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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, December 14, 2011****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Blake, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Dolynny, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Jackie Jacobson, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Hon. David Ramsay, Mr. Yakeleya

In the words of one of the graduates, Mr. Don Cameron, at the November ceremony: "I think it

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Abernethy.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 21-17(1):
CORRECTIONS NORTHERN RECRUIT
TRAINING PROGRAM GRADUATION**

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, for many years, we had a problem filling entry-level vacancies for corrections officers with northern people who had the basic skills that would qualify them to be hired.

In 2009 the corrections service looked at the problem and developed a six-week training program to ensure we have a representative northern workforce in our corrections facilities. The end result is the Corrections Northern Recruit Training Program.

I am pleased to report that this program has been a success. On November 25th we added 12 more graduates to join the 52 who have gone before and are now trained to work in a security-related field in the NWT. Of the 64 graduates, 47 continue to be employed with the corrections service.

In addition to the classroom training for six weeks, each recruit also receives paid on-the-job training for up to four months in one of our corrections facilities.

At the end of the orientation, they are encouraged to apply for jobs. While we certainly hope they will choose to apply to openings in the Department of Justice, the training received is transferable to any security position.

This was the sixth session of this program and I want to inform the Members and the public that we continue to support this training. The next intake will be advertised in January, with the training to take place in Hay River.

was the pride in the accomplishment, the work that we went through, the amount of information, the camaraderie, the unique environment that we were in; it all comes together."

I ask my colleagues to encourage anyone they know who is interested in pursuing a career in the satisfying and rewarding field, to consider applying to the Corrections Northern Recruit Training Program as we work together to build a representative northern workforce. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 22-17(1):
COMMUNITY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION
PROGRAM AND ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE
AND CULTURAL INSTRUCTOR PROGRAM**

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment supports community-based teacher education programming which provides increased access to students across the Northwest Territories. Graduates of these programs will increase the number of Aboriginal educators in our school system.

Currently Aurora College is delivering the community-based Teacher Education Program, including a community educator preparation component, for both the Teacher Education and Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor programs. In 2010-11 the college began offering the first year of the Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program, and for 2011-12 the first year of the Teacher Education Program is available in the Beaufort-Delta. Eighteen students are enrolled in this three-year diploma program, based in Inuvik, and language and culture are being included in the courses wherever possible. Aurora College is also delivering the Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program at the K'atloodeeche First Nations Reserve.

This builds on the success of these programs. Working with First Nations, Aboriginal governments, Aurora College and the district education councils, the department is ensuring greater access and

relevant programming for educational opportunities at the community level.

The advantages of community-based Teacher Education and Aboriginal Language Cultural Instructor programs are numerous, which is the reason behind our commitment to implement delivery at the community level. This approach provides continuous community support of teacher candidates and the program, and puts a stronger focus on the role of the teacher as community member. It provides greater opportunities to join theory and practice throughout the program. It enhances the interaction between community- and campus-based faculties, and strengthens the emotional connection in students' social, cultural and family networks.

Graduates will be eligible to support an educational system that is based on the culture and heritage of the people of the NWT. These programs are an important part of the Strategy for Teacher Education in the Northwest Territories: 2007-2015 and the Northwest Territories Aboriginal Languages Plan – A Shared Responsibility, and reflect the goals of all Members of this Assembly in choosing our theme: Believing in People and Building on the Strengths of Northerners. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Colleagues, before we go on, I'd like to welcome a former Member of Mackenzie Delta, former Speaker, former Minister, Mr. David Krutko. Welcome back to the House, Mr. Krutko.

The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 23-17(1): GEOSCIENCE

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mining, oil and gas sectors are literally in the bedrock of the Northwest Territories economy. These industries rely on modern, accessible geoscience information to make investment and land use decisions. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment partners with the federal department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to deliver geoscience programs for the Northwest Territories.

This partnership – known as the Northwest Territories Geoscience Office or NTGO – provides industry, government, Aboriginal organizations and many other stakeholders with up-to-date, easily accessible geoscience information. This information is key to encouraging investment in minerals and petroleum exploration.

In November of this year, Minister Leona Aglukkaq, from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, announced an additional \$3.275 million in funding to support further geoscience research in the NWT. Combined with

an in-kind contribution from Government of the Northwest Territories of \$1.1 million as well as contributions from the private sector, this investment totals over \$5 million over three years. Reliable geoscience data is vital to encourage exploration in areas with high resource potential which, in turn, contributes to the sustainability of the NWT mining industry.

Significant discoveries often stimulate additional private sector investment. It is estimated that for every dollar invested in government-funded geosciences in the NWT, five dollars are in turn spent by mineral exploration companies. This year the total NTGO investment in geoscience is \$2.5 million.

This should result in approximately \$12.5 million of investment by mineral and petroleum exploration companies in the NWT through activities like prospecting, diamond drilling and seismic surveys. In addition to the investment dollars, these companies further contribute to our economy by employing local residents and purchasing goods and services from local NWT businesses.

I recently attended the Yellowknife Geoscience Forum and saw firsthand the hard work and dedication of the Geoscience Office scientists. Their research ranks with some of the very best in the world.

The NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines and NTGO co-host the Geoscience Forum, which this year had almost 800 delegates; the biggest conference in the North. Not only is this the platform for experts to share geosciences research and best practices in mineral exploration, it is also a huge boon to our economy. Delegates stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants and fly with our airlines.

The NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines and the staff at the NTGO are to be commended for a job well done, this year and every year.

At the appropriate time today I will be tabling the five-year NTGO Strategic Plan. A key focus of the strategic plan is working with communities to support initiatives, including developing local energy sources as well as supporting local business opportunities using carving stone, limestone and silica sand.

The NTGO is also often called upon to provide unbiased scientific advice on complex or contentious issues. Their role is to provide independent geoscience information that is essential to support governments and communities in making informed decisions for the planning, construction and maintenance of critical northern infrastructure.

An understanding of minerals and petroleum potential is essential when considering the location of transportation infrastructure. Industry, Tourism

and Investment will also be working closely with other GNWT departments and northern stakeholders to better understand permafrost issues and other infrastructure issues relating to climate change in the North.

Investing in geoscience research today supports future economic development tomorrow by attracting investment to our territory and creating spinoff exploration projects that will provide employment and business opportunities for NWT residents.

The work performed at the NWT Geoscience Office is vital to growing mineral exploration in our territory. Through the responsible development of natural resources in the NWT, we will continue to work towards our government's goal of creating a diversified economy that provides all communities and regions with opportunities that benefit our residents. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CREATION OF AN ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY AND THE BETTY HOUSE

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues are sharing their thoughts today on poverty, in the hopes that we may begin the journey of preparing a proper Anti-Poverty Strategy framework. No matter what angle we look at, the message is very clear: It's time to get the ball rolling on this strategy.

Countless volunteers and civic coalition partners have invested much time and energy as of late to get one anti-poverty chess piece off the concept table and into action. This much needed transitional facility is none other than Betty House.

My personal role started about a year ago, as president of the Yellowknife Community Foundation, when our board helped with the largest single donation in our foundation's history to get Betty House off the ground. With coalition partners such as the Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition, BHP, The Brick, governments, women's organizations and citizens of the NWT, together they have made Betty House a reality.

Why should we be so passionate about homelessness for women? Admittedly, most homelessness research is traditionally focused on men, but gender-specific literature has begun to emerge focusing on women's unique housing issues, concerns and needs. Women, as we are finding out, account for a significant and growing proportion of population of homelessness which require gender-specific needs and preferences in

terms of approaches to treatment, recovery and housing stabilization.

We know from our research that women also experience homelessness differently than men. Women are more likely to be guardians of children or are younger and homeless for shorter periods of time. Research also tells us they prefer self-contained units and women-only buildings, and favour communal living areas where they can form groups for social support; not to mention this new facility will need to consider the culturally appropriate services and living environments to support spiritual and traditional values.

It is truly unfortunate, but for many women, turning to homelessness is sometimes the only solution to escape from domestic conflict, abuse, or poor social housing conditions. It is where Betty House will play a significant role.

Betty House is a critical chess piece in our future Anti-Poverty Strategy framework to which all Members of the 17th Assembly are looking forward to be putting on their agenda. Therefore, let's not disappoint our coalition partners and truly support an Anti-Poverty Strategy we can be proud of.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COORDINATED ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Poverty is a huge issue for NWT residents and I believe that this government can do better in our efforts to eradicate poverty. We have many programs and services in place, programs and services whose goal it is to assist our residents who are marginalized, programs and services to reduce the level and amount of poverty in our territory.

These many activities are not coordinated across our government system. They are not coordinated with the activities and programs of non-government organizations, and local and Aboriginal governments. There are gaps in the services out there to help our residents. There are holes in the poverty safety net.

By working together we can close those gaps, mend those holes and accomplish so much more than we can right now. A comprehensive, targeted strategy to address poverty in the NWT is of paramount importance and it is what is needed to assist our residents, our residents who are struggling to feel successful and to struggle to feel they are contributing members of our society.

The development of any government Anti-Poverty Strategy must be based in legislation, not just policy. To do otherwise will lead to failure. Without an anti-poverty act, long-term, coordinated efforts and accountability towards the eradication of poverty will both be lacking.

The development of any strategy or legislation must involve all parties, including businesses and those who are experiencing poverty. We will not succeed if it is developed in isolation by government alone.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Several Canadian jurisdictions have developed good strategies and have good legislation on which we can base our own strategy and our own act. Both New Brunswick and Newfoundland have enacted very successful legislation on which we can base an NWT act. Newfoundland, in fact, passed their bill unanimously December 6, 2006; that's quite some time ago. Nunavut has started down the road towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy. They're in the midst of a public engagement process and expect to have a strategy by the end of 2011; that's this year. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they've already seen a reduction in the level of poverty amongst Nunavummiut.

As my colleague has mentioned already, the time has come for action. We need to move this issue forward. We can do it, so let's get started.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN ERADICATING POVERTY

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As residents of the Northwest Territories, we take pride in saying to our southern neighbours, and in the world, for that matter, that the North is situated on top of the world. We also explain that we are rich in natural resources and that we could potentially create billions of dollars in wealth.

The North's brief history is founded on tradition such as caring for each other and closely knit families and communities. During this festive time, being with families and reflecting upon our community, we remember the values of caring and sharing. We want all of our people in the Northwest Territories to be proud, confident, take on responsibilities and play an active role in our communities. Unfortunately, there are some of our brothers and sisters that need our help.

In the early 1900s our ancestors experienced the hardship of living in poor conditions. They were challenged by famine-like conditions when wildlife they relied on for food was scarce. In some cases, people lived on the brink of starvation or succumbed to illness related to malnutrition. At that time the family unit and bond was strong. We lived independent of assistance and lived a simple existence. Unlike today, the well-being of families was more important to individual interests. The way we live and our values have changed. From those experiences of hardships we emboldened our resolve to rise up and find our place in our society.

Today the Government of the Northwest Territories depends upon the federal government for transfer payments. Similarly, Northerners depend on the Government of the Northwest Territories for good government and programs and services, such as income support and health. There are times when governments have to act, and when words are put to action they result in dramatic changes, such as the universal health care which we presently enjoy here in Canada.

I'll be asking the Minister of Health questions related to this effect later. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to use my Member's statement today to put a bit of a profile behind who the working poor are in our Northwest Territories.

This is a question often asked by many because they want to know who we are talking about. Well, more often than not, women are the subjects of being considered the most vulnerable in comparison to men. On average in the NWT, women earn 23 percent less than their male counterparts. That's a shame that we should never be proud of, and certainly something that we should strive hard to fix.

Many of our working poor, it's well known, are single families that make less than \$30,000 a year. In the Northwest Territories it's estimated that there are over 1,200 people in this situation that make less than \$30,000 a year. What does \$30,000 buy you? Well, let's put it on the table. A two-bedroom apartment in Yellowknife costs almost \$1,600 a month to rent, and if you make that \$30,000 a year, after taxes you'd be left with less than \$900 a month to pay for your food, buy clothing, get your transportation and whatever else your family needs for help. Well, how does this work? It doesn't. Quite frankly, I don't know how people survive.

I know a woman in my constituency who uses her credit card to pay her utilities and her food for her children through the winter and she hopes for a good summer to balance it off. It's a crying shame to know that she balances summer against winter. We're not talking about a month-to-month problem; we're talking about a year-to-year problem.

If she goes to income support, guess what their answer is? Sell your house and then we'll help you. What type of independence do we support when we tell people to sell their house even though their mortgage is cheaper than their rent? I get it; the solution becomes put them back on the system, that's the only way. Once they're on the system, I

see very few people who've ever had a fair shot of getting out of the system. We have people who want to be independent. We must find ways to help support them.

I can tell you specific to this one case alone, although there are many and we all know that. All that these families are looking for is a little financial support to stay out of the system. Let's embrace their independence and support them in ways that we can make a difference to support families.

I'll have questions later today. Thank you, colleagues.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO BE STRONG AND HEALTHY

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today reflects on something that results in poverty. It results from the drug dealers and the bootleggers that continue to keep our people hostage in the community and don't give them a chance to succeed or strive to live a healthy, normal life like most of us do.

The drug dealers and bootleggers in our communities don't have any morals. They don't have any compassion for the people. All they care about is the dollar that goes in their pocket, feeding off people's weaknesses and their addictions. What the government needs to do is develop more funding and more programs that will help people become empowered in the community so that they can speak up and take action against the drug dealers and get them out of the communities, and the bootleggers out of the communities, and allow them to live healthier lifestyles. Everyone has brothers, sisters, family members that are going through addictions, going through problems based on somebody else's monetary gains. That needs to stop.

In terms of poverty, when somebody does get addicted and they are battling addictions, they do lead to having less money to make the daily services that they need to survive and have a healthy lifestyle.

Today I wanted to empower the people of the Northwest Territories and the people in the communities to stand up against these drug dealers, talk to your politicians, talk to your community members, talk to the RCMP officers. Use the Crime Stoppers website to get these guys out of your communities, and start living a healthy lifestyle and getting out of these poverty situations that we are talking about here today.

It is a different approach to poverty, and it is a healthy approach and it is a strong approach that

can empower our people to be stronger as one and have a stronger territory in the end. GNWT can look at also helping out by giving services; for instance, having more road checks on the highways that access into the Northwest Territories, as well as doing more checks within the cargo services provided at the airports as well as doing more bag checks at the airports as well. We need to take this stand and get the drug dealers out of our communities so that our people can live a healthy and normal lifestyle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISPARITY

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today I will be tabling information on the gap in household incomes in the Northwest Territories. The information is startling. It shows that the average annual household income of the bottom 20 percent of NWT earners is just \$16,000, with the highest 20 percent of earners' annual household income is \$206,000. That is a gap of \$189,000, the highest spread between wealthy and poor in all of Canada. The wealthiest 20 percent of NWT families make 13 times as much a year as the poorest 20 percent of families, on average. The disparity is growing.

Recent reports from the Conference Board of Canada and the OECD show our income disparity figures mirror national and international trends. The richest 1 percent of Canadians hold 14 percent of the national wealth. They make hundreds of times as much annually as our poorest citizens, and this 1 percent gained one-third of the new wealth created in the last 22 years, largely during the 10 years of highest economic growth in Canada.

Internationally, the trend is the same. With global economic instability, the potential for social unrest could follow upon income and equities we haven't seen since the late 1920s. Despite white-hot economic growth in the NWT over the past decade, 20 percent of our households struggle to live on \$16,000 a year. This puts the lie to the myths that a rising tide lifts all boats or that a job is a ticket out of poverty.

What can we do? Some known causes suggest obvious actions. Examples include stagnation of minimum wages, decreased unionization, fewer employment benefits, lower welfare payments and the 50 percent slashing of the top marginal tax rate over the past 50 years from 80 percent to 43 percent.

Rather than individual actions, we need a broad, integrated and comprehensive response. As a motion before this Assembly later today will urge, we need an egalitarian society built by strategically

helping people out of poverty rather than helping them live in poverty.

Action was promised in the 16th Assembly, with no results. Eighteen Members elected this fall promised to make fighting poverty a top priority. Twenty-six of the territory's foremost advocacy groups – the Dene Nation has just signed on...

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BROMLEY: Twenty-six of the NWT's foremost advocacy groups – the Dene Nation has just signed on – and four municipalities have insisted we sit down with businesses, communities, organizations and those living in poverty, to create a strategic multi-faceted approach to help our citizens out of poverty.

I will be asking the Premier questions on his plans for carrying these commitments forward. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ENCOURAGING SELF-RELIANCE IN COMMUNITIES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was thinking about the Member's statement I'm going to say this afternoon and I'm thinking about growing up in Tulita with my family. I want to start my Member's statements from one of my uncle's visits. He often talked to me over the time that he was alive in Tulita. He said if you wanted something done or you wanted something for yourself or your family just go and do it. Don't rely on anybody. You have two hands, you have two ears and you have a mind, and thank God that he's going to make use of you today.

Today people may be wondering why I'm starting my Member's statement like this on the subject of anti-poverty. I think my uncle was saying do things for yourself. People have always done that. As I said, growing up in Tulita, my brothers and sisters and my friends' lives were hard; but when I think back today, we didn't know what poor was. We were just surviving. We had to hitch up the dogs in the winter, get wood, get ice. We did what we had to do to survive. We listened to our elders, we helped our grandparents and we worked as a family unit. Everybody helped out in the community. Everybody helped to make the community strong. Basically we supported our families, and we lived in our cultural way and we followed the beliefs of our people.

Today that is totally different. We rely on the government. We've become so dependent on the government, we've become poor. Our land is so rich and wealthy, our culture is so rich in culture

and beliefs, but we have relied on the government and become so poor. When we look at our material wealth, we are poor in our communities. Single families especially are having a hard time. We have become so dependent on the government to get us water, haul out our waste, feed us, to clothe us. There are some strong, good people in the Northwest Territories who want to make a difference and we should get on board with them and help them, and get this Anti-Poverty Strategy developed and strategize to be implemented as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS POVERTY

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to speak on the Anti-Poverty Strategy in the Northwest Territories.

Some people believe that the state of poverty is a self-induced state; however, there are more examples that it's a dependency on government systems. The Anti-Poverty Strategy would have the government look at the current system and to get people off the dependency. The strategy would have all departments work together to solve these difficult problems for the people of the Northwest Territories. Poverty includes those people that are working in the Northwest Territories. Our high cost of living has us living in crowded areas and living in minimal accommodations, living with minimal food and basic needs.

I believe that most people are looking for a hand up, not a hand out. We need to bring everyone's income levels up, and decrease the gap between the highest income earners and the lowest income earners. I think that we need to work on more jobs in the small communities. I understand that jobs are not all the solution to poverty; however, it is one aspect.

We need to help people with their unemployment rates in the small communities. In some of the smaller communities in the Northwest Territories there's more people not working than working. We need to work on this situation.

My colleagues and I believe that we need to help solve poverty in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The Member for the Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ADDRESSING ISSUES
THAT LEAD TO POVERTY

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we're speaking about poverty, which is an issue in all our communities across the NWT. In the small communities it can be very difficult for people to get out of poverty because there are not as many opportunities. Here are some numbers that speak for themselves.

The employment rate in the territory is 67 percent, but in many of our small communities that rate drops into the 30 percent range. At the same time we have 19 percent of households in core need across the Northwest Territories. What this tells me is that if we can get more people into the workforce and if we can improve our housing situation, we'll make a big difference.

In our Caucus priorities we talk about increasing job opportunities where they are most needed, addressing housing issues, and strengthening and diversifying our economy. We talk about decentralization of GNWT jobs, fairer rent scales for public housing, and infrastructure projects. These are all areas that will help to reduce poverty in the communities. I think we're on the right track.

I look forward to working with Cabinet and other members of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning to make sure that by the end of our four-year term we will be able to say that we have made a difference and have reduced poverty in the Northwest Territories.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS
NECESSARY TO ADDRESS POVERTY

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone can see, we're having a theme day today on the issue of poverty in the Northwest Territories and the need for this government to organize its efforts across government to address the issue of poverty. I find this topic difficult to quantify and define. When we think of poverty, there's really no clear definition. It's a very relevant term. Do we assess poverty in terms of monetary attainment? Are people who have more, more content than people who have less? How much is enough to live a dignified existence? What are the factors that contribute to people living in poverty?

I'd like to put my comments about poverty in the context of the Canadian dream. We are told that Canada is the envy of other nations and of people looking for a new start in a land of opportunity. We need to ensure that our land is a land of opportunity for our people.

As a government we have a large role to play in making opportunities available to people to reach their potential and we know that these goals are best reached by healthy, educated people. When we make these opportunities available and people choose not to avail themselves of them, then we analyze what are the barriers to people accessing and partaking in everything possible to give them a full and meaningful life. Even after that there are still going to be gaps in spite of our best efforts. Then there's the scenario of our government becoming so custodial that we disempower people by taking away their necessity to fend for themselves, creating dependency and lack of purpose and self-determination.

I'm a firm believer that we can do everything we can as a government to break down systemic barriers that lead to poverty, but at some point people also need to be encouraged to have the drive to pursue their dreams and the resulting sense of achievement and accomplishment that comes from achieving that. The government is not, and never will be, the answer to all the problems, but necessity is a great motivator and we must be sure that our programs and services do not diminish that motivation in people to be all that they can be.

I think that in order to establish a good Anti-Poverty Strategy in the Northwest Territories we must work extremely closely with our non-government organizations. They have the first-hand experience in what they do and this is the way that our efforts will be most effective and best coordinated.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a number of people in the gallery today. Suzette Montreuil from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith is here; Lorraine Hewlett, chair of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Regional Women's Committee; Julie Green, director of community relations, YWCA Yellowknife; Aggie Brockman from Alternatives North; Arlene Hache, executive director, Centre for Northern Families; Dayle Hernblad, Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition; Katie Randall, Valerie Miyok, Jeremy Flatt, and Amanda Mallon, board members of the NWT Literacy Council; Elizabeth Portman and Peter Chynoweth of the United Church; and France Benoit. Those people are all here particularly on the poverty issue. I'd also like to recognize Josh Campbell and Joy Newton of our Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington's office.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to recognize Mr. Scott Messenger from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology department of marketing and communications. Welcome, Scott.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to recognize two staff members from the MP's office, Joy Newton and Josh Campbell. I'd also like to recognize our honourable colleague David Krutko, a former Member of the House here. I'd also like to say how happy I am today to see my wife and my son. I love you both.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a few constituents, as well, today and take the advantage here before us. I'd like to recognize Julie Green and certainly acknowledge her hard work as the representative of the YWCA. She's one of the directors there. Peter Chynoweth, who is the minister of the United Church. Joy Newton, although I've spoken to her many times over the phone, I have never actually met her in person, so it would be nice to have that pleasure. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to recognize Chase Yakeleya, who is a good friend of my son. He's sitting up there in the gallery today and he's the well-known son of our good colleague Mr. Norman Yakeleya. Great to see a young guy in the audience there today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to see so many people in the gallery today. I won't go through the list that my colleagues have already gone through, but I'm particularly pleased to see so many members from the NWT Literacy Council, from the Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition, from Alternatives North and from the Y. Welcome to all of you. I'd like to specifically recognize three people, two constituents: Lorraine Hewlett and Suzette Montreuil. I would like to specifically welcome my constituency assistant, Amanda Mallon, to the House. Welcome everybody and thank you for coming.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make special recognition of my former colleague Mr. David Krutko, who I served in this

Legislature with for 16 years. I have taken up his seat in the Legislature. I have taken up his seat in committee. I will follow his proud tradition of firing the odd surprise shot over the bow.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to recognize a few visitors in the gallery today. I'd like to first recognize Mr. Tom Hoefer, the executive director of the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines. Mr. John Ketchum, who is the GNWT manager at the Northwest Territories Geoscience Office. Both men were instrumental in the Geoscience Forum that was recently held and I thank them for that. Also with them this afternoon is Mr. Christian Bertelsen. He's the acting director of minerals and petroleum with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. I'd also like to welcome this afternoon our Order of Canada recipient Arlene Hache, my former colleague Mr. David Krutko from the Mackenzie Delta, and everyone else that's joined us here this afternoon in the Legislative Assembly. It's great to have you here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to have so many great volunteers and hardworking people that deal with a lot of serious issues in our community. More importantly, I'd like to make reference to one of my Range Lake constituents, Valerie Miyok, who is the administrative assistant for the NWT Literacy Council. Welcome to the House. Of course I would be remiss because of my statement today on Betty House and the tireless efforts of our true champion Ms. Dayle Hernblad, who is the homeless coordinator for the Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition. Thanks, Dayle.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolyunny. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to recognize Mr. David Krutko, former Member for Mackenzie Delta. Thank you for all your hard work.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize a constituent and employee of the Status of Women Council, Samantha Dechief.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. I, too, would like to welcome Chase and Cheryl to the House today. Welcome. I'd like to recognize

anyone that has not been recognized already. Thank you for coming and joining us today for the day's proceedings. Thank you very much.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 63-17(1): DEFINITION OF POVERTY

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement I talked about growing up in Tulita – at that time Fort Norman – as a young boy and what we had to do to support each other. I guess my question is probably to the Premier.

We didn't know what poor was until we started to have some measurement of what other people had that we didn't have. We supported each other. I want to ask the Premier if this government is working on a definition of poverty for the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member knows, we've been doing a lot of consultation and going throughout the regions and visiting 13 communities, I believe. We also had a survey across the Northwest Territories and we've developed a discussion paper which we are now developing into a strategy which will be based on the community consultations that we undertook and the priorities set by this Assembly to develop an Anti-Poverty Strategy. As part of that, my expectation is that there will be a definition of poverty in there.

MR. YAKELEYA: There are various interpretations of the definition of poverty. There are forums on how to tackle poverty in the Northwest Territories. I want to ask the Premier, in his work that is before him with the anti-poverty organizations and communities, does he have an indication as to when a strategy will be completed that will have further discussions with Members from this side?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Since the coalition of 14 groups presented a number of documents to the previous Premier in the 16th Assembly, which was in December 2009, there has been considerable work undertaken in this area. It is our expectation that we will have this by the middle of 2012.

MR. YAKELEYA: I look forward to the report some time in 2012. As part of the report, has there been any type of discussion on any upcoming legislation that would support the strategy for the anti-poverty for the North?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: When we met the Caucus of the 17th Assembly, we developed the priorities for this Assembly. We identified the priorities which are

all part and parcel of an Anti-Poverty Strategy. In our discussion we did not envision legislation for an anti-poverty act, but I guess as we go forward, if that's something that's brought forward, we would look at it.

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

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very hopeful in hearing the Minister's words that if there is some interest or some need that we need to look at some legislation to support the Anti-Poverty Strategy initiatives, that we could have a look at it and, of course, that will support the goals of the Caucus priorities to see where we need to move away from some of the issues that are brought forward. I want to ask the Premier if he would put out a call or discussion paper or something that would now begin to bring in the key people to start working on this Anti-Poverty Strategy for some finality within the life of this government.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We've already undertaken at least six months of consultations and survey work. We can get a copy of any existing anti-poverty acts and provide it to the Member and we can use it for our benefit as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 64-17(1): HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISPARITY

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are also for the Premier today. I just want to follow up on my Member's statement. Clearly, the statistics describe the vast disparity in household incomes between our richest and poorest citizens. I would appreciate a general reaction on this from the Premier. It's obvious that these are trustworthy numbers and the trend is not a good one. Does the Premier agree that we can't really claim to have a just and equitable society when some people have so much and increasing numbers of other people struggle to survive on so little? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Premier, Minister McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The facts as quoted by my colleague, in fact, are true. I mean, we see quoted in national media that Yellowknife has the highest per capita income in Canada, but they never report on the high cost of living.

There was considerable work done in the 15th Assembly where we looked at how much this government was spending on subsidies to assist people living in the Northwest Territories, and the number that we came to was something in the neighbourhood of \$158 million. There was also

work undertaken by ECE and Health and Social Services to see what salary range we would have to go to before the subsidies or support stops. I think the most expensive place was Sachs Harbour and I think it was \$93,000.

There are differences between the small and large communities. We also looked at how could we do it so that we have a system whereby no matter how you set it up, if you work, you're always better off than not working. We did some work in that area and I'm expecting that as part of our Shelter Policy review that we will have some discussions about those areas. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you for that response from the Premier. I think it's well known that this government is spending a lot on these issues and particularly in the area of housing. That's certainly got a lot of national attention lately. Yet, clearly, the income disparity increases. The number of people living in poverty, that proportion of their income doesn't change and gradually worsens, relative to our high income people. There is still some work to be done and I think that's what we're all about today.

Many other Canadian jurisdictions have pursued the approach of anti-poverty strategies. Their approaches are based on the principle that people have a right to adequate food, housing, health care and other basic social services.

I'd also like to confirm, before my last couple of questions, that this government subscribes to this principle, and ask the Premier what we need to do to actually work with families to help get them out of poverty rather than just helping them live in poverty. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I'd like to point out that we're not starting something new. This started in the 16th Assembly. In May of 2010 the Premier of the day committed to developing a discussion paper on anti-poverty. There was an intergovernmental working group set up. In October 2010 there was an anti-poverty workshop set up. In December 2010 we had an advisory group of stakeholders on poverty. We undertook community consultations over a period of January to April 2011. We also briefed standing committee. We did a survey, as I indicated. We had a report on what we heard. We've been working and developed a broad discussion paper. We're now at the stage where we are looking at having an Anti-Poverty Strategy.

This is work that we're building on. We have gone directly to the people of the Northwest Territories, we've heard their reaction and their views on what the causes of poverty are and we will build that into our strategy that we are working on. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I'm glad we are working on a poverty strategy. I think there are probably a couple

of different interpretations on the work that's been done to date; however, I won't dwell on that.

Representatives of the Anti-Poverty Alliance met recently with the Priorities and Planning committee to discuss developments on creation of an Anti-Poverty Strategy, and they also plan to meet with Cabinet in the new year, I believe, in January. Given the broad-based called for creation of a strategy, the unfulfilled promises of the last government and a promise to make an Anti-Poverty Strategy a priority from 18 of us, when will this government actually meet the commitments and get to work on a strategy, and can the Premier confirm that that's actually underway right now? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We will be meeting with the Anti-Poverty Coalition, I believe it's called, on January 19th. We are working on a draft strategy that will build on the priorities of the 17th Assembly. It's my expectation that we would have something by the middle of 2012. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Your final, short supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question for the Premier is: The request for an Anti-Poverty Strategy calls for its creation through a broad process involving businesses, communities, organizations, labour, and people living in poverty. Will the Premier commit to just such a process? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I believe I tried to convey in my previous response that we've already done that. We've already gone out and consulted throughout every region of the Northwest Territories. We met with over 250 people. We've held over 30 focus group sessions in 13 communities. We conducted a territorial-wide survey to get people's views on poverty. We believe we've done the heavy lifting already so that we can get to work on developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy based on the priorities of the 17th Assembly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

QUESTION 65-17(1):
INCREASED RCMP PRESENCE
IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Justice. We look at some of the underlying factors that lead people into poverty and sometimes it's not necessarily the case of their fault; it's, rather, an outside source. And in this case I'm talking about the drug dealers and the bootleggers in the communities that continue to feed off of the weaknesses and the addictions that people have in the communities. My question today is for the Minister of Justice. What are their plans to increase the RCMP presence in the communities

and whether or not they are looking at increasing their RCMP canine force by including possibly another member in that area for the north region of the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for that question. Currently the "G" Division has two fully operational drug services in the Northwest Territories. One is located here in Yellowknife; the other one is in Hay River. These teams support the division, all the detachments throughout the Northwest Territories. The dogs and their handlers also visit communities throughout the Northwest Territories, both for showcasing what they do but also to conduct investigations. This is part of our promotional anti, sort of, prevention mechanism as well.

Recently the teams attended some community visits in Inuvik and then from there they actually went out to all of the communities in the Beaufort-Delta or as many as they could get to. The RCMP needs to examine if they still need the value of these services to see if additional services will be required. Once they have done this analysis, they will be able to tell us and submit a proposal for increased dog teams in the Northwest Territories. We don't know what the results of that review are, but once we get it, I will share that information with the Member.

With respect to what we are doing in the Northwest Territories, the Department of Justice and the RCMP division are investigating options for improving community services. These are the types of things I talked about yesterday with Minister Yakeleya. We are increasing relief unit capacity. We are increasing the number and length of patrols in the communities, and we are adding RCMP community officers who would act as liaisons between the RCMP and the communities. This research is ongoing. This information is being collected. As we bring it in, we will be able to start answering those questions more fully.

MR. MOSES: With this government we are doing a lot of discussions and priorities around economic development. There is a growing trend that we see most often is when a lot of business happens in part of the country or in this case the Northwest Territories if the oil and gas coming up. Previous, when we had our little oil and gas boom around early 2002-03, there was an increase in drugs that wrought the community, and the same thing here in Yellowknife. Having that presence is very valuable and by looking into our investments into the Beaufort-Delta, I want to confirm with the Department of Justice if they are going to be bringing increased canine units or increased RCMP services there. The time to start taking action is

now for years to come and not deal with it when something happens. I want to make sure that there is a plan in place starting today, so we can offset those in years to come. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: With respect to the dog team, like I indicated in my last response, the RCMP is going to do an analysis to figure out whether there is value to bring more dog teams into the Northwest Territories. If they do, they will submit their proposal to the GNWT and that will be shared with everybody.

With respect to additional RCMP, we are negotiating a contract now. Once the contract is negotiated, we can start talking to the RCMP about how many more we can bring in. If we can bring in any, we have to do a cost-benefit analysis on that.

But there are things that we are doing here in the Northwest Territories. For instance, the GNWT Department of Justice is working on a Community Safety Strategy. This strategy will assist us in decision-making and actions about the territorial and community level to make communities safer. The objective of the strategy is to identify issues, look at long-term goals, assess capacity, and achieve those goals and identify strategies with the communities to move forward. The strategy may identify a need for new legislation and initiatives, including things like the safer communities legislation. These are the things that we are working on to increase the safety. I need to continue working with my colleagues both on this side and on that side of the House and with communities. I am looking forward to doing that and to working with you on these initiatives.

MR. MOSES: In my Member's statement I talked about how the people of the Northwest Territories got to become empowered and speak up against the drug dealers and the bootleggers in the community, but at the same time they also need help from the GNWT and the services that we do provide. I wanted to ask the Minister of Justice if there was a policy in place that would allow RCMP officers and canine units to do more police checks, not only on the roads but in the airports doing bag checks as well as in the cargo and the transportation systems. I am not sure how well those are being looked at right now. Is there is a policy in place that provides those kinds of checks? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We can do those things. We have to work with the communities, as the Member indicated. The communities have to take some initiative to help report these things when they are happening so we can get members in.

Last summer the RCMP also conducted enhanced patrols of lakes and the Mackenzie River, and extended highway patrols took place from July 23rd to August 5th involving several communities and

partners in the "M" Division with the Yukon. We are working with our territorial partners. The objective of the patrol was to enhance public safety and police presence through high visibility and check stops; exactly what the Member is talking about. Over the duration of the patrols involving a number of communities and campgrounds, over 338 vehicles were checked and they seized a large amount of alcohol and some drugs.

Those are the types of things we are doing. We need to do more of that. We need to work with the communities. We need to work with industry. We are looking to do that. Once again, looking for cooperation from our colleagues from both sides of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 66-17(1):

REVIEW OF INCOME SUPPORT POLICIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today I was trying to provide some explanation in some manner to describe what some could perceive or see as quite real of what they are working for is and put a number on it. I used that as an illustration of \$30,000. I am well aware of families who are trying to get by on that type of money, but when you own a house and you find it cheaper to get a mortgage than to live in rental accommodations that income support seems to fall silent.

My questions will be targeted towards the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to tackle the Income Support Policy that needs to be amended. My question for the Minister would be as such: Would the Minister be willing to amend the Income Support Policy if it stops people from getting help who own houses who have mortgages? Because a few hundred dollars a month just may make the difference between being able to make a go of it, being independent or falling into the system. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Over time we amended our policy on the income support security system to reflect the costs of being in the Northwest Territories. There is a mortgage payment. It is covered up to three times in the lifetime of the clients. We do assess to some degree on the mortgage as well. Not only that but the client should not be building assets while accessing income support as well. There are subsidies in place. We have amended those subsidies in 2007 to reflect the cost for the

Northwest Territories. We will continue to make those changes as necessary.

MR. HAWKINS: I appreciate the extra length to start to describe part of the problem, because the Minister got right to the point where I need to be, which is owning an asset is detrimental to being independent when you are struggling to get by. In other words, if you have a house and you have a mortgage and you can't go to income support for help... As the Minister said, three times in your lifetime. There are a lot of people who struggle every single winter to pay for that power bill, that heating bill and certainly the high cost of food. That is the policy I am asking the Minister. Would he be willing to revisit this policy to see if we can make it work in such a way to help the working poor survive every winter, every day? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: The Income Support Policy states that it is a top-up for those low wage earners in the Northwest Territories to assist them in whether it be the heating bill or light bills, necessary expenses that are before us.

Again, this particular Income Security Policy has been amended in the past. We are certainly looking at those changes as necessary to meet the needs of the Northwest Territories. We have those clientele that have accessed our income security within our system so they have qualified through the Mortgage Subsidy Program up to three times in their lifetime. We do assist as best as we could, where it is badly needed and especially during winter seasons. We deal with other subsidies, as well, Seniors Fuel Subsidy Program and so forth. We will continue to assist in those categories. Mahsi.

MR. HAWKINS: Respectfully, of course, we are speaking more beyond the one time in your lifetime three months of mortgage payments. We are speaking about annual problems, yearly problems that come up every year, the high cost of oil, the high cost of electricity. I asked the Minister for advice on this particular problem. How does he see us getting to a point where we can amend the policy to help those who are working poor who just need a couple hundred dollars through the winter months to get by, because if they own a house they're told by income support sell your house, sell your assets, come back on the system and we'll take care of you. What type of independence are we supporting? Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: As I stated, we try to assess those individuals who are struggling with their payments as best as we can as income support clientele. As you know, income support covers the Northwest Territories with the 33 communities that we service and we cannot cover all mortgage payments, but we do cover to some degree some payments so they can get by through a couple of months or during the winter transition

period. So we do assist those clientele as best we can according to our Income Security Policy. Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKINS: I think we're still at a crossroads here. I'm not just talking about the mortgage payment; I'm talking about the fact that many people have a struggle every month, all through winter. I can speak to even a specific case, if I may, is I know one particular family uses their credit card every month throughout the winter to survive, to pay for the oil, to pay for the food, to help pay for the electricity, and they hope for a good summer to be able to get by to balance them out. This is a terrible way and any financial advisor would tell you that's a terrible way to be doing business.

So I'm asking income support, can they find a way to amend the policy so we can help families and protect families like this and help ensure that their independence exists. Thank you.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: That is what we're doing. We're topping up the wage that they've earned, and if they can't get by on certain months, we do assist them. They have to fit the criteria, as well, where how much they make per household and how many children they have and so forth, and the cause of the factors as well. So we are subsidizing those individuals that are a pressing need for the Northwest Territories.

We realize there is a high cost of living in the Northwest Territories, so it's all based on that as well. So income support we always say is just a last resort, because we want to have independence in those individuals. So we try to assist them to make productive choices and so forth. So we'll continue to strive for that. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 67-17(1):

EXPANSION OF CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister of Justice for his statement today on the Corrections Northern Recruit Training Program and I'm happy to see this happening in Hay River for the next intake.

With the new justice bill in Ottawa, Bill C-10, that will increase the number of mandatory sentences, incarcerations. I could have sworn on the radio this morning I heard the Justice Minister say that if this came about, they would have to build an addition on to the North Slave Correctional Centre. We're talking here about disparity in the distribution of wealth. I want to talk about the disparity in the distribution of government resources, jobs and programs.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice, is there a plan at this time anywhere on this government's books to put an addition on to the North Slave Correctional Centre. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Abernethy.

---Interjection

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice, could you repeat that again, that's not on the record.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No. No, there isn't.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: That's indeed welcome news. If there is a need for additional correctional spaces in the Northwest Territories as a result of this new federal legislation, will other communities other than Yellowknife be considered for expansion of a facility? For example, the South Slave Correctional Centre in Hay River. Thank you.

MR. ABERNETHY: I believe there are already plans in the works to put a new facility in Fort Smith. As far as a male facility, there are no plans at this time and we would be open to discussion. But North Slave Correctional Facility was designed to have a pod added on to it, so it may prove to be the most cost-effective place to add on to male facilities in the Northwest Territories.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'm aware of the construction of the North Slave Correctional Centre and the anticipation that there may be a need for expanded services in the future and the ability to add on a pod. However, may I suggest, in Hay River there is lots of land, lots of affordable land, lots of affordable construction prices per square foot and I would like the Minister to confirm that all potential locations in the event of more spaces being required will be analyzed very carefully and that Hay River would be in the running for such an expansion. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That would be the financially prudent and responsible thing to do, so that's what we would be doing. Thank you.

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

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you. We're always happy to hear about financially prudent decisions. We're also very interested in politically prudent decisions and one of those areas has got to be in looking for opportunities to distribute the wealth of this government into regions, communities outside of Yellowknife. So hopefully there would be some political consideration brought to bear along with the financial consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

QUESTION 68-17(1):
JOB CREATION IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker: My question today is to the Minister of ITI and as my Member's statement indicated, one of the factors in poverty is job creation and I'm just wondering what ITI has in the future for job creation in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The honourable Minister of ITI, Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Members got together after the election and set a course for the next four years through a priority setting exercise. Obviously, through that exercise the economy ranked very high. I think getting jobs and opportunities for people should be a primary focus of this government. That focus should be on the smaller communities where there are high levels of unemployment. Those types of jobs for folks in the small communities and the regional centres are going to be arrived at through development of one form or another, investment in infrastructure, mining and resource development. That's where I see the future job opportunities for people that live in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: That's great to hear. The other question I had is: Does the department have any plans to increase any small business creation to create those jobs as well?

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: That's an area that the last government spent a great deal of time on. There was some additional funding put into the SEED Program and that's something, as we move forward and work through the business plan for the upcoming year and the next four years, is a discussion that we will have to have with committee and Regular Members of this House to determine how that should happen. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

QUESTION 69-17(1):
PRIORITY HIRING FOR NORTHERN WORKERS

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my statement today I talked about how we can get more people into the workforce. One of the problems is that even where there are jobs, they go to people from outside the Northwest Territories instead of Northerners. My questions are to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. What tools does the government have now to make sure that NWT residents get first priority for jobs in the Territories, whether those jobs are with government or industry? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Part of this government's overall goals and objectives are to work on decentralizing to the regions. Part of that is to have qualified people from the regions and from the communities. Of course, we're always pushing for the education system into the communities and into the regions so we can have more qualified people from our regions so they can tackle all of those job opportunities that will be coming out, whether it be the pipelines or government jobs or community government jobs. Not only that, we also supported the Small Community Employment Support Program out of this Assembly. We've increased the funding so we're promoting more community-level job opportunities. We'll continue to do that, along with the mining industries, the Mine Training Society and Aurora College. We all have partnerships in place. We need to promote more of that at the community level.

MR. BLAKE: Are there any other options the government can consider to make sure that Northerners are top priority when it comes to hiring?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Yes, there is. Again, our overall goals and objectives of this government have highlighted those community employments as a priority for us. Not only that, but through my Department of Education, Culture and Employment we have a Labour Market Agreement that we provide training and services to the small communities and we'll continue to do that. There is a training opportunity in that manner, in that fashion. Not only that, again reiterating the partnerships we have with the communities, with the mining industries, we do have a quarterly meeting with the industry representatives as well. We want to create more opportunities for these individuals, but we have to keep in mind that those individuals need to be trained and qualified for those positions. That is our goal as this government.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

QUESTION 70-17(1):
BUSINESS TAX INCENTIVES TO
SUPPORT ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVES

MR. DOLYUNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt in my mind that the North boasts some of the most generous individuals and businesses that help support our most hardworking NGOs and registered charities in the North. Many of those NGOs and charities are with us here today, listening to our strategies on anti-poverty. However, in a lot of cases, small businesses and medium-

sized businesses would love to contribute to a lot of these NGOs and charities only they can't. They can't afford to do so.

Because this is anti-poverty day I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Would the Minister of Finance consider a business tax incentive for poverty?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're willing to look at all opportunities and alternatives as it pertains to dealing with a lot of our issues and our financial situation which, as the Member knows, is somewhat restricted at this point in time. I'd have to hear more in terms of specifics from the Member, but it would be something that I would be more than happy to appear before committee to talk about.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's response that we look into it and I appreciate the fact that money is tight. A further supplemental to that same question is sometimes businesses can't afford to give money but they can give in-kind. That, too, would have a tangible effect for NGOs and registered charities to get the good work done that they need to do. Would the Minister of Finance consider, as well, equally in-kind tax incentives for, say, poverty?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: As far as I know, once again, most of the NGOs who are in this business have charitable status and can issue tax receipts for donations that will address some of the issues the Member raises. Once again, if the Member has a number of these alternatives and they may be linked, then I would be making the commitment that I'm more than happy to appear before the committee to talk about those.

MR. DOLYNNY: No further questions, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 71-17(1):

"WHAT WE HEARD" REPORT ON POVERTY

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Premier and the Minister responsible for the Executive. I wish to follow up on some of the questions that were asked previously. In answer to one of my colleagues, the Premier mentioned that, he gave us quite a list of activities that the previous government has undertaken. I can't say that I totally agree with the list that he put out there. Some of the work, I think, that was listed was done by our wonderful NGOs. My first question to the Premier is to ask about a consultation that was done sometime within the year of 2011. Members were given a report at the

very end of the 16th Legislative Assembly. I'd like to ask the Premier when that consultation that was done in 2011, prior to the beginning of this Assembly, when will that be shared with the public.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The report that was prepared was called "What We Heard" from Northerners About Poverty and this report was provided to Standing Committee on Social Programs in August 2011.

MS. BISARO: I don't like to correct my colleagues but I think the Premier should well know that reports going to standing committee are not public. This report, in my mind, has never been to the public and there are many interested people in the gallery and elsewhere in our territory who want to know what was in that paper. I think I have to express some of the disappointment, as well, that some of the people in the gallery I suspect are feeling at the moment. The Premier mentioned by mid-2012 he expects that we will have a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy. Really, in the previous Assembly there was a commitment to a discussion paper. The Premier mentioned it when he did his list of activities. I would like to know from the Premier who is involved in the preparation of this draft Anti-Poverty Strategy.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As I indicated in response to a number of questions, we have had in place an advisory committee on poverty. We have an intergovernmental working group. We have held consultations from January to April 2011. We have been to every region in the Northwest Territories. We've had 30 focus group sessions in 13 communities and we are looking at a strategy that would apply NWT-wide. We have developed a broad discussion paper that was based on What We Heard in the communities. We are now having a group of deputies that are taking the discussion paper and taking what we heard in the community consultations, and also taking into account the priorities set by this 17th Legislative Assembly, and on that basis they will be developing a draft, recognizing the business planning schedule for this government for the fiscal year 2012-2013.

MS. BISARO: I have to say now that I'm even more dismayed than I was before, that the paper that was given to standing committee at the end of the 16th Assembly can be considered a discussion paper. This is absolutely incorrect, in my mind. That was a report of what people had said across the territory; it was not a paper which is able to go out and be discussed by Members and by the general public. I'm also totally dismayed that we are going to have a draft strategy produced by a working group of bureaucrats. I have no fault with the skills of our bureaucrats, but it's been well documented that any draft strategy has to involve other people.

It has to involve those in the public, it has to involve those in poverty, it has to involve NGOs, it has to involve business. I'd like to ask the Minister is there any opportunity in the development of this draft strategy by our bureaucrats, is there an opportunity for all those people that I've mentioned, to also have input into this strategy.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I should clarify, it appears the honourable Member misunderstood me when I said the report that I was referring to was based on What We Heard. We subsequently have developed a broad discussion paper. So there are two separate papers. Secondly, we are looking at an NWT-wide strategy and the advisory group on poverty that has been advising us has people from across the Territories that are advising us.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can be really short. I'd like to ask the Premier where is the discussion paper to which he refers.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The broad-based discussion paper is one of the documents, as well as What We Heard through community consultations, and as well as the priorities of this 17th Legislative Assembly; all are information that are being used to help draft a broad Anti-Poverty Strategy for all of the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 72-17(1):

CHRONIC DISEASE RELATED TO POVERTY

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that we can all fairly say that living in poor conditions sometimes creates health problems. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Health. Overcrowding invariably creates health issues related to chronic respiratory conditions. My question to the Minister is: What is the department doing to eliminate tuberculosis rates and rates of other chronic respiratory conditions related to poor living conditions?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department is working on the eradication of tuberculosis. The department works with Aboriginal community governments and our health authorities across the Northwest Territories to make a commitment to eliminate tuberculosis in the Northwest Territories.

MR. NADLI: I'd like to thank the Minister for that. Is there also an effort to maybe try to describe some of the trans-weather... I know there's always the possibility of epidemics and I think we recently saw

it in southern Canada. Whether the department is looking at, perhaps, trends or just some target areas, we have to be fairly concerned in terms of this new strain of tuberculosis and how it could probably affect the general health.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes, the rates of tuberculosis in the Northwest Territories are six times the national average. That's a fact, but the numbers are still small. There are 26 cases per 100,000 people. This is the number and it's less than four cases per 100,000 across the country. In cases where there was a bit of an outbreak of tuberculosis, the department has gone into the community; we've gone into the community, we've done screening. The last time that occurred we screened 95 percent of the community. We found 17 cases of positive tuberculosis and all of those cases have been eradicated.

MR. NADLI: I'd like to ask the Minister what are some of the preventative steps or preventative strategies that perhaps the Minister and the department would consider in trying to eliminate tuberculosis and other chronic respiratory conditions that are associated with overcrowding.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The situation is that the community health nurses in communities where tuberculosis has come into the community or the community has come into contact with tuberculosis, the health nurses are working with the communities where there is overcrowding that seems to be one of the factors. We work with the local housing organizations to ensure that if there's overcrowding in public housing, that we try to address that issue. If there's overcrowding in the homeownership situation, then we work with the Housing Corporation to try to address that issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final supplementary, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my final question is just on the lifestyle that we all live. I think it's fair to say that we have high rates of alcoholism and drug abuse, and also at the same time, smoking rates are high. What is the department doing to try to maybe perhaps focus on preventative steps so that our people here in the North are living a more healthy lifestyle?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: From about 1995 to 2009, smoking for people over the age of 15 has gone down from about 52 percent to 38 percent, and that's largely to do with the Don't Be a Butthead campaign that was launched in the schools and so on.

The department is trying to come up now with an overall strategy of health problem prevention, and how we're hoping to do that is to talk to our authorities, and the communities, and the professionals in the communities and try to package, along with the Aboriginal government, try

to package the programs that are in the community so that we have a greater impact, that good programs are continued and that programs that are not effective can be dropped, and we will focus in on the good programs and hopefully prevent people from getting unhealthy as a result of lifestyle. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 73-17(1):

STATUS OF DRAFT ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to return to my questions to the Premier. I'd like to ask the Premier a few more questions related to some of his answers to my previous questions.

The Premier indicated that the draft strategy is being developed by a group of deputy ministers and that there is an advisory council that is assisting them. My recollection is that that advisory council is perhaps five or six members. I would like to suggest, without casting any aspersions on the abilities of the people on the advisory council, that we have a huge amount of expertise, some of which is displayed in the gallery, but the Anti-Poverty Coalition is some 26 or 29 member groups, and I feel that we are drafting in a vacuum if we don't involve them. Is the Minister asking that all information be funneled through this advisory group to get to the people drafting the strategy?

To the discussion paper that is apparently being used as a basis for the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Minister stated that the paper is there. It hasn't yet gone to standing committee. It hasn't yet gone to the public. When will that happen, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The advisory committee that we're referring to is made up of four people and it advised us in the early stages. The discussion paper that has been drafted looked at what is currently being done, what some of the findings are with regard to the discussion that we held with Northerners, and ways to improve the well-being and self-reliance of Northwest Territories residents and gaps and areas for improvement, amongst other things. We will review the progress on the draft strategy, and at some point in the very near future we'll be going to standing committee to provide an update and at that time we'll make a determination. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thank you to the Premier for that response. That's all well and good, but I have to say there's absolutely minimal opportunity for the public to have any input into the development of this strategy. I can't stress strongly enough that we have to involve the members of the coalition and

that's not happening. I didn't hear the Minister speak to the discussion paper. I would again ask the Minister, the Premier, when will the discussion paper be released to (a) the Standing Committee on Social Programs, and (b) the public. Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I already responded several times, that we've had a very wide period of consultation. In October 2010 there was an anti-poverty workshop held here in Yellowknife. From January to April 2011 we did community-wide consultations in every region. We had 30 focus group sessions in 13 communities. We talked to over 250 people. In addition, we held surveys that anybody in the Northwest Territories that had an interest or view on anti-poverty could submit. I think that we've covered the consultation piece quite widely. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: I'm not suggesting that consultation was not done, but when a strategy is being drafted, I suspect that there are one or two organizations within this territory who might like to have some input onto the development of that strategy. The Premier calls this paper a discussion paper. It's for the benefit of who? Who's doing the discussing? From what I hear it's only deputy ministers. So to the Premier: Who is this paper intended for and is there any opportunity for the public to take part in discussing this paper? Thank you.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I think we're following normal procedure in developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy. We will be developing a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and will be coming forward to committee. Also, as I indicated earlier, we are meeting with the Anti-Poverty Coalition on January 19th. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Your final, short supplementary. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Premier. I guess I don't understand the reticence of this government to release papers that they're using to base a strategy on. I simply want to make a statement to anybody who happens to be listening: Find a person on the advisory committee. Present your points to them; they're the only ones that have input. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. More of a comment, but would you like to respond? The honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: There will be opportunities to comment on it. We will be briefing committee. We will be providing the discussion paper and a draft strategy to committee. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 74-17(1):
ESTABLISHMENT OF A
MENTAL HEALTH COURT

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Justice. The rate of mental health issues in the Northwest Territories is the highest in Canada. Health and Social Services is in the process of reorganizing our mental health services. A motion in the 16th Assembly calling for a mental health court was overwhelmingly endorsed by front-line, non-government organizations, and Bill C-10, obviously, elevates dramatically the need for prevention and diversion programs to keep people, especially those with mental health issues, out of the costly justice process. What is the Minister doing to get a mental health court in place and resolve this need? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 16th Legislative Assembly I believe my colleague Mr. Bromley put forward a motion that was seconded by the Member from Frame Lake, which asked us to begin research and examine options for potential benefits of the introduction of a mental health court. Since we've come back as the 17th Assembly, I've had conversations with my colleague Mr. Bromley, but also my colleague Mr. Beaulieu about this particular opportunity.

The Minister of Health has indicated that they wish to be moving forward with more prevention and treatment options within the Department of Health and Social Services, and we've agreed to work together to come up with a response on whether a mental health court would be the appropriate tool to use here in the Northwest Territories. But in addition, we also want to talk about integrated case management, having the departments of Justice and Health and Social Services work together more closely. We want to talk about front-end diversion to community programs and supports that could be done by the RCMP and other organizations before people are even charged, and we want to talk a lot about specialized courts.

Will a mental health court be the exact one that is laid out in the end if it is deemed to be appropriate? I can't say. There are other options like a wellness court used in the Yukon, but it is certainly something that we're exploring at this point in time.

We need to look at the social indicators of crime in the Northwest Territories and we need to all work together. I'm excited to say that the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services are going to be working on this and will, hopefully, come to committee and Members with some options which may indeed include a diversion-type court yet to be determined. Thank you.

MR. BROMLEY: I appreciate that all those discussions are being had and are ongoing but, obviously, the need is only growing, so we really want on-the-ground actions. I guess my next question will be when can we see recommendations coming forward that we can actually get going on the ground. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I can't say exactly when we'll actually see the recommendations come forward, but I have committed to work with the Department of Health and Social Services to come up with a working group that's going to come up with these recommendations. I hope to have that to the Member shortly after Christmas, as far as when the actual recommendations come out. We might need a bit more time. I will continue to work on that.

Building on this is the conversation I had with the federal Minister on Monday. The federal Minister did indicate that they would be willing to work with us on options to help keep individuals out of the court system and that mental health courts or divergent court of some sort might be one of those options. We are getting support from other areas as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BROMLEY: Again, I appreciate the response from the Minister. Obviously the motion and the discussions – I think this was brought up in our motion on Bill C-10 as well – was specifically to deal with the mental health issues. Can the Minister assure me that there will be a focus of the... Obviously I am hoping for broader and other areas of prevention and diversion, but in this particular case I am hoping we can focus on the mental health issues that the Northwest Territories is challenged with. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I commit that in the research that the working group does that they will include those types of discussions and they will certainly include all of the research and analysis that my colleague Mr. Bromley had prepared as part of the motion in the 16th Assembly. We are looking to collect as much information as we can and to include all of that. I commit that that information will certainly be included.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess, just briefly, I would be interested to learn what possibilities there are for support from the federal government to deal with these issues based on the Minister's visit. Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: During my conversation with the federal Minister of Justice in Ottawa, we talked about options to keep people out of the court system and we have agreed that our department, and the federal department and the territorial department are going to work together to come up with some options in this area. Diversions

is certainly one of those areas. The departments will continue to have that conversation. As more information comes down, I am absolutely happy to share that with committee and with the Regular Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Time for oral questions is now complete. But before we move on, colleagues, I would like to have recognition of visitors in the gallery. Annemieke Mulders, NWT Status of Women; Dawn Tremblay, Ecology North; Lois Little; Ron McLean, United Church; Sandra Lockhart, PSAC North; and Ben McDonald, Alternatives North. Welcome to the House.

Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Petitions

PETITION 1-17(1): CREATING AN ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of creating an Anti-Poverty Strategy for the Northwest Territories.

The petition contains 309 signatures of Northwest Territories residents. The petitioners request that the Government of the Northwest Territories get to work immediately on creating an Anti-Poverty Strategy for the Northwest Territories and that the government work collaboratively with community groups, labour, business and others who want to eliminate poverty in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Ramsay.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 12-17(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES GEOSCIENCE OFFICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2016

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled "NWT Geoscience Office Strategic Plan 2011-2016." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of ENR, Mr. Miltenberger.

TABLED DOCUMENT 13-17(1): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT HIGHLIGHTS 2011

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document, entitled "NWT State of the Environment Report Highlights 2011." Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

TABLED DOCUMENT 14-17(1): AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY LOWEST AND HIGHEST INCOME - CANADA, PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES, 2009

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the following document, entitled "Average Household Income by Lowest and Highest Income Group, Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2009." Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 1: APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), 2012-2013

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Friday, December 16, 2011, I will move that Bill 1, Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2012-2013, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 17, motions. Ms. Bisaro.

Motions

MOTION 19-17(1): COMPLETION OF AN ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY, CARRIED

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the 16th Legislative Assembly passed a motion for the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy;

AND WHEREAS work toward a clear and integrated strategy to combat poverty was undertaken during the 16th Assembly but was not completed;

AND WHEREAS every person has the right to a standard of living adequate to the well-being of their families and themselves;

AND WHEREAS in 2009, 16.7 percent of NWT families had a total income of less than \$30,000;

AND WHEREAS health indicators, educational achievement, child apprehension rates and family violence can be directly related to poverty;

AND WHEREAS poverty is human made and can be overcome;

AND WHEREAS it should be a goal of the GNWT to eradicate poverty in the Northwest Territories;

AND WHEREAS eradicating poverty will significantly contribute to the achievement of all of the Legislative Assembly's goals and priorities;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with business, organizations and those living in poverty to complete an Anti-Poverty Strategy for the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHER, that the Anti-Poverty Strategy identify specific measurable targets, with clear cross-departmental mechanisms for coordination and integration of actions;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the government provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The motion is in order. To the motion. Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring this motion forward because I feel that there is a need to reaffirm the passage of the motion from the 16th Assembly. I feel that this Assembly needs to indicate their support for their belief in the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy so I am bringing this motion forward basically in that regard.

I want to provide some comments. First of all the National Council of Welfare first examined the cost of poverty almost a decade ago. What they found was that poverty does have high costs for all Canadians. That certainly is true for us here in the NWT. That high cost is not attached to those just living in poverty but it is attached to everybody.

Alternatives North in 2009 produced a report. I would like to quote from that report. "There has never been a more important time for the government to develop a poverty reduction strategy to improve the living conditions and well-being of low income Northerners. These efforts need to be located within a larger vision and framework for social development, one that is tied to an equitable and sustainable vision of economic progress. Economic growth alone cannot accomplish this task, as evidence from the last decade amply demonstrates. Rather, a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction is needed, one that brings together community governments, employers and

citizens to ensure that all share in the potential and the promise of the NWT." That is from Jeffery Wilson from an Alternatives North report on Poverty Reduction Policies and Programs in the NWT.

The impact of poverty and low income is seen across Canada, but there are a number of variables that are unique to the North. I don't think that is any secret for anybody in this room. They affect the depth and the experience of poverty in our NWT communities. I would like to mention a couple of them. High cost of food, shelter and fuel in the North and the decreasing reliance on traditional ways of life and the mixed economy, especially in regard to food supply, influences poverty. The development of non-renewable resources has fostered inequality in the distribution of wealth and economic opportunities between genders, as men typically have benefitted disproportionately from the vast majority of jobs in mining and the industrial sectors. There has been an increase in housing prices and rent which contributes to housing insecurity among those who don't benefit from the boom times, and decades of policies of colonization and assimilation have created dependencies, poverty, apathy and lack of encouragement to work on homelessness and loss of self-esteem. Again, this is not news to anybody in this room.

These factors create large disparities from community to community and also among people within communities, and I mean all NWT communities. Poverty has an economic cost to our government, and some of those are expenditures on health care to remedy poorer health associated with poverty. A family that can't afford prescription medicine for a sick child will likely end up in a hospital at an emergency room. That's far more costly than keeping the child at home and/or keeping them healthy.

Poor nutrition and high stress can lead to diabetes, heart disease and other illnesses. Twenty percent of health care spending in Canada can be attributed to socioeconomic factors such as income-related disparities. So it costs us when we don't have healthy people, and we certainly have a high number of unhealthy people within the NWT and an Anti-Poverty Strategy will address that.

Another cost to government is the additional cost of crime and we've talked about that through Bill C-10. Across the NWT in 2010 there were over 22,000 incidences reported, criminal incidences. Another cost to the government is foregone tax revenues. Millions of dollars in personal income and tax revenue would be added to our economy if adults facing a high risk of poverty had the same likelihood of employment and the same average income as other Canadians.

Lastly, there's the tragedy of losing out on potential and talent. The health problems of an impoverished child, for instance, can hinder their learning and,

therefore, their employment later in life. We lose a lot of potential if we don't have healthy children and children who are able to go to school and become educated.

So what does poverty cost? Well, in BC poverty represents a direct cost to the government of \$2.2 billion to \$2.3 billion annually. That's about 6 percent of their provincial budget. In PEI the total cost of poverty is \$315 million on an annual basis. In the NWT we don't have a clear definition of poverty and it's a very difficult one to produce, so it's very hard for us to work out the total costs. But I can tell you that about \$15 million of our budget goes only towards income support, and if you add in the staff costs for income support it bumps it up to about \$26 million. But we have to consider all of the subsidies that we give to people in the NWT. That \$15 million or \$26 million does not include housing, it does not include all the subsidies that we have, for instance, for fuel subsidies for our seniors. So there are absolutely any number of subsidies across any number of departments in the GNWT that we have not yet accounted for. BC and PEI have done that and they can give a total amount of money. I can't do that because we haven't done that work.

Initially, to put an Anti-Poverty Strategy or to develop an Anti-Poverty Act and put it into place will cost a small amount of money. But I've said this several times before and I will say it again: there will be an initial upfront minimal cost, but the amount of money that we have in providing programs and services that try to deal with poverty and try to support our people that we have an adequate amount of money. We spend huge dollars on our people relative to income support, relative to poverty, relative to education, et cetera. We just need to take that money and use it more efficiently. We need to coordinate it across departments. We need to make sure that we have policies that don't contravene each other. Looking at an Anti-Poverty Strategy, if it's comprehensive, if it involves all departments, if it involves the general public, if it involves NGOs who do the work as well, and if it involves people who actually are impoverished, we will get a strategy that will give us a more efficient and, I would say, a more caring government. We can invest in childhood development, literacy, numeracy and higher education.

Last, but not least, I want to say that research has shown that if we invest in poverty, it generates positive results for us. I'd like to quote another quote from Alternatives North from Ms. Aggie Brockman, who I believe is still up there listening: "Our society and economy cannot prosper unless the negative costs of dealing with poverty are exchanged for the positive costs of human development. Other jurisdictions are defeating poverty using Anti-Poverty Strategies. We can do it too." It can't be said better.

Poverty reduction plans do work and not doing anything about poverty will cost and is costing us all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Who's a seconder? Mr. Yakeleya, Member for Sahtu.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my colleague Ms. Bisaro for bringing this motion to the committee level and receiving support to it today where we had a theme on anti-poverty and I was very happy to offer my support to second her motion.

This is a very important piece of work that is not yet completed by some very dedicated people in the Northwest Territories that see that this is a doable thing within the life of this government or within the Northwest Territories and more so raise the issue of the poverty situation in our communities in the Northwest Territories.

Ms. Bisaro touched on some of the factors that could be causing this issue to take forefront and what things we need to do to resolve them. Ms. Bisaro also talked about the dependency, how we now tend to lean on governments for everything. That has caused poor people. It costs people to stay poor because of the policies that are not quite fitting the needs of the people. I know for sure that people want to make a contribution to their community, to their family and to the Northwest Territories. They want to do things that would be appreciated by the community. Sometimes it's very difficult to help when there are roadblocks and barriers and red tape from allowing them to do it. It stifles their spirit and creativity, their spontaneity, and they just say, oh well, just like nobody is listening.

I raise this point because, like I said in my Member's statement, growing up in Tulita we did not have a definition, we did not know what poor was. The only way we found out if we were poor is that when you looked at the outsiders coming in to teach us, to police us, to look after our health, that these people had running water and flush toilets and electricity in their house, while we had gas lamps and slop pails or honey buckets and we hauled our own water and we made our own fire. We didn't have a furnace. So we were trying to figure out, well what's going on here. We didn't know any better, but on those types of standards when you talk to the older people like my grandmother and Chief Albert Wright who signed the treaty in 1921, we were considered pretty well off living in a house, having gas lamps, having woodstoves compared to how they lived in the bush. We would look up and say, oh, you guys were poor, you had some hard times and the way you travelled.

So through the period of different changes in the lifestyles, now we're the generation where a lot of our young people in Tulita know they want to do

well. I spoke with them through the election; I spoke to them after the election; and I know they want to make a contribution. They did not get up one day at 15 or 16 years old and say, well, I'm going to be a burden on government the rest of my life. These children, like Colville Lake students, Tulita students, when we went to visit in schools, want to become doctors, engineers, Ministers, MLAs, chiefs. They want to aspire to something that will be beneficial not only to them but to their community.

Somehow we have created this dependency as much as we're depending on the federal government for our funding. We're beggars to the federal government and this land is so rich.

When I look back now at my grandmother, they were rich in their culture, in their spirituality and their belief and they held a family close together. They were rich as a family. They weren't poor, but if we look at them from an economic, materialistic way, we say, yes, they were poor. They were poor because they lived on the land. They made brush from the trees for their floor. They hunted and they trapped.

Today my elders say we are poor. We have houses. I can pick up the phone and the government's going to deliver water for me. I don't even have to walk down anymore to get water. If I can pick up the phone, the government isn't going to let me starve. You're going to feed me, but you're only going to give me this much.

Our prices in Tulita are almost double what the prices in Yellowknife are. In Deline it's \$50 for a can of powdered milk for the babies. Our currency in the Sahtu is lower than Yellowknife. Like I said before, you put \$50 on the table, you go to OK Economy, you know what kind of groceries you can get. You know what kind of change. If you do that in Tulita you know darn well you'll only get a few cents left in your pocket. The value of our currency has depreciated as you go further north.

Mr. Premier also made reference to what it could cost to live in Sachs Harbour: \$93,000 just to get by. That's crazy. We do not have to continue this way of thinking that we're poor. We're very rich. Just as Ottawa sees us as the poor territory, we're dependent on them. We beg them for money, to lend us a little more so that we can do some projects. Increase our borrowing. Give us more money. Give us more responsibility with money so we can do devolution programs. We're beggars in our own land. Our people are beggars in their own community amongst their own people.

This Anti-Poverty Strategy is something that we should be looking at and we should support the people. I know a lot of people in Deline support that. They do not want to be beggars because kids follow the role models. If the parents are that way, make sure the prediction is that the kids will do the same thing. They're going to ask for the same

thing. I want to say that, because when I look at the stats of the profile of the Sahtu, the anti-poverty and the way we look at poverty is based on the economic measurements.

To correlate, the percentage of employment is 44 percent. Norman Wells is 80 percent. Look at the communities that are the most busy with economic activities, the highest employment rate. The communities with no employment, like Deline at 42 percent. The housing problems in Colville Lake, percentage – this is on percentage – the problems of housing in Colville Lake is 97 percent.

I met a young mother, two children, two jobs, living in a log house with holes between the logs, no running water, no bath or shower, no indoor flush toilets. She's trying hard. I encouraged her, and I support her, and she's trying hard to make ends meet. I understand that is poor. That's unacceptable. It's so cold in there when I went there that there's frost under her kitchen table. You know what? I admire that young lady because she reminds me of my mother when my mother was bringing us up. Those things that we're measuring in poverty, she's in poverty right now. Same with the lady in Deline who is living in a shack.

Housing problems in Norman Wells are only 25 percent. Tulita 49 percent.

The income in the Sahtu for 2006 was \$46,000, but the smaller communities are much lower. In Fort Good Hope the income was \$29,000; Deline, \$31,000; Tulita, \$33,000; and Norman Wells, \$67,000. This shows that the average person in smaller communities is living in poverty. In the Sahtu 19.7 percent of people had total incomes of less than \$10,000 a year. In the Sahtu 56.6 percent of the people had total incomes of less than \$35,000 a year. It's also that the majority of people are living in poverty. That's the conclusion.

Poverty is also related to education. Like I said, in the olden days we were very well educated on the land. It will be unbelievable today if you take any one of us who wasn't raised or living on the land and to go out and expect you to live on the land. You would be poor. You would starve to death. You would ask for Dene social income assistance to help you live off the land. We would never, ever accept or allow anybody to live on the land without knowing anything. So our education system was rich and wealthy, because it made us independent.

Somehow, like Ms. Bisaro said, we've become dependent. People feed us and educate us and we move into the economic lifestyle of the world.

The education in Colville Lake, the high school graduation rate is 28 percent. The Northwest Territories average is 70 percent. In Deline the average is 46 percent. Fort Good Hope is 40 percent. Norman Wells, again, is 82 percent. You see how the economic activity flows around where

there's lots of business and how the poverty is decreased while the other communities don't have much activity and the poverty is more of an issue there. Tulita has 48 percent. It's well known that low education levels are linked to unemployment and poverty.

We ask, through this motion, that some serious consideration be put to how we change people's thinking that they're not poor, that they're rich, and the government needs to look at how we create that interdependency and no longer be dependent on government.

People can and will make it. There's more than enough in this world to share. Just as you go onto the land, there's lots and lots of food to eat there. The young people today in Tulita are so used to the government's dependency that it's a shame we have come that far from once being a proud and strong people. Hopefully with the group of this hardworking people we can help us all to learn how to live independently and be wealthy. This issue for sure one day can be eradicated in the Northwest Territories.

I thank Ms. Bisaro for bringing this motion up and having us debate on it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Colleagues, before we move on I'd like to welcome Ms. Marianne Bromley into the House, Mr. Bromley's wife. Welcome to the House. To the motion. The Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of the motion before us today. I want to start by just noting that a revved up and healthy economy does not equate directly to reducing poverty unless there is a clear strategy in place to ensure that benefits and opportunities trickle through to all people that need it. Again, we can have a revved up economy, we have had a revved up economy, and yet we are still struggling with these issues.

We are looking today for a clear commitment to put together a strategy to address that. The income gap is growing. The disparity is growing steadily and will only continue to worsen again unless we develop explicit measures in such as a document as the strategy and implement those to address that.

We're not alone in this, by the way. Just about every jurisdiction around the world is struggling with this. I'm not saying we're the only ones here, but we are part of the... This is a challenge that many have and we need to address it and show some leadership.

We are able to take advantage, in this case, of lessons learned and mistakes that have been experienced from other jurisdictions. Ms. Bisaro mentioned a couple of those. There are a number of them in Canada and the successful ones are

really standing out. I don't see us taking advantage of these lessons learned. We need to do that.

The comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy needs to be developed by a real cross-section of society and overseen by the same. With that, it has some real promise. Again, I don't see that happening very well yet, so we need some clarity on that and we need to put that in place.

A most recent example of jurisdictions that I'm aware of who have been successful versus those that haven't is the situation contrasting Ontario with Alberta. During the recession in '08 and '09 here, Ontario, which did have a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy in place, actually decreased the number of people living in poverty. Whereas Alberta, as we know, one of the richest, possibly the richest province in Canada, experienced a significant increase in the number of people living in poverty. A stark example there that we should pay heed to.

We do not have to spend a lot, in my belief, in putting together and implementing a poverty strategy, but we do need to ensure the participation of this cross-section of society, including the NWT Coalition that has already done such good work.

We heard from the Premier today, I believe, a figure of \$185 million we're spending. To me, this is an opportunity. If we're spending that much, surely a good, effective strategy put in place should be able to reduce that figure and so the savings indicate that this was a very reasonable investment.

Probably our biggest challenge and opportunity here is to capture and resolve the cross-departmental issues that people in poverty experience and that a number of Members have mentioned today. This is something that I've tried to harp on a lot, and I know others have because we hear about this from people who actually experience it day to day.

I'm in full support of this. I appreciate the Members that are bringing this forward, and basically I just want to say let's get it done. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. To the motion. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, stand before the House today in support of the Anti-Poverty Strategy. In terms of getting that strategy put forward, you know, if we're talking about discussion papers, we're talking about developing the strategy and bringing our groups together. We know what the problems are. Let's start working on them now. We know what the underlying issues are that are leading our people into poverty. Let's work on them now.

The governments have some really good initiatives. The departments have some really good initiatives.

Let's tackle those underlying issues now so that we can start working on mitigating some of this poverty that we see in the Northwest Territories. We have a lot of good working people out there, a lot of NGOs that have been putting a lot of hard work, energy and efforts forward that it shouldn't go unnoticed, and today we should start working on that strategy and getting those development papers forwarded. But within the departments we should look at ways we can do a little bit of work together to start working on this Anti-Poverty Strategy and not wait for that discussion paper to say, hey, we have the paper now. Let's go to work.

Let's do it now. Let's start working within our departments. We are all doing a good job, but get those underlying issues and get those little problems solved. We know what they are right now. I don't think, I know, coming from Inuvik, we have a lot of hardworking people there as well. We find the issues in our community. The communities come together and address those issues. We have a lot of concerns back home. We have a hard, strong working group of individuals there, as well, that tackle the problems. I feel that we can do that across the Northwest Territories as well. I am really glad to see this motion brought forth in the House today. I do support it.

As a government and as leaders and community leaders, we are all here for one purpose, and that is to help those people that have a hard time helping themselves and speaking for those people that can't speak for themselves. We have to move forward on this and work with government. Even though the Anti-Poverty Strategy is not put in place right now, we still have to commend the government and all the hardworking people across the Northwest Territories for the little bit of efforts, the hardworking efforts, the energy that they have been putting in place already, and recognize that, and applaud them and continue to support them towards this Anti-Poverty Strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. To the motion. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am definitely in favour of this motion today regarding anti-poverty. It is obviously a very tricky subject. Obviously you have heard today a lot of supporting views from very different angles. I would like to attack this from a more pragmatic angle, an economic angle.

If I was to use the analogy of what we do here today as an automobile, as a government we tend to focus a lot of our efforts on tweaking with our engine, making our engine strong. That is not a bad thing, Mr. Speaker. That is not a bad thing for the Members to work on. But keep in mind if we were to use the analogy again of a vehicle, then poverty

would be our flat tires. This is what we have to deal with, Mr. Speaker and Members, is that we have flat tires.

Industry and research has told us that if we were to look at our flat tires, if we were to fix these flat tires, the return on our investment as a government would be anywhere between four to 15 dollars for every dollar we spend on fixing our flat tires. These are numbers that are factual in print. If we were to take the time and to look at fixing these tires, to get four to 15 times on our dollar I think it is a great amount of help for our economy because it takes those stresses away from things like social programs, health, incarcerations. If we have flat tires, Mr. Speaker and Members of this Assembly, then we need to take it to a good garage. To take it to a good garage we need to take it to good mechanics. Some of our great mechanics are sitting with us today. These mechanics are hoping and waiting to fix our flat tires. I support the motion of anti-poverty. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. To the motion. The honourable Premier, Mr. Bob McLeod.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Taking action to improve the well-being of Northerners and reduce poverty in the Northwest Territories is a continuing priority for the Government of the Northwest Territories, although it is not something this government can do alone.

Earlier this year an interdepartmental team consulted residents about the root causes of poverty. Residents told us that the root causes of poverty included lack of wellness, lack of education and skills, housing challenges, lack of employment, high cost of living, and programs that create dependency instead of encouraging independence. In setting our priorities as a Caucus, we recognize that action, not more studies, are needed. That is why we identified concrete actions like addressing housing needs, strengthening and diversifying our economy and increasing employment opportunities where they are most needed as our collective priorities.

To effectively address poverty, we will all need to work together; individuals, families and communities, different levels of government and volunteer and community organizations. We all have a role to play when it comes to reducing poverty in the Northwest Territories.

The government appreciates constructive advice from Regular Members on all matters and will certainly take the suggestions and this motion under consideration. However, as this motion is a recommendation to government, Cabinet will abstain from voting on the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is being called. Sorry; I'll allow Mr. Hawkins, the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to use this opportunity to inform the House, and of course the public as well, that I'll be voting in favour of this particular motion. I'd like to give credit to Ms. Bisaro for being a champion to this particular issue. She carried it forward in the last term quite strongly and I'd like to give her recognition and certainly her due that she deserves for bringing forward this motion. So I think that should not be overlooked. She's become the new champion.

---Applause

She's blushing. May that be noted on the record?

---Laughter

We need more champions like Ms. Bisaro on this particular initiative and I think it's very important, and we've heard today and many people have spoken in favour. If anything, I don't think I've heard anyone speak against this particular motion. I'd be surprised if you could find a single person on the street out here today in the North or anywhere in Canada that would be in support of poverty in any method.

Let me not forget, at the same time, I want to recognize the work that government does try to do in recognition of its hard work on housing, education and even income support. As I may have mentioned earlier here today, income support I feel, in my opinion as well as many others, could be doing more. There's no doubt that we could be doing more and I think this motion is an expression of that issue. Can we do it all? I've spoken many times and said no, we cannot do it all at once. I'm always in favour of us finding certain things we can do. Let's do them well. Let's continue the synergy of those types of initiatives or let's do more. We can do more. Let's be relentless on this particular issue.

There's no better commitment to this House. They should hear no better commitment to this House than seeing this motion passed. I wish Cabinet itself would vote in favour of this motion with a free vote, but we know it will never happen. That does not mean, and my colleague here has it right by saying shame, but let it be noted, too, at the same time many of those Members whose hands will fall silent do support poverty initiatives and although they're not allowed to vote in favour of it today, I do know many of my colleagues support this initiative although they're in Cabinet. Again, they don't like creative suggestions from this side of the House, which I find sad.

That said, the Premier did speak and say that they would recognize and hear the concerns and calls from Regular Members.

Again, I'm just going to finish by saying that again I'd like to give credit to Ms. Bisaro for being the champion of anti-poverty and I'd like to see it continued and someday I'd like to hear, maybe before the end of this term, this is one mountain we climbed and captured. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I'll allow the mover of the motion to have closing comments, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I'd like to thank my colleagues for their support, particularly Mr. Hawkins for calling me a champion. Thank you very much.

I'd like to just take note of two things in this motion. One is that it asks for the development of this strategy to be inclusive and to involve more than just the government. It needs to have a cross-section of society, and that was mentioned by my other colleagues. The other thing is that it asks for clear cross-departmental mechanisms for coordination and integration of actions. I think that's one thing that if we are going to be successful, we absolutely have to be coordinated across the whole government.

I really do look forward to seeing a draft strategy, flawed as it may be since it may only be an internal document, but I do appreciate the commitment of the Premier to develop a strategy. I would like to say that I appreciate that we are giving direction to the government, and I appreciate that we have a Cabinet protocol which says that they don't vote when Regular Members give them direction, but the Premier has indicated that this strategy is already in development. The government is already doing what we're asking them to do. So I would urge my colleagues across the floor to show their election commitment and vote for this motion.

Lastly, speaking to all Regular Members, I would like to urge you to support this motion. I feel that we have support and I thank you very much. I would like to ask for a recorded vote.

RECORDED VOTE

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The Member is seeking a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Moses, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Blake, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Dolynny.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. McLeod - Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. McLeod -

Yellowknife South, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. SPEAKER: For: ten; against: zero; abstaining: seven. Motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Item 21, report of Committee of the Whole. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Programs at adjournment today.

Orders of the day for Thursday, December 15, 2011, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Petitions
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
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Prorogation

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, December 15, 2011, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:00 p.m.