look at our own departments. Another example is the requirement to have regional staff prepare documents for decisions that are made in headquarters.

Mr. Speaker, when reductions were made in the area of positions, we were told that this would streamline government operations. I understood that to mean we would get rid of some of the unnecessary paperwork as well. My earlier example of the decision-making process that is still in use today proves that has not happened.

Mr. Speaker, in the work we are about to set on as Members of the 14th Assembly, we must look beyond this fiscal year. We must look to our future, that being our children. What legacy will we leave them? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Member's Statement On Costs of Participating in Arctic Winter Games

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every two years, athletes from across the northern part of our world come together to participate in the Arctic Winter Games. This event was first hosted in Yellowknife in 1970. This year, from March 5th through the 11th, athletes from the Northwest Territories will travel to Whitehorse to participate in the 16th Arctic Winter Games. Three hundred sixteen athletes from the Northwest Territories will participate.

At this point in time, I would like to congratulate each of these athletes for making the Northwest Territories Arctic Winter Games team. I would especially like to congratulate the three athletes from the Deh Cho who have attained positions on Team NWT.

Mr. Speaker, although I celebrate the three athletes from the Deh Cho who made the team, I have to express my concern

that only three athletes from the four communities in my constituency were successful.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, perhaps it is time for the Northwest Territories to re-evaluate its participation in the Arctic Winter Games. We must ensure that youth from smaller communities are given a fair opportunity to participate. We must investigate further to determine the barriers that prevent youth in a small community from being selected to the Northwest Territories teams.

The costs for participating in the Arctic Winter Games selection process are high. In my region, in order to participate in the regional trials, all athletes had to pay a fee. If the athlete is successful at the regional level, they must pay an additional fee to participate at the territorial level. Then again, if the athlete is successful at making the Northwest Territories team, they pay another fee. Mr. Speaker, the hockey team from my community could not raise the funds so did not participate in the trials. We have to question how families with low incomes and a number of children raise the money.

Further, Mr. Speaker, we all know the social problems in our communities are high. However, most of our youth that participate at the games are under the age of 19 years. How do we address the youth from the ages of 20 to 24? Are we sending the message that participation in sport ends once you have reached 20?

We are entering a new millennium. Perhaps now is the time to enter into a new type of games for the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

Member's Statement On The Passing of Stanley Tyrell

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories for the riding of Inuvik Twin Lakes, I would like to extend my sympathies to the family of Mr. Stanley "Goo Goo" Tyrell, who passed away after a short battle with cancer.

Mr. Tyrell was a prominent and well-respected elder from Aklavik who spent his entire life working with his people. He was very instrumental as a carpenter, having spent his early adult life building up many of Inuvik's existing buildings, such as the Mackenzie and Eskimo Inn hotels.

Mr. Tyrell leaves to mourn his sisters, Rose Larocque, Dolly McLeod, and Florence Carpenter, his son Wally and his wife Jeannie, wife Jane, life-long friend Ida and granddaughters Tammy and Annie Tyrell. He also leaves in mourning his many nieces and nephews and his well-regarded friends throughout the Mackenzie Delta and the surrounding communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. The sympathies of the House are extended to the Tyrell family. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Member's Statement On The Unique Communities of Fort Rae and Edzo

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a new Member, I would like to make a statement about the unique community I come from.

Rae Edzo is a one-of-a-kind municipality in the western Arctic. It is the largest hamlet in the Northwest Territories and consists of two communities connected by 16 kilometres of road.

The communities can be seen across the lake from each other. In the winter, the communities are connected by four and a half kilometres of winter road, and relatives reside in both communities.

The local municipality in Rae duplicates services in both communities. But the residents of Edzo are concerned about the level of services provided. The community of Rae Edzo is growing. With the addition of an airport, service needs are changing.

At the appropriate time, I will be asking questions concerning the need for funding services in Rae Edzo. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Kakfwi.

Member's Statement On Participation in Trans-Canada Water Relay

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we heard on the radio, the journey for the water of the Arctic Ocean to meet up with the waters of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans began in Tuktoyaktuk on February 19th.

This is in keeping with the plans of the Trans-Canada water relay, to lead up to the official opening of this national trail in September of this year. Today the water passed through the town of Norman Wells. 30 residents officially took turns carrying the water from the Arctic Ocean. I would like to congratulate the residents of the Sahtu for their enthusiastic support in celebrating the Trans-Canada Trail water relay. I look forward to seeing the water as it travels from Rae to Yellowknife on March 3rd and 4th. I would like to say a special thank you to all Northern Rangers who have taken on the responsibility of ensuring the water and carriers travel safely through our Territory.

Mr. Speaker, it is the intent of this relay to have the water of the Atlantic, Pacific and the Arctic oceans all meet somewhere in the capital region in early September. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

Member's Statement On Importance of Sports and Recreation

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also wish to acknowledge the importance sports and recreation plays in the communities. I am sure we are all concerned about community wellness. This is a key element in shaping our youth for tomorrow. Sports provide an environment for developing learning and leadership abilities, and also provides excellent role models. Not only do recreational activities promote team-building and sportsmanship, but promote healthy individuals.

With that in mind, I wish to recognize the following Arctic Winter Games participants from my constituency of Tu Nedhe. From Fort Resolution, Travis Guild in badminton, Dexter Lafferty and Frank Lafferty for dog-mushing, and Tausia Kaitu'u' Lal, an official at badminton. Also, from Lutsel K'e, Jesse Michelle for Dene games. I would like to wish these and all of the other fine athletes all the best at the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my concern on the lack of funding and recreational facilities available in small communities. Small communities have very tight-knit people, but the communities do not have access to a lot of recreational facilities. If there are recreational facilities, there is no money in the community to really take full advantage of it.

I think sport and recreation boards and Municipal and Community Affairs could do a little bit more to guarantee that adequate funding levels are available in small communities where it is very difficult to raise money from industry and corporations. There are no industry and corporations in small communities. Everything is based on proposal writing to the federal and territorial governments. It is very hard to raise money in the communities. I think this government has to be conscious of that.

The representation from small, rural communities in the Northwest Territories at this Arctic Winter Games will be a good example of those problems. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. SPEAKER: Before we go to the Members, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize in the gallery Mr. Robert Clark, Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, and accompanying Mr. Clark is Mr. Frank Work, Queen's Counsel and Legal Advisor to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

Welcome, gentlemen, to the Legislative Assembly.

Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize the board of directors of the Arctic Cooperative Limited who are here with us today, and also the president, Mr. Bill Lyall. I would also like to recognize the president for the Co-op in Fort McPherson, Mr. Piet Van Loon.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize the board of directors of the Arctic Cooperatives Limited and the Arctic Cooperative Development Fund, as well as the two service federations of the community owned cooperatives of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Mr. Krutko has mentioned several, and I would like to recognize them again. Mr. Bill Lyall, the chair; Piet Van Loon, Lucassie Arragutainaq, Gina Dolphus, Guy Enuapik, Bernie

Putulik, Andrew Goussaert, Danny Yakeleya, Solomon Mikki, Nick Nichol, Greg O'Neill, and Andy Morrison, who is the CEO. Welcome.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery, the Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cannot see him from where I sit, but I am told that Mr. Gerard Mulders is in the gallery. I would like to recognize Mr. Mulders who is a long-term resident of Yellowknife, formerly the regional director for the Keewatin region for this government before his retirement. He now lives in British Columbia and he took time out of his retirement to help me in my campaign. He worked really hard for me.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Welcome, Mr. Mulders. Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. I guess this time Ms. Thomas is going to go unrecognized. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 13-14(2): Working Together Student Employment Program

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to follow up on my line of questioning from yesterday in my question to the Minister for Education, Culture and Employment. Yesterday I was asking questions about summer hiring for returning university students and I was reassured to hear the Minister say that he planned to see if he could coordinate the efforts with other government departments to identify opportunities for students and youths for the coming summer.

I would like some clarification. I am wondering if the Minister can tell me which government departments he was coordinating with or planning to coordinate with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Jake Ootes.

Return to Question 13-14(2): Working Together Student Employment Program

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do my best to answer the question, as I did yesterday. Just to mention I have had three weeks in this department, Mr. Speaker, and it has been a hectic situation for me because I am new to this particular department.

I am being briefed as we go. It is a large department. I am very pleased to be there. The Premier expressed his confidence in me to take on this department, but it is new to me.

As I mentioned, getting up to speed on it is going to take me a bit of time when it comes to the technical matters.

Some of the Members on the other side are former Ministers of this particular department and some have also been on the Social Envelope committees for four years. If I cannot answer the question, Mr. Speaker, I may have to give notice for anything that may be technical. I will do my best, and I do

appreciate the questions, but I would appreciate some understanding if I have to give notice.

Regarding the Member's question, it is true that the government, through the Executive, is trying to coordinate an employment program for summer students so that we do have an opportunity for students returning to the North to be employed by at least the territorial government. I hope that answers the Member's question. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. The Ministers do have the option to either take the question as notice or respond to the question. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 13-14(2): Working Together Student Employment Program

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a little more clarification is required. You mentioned that the Executive is going to take the lead on hiring summer students. I am wondering if that means they will set up an office for students to report to when they return home to check in and see where the employment opportunities might be. Even if that office is not handling the hiring directly, will that office be coordinating job opportunities with the other departments then?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 13-14(2): Working Together Student Employment Program

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes, that is correct. It will be coordinated by the Department of the Executive. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Item 6, oral questions. Second supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 13-14(2): Working Together Student Employment Program

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just one more thing; is that for Yellowknife or is that for the entire Territories, based in Yellowknife? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 13-14(2): Working Together Student Employment Program

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It will be for all of the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 14-14(2): Child and Family Services Program Review

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listening to the Minister of Education's responses I am tempted to ask him some questions, but I will redirect my questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services and hopefully I will get two bats at this.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister to elaborate, if she could, on this fact sheet she gave us yesterday. One hundred files

were reviewed. What does that mean? Was it a random selection or were they carefully selected by the department to achieve a certain end? That is one question to deal with these files, to give the Minister an indication of what I would like to hear her respond to. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen.

Return to Question 14-14(2): Child and Family Services Program Review

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received a more extensive briefing note as a result of your questions in the House yesterday as to how the terms of reference were set out for this review. However, it does not specify how the 100 files were chosen.

It does talk about how the eight communities were chosen, and the various other organizations that were consulted with. The 100 files I am sure represented a cross-section of cases, but I will undertake to find out for the Member exactly how the 100 cases were selected. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary to Question 14-14(2): Child and Family Services Program Review

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The half response, or quasi-notice, leaves me at the Minister's mercy and convenience. I will have to trust her reliability. I do have a question regarding the consultation. I would like to know what it means when they list community councils, band councils, school authorities.

Did the plane go into the community with the motors running on the tarmac, with a few folks scurrying over to the community hall? Did they drag some poor folks around the table, ask a few questions, and then jump on the plane so they could be back in Yellowknife for supper? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 14-14(2): Child and Family Services Program Review

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member has indicated that he does not like questions that are taken as quasi-notice, so I will take that question as notice. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Groenewegen. The question has been taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Question 15-14(2): Fort McPherson Water Quality

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine. As referred to in my Member's statement, I am concerned about the issue of water quality, which has been a

problem in the past, most notably a sensitivity to the smell, the colour and the taste of the water in Fort McPherson.

It has now become more of a health concern with the discovery of THMs, which is a cancer-causing component traced to bladder cancer, especially in eastern Canada. If you had the opportunity to watch the National during Christmas and New Years there was a major broadcast on the number of bladder cancers in the smaller communities in eastern Canada. They were all traced to this particular chemical, which is THM.

Because of that I feel this situation Fort McPherson finds itself in is at a crisis level. That is why I have spoken to the Minister of Indian Affairs as well as our Member of Parliament. The community of Fort McPherson is taking steps to resolve this as soon as possible.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to tell me what his department has done to date to try to resolve this issue. Thank you.

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

Return to Question 15-14(2): Fort McPherson Water Quality

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of water quality in Fort McPherson has been an issue for a while here, and the department has been involved in trying to resolve it. I know it has been outstanding for a long time with the colour and the smell and the liquidity of the water.

I have been in Fort McPherson and they gave me a glass to drink, but I would not drink it. I am aware of the situation. In trying to resolve it, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has been working with the health board in the Inuvik region, as well as Public Works and Services.

We discussed this with the community in December. The area of THMs, which is now a health concern, has come to light. As a result of that, we tried a number of solutions.

We tried to fix the water containers and clean the pipes, but it is still not good enough. The department has issued filters as an interim measure. To date, I understand there have not been any complaints received from the community about the water quality since the introduction of the filters.

Last week, on February 15th, the acting deputy minister was in Inuvik and Fort McPherson, and held a series of meetings to discuss the water issue, including the status of the water supply and improvements. I am told Deepwater Lake has been identified as a new source of water and this project is a priority.

The department is working to try to rearrange the project financing to allow for the use of Deepwater Lake. We have an application to the Gwich'in Tribal Council for access to Deepwater Lake, since it is on the Gwich'in lands. We need to apply to have access to it. This is what the department has been doing to date. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 15-14(2): Fort McPherson Water Quality

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, could the Cabinet Minister indicate exactly what the next steps his department is going to take to ensure that this project does come to light and is done in a speedy manner? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 15-14(2): Fort McPherson Water Quality

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this project of having a new and better water supply for Fort McPherson was a P3 pilot project and that has been flipped into the conventional capital projects. We will have to work towards rearranging the project financing through the normal process. This will be done through the help of the department. The department will need to arrange that and with the help of the standing committees of this House, we will have to look at that.

At the same time, since Deepwater Lake is on the Gwich'in tribal lands, and based on the discussions with the president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council last week, we anticipate the negotiations could begin on access and use of Deepwater Lake as soon as possible.

We have to prepare a management plan for the Deepwater Lake watershed as well, and a design will be carried out concurrent with the negotiations with the Gwich'in Tribal Council. Trying to acquire the permission to have access to the lake with the Gwich'in Tribal Council is going to start very soon, and refinancing internally within the department will start as soon as it can.

This takes time and we will be sure it is a priority. The health of the people in Fort McPherson is a major concern to us. We will try to move as fast as we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Mr. Krutko, second supplementary.

Supplementary to Question 15-14(2): Fort McPherson Water Quality

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell me if there will be any activities regarding the upgrade of the water treatment plant in Fort McPherson so that that work can continue? And will that work take place this summer?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 15-14(2): Fort McPherson Water Quality

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mr. Speaker, through the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and working with the Public Works and Services department, we will continue to make changes to the treatment, including installing holding tanks to increase the effectiveness of the treatment chemicals.

We have been testing the Brita filters in households for several months. These are just temporary measures. The end goal is to

eventually have access to Deepwater Lake to have a good supply of water. These measures at this time are interim measures and we are trying to provide good water to the community. These are the initiatives we are doing now. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Antoine. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 15-14(2): Fort McPherson Water Quality

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With my final supplementary I would like to ask the Minister has he worked with his counterpart, the Minister of Health and Social Services, to see what the health implications of this chemical are on the residents of Fort McPherson? In my statement, I made reference to the concerns that were raised in eastern Canada where this has been determined to cause large cases of bladder cancer. It showed that people in smaller communities in eastern Canada had more cases of this cancer, especially in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Can the Minister tell me if he has had the opportunity to speak with his counterpart to see what the health implications are?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Honourable Minister Antoine.

Further Return to Question 15-14(2): Fort McPherson Water Quality

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the different departments in this government have been working together in this case, at the regional level as well as the headquarter level.

At this point in time, I am not fully briefed on the implications of the health effects regarding chemicals that are in the water. As soon as I get that kind of information, I will share it with my colleague across the floor here. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Antoine. Oral questions, the Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 16-14(2): Rae Edzo Municipal Funding Levels

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, the Honourable Jim Antoine. The formula funding agreement between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the communities has recently been reviewed. Recommendations were made to make some changes to the formula to make it more fair and equitable.

In the case of one of the municipalities I represent, Rae Edzo, funds are provided by Municipal and Community Affairs to provide basic municipal services. These services include general government services, building maintenance, recreational services, and community planning.

Community governments are required to provide these services under the Hamlet Act and Chartered Communities Act. In the case of Rae Edzo, it is pointed out in one of the documents that "unique community features are not always addressed by the funding formula." The example that was given was the dual communities of Rae Edzo.

Mr. Speaker, I am worried that unless an agreement is reached which recognizes the unique situation of this twin community, the two communities will split and apply for funding separately. In this time of tight budgets, I think that it would be more cost effective to reach an agreement. Would the Minister commit to examining this issue?

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

Return to Question 16-14(2): Rae Edzo Municipal Funding Levels

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am told that Municipal and Community Affairs currently takes into consideration the needs of the twin communities of Rae Edzo. I know that there are many municipal services that are duplicated and are required in both locations of Rae and Edzo. Certainly I will look at this issue. The honourable Member is asking me to make a commitment to look at it, and I will certainly do that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Antoine. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Question 17-14(2): Aboriginal Languages Fund

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The Deh Cho Tribal Council has publicly stated that the aboriginal languages in their region is in a crisis situation.

The Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government have signed a cooperation agreement on languages. In this agreement, there will be \$1.6 million allocated to the provision of French language services. The agreement further supplies \$1.9 million for aboriginal languages.

The Deh Cho region has been allocated \$250,000 of this money. Mr. Speaker, this amounts to \$25,000 per community when you divide by the ten communities in the whole of the Deh Cho region. This is not enough money to preserve, promote or enhance our aboriginal languages.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister how the amounts of \$1.9 million for aboriginal language activities and \$1.6 million for French language activities were determined?

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

Return to Question 17-14(2): Aboriginal Languages Fund

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The funding is provided through a Canada-Northwest Territories Cooperative Agreement. It is a five-year agreement. It was signed on January 6, 2000. The five years is for a total of \$17.5 million.

The Member is correct; it provided \$1.9 million for aboriginal languages in the Territory and \$1.6 million for French. The allocation of the French language is done according to a national requirement. That particular allocation is based on a formula done nationally.

In addition to the federal monies, the territorial government also has approximately \$1.8 million for language programs in schools, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 17-14(2): Aboriginal Languages Fund

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister inform the House as to whether or not there were any aboriginal people directly involved in the negotiations of this funding?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 17-14(2): Aboriginal Languages Fund

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The negotiations did take place and aboriginal people were involved in the negotiations. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary to Question 17-14(2): Aboriginal Languages Fund

MR. MCLEOD: Would the Minister inform the House which aboriginal people were involved in the negotiations?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 17-14(2): Aboriginal Languages Fund

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have that information with me. I will have to get back to the Member with that information. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Oral questions. Supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Supplementary to Question 17-14(2): Aboriginal Languages Fund

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, languages are an integral part of the aboriginal cultures of the Northwest Territories. What does the Minister plan to do to preserve, enhance and promote aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 17-14(2): Aboriginal Languages Fund

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is true language is an extremely important part of the northern culture. There is a great deterioration of aboriginal language usage, which has been happening over the last 20 to 30 years. There is a need to address it very strongly. The territorial government is looking at an aboriginal language strategy. I believe some

consultations have already taken place. Plans are for further discussions on this matter before the end of March. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

Question 18-14(2): Student Advocate Proposal

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The Minister is aware there was a Ministers' Forum on Student Financial Assistance that was previously tabled in the House. There were concerns raised by students about service delivery of student financial assistance.

Specifically, things like the late arrival of funding, inconsistent notification that funds had been deposited, more consistency in information and service provided, a need for customer service training for staff, improved accountability when errors were made by staff and the need to review staffing levels to ensure prompt service and no delays in processing applications and funding.

Out of this forum, there was a recommendation that a student advocate be considered to speak on behalf of students to bring their concerns forward to the department. Can the Minister tell me if he feels that this recommendation is a worthwhile one? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. The Honourable Jake Ootes.

Return to Question 18-14(2): Student Advocate Proposal

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Students have made presentations and have made the department aware of difficulties that were being faced within various matters; processing of cheques, late arrivals and so forth. The issue of a student advocate is being addressed and we are definitely looking at that. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 18-14(2): Student Advocate Proposal

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we can assume that the Minister is looking into it and will endeavour to see if we can set up a student advocate, if it is warranted, who would then provide independent advice on how to proceed with claims on behalf of students. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. It sounded like you were asking for an opinion, but I wonder if the Minister would like to answer this. Mr. Ootes, you may answer if you choose.

Further Return to Question 18-14(2): Student Advocate Proposal

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will answer, Mr. Speaker. We will definitely take that as a serious concern and we will follow through with it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Bell, second supplementary. Your question started off with, "we must assume". We cannot assume, we must be factual. Thank you.

Supplementary to Question 18-14(2): Student Advocate Proposal

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question relates to timeframes. I am wondering if we can look at a student advocate in the next budget? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 18-14(2): Student Advocate Proposal

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the student issue is extremely critical and we all realize that. All of these types of suggestions are very important to us. Wherever we can, we will follow up and we will look at it before the next budget. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 19-14(2): Accident on Highway No. 3

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation. Yesterday in my statement, I talked about the dangerous situations and hazards that the condition of Highway No. 3 poses to the travellers and the motor vehicle operators. I was wondering if the Minister could tell us what he knows about the accident I was referring to. Specifically, I would like to know the cause of the accident and the road conditions at that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, the Honourable Vince Steen.

Return to Question 19-14(2): Accident on Highway No. 3

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this question is quite specific and the response could be taken one way or the other. I will take the question as notice and respond to the Member in writing.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. The question has been taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Question 20-14(2): Solution to Financial Problems

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as in my Member's statement, I will be continuing on from my questions yesterday on the budget process. The Minister responsible for the Department of Finance has given a speech today and remarked on a number of things that we have embarked on as Members of the 14th Assembly.

Specifically, in his statement, he talked about the second conclusion, that there are no short term fixes to most of the issues we face. The issues have been developed over a long period of time, so solving them, from what I read here, will take quite some time.

The other area he speaks of is one that we have to pay attention to because it relates directly to a concern that I have raised. It reads "otherwise we will end up tinkering around the

edges of our economic and social issues, while they only get worse". I agree that if we do not look at the long term and take a serious inward look at how government carries on its programs and services, tinkering just will not do the job.

Hopefully the Minister can inform us in this House that the directions that are given to staff will not only ensure we do not hit our debt wall, but will ensure that some of the work that is going to be ongoing will in fact be taking a very serious look at how we deliver programs in the House. Is that the situation, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 20-14(2): Solution to Financial Problems

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday, I can reassure you we will do everything in our power to make sure we do not hit that wall. We also have to look at the short term, and we are. If we are going to balance our budget, there are only two ways of doing it. Either we cut expenditures or we find new revenues. We are always open to finding new ways of cutting expenditures.

We are going through a process of reviewing our operations across the government. The departments are working on it. They are looking at everything from capital plans to procurement practices to the way we do business. They are asking is there any money we can save in our current operations? We are looking at the long term, in terms of how do we re-adjust ourselves as a government, what are some potentials for new revenues and what are some ways of doing business differently.

As I said earlier, we want to work in participation with other partners, and we certainly want to discuss a lot of this with the other stakeholders, particularly the aboriginal leaders, before we get into any detail on it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary to Question 20-14(2): Solution to Financial Problems

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must agree with the Minister that the details of this need to be worked out in partnership with other governments of the Northwest Territories. Will the Minister inform us, because he just talked about a balanced budget, is that the situation? Or are we looking at a combination of reducing expenditures and carrying some debt? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 20-14(2): Solution to Financial Problems

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we expect in this current year, 1999-2000, to have a deficit. I expect that in 2000-2001, we will likely look at another deficit. I do not think it is going to be possible in the short term to see a balanced budget in the next fiscal year. I think we can take

some important steps to working towards a balanced budget in the longer term. I do not see how that would be possible right now. We will do everything we can to keep the deficit well under control and we will certainly try not to hit that wall. We have made that commitment. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary to Question 20-14(2): Solution to Financial Problems

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been talk among employees and regions, that there is some downsizing exercises going on. Can the Minister inform us if that direction has been given, or is it still under development? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 20-14(2): Solution to Financial Problems

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have a working group, set up by deputy ministers, that is looking at a number of issues. The exercise is ongoing and as I mentioned earlier, we are looking at our main cost drivers, at procurement practices, at the capital budget, at energy consumption and generally how we do business and what things are costing us money. That exercise is ongoing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Roland. Item 6, oral questions. The Chair recognizes the Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 21-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services. She sent me a note saying to ask more questions about things she can answer. I am not quite sure where to set the bar here, but I will try this one.

Under the scope of the Child and Family Services Review, specifically item seven, if she wants to flip open her briefing book, it is recommended that the Child Welfare League is supposed to recommend what needs to be done in what priority to ensure that the Child and Family Services Program is designed to meet the present and future needs of clients, staff and communities.

These folks are going to be here for possibly six weeks. Can the Minister indicate whether she seriously believes that they are going to be able to answer a question that this department, this government has not been able to answer for 25 years? Does she seriously believe they can answer adequately and finally in six weeks? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. I wonder if that is a question or if that is seeking an opinion. I think you are asking more for an opinion. I wonder if the Member would phrase it in such a way that it is more of a direct question?

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will attempt to not ask an opinion from the Minister. Can the Minister tell

me, will the contractor be able to do this work in such a short period of time, given the tremendous complexity of item seven alone, forgetting the other seven points listed here? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen.

Return to Question 21-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can I just say that the Member failed to tell the first part and went on to the last part to sensationalize it.

This particular review, the Child and Family Services Review and the work of the Child Welfare League of Canada was focused primarily on the child protection component of the program. The review began December 6, 1999 and we will have the report by February 28, 2000. The Member is correct in stating that this is a six-week exercise.

Mr. Speaker, I have not been a big proponent of costly reviews and studies, but I think this particular review was extremely necessary to see if the practice of our people who are involved in enforcing the child protection side of our work under the Child Welfare Act were doing so in a standard that was comparable to other jurisdictions in Canada. So I do not know if it would be proper for us to prejudge the outcome of this review.

We will receive it. We will evaluate the results as indicated. In some ways, the Member's question is hypothetical because I do not know what is going to be in the report. I think it was a good undertaking on the part of the department. I think the terms of reference look good, which I will be happy to table later on today, and if the Member, at that time, considers those terms of reference to be somehow lacking, of course we will welcome that input. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger, supplementary.

Supplementary to Question 21-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if that qualifies for the direct answers that we were promised a few weeks back. But we will see if the proof will be in the pudding.

Mr. Speaker, very clearly this speaks to more than child protection. I am not proposing hypothetical questions. If we accept the fact that this process has been underway for over two years and the department has waited until the last six weeks to try to pull it all together and compress it into an incredibly tight timeframe, I do not think it is unreasonable to ask this Minister, given the complexity of these issues, is she planning on coming forward with anything that will be considered more than superficial, trying to meet a two year obligation in six weeks? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 21-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Child and Family Services Act is a relatively new piece of legislation. But, it was brought to this House following 10 years of community consultation, including family law review.

To say this is something that has been compressed into the last six weeks... I do not think we should prejudge the outcome of the report. I mean I have only been the Minister for five weeks. I cannot speak to whether or not this is how this information should have been sought. But from the information I have been given so far, we look forward to the results of the review and we will assess and evaluate them at that time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Supplementary, the Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return to Question 21-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the issues related to this review, of course, is who is doing it and the fact that there is no northern content to speak of. That is, there are no Northerners from the Northwest Territories involved. They have gone through a southern firm on Yonge Street. True, they have dragged in a couple of folks, one ex-deputy minister from the Yukon and a First Nations person from somewhere. The Minister has indicated in her comments yesterday that northern experience and northern background is not really essential, that child welfare issues are the same no matter where you go.

Given this significant gap, is the Minister still going to say that northern child welfare issues can be easily dealt with and handled by people from Toronto? That we do not really even have to have a northern experience? That the North is not unique, as we try to tell tourists when we make the case with the government, and as we made the case through our child welfare legislation that the North is a significantly and very unique jurisdiction? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 21-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Child Welfare League of Canada is a nationally recognized organization that deals specifically in a very specialized area, which is child welfare. Mr. Speaker, I think the Member's comment that an aboriginal member and a member who had northern experience were dragged in is not particularly representative of the facts.

This is a group of people which I was pleasantly surprised to find that there was strong representation on this review committee by someone who had extensive experience in the North and someone who also had extensive experience with aboriginal people.

I think, given the resumes I have seen of the members of the Child Welfare League, that this was a good group. Again, let us see what they found out. Let us evaluate the terms of reference that I will table later today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Final supplementary, the Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary to Question 21-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have in my own way evaluated the terms of reference. Can the Minister confirm that, in fact, there is not one northern resident from the Northwest Territories that is working with the Child Welfare League to provide a perspective from the Northwest Territories, and that there is one from the Yukon? A former senior level civil servant who probably lives in Whitehorse and a First Nations person from somewhere? That there are no Northerners involved in this study? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 21-14(2): Child and Family Services Review

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member's assumption that there are no Northerners involved in this study is certainly not correct. The Department of Health and Social Services was involved in identifying the individuals, groups and agencies that provide the services in the community. This group went into the communities. They spoke with health and social services boards, which are certainly representative and aware of the issues in their constituencies. They met with community representatives. They met with the RCMP, aboriginal organizations, and local school authorities. They met with foster parents, as well as any other individuals or groups that are involved in the well-being of children.

So for the Member to say that Northerners were not involved in this review, Mr. Speaker, I would have to disagree with that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madame Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 22-14(2): Fuel Spill on Highway No. 3

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Kakfwi.

I want to ask a follow-up question to the accident that happened on Highway No. 3. The accident resulted in two things; one of them being a man ending up in the hospital for injuries, but also there was spillage of diesel fuel onto the road. The last I heard from the media was that clean up efforts were engaged. I would like to ask the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development what the extent of the clean up is, what the status is, and what is the extent of environmental damage? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife, and Economic Development, the Honourable Stephen Kakfwi.

Return to Question 22-14(2): Fuel Spill on Highway No. 3

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My information is the same as the Member's. I will take the question as notice and provide further information to the Members as it becomes available to me. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi. The question has been taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. The Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

Question 23-14(2): Funding for Language Development

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Jake Ootes. It is dealing with the funding for language development in the Northwest Territories. How many official languages are in the Northwest Territories?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Jake Ootes.

Return to Question 23-14(2): Funding for Language Development

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are legislatively eleven official languages.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 23-14(2): Funding for Language Development

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell me what are those official languages?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Jake Ootes.

Further Return to Question 23-14(2): Funding for Language Development

HON. JAKE OOTES: I will try and do it off the top of my head, Mr. Speaker, and I may have to look at my notes to remind myself. There is Innuinaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, Gwich'in, North Slavey, South Slavey, Dogrib, Chipewyan, English and French.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Members are reminded that sometimes questions like that are best answered if they would refer to the manual they have.

-- Laughter

I think there is a couple missing in there, but I will allow that reply. If I was a school teacher though...supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 23-14(2): Funding for Language Development

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to a cooperation agreement signed between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government, January 5, 2000, funding for the year 2000-2001 for aboriginal languages was agreed to \$1.9 million. For French language, it was \$1.6 million. If you break that down to individuals, there is approximately 20,000 aboriginal people and approximately 1,000 French people. If you break the funding down, you have approximately \$1,600 per francophone and \$100 per aboriginal.

I am just wondering, Mr. Speaker, what is the real need here? Is it the \$1,600 per francophone? Is that the real need for language to be preserved and enhanced or is it \$100?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Jake Ootes.

Further Return to Question 23-14(2): Funding for Language Development

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Nitah is certainly very concerned about aboriginal languages and I respect that. I think that we are all very concerned about the preservation of languages here in the Northwest Territories.

As I mentioned earlier, there is a tremendous deterioration of languages. I think we are working on this as we go, so to speak. The funding for this particular program is done through the Canada Northwest Territories Cooperation Agreement. As I mentioned earlier, it is a five-year program with some \$17.5 million, but it is partially set by criteria of the federal government based on a national formula for French.

We negotiated as much as we can for the territorial government and the agreement was signed on January 6, 2000, as I mentioned earlier.

As well, I should mention that we do have \$1.8 million for school programs. That is in addition to the \$1.9 million that we, as a territorial government, dedicated to the preservation, encouragement and resurrection of languages. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Supplementary. The Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 23-14(2): Funding for Language Development

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I do not think the Minister answered my question. The question is out there. People have asked me this question.

Since you are talking about school programs, I am wondering how many French schools are there in the Northwest Territories? How many French students are they catering to? How much does it cost to build a school and how much does it cost to run the school?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. There were four questions in there. I think some of those would probably be better as written questions, but I will allow the Minister to respond to one of those questions as he chooses. The Minister

responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, the Honourable Jake Ootes.

Further Return to Question 23-14(2): Funding for Language Development

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to take that question as notice because I do not have the details of all the questions that the Member asked. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. The question has been taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. Item 7, written questions. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

ITEM 7: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 4-14(2): Nurses' Supplement

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two written questions.

The first one is to the Minister of Health and Social Services in regards to the nurses' supplement. The Minister is requested to provide the following information related to the \$3 million nurses' pay supplement offered in 1999:

- The total amount of the supplement received by nurses by health board;
- The total number of nurses who received the supplement by health board;
- The total amount of the \$3 million that was retained by the department or other government departments for administration or other uses; and
- A comparison of nurse turnover by board for the past few years including 1999.

Written Question 5-14(2): Probation and Parole Service

Mr. Speaker, the second question is directed to the Minister of Justice in regards to the probation and parole service. In the fall of 1998, the government approved a new probation and parole service. The Minister of Justice is requested to provide the following:

- The implementation plan, including timelines for the new probation and parole service;
- A list of probation parole positions by community; and
- An indication of which positions have been filled and whether by open competition or by direct appointment.

The Minister is also requested to identify, for each filled position, whether the appointee was previously a Government

of the Northwest Territories employee and the affirmative action status of each appointee. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to the opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. Mr. Handley.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 6-14(2): 45th Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Liquor Commission

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table today.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled 45th Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Liquor Commission. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabled Document 7-14(2): Public Service Annual Report, 1996 and 1997

As well, I wish to table the following report entitled Public Service Annual Report 1996 and 1997. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 13, tabling of documents. The Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent

Tabled Document 8-14(2): Letter From the Northwest Territories Students' Coalition Regarding the Student Financial Assistance Program

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a letter signed by Brian Armstrong from the Northwest Territories Students' Coalition addressed to the Honourable Jake Ootes. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 13, tabling of documents. The Honourable Jane Groenewegen.

Tabled Document 9-14(2): Terms and Conditions of the Child Family Services Review Contract

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Terms and References of the Child and Family Services Review Contract. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. The Honourable Joe Handley.

ITEM 14: NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 8-14(2): Date for Tabling of Public Accounts

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, February 25th, 2000, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that the Legislative Assembly fix the date of June 30, 2000 for the tabling of the Public Accounts of the Northwest Territories for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1999.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. The Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Thebacha is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Miltenberger, you have unanimous consent.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the honour of recognizing in the gallery the chief from the Smith's Landing First Nation of Alberta, who are within days of finalizing their land claim. I am very glad to see him here today and I would like to acknowledge his presence. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 14, notices of motion. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Jim Antoine.

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move back to item 13, tabling of documents. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 13, tabling of documents. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Antoine, you may table your document.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 10-14(2): Dogrib Agreement-in-Principle

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled The Dogrib Agreement-in-Principle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Mr. Antoine. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters. Minister's Statement 1-14(2), Sessional Statement, with Mr. Krutko in the Chair.

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

Minister's Statement 1-14(2): Sessional Statement

MR. CHAIR (MR. KRUTKO): We have one item to deal with in committee of the whole. It is item 1-14(2), Minister's Statement. We will take a short break at this time.

-- Break

MR. CHAIR: We have one item to deal with. The Minister's statement made by the Premier, Mr. Kakfwi, Minister's Statement 1-14(2), Sessional Statement. The floor is now open for general comments. Are there any comments on the statement? Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When I put the statements made by the Premier and the Minister of Finance together, truly nobody can argue with the general sentiment expressed by the Premier. The question is how do we move ahead? What kind of specifics and comfort can we give to people with the fiscal year-end five weeks away?

With people currently preparing contracts, budgets, looking to programs and services that are going to continue on, while we search for new revenues in all the areas that the Minister touches on - on the economic side, on the social side, on the health side.

I think the key is people want more than noble sentiment. I know that Mr. Handley, the Minister of Finance, has indicated that it is going to take us possibly until June to come up with our vision and priorities, which takes us a good way through the fiscal year. So I would be interested in the Premier's comments in terms of the practical realities.

Can we step it down from the high general level to the realities of life that will be facing us in the next five weeks? Can we in fact give comfort to people in the communities that are concerned about bread and butter issues? What are we going to do as a government? I think asking people to wait until June is going to be asking a lot of people in the North, considering the election was December 6. I would hope we can give some more specific ideas and directions before that. Thank you.

MR. CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Maybe we will just ask for some direction on process here. Would each of the Members like to respond to the statement, or would you like an answer to every Member's questions on the statement? We can either do it individually or all altogether, and then get the questions later? What is the direction of the committee? Individually? Acceptable? Okay. First the Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to think that the statement reflects, in a profound way, a willingness to address the very stark realities that we have never clearly stated before.

The fact is for a number of years now, we have been seeing very low graduation rates in our schools, considering the couple of hundred million dollars we spend on education, building schools, staffing them, keeping them running, paying the teachers. The results we get for the amount of money we pay into schools is not acceptable and it has been like that for a number of years.

But, it is time to look at stark realities like that. We have said that we have other things that we need to address - the completely unacceptable level of alcohol consumption, drugs, and smoking in our communities. The profound way in which many of our families are slowly disintegrating, the number of child apprehensions, and the abuse suffered by our women and children and elders in communities. We cannot give comfort to our communities and our people and say that it is going to be business as usual. We have to give a message that we will not continue to spend money the way the previous Legislature has because we do not have time to get specific.

So we will come up with an interim appropriation in March for this Legislature to deal with. We have made a commitment, and we tried to start that in Fort Providence, to work to the maximum extent possible with every Member of the Legislature to set the priorities and goals of this Legislature, and to define a

way in which we should set out to achieve those goals. We have said that we want to be as inclusive as possible to define those priorities and goals.

We said in Fort Providence that we want to include the aboriginal leaders, the chiefs, the Metis leaders, the Inuvialuit, the representatives of our aboriginal communities and our communities across the North, to tell us how they think we should run this government. What is it we should try to set out to do? We want to ask them how they want to work with us to address the needs that we have in our communities today. How can we work together to plan to improve things in a measurable way in the next four years?

Perhaps we can begin by defining a ten-year term on how we will collectively set common goals and objectives.

That is what the intent of my statement was. It was to signal to people in the North that we want to work, but we are just not going to keep everything running the same way it has and currently is. There are some changes that need to be made. Some of those need to be made in partnership with our communities and our regions.

This government is not going to dictate the changes unilaterally. We are starting to articulate the things that we see that need to be addressed. We have not yet started to articulate how we are going to address those changes except to say that the first order of business is to invite aboriginal leaders to sit with us to discuss whether or not they agree on the work that we see ahead of us, to seek agreement with them on how to approach the work and to get consensus that the only way we can address problems at the community level, the regional level, the territorial level is by working together. Once we get that realization and that agreement, I think we can look forward to addressing some of the very fundamental needs that we have in our communities today. Thank you.

MR. CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Premier. General comments. Mr. Roland, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the social statement we are looking at today outlines some very important goals as a territorial government. As we heard earlier, there is some question as to how we are going to map out these goals and how we are going to achieve some of this.

In the first page of the statement that speaks on with division behind us, we need to move quickly out of the starting gate with renewed vision and commitment. As the Premier stated in Fort Providence, they have started to work along those lines. I think, in a sense, my interpretation of what happened there is that it was in line with the New Agenda for the New North and how we are going to map that out.

As we get into the budget sessions, we will start to work on some of these issues. It does cover a lot of areas and some areas of importance that I think we need to spend more time on as a government and put some emphasis behind how we will achieve them.

Now we know most people in the Northwest Territories do not like the idea of being told their lifestyles are dysfunctional and are costing taxpayers a lot of money. We have to make sure we try to heal the families and the dysfunctional groups that are out there.

I know it is a difficult task, finding out how we try and get families to lead a more balanced lifestyle. I do believe it starts at this level, by setting the example for our children to follow. As I see it, I know a lot of the goals that we are going to outline as the 14th Assembly are not going to be ones that we can measure in one year or two years. I think it will take possibly a whole term to see some results, to see a positive impact. I think these are areas where we are going to have to put some attention to.

As the previous Minister of Health and Social Services, it is amazing the amount of dollars we spend on putting out the fires or the crises that come by day to day. So it is important that we try to put some of the limited resources we have to work at trying to focus on prevention, not putting out the fires. That will mean some serious work, as I stated earlier in my Member's statement.

We are going to have to get down to it and make some serious decisions on the future of the Northwest Territories when it comes to the impact we will have and what we will leave our children with. I believe when it comes to families and how families operate in the Northwest Territories, that will go a long way to how effective we will be in preparing the future generations. We have to set the stage for them to be able to pick up the gauntlet and carry it forward.

Another area worth getting out in the open is the area of government itself and the systems we operate under. We know there are eight tables around the Northwest Territories that include some form of self-government, whether it be community self-government or regional self-government.

For example, in the Beaufort Delta area there is a partnership motto that they have been promoting. We have the one the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs tabled today, the Dogrib, which is more a parallel system. We have very diverse interests throughout the Northwest Territories. Those diverse interests will impact on how we can deliver services and what is left of a public government system.

In light of our fiscal situation, we must inform the residents and all those groups that are at the negotiation table of the difficulties we will face if we continue to go down separate paths. When you put all the dollars together that we spend on administration versus program service delivery, that area alone can be interpreted a number of ways. For example; all the funding that goes to non-government organizations are categorized as program service delivery. In fact, just about every non-government organization out there has an executive director and an assistant or something of that form. That takes up the delivery dollars. In this day and age, can we afford to have that many groups out there doing similar work?

Some areas you have to keep separate, some areas we are going to have to see if there are enough common interests that combinations can be formed. That is an area that we have spoke of in the past, Mr. Chair.

I believe that if we are going to be able to measure some of our work that is being done, it will be difficult to do so in the first year. For example, making these comments in this House on some of the cost drivers we find ourselves under is an important step. I must applaud the Premier for being so bold to state some of our biggest problems are those that he listed in his sessional speech.

Now the important part is how do we deliver that in a consistent and effective way? It is pretty hard medicine to swallow when people speak directly about their families. We all get defensive about issues being brought up about our own particular families. It is not easy. We have gone through, as a generation in the Northwest Territories, a lot of change in a short time. I have made statements in this House regarding the change. We can look at some of our elders today. The style of life they lived when they were young men and women growing up in the Northwest Territories is light years from how we do it today.

When my father was a young man, he traveled with a dog team. On a trip from Sachs Harbor to the Delta, that took a long time. To stop at nights was a matter of setting up snow houses. Today, we jump on a plane and it is a couple of hours. We have gone from one extreme to another. Lifestyles that used to be affordable when the first fur trading industry was strong are no longer affordable. Trying to keep your family linked to their cultural history is a difficult task, as we heard today. The language portion is disappearing on us. That is something we have to see how we can correct.

There has been some work done in the areas of transferring responsibility to communities, but again, as I stated in my Member's statement earlier, transferring those responsibilities or the idea of it is important, but how far can we go? We seem to hold the final decision-making power at the headquarter level. We are almost duplicating the work that needs to be done. Either we will transfer responsibilities and requirements to fulfill those responsibilities or maybe it is just best to keep them at headquarters and reduce the duplication.

I know myself, and speaking for residents of Inuvik, I would rather not see the regions and communities lose more in this process. We all know at the end of the day to make a big difference and set the stage for the future of our children, it is going to take a lot of hard work on our behalf. I do not envy the position that we as decision-makers face. In a sense, especially Cabinet, we see the answer for all of us to the public. This is nice to say, but we now have to convert to action. How do we do that in the short time we have and have some measurable outcomes? I think that is the \$700 million dollar question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Premier.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Members of the Legislature are aware that about 65 percent of our overall budget goes to the social envelope, that is to justice, health and social services, education and I believe housing.

It is true that this government is finding itself increasingly unable to provide programs and services as it used to, to the people of the Northwest Territories. This is no different from other governments across this country. It has been said that even provinces that are well financed with balanced budgets, will in a few years be unable, even with cost share commitment from the federal government, to meet the health cost demands of their citizens. This is the nature of health as we believe it will be in the future.

It brings a scenario to myself and Members of Cabinet and all Members of the Legislature; what type of population are we going to turn over to aboriginal governments when they are set up and are ready to be implemented? It is my view that we

have an obligation to address the realities that we have been forced to confront in our communities today.

Should aboriginal governments be set up, no amount of money will be sufficient to address the needs of the community at the regional level, even in two years. As a government, we have been working for years now, addressing the needs of our communities with drug and alcohol programming, family violence, social workers and nurses. It is our view that unless we address it up front and we find some way to work in partnership with the chiefs, Metis leaders, Inuvialuit leaders, community leaders, the costs of providing services to our people is going to go up from 65 percent of our overall budget and keep creeping up until it consumes the entire budget.

This is not an honest way to run government. It is not an honest way to approach self-government. We have an obligation to address it, to articulate it and to find some way to prepare for the transition. This is the reality of where we are today. It is not all doom and gloom. The fact is that in many of our communities, in almost all of our communities, we have very strong leaders. We have committed frontline workers. We have whole families that are committed to working towards a better, more balanced lifestyle. People who have dealt with drug and alcohol problems are on their way to becoming healthy, recovering people. Good portions of our people in the communities are already there.

In many ways, we are in a better position than we were in the 70's and 80's, but the fact is our people need more jobs. We need to position ourselves so that we become confident, strong and capable enough to not only be defensive, but to take the offensive and say yes.

We see that the world needs more natural gas and oil. We will take the initiative and propose to build, own, and manage a pipeline.

The signal is there. Now we need to build the confidence and give them the support so they can do that. There are whole ranges of things we can do, if only we make the commitment to articulate those things and work together. It is too time consuming and disillusioning for our community leaders to see our leaders fighting and bickering, paranoid of one another and disowning and discrediting one another on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis.

Just for once, perhaps we could see the chiefs, the Metis leaders and the Inuvialuit work with the Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Ministers, in getting two or three good things done for our communities.

For too many years now, and I have heard it for too many years in the Sahtu myself, that it is the government's fault. The government did this to us, they did that to us and if only the government was not there, life would be better.

It is my view that even if the Government of the Northwest Territories was not there, people would still be smoking as much as they do. They would still be inflicting the harm, hurt and damage on themselves and each other as they do now.

It is not the government that makes people do that. Perhaps there is some responsibility for it but some time or another people have to accept that no one can make life better unless each individual decides that the way we live now is not acceptable. That is what we are going to try to do.

First, quit denying that life is good and that life could be better if only the Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government were gone. That life would be a utopia life, when and if we get self-government off the ground.

That is my view. I think that this renewed vision and commitment that we speak about is simply that. We see a better future, a better life for everybody and there is a way to do it. But first, as many of our communities and regions do, we are going to spend a lot of time talking and disagreeing. At the end of the day, when the decision is made, we all have to support it. We have too many detractors, too many people who see only the negative side or are absolutely convinced that nothing will go wrong but that everything will go wrong.

This is what we are talking about and I think that all Members agree that it is a matter of choice and a matter of commitment to make people face up to those choices. Thank you.

MR. CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Any general comments from the Members? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Mr. Chair, I move that we report progress.

MR. CHAIR: The Member for Frame Lake has made a motion to report progress. The motion is not debatable. To the motion. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. We will report progress.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. SPEAKER: The House will come back to order. Item 20, report of the committee of the whole. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Minister's Statement 1-14(2), Sessional Statement and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the committee of the whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Is there a second for the motion? Mr. Miltenberger, the Member for Thebacha seconds the motion. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Item 21, third reading of bills. Item 22, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. David Hamilton): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the meeting of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. Orders of the day for Thursday, February 24, 2000:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions

8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address
10. Petitions
11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Education Act
 - Bill 2, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 1999-2000
 - Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act
 - Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act
 - Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 1-14(2): Sessional Statement
20. Report of the Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, February 24, 2000 at 1:30 p.m.

-- ADJOURNMENT

