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The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Monday, May 26, 2008**

Members Present

Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Bromley, Hon. Paul Delorey, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krutko, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Sandy Lee, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Ramsay, Hon. Floyd Roland, Hon. Norman Yakeleya.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

Prayer.

Speaker (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back to the House. Before we begin the business of the day, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the passing of a former member of our Legislature, Mr. Arnold McCallum. Mr. McCallum was first elected in 1975 during the 8th Council/Assembly and served in this House until 1987 for the riding then named Slave River.

Mr. McCallum passed away Sunday, May 25, 2008, in Digby, Nova Scotia. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his friends and family.

Orders of the Day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 32-16(2)
NEW RCMP DETACHMENT IN
SACHS HARBOUR

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that the new RCMP detachment is now open in Sachs Harbour. This has been a priority of both this and previous governments for many years and has finally become a reality. A corporal and constable are now in the community providing full-time policing services. They will be able to respond immediately to any situations that arise and will work on crime prevention activities with community members.

The detachment in Sachs Harbour was closed in 1992 due to resource issues. Since then officers from Inuvik have provided regular patrols and responded to emergencies. The community has been very successful in keeping the crime rate low, but this government felt a full-time police presence was required because of the logistics of responding to urgent situations.

Simply put, it can take several hours to get to Sachs Harbour in an emergency, because a plane has to charter in from Inuvik. This government felt this response time was simply not good enough and committed to re-establishing the detachment. As Members know, this was not an easy task.

First, the federal government had to agree that infrastructure for new detachments was a priority on the long list of national policing priorities. I want to thank the former Minister of Justice, Brendan Bell, for his successful work to lobby the federal minister of this issue.

Then the RCMP had to work through the logistics of repairing the detachment and hiring officers. This is a special posting. They wanted to make sure they had the right people for the job.

I am pleased to announce that Corporal Eric McKenzie is one of our former G Division officers who used to police Sachs Harbour when he worked at the Inuvik detachment. We are always happy to welcome officers back to our community. Their experience is crucial to our policing efforts. I would also like to extend a welcome to Constable Todd Midgett. I am looking forward to meeting both officers in person at the detachment's formal opening scheduled for July 10, 2008.

This detachment will make a real difference in the lives of people in Sachs Harbour. I am proud to be able to make this announcement today. Community safety is a priority for this government, and this new detachment is a huge step toward our goal of increasing police presence in all the small communities.

I would like to congratulate RCMP G Division for all their work in making the detachment a reality. Thanks must go out to MLA Jacobson, Mayor Eldridge and the people of Sachs Harbour for their advocacy and support for the project. It is through the combined efforts of government, the community and the police themselves that we can truly progress towards making a community that is safer for everyone. This is a tremendous achievement for the community of Sachs Harbour.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister Responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Miltenberger.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 33-16(2)
NORTH AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL
SAFETY AND HEALTH WEEK

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, every year we join together to celebrate North American Occupational Safety and Health, or NAOSH, week. This year NAOSH week was May 4 to 10. First marked by an agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States in 1997, NAOSH week focuses on creating safety cultures at home, at work and at play. It reminds us of the importance of preventing injury and illness.

This year's theme, "Start Today, Live it Every Day!" expands on last year's theme of making a lifetime commitment to safety and health. It is never too early or too late to start learning about and practising safety.

As part of this year's activities, the organizing committee planned several exciting safety and health-related events. Over 80 students from Yellowknife schools explored the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission's trail map to safety. The trail map to safety, held May 9, featured safety demonstrations and activities facilitated by the commission and Life Care Planning. The commission also visited local Yellowknife classrooms throughout the week to deliver safety talks and play the safety trivia game "Are You the Safest Link?" CJCD hosted the "Are You the Safest Link?" radio trivia game three times a day from Monday to Thursday. Listeners called in and answered a series of safety-related trivia questions to win prizes provided by the commission and BHP Billiton Diamonds. The Department of Transportation hosted video lunches in Inuvik, Fort Simpson and Hay River to help raise northern safety awareness.

NAOSH week culminated with a well-attended Yellowknife community event in the Centre Square Mall parking lot from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on May 9. In addition to the Northern Territories Federation of Labour free barbeque and Arctic Response safety demonstration, the commission held its second annual "Ready, Set, Go Safe!" team challenge where local area teams participated in the safety trivia showdown "Are You the Safest Link?"

NAOSH week event participation grows every year. This year a total of 16 teams of four members each, representing a wide range of employer groups, took part in the challenge.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who helped make this year's NAOSH week activities a

success. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission continues its commitment to build on the successes of these events to develop northern safety cultures for which we can all be proud. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Before we go on, colleagues, I would like to draw your attention to the presence in the visitors' gallery of the Consul General for the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Saptomo. Accompanying him is the Consul for Protocol and Consular Affairs, Ms. Bakrie. Welcome to Yellowknife again, and welcome to the Assembly.

Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STAFF HOUSING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the 13th Assembly since 1995, I came into office with a \$150 million deficit with the government at the time. We had to make some tough decisions and had to make some tough choices in regard to how we were going to do to deal with the deficit situation we were in.

Back then the Government of the Northwest Territories provided staff housing to staff throughout the Northwest Territories, and the government of the day decided to sell off that staff housing to deal with the deficit situation we were in with regard to trying to recoup some \$75 million to pay down the \$150 million debt that we incurred.

We also had to make tough decisions in regard to programs and services, and also amalgamating departments by moving department personnel, eliminating the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and also amalgamating departments into Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development.

The loss of programs and services through the Northwest Territories, especially in small communities.... We have not been able to recuperate from that decision. Today we have some major problems simply in recruiting and retaining professionals in our communities. One of the main drivers of that is the lack of housing for staff.

Our communities are still recuperating from those decisions and yet have never been able to get back what they lost. The simple things we take for granted, such as programs and services like being able to see a doctor, dentist, the nursing professions in the communities, are being limited because of not being able to recruit and retain

nurses and teachers in our communities. That decision is still affecting us today.

What do we do from here on in and going forward? We have to ensure our decisions, the impacts....

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues.

Whatever decision we make going forward has to be one that's seen over the long term — not just four years ahead, eight years ahead or, as in my case, 12 years ahead, but 20 years ahead, to ensure that whatever we do here...the implications and impacts will be minimized and the long-term effects resolved, so that we're able to find ways of filling those gaps and don't have to live with them long into the future.

With that, I will be asking questions to the Premier on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk to you, our Premier, MLAs and all people of the Northwest Territories. I am gravely concerned that this budget does not address some crucial issues.

As the Premier said on CBC this morning, we have to start taking actions to secure the future. Unfortunately, this government does not appear to have a good grasp of the key issues we face today. In a nutshell, government planning and budgeting must recognize and respond to the full implications of climate change and the rising costs and uncertain availability of oil. Almost daily, between reports of catastrophic weather events, scientific reports reveal that we have woefully underestimated both the magnitude and speed of climate change. Impacts include the loss of species, decreases in food production, increasing disease and transportation issues, loss of cultures, landscape change and so on. We feel impacts in every aspect of our lives, our business and our government.

As Rajendra Pachauri said when he accepted the Nobel Prize on behalf of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: "If there's no action before 2012, that's too late. What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. This is the defining moment." Mr. Pachauri said this last year.

The Minister of Finance proposes to spend one-third of 1 per cent of the budget on mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Worse than this, Mr. Speaker, is the absence of a comprehensive, government-wide program to aggressively reduce the cause of climate change and to change how we do business in the NWT. We need a workable relationship with the natural world; we identified this need in our vision, goals and priorities. Time is running out. We need action to secure our future.

The second crucial issue to residents of the NWT is the declining availability of oil as we pass peak oil — the point where 50 per cent of our global resources have been used up, and thus the high cost of oil today and in the future. Mr. Speaker, we have used up the cheap oil, the price is soaring, there is no ready economic alternative, and availability of oil is increasingly uncertain. We in the North are currently totally dependent on oil; it's the foundation for our heating, our food, our shelter, our health....

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Bromley, your time for your Member's statement has expired.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This shortage of oil was forecast, but it's happening now.

Mr. Speaker, both of these issues are upon us. The 16th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories will decide our future. The opportunity, the responsibility, the requirement for immediate, comprehensive and effective action is ours. In light of the facts and today's communications, we cannot deny that we are fully aware of these issues. History will record our response to these critical challenges. The time for action is now. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Mr. Abernethy: A lot of Members have already gone on record discussing the proposed budget and the process that has been undertaken today. Given that today we may be voting on the first and second readings of the budget, I thought it would be timely for me to talk about the process as well.

It has been suggested by Cabinet that the 11 Members on this side of the House have been adequately briefed and involved throughout the entire budget process, including the cuts themselves. When it comes to reductions, the 11 Members prepared a list of potential reductions, not focused on job cuts, and provided them to Cabinet

for consideration. We were told that there were some good ideas but they would need research before they could be implemented. That makes sense. However, if research into our ideas is required, I would suggest that research into the changes put forward by Cabinet would also need to be reviewed and researched as well. Instead, they put their ideas forward as part of the budget.

To me, they don't appear to be the most logical and appropriate cuts given Cabinet's commitment that job cuts would only be as a last resort. Some departments made no attempt to reduce other than by cutting jobs themselves, which is contrary to the original message. With respect to the job cuts, we've also been ignored. During the last session, we asked that job cuts be a last resort. We were also given the understanding that we, as Regular MLAs, would be notified before potentially affected staff.

On February 28, 2008, we received a letter from the Minister responsible for Human Resources indicating that jobs are being cut. Unfortunately, staff were being notified at exactly the same time. That hardly gave us an opportunity to discuss the potential cuts with Cabinet and offer alternative solutions. Further, the package we did receive did not include a list of potentially affected positions; rather, it just said staff were being notified. We didn't receive a list of potentially affected employees until three weeks later, long after staff had been told.

The worst part about this whole situation is that the Minister of Human Resources went on record in the March 3, 2008, issue of *News/North* indicating that MLAs had been told about the notification in a briefing and a letter. I don't personally recall the briefing.

As a Regular Member I don't personally feel that I've been adequately briefed and/or involved in setting the priorities for the proposed reinvestment either.

When it comes to the reinvestment, Regular Members have continually asked to participate in the setting of priorities. We have continually been denied that opportunity and been told that we won't be invited to participate in the strategic reinvestment committee. The entire process has been lacking, and the net result is, in my opinion, not in the best interests of the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TROUT LAKE FUEL SPILL

Mr. Menicoche: Mr. Speaker, the *Deh Cho Drum* took the recent contamination of the Trout Lake oil

spill so seriously that they called it the Exxon Valdez of Trout Lake.

Trout Lake is a small, fly-in-only community in the Nahendeh riding. People take pride in their traditions, their pristine surroundings and still live off the land. They use the lake for drinking water and to fish and to provide sustenance. They have protected their environment for a long time and are proud for the food it provides to them.

At this time people in my constituency are still very concerned about what was allowed to happen: 9,500 litres of diesel fuel escaped from a seeping pipe at a Northland Utilities power station tank. Nine thousand five hundred litres in one 45-gallon drum is 200 litres, Mr. Speaker. That's 50 drums of diesel fuel that spilled onto the land, and some it made its way onto the lake. The diesel fuel soaked through the soil and into drainage ditches and, like I said, made its way onto the frozen lake.

This contamination was avoidable. How could it happen? Once again, this was a preventable accident. The community of Trout Lake wants answers. I want answers. The people want to make sure that nothing similar can happen again.

Since the spill occurred at the beginning of May, most of the fuel has been cleaned up, and everybody tells the people of Trout Lake not to worry, but worry they do. Now their precious water is being monitored, and specialists are planning for decontaminating the poisoned soil. Northland Utilities has installed new flexible piping and has looked into changing the fuel pipes from the bottom to the top of their tanks.

To make sure that all is done right, the environmental protection unit of Environment and Natural Resources is monitoring all of the damage control and cleanup.

Once again, this did not have to happen. I want to know: what had they done before the spill occurred to protect Trout Lake? I will have questions for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources at the appropriate time. Mahsi cho.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO TERRITORIAL PARKS SEASONAL CAMPSITES

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to use my Member's statement today to discuss recent events and decisions made in regard to park operations here in the North Slave region.

Three weeks before the parks and campgrounds were set to open on May 15, it appeared that ITI was going to implement a new set of rules for

seasonal campsites. The allotment was going to change at both Prelude Lake and Reid Lake. The available duration was set to change, as was the pricing.

All of these proposed changes were developed in isolation by ITI. There was no public consultation. There was no consultation with Regular Members or Members who would be hearing complaints from the public.

How is it possible that ITI could have eight months since the end of last park season to come up with a plan and consult, and the best they could do was to cause a public uproar by proposing to change operations just weeks before the parks were set to open? It was only after considerable outrage by the public and Members of this House that ITI decided to stay with the status quo for this year, and I do thank them for that.

To me, all of this was completely avoidable had the department consulted with the public. I believe and hope that the Minister and the department got the message. I also believe we need to be doing more to get additional seasonal sites in our parks so that as many residents and tourists as possible can have access to sites to camp in.

I worked as a parks officer in the North Slave region for eight years, and I learned very quickly that campers are a very passionate and vocal group. Certainly before any changes are contemplated or made, the public is going to have to have an opportunity for meaningful input into the process.

I also want to say how completely ridiculous the reservation fees are for the public booking campsites. They've been lowered this year, and I guess we should be thankful for that. However, I just do not understand why money paid to reserve a campsite is not offset against actual camping fees. It costs enough for families to go camping in the North Slave region as it is, and to add cost to the reservation is absurd.

I'll have questions for the Minister of ITI at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BUDGET CONCERNS

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, I think that as elected leaders and politicians, it's very important that we have the ability to make decisions and be able and prepared to back those decisions up with clear communication and a rationale for those decisions.

I have tried to be very transparent and clear when I raise my voice in this House to speak out on issues.

I have expressed that I have concerns with the budget that has been presented. I've spoken in the House and in the media interviews about why I have those concerns. I make no apologies for that. I have the right, in fact the obligation, as an elected Member to hear my constituents, weigh the evidence and the information before me, and act accordingly.

So I was disappointed when I heard the Premier on the radio phone-in show on CBC this morning say that he is not good at political gamesmanship. I'm not sure what the insinuation is here, but I want to assure you that there is no political gamesmanship here. I'm not good at it either, and I have absolutely no interest in it. I am committed to good government, consensus government, clear vision and direction, and our ability to communicate that vision and direction to the people of the Northwest Territories.

In the same interview the Premier, in response to a question about whether Members were sufficiently consulted, said that new Members he could understand. I don't know why the Premier would differentiate between new Members and returning Members.

The fact is that we had a compressed process. Maybe a better product would have come forward in the fall, or maybe it wouldn't have. But when the opportunity to include Regular Members presented itself, our requests were denied. We asked for participation in the capital planning priorities. We asked to have membership on the strategic initiatives committee. We asked to be at the table when new projects were identified under the Building Canada Fund. Our written requests were denied. We submitted a report to the Premier on cost-saving ideas. They were set aside for future consideration.

After all this, a budget comes forward, and many Members now say that this is not our budget. Regular Members do participate through standing committees. We responded to the Main Estimates. Most of our recommendations were not accepted by Cabinet. Is it any wonder that we say that this is not our budget?

Later today, at second reading, I will elaborate further about why I feel that the month of June would be better devoted to taking this budget back to the drawing board and why I cannot support this budget.

The limited ability to further delete items cannot fix this budget for me. The Premier has already clearly stated in the House, on Friday, that they are not prepared to move on the budget reductions or the reinvestments. I asked the Premier, and I quote, "Would the Premier agree to return to an interim status quo budget until such time as we can come

together and not take these very, very drastic measures that are proposed in this budget?" and the Premier's response was no.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REGULATORY DELAYS TO THE
MACKENZIE VALLEY GAS PROJECT

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline has faced one delay after another in the past few years, and reading the paper this morning, I see where the Joint Review Panel's report has been delayed again. First we expected it in 2008, and now I hear 2009. I'm not sure when in 2009 that it's coming. First they extended it; they added another seven months on to their hearings. You know, it could be December of next year for all we know. That's going to add almost another year and a half on to the whole process.

The reason I keep speaking to this is I represent an area that's invested quite heavily into being ready for the pipeline, and the longer the delays continue to go on, the more it affects them and their businesses. The price went from \$4 billion to \$16 billion, and who knows what it's going to be a year and a half, two years from now.

This panel has had 21 months of hearings, 630 days. The paper said they had 115 days of hearings. At least 525 days where they could have been working on their report.

I understand that this is an independent board. I think sometimes we may have given them a little too much independence — giving them independence to the point where they're extending as long as they like. I'm not sure if this government had input into any terms of reference that may have been set aside for this board.

The pipeline is important to the residents of the Beaufort-Delta. You know, I believe that the pipeline will go through. It'll be controlled development. We're not going to just push this through, and I appreciate the fact that we have to have due process and look at all the different effects this might have on the land and the environment, but I do think that too many delays have affected this project.

I have a habit of sometimes saying what I really think, and I have a habit of saying what other people think. I am just wondering — and I have people asking me — if an honorarium had a large part to play in the delays.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
EXTENSION OF
COOKING TRADES PROGRAMS

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has put an increased emphasis on support for trades training and apprenticeship opportunities over the past few years. What hasn't been discussed enough, as far as I'm concerned, is the fact that the trades training programs, in my mind, still have a number of gaps.

One area in the trades that is definitely needed in the North is cooking trades, a Red Seal Program. There's a high demand for certified cooks in our diamond mines, exploration camps and in the food service industry in our North. The demand for skilled cooks will only increase when the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline Project eventually moves forward.

There is a camp cook program offered through Aurora College, but this is an entry-level program that does not provide the necessary training for work as a fully licensed cook, a Red Seal tradesperson.

I believe we need to expand the cook training program opportunities in the North. I believe that it's something we could do, and I believe it's something that's direly needed. People should not have to travel south — whether it's to Edmonton, Calgary or beyond — to receive this training. We have facilities here in the North. We even have facilities here, potentially, in Yellowknife. I've had the opportunity to take the Education Minister down to see what a good program could look like.

Later today I will be urging the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to take a serious look at this, to fully implement a fully accredited Red Seal cooking trades program here in the North so that all our northern students can get true training here in the North, exactly where we want them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLING
SERVICES IN LUTSELK'E

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about the concern for residents in Lutselk'e and the lack of culturally sensitive professional counselling services.

Currently there are no professional counselling services readily accessible in the community, and there haven't been since 2006. The agency responsible for providing these and other health and social services is the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority.

The Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority is doing a good job providing these important services, particularly when there is staff turnover, and that is a constant problem. However, when residents are in need of professional mental health services, there have been some problems in accessing those specialized services. This is due in part to another problem dealing with professionals.

Mr. Speaker, because many of these positions require some kind of professional designation and are highly technical in nature, these individuals are highly educated, non-native people from the south. Residents have complained that when they need these mental health professionals, they are not able to effectively communicate with them because of what they refer to as cultural insensitivity on behalf of the professionals.

The residents are trying to express important family social information for the professional, but with limited education. In many cases even with limited knowledge of the English language it is difficult to accurately convey their concerns and their needs. More often than not, they feel they are being dismissed as having a bad day, and they are left at the end of the day not getting the needed professional counselling they desire. As a result of this, they get frustrated and stop seeking assistance from these individuals.

Unfortunately Mr. Speaker, there have been three suicides in the community of Lutselk'e within the last 24 months, the most recent a couple of weeks ago. These incidents are a tragedy to the whole community. Recently a constituent told me....

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Beaulieu, your time for your Member's statement is expired.

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

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Beaulieu: Recently a constituent told me that there are many other young people in the community that are in desperate need of proper counselling. This is a very serious concern for the community of Lutselk'e. I can understand the challenges our government is facing, working in these times of fiscal restraint, but when you have three suicides in the span of 24 months in a community of under 400, we need to review the programs and services that are being delivered, in areas such as effective cross-cultural training for our front-line staff in these communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BUDGET CONCERNS

Ms. Bisaro: Mr. Speaker, I've had the chance to do a small review of the Budget Address heard last week, and a number of statements in the address made me go, "Huh?" I'd like to discuss a few of those and the questions they raised in my mind.

We had some communication last week about how the government is accommodating employees who have been affected by budget reductions. There seems to be a genuine desire on the part of the government to make the transition as easy as possible, but where are the actions that show us that desire? I haven't seen anything.

The Minister of Human Resources said that GNWT policies don't allow certain actions that could better accommodate staff whose positions are being reduced — early retirement, for example. I would think that if the government is serious about needing to reduce positions, we would be looking at every available possibility to smooth the way. Surely we can amend policies or, at the very least, agree to waive them for a specified period of time to accomplish the easy accommodation of our affected employees. After all, it seems the government writes the policies.

The Budget Address indicated that there are plans for approximately \$500 million of capital investments over the next four years but that we will only incur \$17 million in debt in doing so. I suggest that we would be better off retaining the 111 affected positions set to be reduced and use more of our borrowing power to pay for the capital investments.

Page B2 of the address document includes a graph titled Revenue and Expenditure Growth. It shows revenues increasing faster than expenditures, at least to my eye, and contradicts the Finance Minister's statement that expenses are outgrowing our revenues. I am unable to reconcile the words and the picture.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I am particularly disappointed in three aspects of this budget: that there is no new revenue source; that budget reductions seem to target jobs first, not as a last resort; that there is no coordinated approach from the government for the consideration of saving the environment — reducing greenhouse gas emissions, for example; energy planning; and minimizing climate change through all of our programs and services. Energy conservation, climate change prevention and mitigation should be at the front of and integral to everything that we do as a government: new buildings, roads, bridges, economic development, utility costs — everything.

As I mentioned in my statement last week, few departmental budget briefings presented a good

rationale or justification for the content of their budget. I hope to see that information during budget debate. I need convincing that the various departments' proposals are the right ones. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
WELCOME TO CATHOLIC BISHOP
MURRAY CHATLAIN

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity in Fort Smith to attend the installation of the new bishop for the Mackenzie-Fort Smith diocese, Bishop Murray Chatlain.

We also at the same time celebrated the retirement and dedication of years of service of now Bishop Emeritus Denis Croteau. Bishop Croteau will be staying in the North. He will be working in communities in the North as well. He is going to take his vast experience in compassion and caring to the fields of the Lord outside of Canada.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize and welcome Bishop Murray Chatlain into his new role. He has a huge area to cover. He has many challenges. He is very young and enthusiastic, and clearly the Pope made a wise decision in picking the new bishop, and I welcome him to this new diocese. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TRIBUTE TO
SISTER CELESTE GOULET

Hon. Norman Yakeleya: [Translation.]

I rise today in the House to speak on behalf of my people of the Sahtu. On May 15, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada announced the names of the 2007-2008 recipients of the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. On behalf of the people of the Sahtu, I'm proud to extend my great wishes and congratulations to one of my constituents who's visiting, Sister Celeste Goulet. I'm so proud to say "Mahsi cho." Mahsi for believing and supporting our children's development and realizing their potential. Mahsi for guiding my people to make better choices for themselves. Good job, Sister. You have truly demonstrated your love and meaningful caring for our children in Tulita and Sahtu.

Sister Celeste Goulet was recognized for the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education for running the Child Development Centre in Tulita. She was recognized for embracing

the community's history and traditions to put children in a learning environment that will be a strong foundation to build their education and learning. She started the Tulita preschool program back in 1981 and has since helped start the drop-in centre in 1983. Today the preschool cares for several children. Her doors are always open for the community, the coffee's always hot and everyone is welcome to drop in to chat and visit with her.

Sister Celeste's countless years extend beyond the people of Tulita. She provides a safe place for women and children to go if there are problems in the home. She does volunteer work in the community schools on a regular basis and helps our women and children with their applications, resumes and legal forms. She has been instrumental in serving on various boards as part of the local education community and justice circle community. Sister Celeste was also a nominee, twice, of the Wise Woman Award and a winner in 1999.

Sister Celeste has lived with the people in Tulita since 1979. Amongst the people in Tulita, she is considered to be one of the people from Tulita. I look forward to working with Sister Celeste in the future as she brings more history to the people of Tulita. Mahsi. [Translation ends.]

Mr. Speaker: Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Recognition of
Visitors in the Gallery

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Ms. Candy Brown in the gallery today. Welcome.

Mr. Bromley: I'd like to recognize Ms. Amanda Mallon, outgoing president of the NWT Teachers' Association, and Mr. Jean-Francois Des Lauriers of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Donna Pick and Gayla Wick, Yellowknife South constituents.

Mr. Jacobson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize my sister in the gallery today, Judy Payne.

Mr. Speaker: If we've missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the House. Hope you're enjoying the proceedings. Always a pleasure to have an audience in here. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 180-16(2) STAFF HOUSING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, in light of my Member's statement and the practice that was seen in the 13th Assembly, which still originates in our communities, especially in the areas of programs and services, in regard to services in general, from health care services, education services, and having the ability to access professions in our communities.

In regard to the biggest challenge, we hear from a lot of our professions in the area of housing. I think as a government we have to try something different, so I'd like to ask the Premier: have you considered looking at an alternative for retention and recruitment in communities outside the regional centres by way of some sort of housing initiative? I'll use an example: in most communities we have accommodations in the health centres for the nurses, but we don't have accommodations in our communities for teachers. Is it a possibility of looking at that, by way of precedence, and working with the private sector and working with the local education boards to see if there's a possibility of implementing that type of program?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: We all are aware of the reductions that happened in 1995–1996. For the record, back then the government of the day looked at \$150 million worth of reductions, and those were peer reductions. I believe the numbers back then for employees affected were in the neighbourhood of 700 to 800. Our scenario at this stage: we've minimized that to the largest extent possible.

The housing piece is something we're still affected with, as the Member has pointed out. We have looked at.... For example, in the last Assembly there was the Market Housing Initiative to try to get units into communities for professionals. This government, the Minister of the Housing Corporation along with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment have been working on, for example, the guaranteed program for development corporations to get into that market and provide housing at that level.

Mr. Krutko: Again, the problem seems to be around the area of collective bargaining in regard to the northern allowance that's offered and with regard to a housing subsidy. I think we have to work around that. Like I say, through the nursing staff that we have in our communities who worry about the work — that's through the precedence that's there. Can we work either through the collective bargaining agreement or with the different professions to have some sort of universal program

in isolated communities outside regional centres where there is no real housing market? It is having a major effect on delivering programs and services in our communities. Will the Premier consider looking at...? I know we've gone through discussions with the unions, but again, we have to find ways of working out this problem. I'd like to ask the Premier: is he open to those type of suggestions?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Back in 1995–1996, the housing package, along with the VTAs that were in place, at that time tallied close to \$30 million. In today's environment I wouldn't even speculate as to how high it's gone from that area. We are looking at ways of trying to have development corporations, the private sector, get involved in the housing in those communities. We're trying to find that option.

When it comes to collective agreements, if the roles participating, the negotiators for the unions, ask to discuss it, there's no stopping us from having the discussion. The fact will come in as: can we afford anything of that nature?

We also have to also recognize the northern allowance was put in place to make up the difference and each community has different rates. Some communities have a substantial northern allowance rate to try to mitigate those higher costs.

Mr. Krutko: Again, working with the private sector with regard to housing we have the development corporations, community corporations, and also a few individuals who are looking at that by way of business opportunities. It is a major capital investment in a lot of our communities. You're talking about a very high cost to construct in a lot of these communities. If anyone wants to take on this endeavour, they are going to be on a long term, being able to recoup their investments.

I'd like to ask the Premier: are there any programs that we may have where we can invest in these type of projects where the corporations could maybe look at it, knowing they're going to have to probably wait a while before they get paid back for their investment within a long-term lease or long-term financial commitment, either by this government or the divisional boards to help their education?

Hon. Floyd Roland: Much like we did during the Market Housing strategy, the two-year pilot program that started bringing modular units into communities for the professionals, that was done on a cost-mutual basis in the sense that full recovery of having that unit there, utilities and so on, had to be a part of the package. That actually worked out fairly well for the most part. Some of those units came in at a lower cost than what we were having paid to rent for those in our communities living in standard public housing units.

So that was an initiative. It's something we can look at again.

The Housing Corporation in today's environment has a loan guarantee program that would help development corporations get involved in that area, but we'd expect part of that solution would have to be made up from their rent structure.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Can the Premier commit to come back to this House with some of those types of initiatives, so that we can also take them back to our constituencies and meet with the district education boards and health boards to find solutions to these problems we're having with recruiting?

Hon. Floyd Roland: We're willing to sit down and look at those types of options with the Members and committees to see what avenues we can look at. We realize there are pressures there and we're trying to find ways to mitigate that.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 181-16(2)
COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE
TO CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on my Member's statement this afternoon and ask the Minister of ENR, who I believe is responsible for a response to climate change, what exactly he is doing to address climate change given that we are recognizing increasingly that there is a strong element of time and the need for immediate and comprehensive response.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're doing a number of things. We're looking at, hopefully in the next number of weeks before the end of session, being able to come forward with a framework for a water strategy that is going to allow us to deal with a very crucial issue that's directly impacted by climate changes and global warming in addition to the huge development pressures.

We're also going to be working on a land use framework that will give us a clear base to look at issues such as the pace of development, where we develop, how fast we develop, is it in our best interest, and how does it fit with all the other demands and needs to protect the land.

We have our own Greenhouse Gas Strategy. Granted, it is somewhat inward-looking.

We're going to be looking at a biomass strategy that's going to look seriously at the opportunity to replace those diesel generators in communities that are now providing electricity with wood pellet generators.

We want to look at the hydro expansion in small communities, but we also want to take a look at the opportunity to redirect the transmission line that's currently being planned to go around the East Arm. We want to consider the benefit of moving that closer to Yellowknife, which burned 18 per cent last year on diesel, to provide the electricity for the community.

We're shifting over to electric heat in some of the communities. In the South Slave we're switching over to electric heat to see how that works. In Behchoko we're working, and in the North Slave Correctional Centre we put in wood pellet boilers.

So we have a number of initiatives. We're committed. We have a wind strategy up in Nunakput. We're committed to looking at the opportunity there to do a pilot project in conjunction with other alternatives to see what's possible there.

So we have a whole array of things that we're doing.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you for those remarks. I acknowledge that we have a number of programs that are getting off the ground, and I'm encouraged that we are going to be learning from that and that we're starting to pay attention to the public here and the evidence that is strongly before us. Our Greenhouse Gas Strategy, if you would call it that, which commits itself to a 10 per cent reduction from 2001 levels by a certain date, is hardly significant when we are well on our way to or past doubling and are now on our way to tripling our greenhouse gas emissions. What we need is an absolute decrease in that. There are many jurisdictions, such as the Western Climate Initiative states and provinces, that are moving on this.

What are we doing to get real and move in a very comprehensive way to reducing absolute amounts of greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories that are currently doing us in?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: We're in the process of working with Priorities and Planning to set up a joint climate change committee. One of the things that will be on there is the work plan. We have existing strategies, like the Energy Plan, the Greenhouse Gas Strategy, that are going to be there for review. Clearly, that was done in a different time; it was done along with the energy strategy to access funds for other projects like mini-hydro and the Taltson project. Collectively, working together, we're going to have an opportunity here, early on in the life of this Assembly, to revisit some

of those policies and those programs and look at how we can improve them.

Mr. Bromley: Again, thank you for those remarks, and I appreciate hearing those things are happening. Again, we need a really comprehensive response. What authority does the Minister have? As Ms. Bisaro pointed out, this response is required from every department and agency in the Northwest Territories, and in fact, we need the help of industry and residents as well. What authority does this Minister have, over at least those other government departments, to get some mandatory action on this issue, for a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I'm a Member of this Legislature, I'm a member of Cabinet. Clearly we have to.... There's a process. We want to engage with the Members, with the Climate Change Committee. We want to identify some of the priorities. We're continuing to look at some of these other issues, as well, and to the Energy Coordinating Committee and other committees. Some of the things I'm talking about, for example, biomass, I believe, would have a direct impact on the cost of living in communities, both to individuals and businesses. So the initial point of call will be the structuring of this committee so we can get up and running and operational as soon as possible to lay out the issues we want to pursue.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: I'd like the Minister to commit to requiring every department to come up with its own plan — and this is on both the climate change and the cost of fuel end of things. As a responsible government, we really need to respond to the cost of fuel as well as the climate change issue, which are closely related. So will this Minister commit to get each department to aggressively develop, in the very short term here, plans to deal with those issues that are concrete — again, that result in net reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of a significant level?

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I will commit to put that on item number one at the top of the agenda for our committee so that we can, in fact, do the proper groundwork to have a coherent clear message we want to bring forward as a Legislature and as a government. As we move into the business planning process, we can give the government a chance to gear up and give a chance for full input from the members as well as, of course, my Cabinet colleagues.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 182-16(2)
TROUT LAKE FUEL SPILL

Mr. Menicoche: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in my Member's statement, I talked about the diesel fuel spill in Trout Lake. In my opinion, this contamination was avoidable. Northland Utilities knew that the tank was sitting on unstable ground. Why was there no berm in place and why wasn't a flexible feeding pipe used from the beginning? The community of Trout Lake is most concerned about avoiding anything similar happening again.

My question to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources concerns the planning and preparedness of such emergency situations, where the goal is to prevent situations like this from happening again. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain what safety features, like shut-off valves, are currently required for fuel tanks and for feeding pipes, to prevent fuel spills, and what other features like berms are required to control contamination, should there be a release of fuel? Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Mr. Miltenberger.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding was that the fuel tank in question was a double-walled tank, which is supposed to preclude the need for a berm. Clearly, there was a failure not with the tank itself but the connection from the valve to the tank and from that valve to the hose.

Clearly, the Member has raised some good points. Environment and Natural Resources is dealing with the cleanup, but we're going to be working as the government, with ENR as the lead agency, to do a debriefing and review to make sure, in this circumstance, what happened and why, to preclude that it ever happens again — and to make sure that we check our other facilities so that we don't have any other of these types of circumstances just waiting to happen.

Mr. Menicoche: Mr. Speaker, it's been my experience that double-walled tanks.... There are certainly reasons for having double-walled tanks — they're meant for temporary installations. Maybe the Minister can clarify this for me: I think that double-walled tanks, if they're intended to be permanent, that there indeed be a berm attached. As well, with any tanks there, we've got lots of unstable ground, and all the tanks should have at least the minimal flexible coupling. Can the Minister advise me of the current regulations? Mahsi.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, I'll check on those specific details and provide that information to the Member.

Mr. Menicoche: The NWT has an Environmental Protection Act. Under this act, we also have a consolidation of spill contingency planning and reporting regulations. Anyone who stores more than 20,000 litres of contaminants above ground needs to file a spill contingency plan with the department. Can the Minister confirm that Northland Utilities had filed a spill contingency plan for the Trout Lake power station operation that accounts sufficiently for the circumstances and remoteness of that community? Mahsi.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: Mr. Speaker, clearly, once this spill was discovered and the notification was made, there was a full response from ATCO, Northland Utilities, ENR, and all the other involved government agencies, to make sure that it was handled in the most appropriate way. There will be a debriefing and review of this whole incident once remediation has been dealt with, and all those issues and items raised by the Member will be addressed.

Mr. Menicoche: I'm very glad to hear that the situation will be adequately assessed and a determination to review the regulations. I'm looking for that as well. Small and remote communities, even more so, need adequate protection measures, and I'd like to see our current existing legislation certainly accommodate that, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

Hon. Michael Miltenberger: I will commit to sharing that information, as it comes ready, with the Member and with the appropriate committee, so that we can all have our input into this particular situation.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 183-16(2)
PROPOSED CHANGES TO
TERRITORIAL PARKS SEASONAL CAMPSITES

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of ITI. It gets back to my Member's statement from earlier today, where I talked of the proposed changes to the allotment, the duration and the pricing for seasonal sites here in the North Slave region.

Most of us are well-aware of the firestorm that built up a month ago regarding these proposed changes. Again, I wanted to thank the Minister for maintaining the status quo in the campgrounds. What I'd like to ask the Minister today is: why did the department take eight months to come up with some proposed changes and try to implement them three weeks before the park season opened?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member knows, we had an election in October and this resulted in a change. As well, in the North Slave region we had a wholesale changeover of regional managers.

Mr. Ramsay: I don't know if the territorial election had much to do with the operational requirements inside a department — that should be a day-to-day operational thing. And they should be covered off by somebody whether there are changes to personnel or not. What I'd like to ask the Minister is: what is the game plan going forward in terms of consulting the campers in the North Slave region? Has he got a plan for this summer?

Hon. Bob McLeod: I did write to the Member, as the chair of the Economic Development Committee, advising him of what we were looking at. So I was pleased with his response and suggestions.

As I've committed publicly and I've committed to the committee, we will be undergoing full consultation with the campers, the aboriginal governments, and all of the public before we make any changes.

Mr. Ramsay: I think it's important in this that the department gets out into the campgrounds in the North Slave region and talks to both the seasonal campers and the recreational campers that are out there, and develop some type of survey or questionnaire or something to that effect before waiting until the fall when everybody goes and packs it in for the winter.

I'd like to ask the Minister: are there plans in the works to get out there and talk to people while they're actually camping?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Certainly that is our intention, and we've been getting a lot of feedback from the campers. I'm also pleased that the Member supports the fact and the recognition that we need as many new sites as possible.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In relation to the issues in the North Slave campgrounds, I wanted to ask a final question on the reservation system and how it is that the public has to pay to reserve a campsite. I can understand that they pay and they get that offset against their actual camping fees, but from what I see and from what I hear from my constituents, somebody is taking that money, and it's not going in to offset the camping fees. So I think that's a cost the department should be incurring.

I'd like to ask the Minister: is there any appetite to phase that type of reservation system out so that the general public doesn't have to pay to reserve a campsite?

Hon. Bob McLeod: That concern has been raised by many people, so we're reviewing the whole reservation system. We've already made a commitment that we weren't changing anything this summer, so we'll look at changing it as part of our overall consultations, unless we can find a better approach quickly.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

QUESTION 184-16(2)
REGULATORY DELAYS TO
THE MACKENZIE VALLEY GAS PROJECT

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my questions today to the Minister of ITI, and it goes back to my Member's statement on the delays in the Joint Review Panel public hearings and their final report. I'd like to ask the Minister of ITI if this government had any input into the terms of reference for the Joint Review Panel.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our previous Minister — I think it's two governments ago — was at the forefront in advocating that we take a joint review panel approach. It was felt that going through regulatory review involving 13 boards and agencies would take too long, and as such, we advocated a joint review panel approach.

Mr. McLeod: I appreciate the Minister's comments about taking too long. I can't imagine how much longer it would have taken had we gone through 13. It seems even with the one, we're still taking a long time.

I did ask the Minister and he did give me a response to my question, but I don't think it was an answer. I asked him if this government had any input into the terms of reference for the Joint Review Panel.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We did review the terms of reference and we did have input. For those areas that are under the Government of the Northwest Territories' responsibilities, we specifically dealt with those as well.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for that. I found that was an answer to the question that I had posed.

I would also like to ask the Minister: do we contribute any funding to the Joint Review Panel?

Hon. Bob McLeod: The Government of the Northwest Territories doesn't specifically contribute to the operations of the Joint Review Panel. Where we spend money is in making sure that we have the

people and the resources to develop the positions that are taken by the Government of the Northwest Territories in any interventions, also in reviewing the interventions of other groups and agencies that appear in front of the Joint Review Panel.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Robert McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: I thank the Minister for that. I'd like to ask the Minister if the Minister's office is made aware of any delays or extensions to the hearing process, and has he communicated to the Joint Review Panel our displeasure at the extensions and delays? Thank you.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We have been in discussions on a number of occasions with Mr. Neil McCrank, who is reviewing the regulatory process on behalf of the federal government. We've also had discussions with Minister Prentice and his point man on oil and gas for the Northwest Territories, Mr. David Hudson.

We recognized early on that the writing of the report of the panel could be facing delays, because there was only a four-month window for the report to be written. We expected that the April report would likely be pushed back, and that has come to pass.

But the main issue was how do you try to speed up a panel that has held hearings and has had input. How do you speed it up without being seen to interfere with the proceedings of the panel? So that was the dilemma. Certainly, our Premier has made comments that he would like to see the process speed up, and certainly we would like to see that happen as well. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

QUESTION 185-16(2)
MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLING SERVICES
IN LUTSELK'E

Mr. Beaulieu: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Today I spoke about counselling services in Lutselk'e and the serious concern for the community. Unfortunately, the community has had to endure the untimely passing of three community youth because of suicides within the last 24 months. Can the Minister tell me what the current situation is with respect to providing counselling services in Lutselk'e?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, Ms. Lee.

Hon. Sandy Lee: Currently in Lutselk'e there has been a vacancy of the mental health addictions

worker there for about a year. In that period of time the services have been provided by Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, which is in charge of those services. So there have been three workers travel to Lutselk'e on a periodic basis to provide services, one of them specializing in youth counselling.

I'd like to advise the Member the latest is we have been able to hire somebody, and we have had verbal commitment from a mental health specialist, and we hope we'll be able to fill that position on a permanent basis for the community.

Mr. Beaulieu: I thank the Minister for that answer. The higher-than-usual frequency of suicides in a small community: what has the department done to specifically address that issue?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, obviously that's a very complicated issue, and it's one that has to be addressed in multi-faceted ways. The government and the Department of Health work with other organizations on suicide prevention, working with youth. The government funds various programs to support youth. I think over the last two, three years, we have made some progress in that area.

Specifically to mental health and addictions issues in small communities, it is a constant challenge to be able to provide a community-based program. We do fund about \$7 million for 75 positions. But in the last three, four, five years, we've had a constant level of vacancies with community wellness workers positions. It's up to about 25 per cent. But we're making steady progress in that area. And I look forward to working on that more with the Member.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister tell me what role the Lutselk'e Indian Band has had in the delivery of counselling services at the community level?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Mr. Speaker, as far as I understand, all of the programs for mental health counselling and community support work in that area are delivered by Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, which oversees that community.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to working with myself and the community, specifically the Lutselk'e Indian Band, to explore options for actively engaging the community for delivery of effective community-based counselling services in Lutselk'e?

Hon. Sandy Lee: Absolutely, I am willing to do that and prepared to do that, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to just give notice to the Members that I'm in the process of having the department review our entire mental health and addictions strategy. The

current plan that we have in place has been in the works for about four or five years.

But I think there's room for a change and room for revising and re-profiling, specifically giving more multi-dimensional roles to our community workers, social workers, mental health workers, so that we have a holistic approach towards those who walk into the office and need help. Right now, I think the way it's being done is way too many stovepipes, and one may not be working as efficiently and effectively as we could.

So I look forward to working on that process with the Member in the coming months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 186-16(2)
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR
POTENTIALLY AFFECTED EMPLOYEES

Ms. Bisaro: In my Member's statement I mentioned that I sensed a genuine desire on the part of the Department of Human Resources — I should say my questions are addressed to the Minister of Human Resources — to make transition as easy as possible for those employees who have been targeted for reduction. I'd like to give the Minister an opportunity to publicly state and answer the question: is it the department's goal to make the accommodation of employees as easy as possible?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is certainly our intention. As has been mentioned, we do have 118 potentially affected employees, depending on whether the budget gets passed or not. There are a number of these employees that are approaching some significant milestones with regard to retirement. So this is an area that we're looking at.

Ms. Bisaro: I thank you, Minister, for that answer. Particularly in regard to those who are approaching retirement or those who are requesting voluntary separation, there are policies which are in place. I wonder if the Minister could advise whether or not the department is open to actions for these particular employees that are outside the current policy.

Hon. Bob McLeod: We are open to looking at all possible options and with the individuals that are potentially affected.

Ms. Bisaro: I'm glad to hear that. Thank you, Minister.

I'd like to know whether or not the Minister can advise what kind of a time frame is involved. I presume there has to be Cabinet approval of any changes to these policies. Can he advise when these policies will be going forward to Cabinet and when we might expect some kind of a response in that regard?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we had an opportunity to brief the standing committee with regard to human resources, and I am waiting for a letter from the committee that would indicate they're supportive of the department taking such an approach. If we have that support, then we would go forward.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I missed that part of the meeting. That wasn't my understanding. I will discuss that with the committee.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. I didn't hear a question there. The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 187-16(2)
ADDITIONAL POLICING SERVICES
IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, in regard to the statement made earlier today by the Minister of Justice in regard to policing in Sachs Harbour, I'd like to applaud him on that. But more importantly, we still have, I believe, nine or ten communities out there that still don't have policing.

I think it is an essential service for our communities, and also for our professionals to deliver programs and services in those communities. I'm talking about the community I represent, Tsigehtchic, where they were having problems attracting nurses and also in ensuring public safety in their community.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice: exactly what is he doing to ensure the other nine communities will also have a similar opportunity where we can expand the policing into those other communities that don't have that policing in place at the present date?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for asking that. It's one of the important questions that I addressed today in my Minister's statement.

We are focusing on the small communities that don't have RCMP detachments, and Sachs Harbour is one of them that we have identified.

There will be two more that are coming up: Gameti and Wrigley. We will continue to stress this with our federal government, to push them even further to establish more of a presence in the communities.

For the remaining communities without detachments, I'll certainly make a commitment in this House to continue working with the federal Minister. We met already, last year, as part of the FPT meeting, and I did stress the importance of having police presence.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I believe it's an essential service, like I mentioned earlier. Again, it may be some time before we do get to all the nine communities, but I believe we do have to look for options and alternatives.

I'd like to ask the Minister: have you looked at the possibility of either increasing the number of RCMP visits to our communities, where they stay a couple of days or they drop in on a weekend? At least with their presence, a community does feel a lot safer; but also, building that relationship between the RCMP and the community is just as important as having an individual stationed there.

I'd like to ask the Minister: have they looked at options of ensuring that there will be more police presence in those communities that don't have police?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, this is one area that our department is focusing on: those without detachments. We will certainly work on a schedule. We do have schedules in place for visits from the regional centres to communities without detachments.

Also, the Member talked about possibly options of overnighting. We need to work with the communities in finding suitable accommodation for officers to be in a safe environment in the communities. So we are continuing to work with the communities to identify those accommodations.

Also, the Member brought up a good point about building relationships. That is one of our strengths in the communities. We want to build on our strengths, having open communication and dialogue, and also building on our relationship with the RCMP, the communities, the leadership and the community as a whole.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, another option that I think the Minister should certainly consider looking at is, I believe, that under the policing agreement, it does talk about First Nations policing and also the possibility of looking at special constables.

I think that we have to look at every avenue that we have available to us, because I believe that without policing in our communities, it is affecting the government's ability to deliver programs and

services, especially around nursing, teachers and other professions in those communities.

I'd like to ask the Minister: have they also talked with the federal government, or even with the aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories, about looking at the possibility of First Nations policing?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, the area of special constables in community policing has been addressed by my department. I met with the commissioner of the RCMP just last month. We just had an initial discussion of trying to find out where the status was with aboriginal policing in the communities. I was told, at that time, that news will be coming this summer — late summer or early fall — and that there will be an announcement from the federal government.

Currently they are looking at options of reintroducing community policing, whether it be the special constables.... They're still working out the logistics on that, and there'll certainly be good news for the communities. It will certainly benefit most of the communities that have the detachments. Certainly we'll work with the communities that do not have detachments at this time.

Mr. Speaker: Final short supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, my issue is around the security of the community. We have had a lot of instances where we have communities with prohibition orders. They've passed them, and they look for the enforcement side of those prohibition orders. I think we're seeing that a lot of the people are wondering why they even voted in the first place.

Again, I'd like to ask the Minister if he can ask the RCMP, or whoever is in charge, if they can increase their presence — but, more importantly, allow the communities to work with them to ensure they do have a presence in our communities and also ensure that they are enforcing those prohibition orders, especially for those communities that have passed such an order.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly make a commitment here to deal with the scheduled visits to the communities. I'll work closely with the RCMP G Division. We do have schedules in place. We need to monitor those schedules. My department will certainly follow up with that, and I will certainly get back to the Member on this particular item.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 188-16(2)
IMPLEMENTING A
COOKING TRADES PROGRAM

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, earlier today I talked about raising the bar of our trades programs here in the North by offering training that doesn't exist today. That training would be the Red Seal Program for a cooking school. I had the chance and the privilege to bring the Minister down to a facility here in Yellowknife run by Chef Pierre, to see his facility and what could be done to elevate trades programs here in the North.

My question to the Minister of ECE is: would he be willing to look at this possibility of moving forward on implementing a cooking trades program here in the Northwest Territories, to run through Aurora College?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Minister Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for inviting me to tour the facility. At this time we do have our department staff and our Aurora College staff, and possibly the chairpersons, visiting the facility. I want them to see what kind of facility there is there. So from there, we can talk about the process.

Certainly, the Member wants to push this forward, but we need to sit down and develop plans. We need to work with the industries as well. It has to be based on the needs of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I compliment Aurora College for having their camp cook program that they operate in their existing programming, but I think it's time that we can expect more and demand more.

The Minister has said that he would be looking at this situation. When can I get some type of commitment that they will bring down the Aurora College board and the officials to take a serious look at the nuts and bolts of this operation, to see if this is something we can do here in the Territories?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, the tour happened just before session, so I told the Member that I will certainly sit down with my department and work out a plan of when the scheduled visit will be. It would have to be probably sometime after session, to have them tour the facility and then sit down and start planning what we can do next. Certainly the Member will be involved in that, and other Members who are interested.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

QUESTION 189-16(2)
CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING
FOR FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Human Resources. Today I spoke about counselling services in Lutselk'e and made reference to the front-line staff.

With Lutselk'e having over 95 per cent — and Fort Resolution having over 90 per cent — of its population aboriginal, can the Minister tell me if the front-line professionals with Health and Social Services who work in these aboriginal communities are mandated to have cross-cultural training?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Human Resources, Mr. Bob McLeod.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, with the difficulty in attracting some of the front-line workers, it's certainly something that we would like to see — that they have cross-cultural training. But unfortunately, the reality is that sometimes this cross-cultural training is not made available until after the fact. The ideal would be for front-line workers to receive cross-cultural training.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister commit to reviewing the situation to ensure that front-line staff such as Health and Social Services workers are properly trained and culturally sensitive to their respective working environments?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I've worked in a number of environments where cross-cultural training was provided across the board, and it was a requirement for not only front-line employees but all employees to take cross-cultural awareness training.

This is certainly an area that I think is important, certainly for people who are new to the North and new to the communities. We develop training programs, and we will make sure that this service continues to be provided.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm whether the boards and agencies for which Human Resources is responsible for providing service get the same response and attention as the regular departments do?

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, boards and agencies generally operate on a different basis. I think that we would certainly request that the Health Minister direct boards and agencies to deal with cultural awareness, but the boards are independent and would have to make that kind of decision themselves.

It's an area where it's not as straightforward as just asking them to fulfill requirements with regard to

cultural awareness. But that's something that I'll discuss with the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker: Final short supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I shifted gears just slightly there. My question was more about the service being provided to boards and agencies from the Department of Human Resources, just strictly on hiring versus the services provided to the departments. I just wanted to know if there was a difference in the Department of HR's role when hiring for boards and agencies versus hiring for departments.

Hon. Bob McLeod: Mr. Speaker, HR's role is not different. It's just that we may take a different approach with some of the larger departments and some of the larger boards in how we approach the staffing for boards and agencies.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Robert McLeod.

QUESTION 190-16(2)
PROPOSED CLOSURE
OF ARCTIC TERN FACILITY

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, going back to the proposed closure of Arctic Tern, I'd like to direct my question today to the Minister of Justice. During the course of some discussions I was told that there was an engineer's report being done on the facility. I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice: what is the status of the report?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Minister Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, there is a review that's been undertaken, and that review should be completed sometime early next month, I do believe. Once we have that package, then we can certainly discuss it with the Member.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for that timeline. I've got 18 full-time staff and some casuals in there depending on me to bring their concerns forward.

I'd like to ask the Minister: who is doing the report? Is it being done by the department — which I could have a problem with, because they might use that to justify closing the facility — or is it done by an independent engineer?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, our department is working with another firm that is doing the overall.... We're working closely with PWS, as well, on the foundation itself and the structure of the building.

The building is a fairly new building, but there are some structural damages to it, so we need to develop plans on that, the next step. The review has been done on that part.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister what would happen if the engineer's report were to come back that the building was structurally sound. Would that be an opportunity to still use it as a young female offenders' facility?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, if the report comes out stating that the building still could be utilized for a number of years, then we can certainly utilize the building, whether it be for program delivery.... We are looking at options for that particular building, and we are going through some stages here. What we propose here is part of the Arctic Tern plans, but there are other options that may be fully utilized in that facility.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the facility was built at a cost of around \$14 million, I understand. It's six years old and was built to house young female offenders. We have people that believed us when we said, "Go get training and we'll employ you." So they've done that. Moving them around the territory is not an option. These are people who were born and raised around there, so they would obviously like to stay. I would like to ask the Minister if this proposed closure of Arctic Tern is dependent on this budget being passed.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, one of the proposals is the reduction in the Arctic Tern facility. Not only that, but the cost for us to operate the facility, with the way it's been operating with the number of inmates in there and the number of staff.... It's just the feasibility of the operations. So that's what our department's been tackling.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's answers. I would like to ask the Minister if his department is aware of any potential changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act of Canada, which would justify, probably, keeping the facility to be used as it's being used now.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mr. Speaker, when I met with the federal minister and the provincial ministers last fall in Winnipeg, one of the discussions was potential changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. They are seeking our input, from all jurisdictions, and I do believe that review of the input will be starting this summer, late fall. It could change. There are a lot of concerns in that area, so we'll certainly provide our input to deal with those issues.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

QUESTION 191-16(2)
IMPACTS OF
INCREASED OPERATING SURPLUS

Mr. Bromley: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Given that our estimate of operating surplus at \$44 million has risen now to \$69 million — that's a \$25 million difference — and we've firmed up the Building Canada Fund.... I think we're \$12 million to \$15 million this year and then \$35 million per year. Given that our intent, laid out before that, was to have a net savings of \$30 million a year, considerably less than the sum of these, do these affect the budget? Do these affect the perspectives? Is there a little more opportunity for doing things a little differently?

I understood the Premier's statement. We need to do things based on certainty. We can't just assume there will be incomes and whatnot. But now here we have proven income with the \$25 million from the surplus, \$35 million from the Building Canada Fund, and part of that this year. Our net need is for a \$60 million drop over two years, and this is one year. Is there some room for moving there?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, the end cash position of the government is one consideration of moving forward. It gives us a starting point for the upcoming budget planning cycle. What we have in this situation is that we also recognize some of those bump-ups that end up making our surplus position look a little healthier. It's a one-time fund. They are not ongoing funds, and that's the problem we're going to have to tackle as we go forward.

Mr. Bromley: The Building Canada Fund may be a one-time fund, but we know it's a one-time fund for seven years. We have a pretty clear record of establishing surpluses greater than \$19 million over what was estimated every year for the past number of years. This year we've surpassed that yet again. So I don't think these can be categorized as one-time situations. Looking at our estimated revenues last year, it was about \$60 million or \$70 million less than turned out to be the case. We're at the same estimate for the Mains this year.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, the one-time funds I speak of are those adjustments that happened from past corrections to transfers from the federal government. Those are one-time. The Building Canada Fund is cost-shared dollars, and it's for capital only. There are no O&M dollars attached to that, so that's something we can't plan on — making increased expenditures to O&M that will continue to grow with forced growth on an annual basis.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that the last government — and this is the issue.... You're

looking at the history of the government, where we've had to account for one-time funds in the year we receive them, but they really are three-year funds. For example, the Affordable Housing Trust: \$50 million spread over three years. So those are accounted for in the year they're allocated.

We have a number of other issues that are about to impact us in '09–10. The Territorial Health Access Fund is due to run out in '09–10. We have housing transfers from the federal government that are on a steady decline until 2033. As well, we have existing problems within our health authorities around some budgeting issues that we need to be prepared to deal with, and if we don't take the opportunity while we have some flexibility, we will lose that all in years to come.

We recognize there are things that we have to bank on, and bank on, on a basis that will allow us to proceed. If we continue to go down the path we are, where revenue's going — and I would refer to B3 in the actual Budget Address document.... If we don't make any changes, we will see big problems in the future.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The time for question period has expired. However, a lot of Members have supplementary questions. Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for those comments, Mr. Minister. I don't really disagree with any of them, except that I wouldn't throw out history like that. I think we need to make use of the information we've got in the past.

I'd also like to point out we've done things in a rush here. We've got to get in gear. I disagree that we have to rush things, given that we have this \$25 million unexpected surplus, which is about what we had anticipated in the reductions this year. So I don't quite see the hurry that the Premier's in.

Mr. Speaker: No question there, Mr. Bromley. My number says it's not time to make statements; it's time to ask questions. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Written Questions

QUESTION 13-16(2) TU NEDHE RESIDENTS SUFFERING FROM DIABETES

Mr. Beaulieu: I have a written question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services provide me with information on the number of people in Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e who suffer from diabetes?

Mr. Speaker: Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, replies to Budget Address, day three of seven. Item 12, petitions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Petitions

PETITION 2-16(2) OPPOSITION TO REDUCTIONS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, the petition I would like to table contains 1,282 signatures of residents from across the Northwest Territories. The petition asks that Members of the Legislative Assembly vote "no" to any budget proposal that contains such reductions.

PETITION 3-16(2) REGIONAL POSITION REDUCTIONS IN AREA OF SPORT AND RECREATION

Mr. Menicoche: Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of regional position reductions in the sports, recreation and youth area. The petition contains 37 signatures of young people from the Deh Cho region. The petitioners request that the Members of the Legislative Assembly reconsider proposed regional positions and reduction to the sports, recreation and youth area.

PETITION 4-16(2) OPPOSITION TO PRIVATIZING FORT SIMPSON AIRPORT MAINTENANCE SERVICES

Mr. Menicoche: Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of Fort Simpson Airport maintenance services. Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 309 signatures of Nahendeh residents. The petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly represent Nahendeh residents by opposing plans to privatize Fort Simpson Airport maintenance services.

PETITION 5-16(2) OPPOSING PROPOSED LAYOFFS IN NAHENDEH

Mr. Menicoche: I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of cutbacks to public services in Fort Simpson. Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 276 signatures of Nahendeh residents. And, the petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly represent Nahendeh residents by opposing proposed layoffs in the public service that would have an economic and social impact in Fort Simpson and surrounding communities.

Mr. Speaker: Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 4-16(2) STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIORITIES AND PLANNING REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2008–2009 DRAFT MAIN ESTIMATES

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read for the record today the report of the review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates from the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning.

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning is pleased to present its Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates, which took place between March 31 and April 11, 2008.

The committee's mandate includes the overview of the budget and fiscal framework. This report therefore focuses on government-wide implications of the proposed Main Estimates. Specific comments on individual departments are provided in the reports of the Standing Committees on Economic Development and Infrastructure, Government Operations and Social Programs, in accordance with their respective mandates.

General Comments

Shortly after the fall 2007 election, all Members of the 16th Assembly undertook a strategic planning process, which resulted in the vision, goals and priorities document *Northerners Working Together*. The enthusiasm with which Regular Members embarked on this process has been dampened by a series of poor communications and unilateral decisions on the part of the Cabinet culminating in this very disappointing budget in which we have had minimal input.

Reductions

The committee understood that some reductions would be necessary in order for government to make new investments in our strategic priorities while continuing to live within our means. To assist with identifying reduction measures, the committee undertook its own brainstorming sessions and produced a list of suggestions, which it provided to the government for its consideration on March 5, 2008. The list was based on our own thoughts and experiences as well as many straightforward, common-sense ideas contributed to us by our constituents and public service employees.

While the committee acknowledged that many of the suggested measures would require detailed analysis and costing and could not be implemented for this budget, certainly some of them could have been put in place immediately. The committee finds it ironic that while the government has put off our ideas in order to allow for more review, they have proceeded with reductions in the budget with apparently minimal analysis of alternatives and impacts.

Generally, the committee is concerned that some of the proposed reductions are inconsistent with our caucus priorities and that overall the government has placed too much emphasis on reducing positions rather than reducing expenditures by changing how the government conducts its day-to-day business. The committee was especially concerned that during the Draft Main Estimates review process, some departments were unable to provide complete information about the full impact of position reductions, such as severance costs and contracting fees that will be associated with the privatization of some services.

Although the committee is pleased to see the 5 per cent across-the-board reduction to travel and materials and supplies budgets, we believe the reduction to travel expenses could have been increased to 10 per cent by restricting southern travel to the absolutely essential and putting other cost-saving practices in place.

The committee is also extremely disappointed that no revenue generation measures were included in this budget to offset some of the need for reductions. While the cost of living is already very high in the Northwest Territories and the government must avoid exacerbating this, the committee believes that there are opportunities to increase revenues and that government's failure to bring forward any options is a major oversight.

Strategic Investments

The committee has difficulty supporting additional spending in the form of strategic reinvestments while the reduction exercise is only partially complete and we have not yet seen proposals for increasing revenues. Without the full fiscal picture, including possible revenue increases, the committee is unable to assess the affordability of the proposed reinvestments.

The committee is also concerned that some of the proposed reinvestments are not related to our caucus priorities. Although the committee believes that some of the proposed reinvestments are good ones, they should have been deferred until they could be considered in the context of business plans and a coherent strategy for our term as the 16th Assembly. Moreover, the government failed to propose any investment in some caucus priority

areas; for example, support for a healthy and sustainable voluntary and not-for-profit sector.

This budget also fails to demonstrate a commitment to develop a coherent, government-wide approach to address the caucus priority of mitigating climate change. The few investments intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are piecemeal and far outweighed by the forced growth and other costs that are directly, or indirectly, attributable to the use of oil.

The committee is not persuaded of the need for the proposed \$610,000 in strategic investments tied to the Mackenzie Gas Project, which was not one of our caucus priorities. Further investments on top of the already substantial resources allocated to this project are not appropriate at this time, given the recent announcement by the Government of Canada that socio-economic funding will not be available this year as previously expected, and the estimated completion date for the joint review panel's report, which is now delayed to mid-2009.

The committee is also unconvinced that the \$1.5 million dollar infrastructure investment in parks renewal, particularly the amount allocated for signage and displays, is a priority at this time given the reductions across government.

Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Function

This budget includes substantial changes to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations. The committee believes it is time for the government to review the mandate and activities of this department and reintegrate it into the Department of the Executive. This would save on administrative costs, ensure investments are made in areas where they will be most effective, and provide for direct oversight by the Premier of this critical area.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the report of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning on the review of the '08–09 Draft Main Estimates.

Therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, that Committee Report 4-16(2) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion carried; Committee Report 4-16(2) received and referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and that Committee Report 4-16(2) be moved into Committee of the Whole for today.

Unanimous consent granted.

Mr. Speaker: Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents, honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Lafferty.

Tabling of Documents

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled Strategy for Teacher Education in the Northwest Territories, 2007–2015.

Document 47-16(2), Strategy for Teacher Education in the Northwest Territories, 2007–2015, tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to section 5 of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Summary of Members' Absences for the Period February 6, 2008, to May 21, 2008.

Document 48-16(2), Summary of Members' Absences for the Period February 6 to May 21, 2008, tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to section 35(a) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Annual Report Respecting the Members' Indemnities and Allowances for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 2008 (15th Assembly – April 1 to September 30, 2007.)

Document 49-16(2), Annual Report Respecting Members' Indemnities and Allowances for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (15th Assembly – April 1 to September 30, 2007), tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to Section 35(a) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Annual Report Respecting Members' Indemnities and Allowances for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (16th Assembly – October 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008).

Document 50-16(2), Annual Report Respecting Members' Indemnities and Allowances for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (16th Assembly – October 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008), tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to Section 35 (c) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Annual Report Respecting Members' Constituency Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (15th Assembly – April 1 to September 30, 2007).

Document 51-16(2), Annual Report Respecting Members' Constituency Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (15th Assembly – April 1 to September 30, 2007), tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to Section 35 (c) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Annual Report Respecting

Members' Constituency Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (16th Assembly – October 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008).

Document 52-16(2), Annual Report Respecting Members' Constituency Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (16th Assembly – October 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008), tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to Section 35(b) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Annual Report Respecting Capital Accommodation Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (15th Legislative Assembly – April 1 to September 30, 2007).

Document 53-16(2), Annual Report Respecting Capital Accommodation Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (15th Legislative Assembly – April 1 to September 30, 2007), tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to Section 35(b) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Annual Report Respecting Capital Accommodation Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (16th Assembly – October 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008).

Document 54-16(2), Annual Report Respecting Capital Accommodation Expenses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2008 (16th Assembly – October 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008), tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, motions. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Motions

MOTION 9-16(2)

REFERRAL OF MAIN ESTIMATES 2008–2009
TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
(MOTION CARRIED)

Hon. Floyd Roland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Main Estimates for the fiscal year 2008–2009 have been tabled in this House;

AND WHEREAS the Main Estimates require detailed consideration;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Tabled Document 37-16(2), Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2 be referred to the Committee of the Whole for consideration.

Motion carried; Tabled Document 17-16(2) referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration.

Mr. Speaker: Tabled Document 17-16(2), Main Estimates 2008–2009 to be moved into Committee of the Whole. Item 19, first reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 8

APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008–2009

Hon. Floyd Roland: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 2008–2009 be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Can I get you to hold your hands up, all those in favour? Appropriation Act, 2008–2009 has had first reading.

Motion carried; Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 2008–2009, read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: Bill 8 has had first reading. Item 20, second reading of bills. The honourable Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board Secretariat, Mr. Roland.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 8

APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008–2009

Hon. Floyd Roland: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 2008–2009 be read for the second time. Mr. Speaker, this bill authorizes the Government of the Northwest Territories to make operational expenditures and capital investment expenditures for the 2008–2009 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The motion is on the floor. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, of all the Members on this side of the House, I'm the one that should have the most concern with the budget, because it does affect the people I represent the most. However, I did make a commitment to them that I would debate line by line, page by page, delete anything I have to delete, because Inuvik is hit hard by this proposed budget. I will vote in favour of second reading just for the opportunity — and I repeat, just for the opportunity — to get it into Committee of the Whole so I can have that debate so I can do the line by line. It's not support for this budget. Once we do the line by line, if I'm unable to affect any changes or any deletions, then I will reserve my right to vote as I see fit for the third reading of the bill.

It has been stated by some people that this could be taken as a vote of non-confidence. I disagree with that. I say to Cabinet: for my part of it, anyway, you take it as a vote of confidence. You take it as a vote of confidence that you're going to be listening to what I have to tell you. You're going to be listening to this side of the House. You're not going to be basing your decision on recommendations you get from bureaucrats. You base your recommendations on the information you get from this side of the House, who got their information from the people who put us here.

Mr. Speaker, that is my take on the principle of the bill. I said again, as I said before, that I am voting in favour of getting this into Committee of the Whole. We can have our debate line by line then.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if this budget is worse for anybody else in the House than it is for the Tu Nedhe residents. Nothing was really taken away from the Tu Nedhe residents, because there is nothing really there to take. The budget didn't provide anything additional.

So I, too, will stand up today and say that I will support this budget to a point where I will get it into the House to get it through second reading. Again, I'm hoping that Cabinet is listening. I know that to this point they haven't listened to me at all. I had a whole bunch of initiatives on the table, lots of capital projects and so on. At the end of the day, there was very, very, very little provided to Tu Nedhe.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, I came today to make sure my vote got recorded. That was probably the most important reason I came today. I've got personal reasons that should be keeping me away today, but my wife is keeping me abreast all the way through.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to vote in favour of second reading on the simple principle of debate. The reason is — if I may steal the words of another colleague of mine — it's going to give us the opportunity to fight like hell on a number of the lines, line by line. I welcome that opportunity.

I'm not going to pretend I'm in favour of the budget wholeheartedly. I wouldn't want to give that impression to anyone, whether they're in the gallery here or they're across in those other seats. This is simply based on an accommodation of bringing it forward for the details.

As we've heard today from the Minister of Human Resources, they're still working on things. They're waiting for recommendations and details and comments from committee about possible plans on how to deal with staff. My support is really based on that, on how we deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of days before third reading comes. I'd like to say this is my olive branch. I'd like to see the details of how these line up. It's my belief that as we give them a few extra weeks, we'll be able to chew a significant amount off that layoff list down to — I'm going to stay away from saying reasonable — what we can accept as a way to go forward. That said, if I don't see that effort and commitment that we either find retirement, transfer positions, education positions or some kind of accommodation for that large number, I won't be able to support third reading.

There are other areas that I will be raising, but I just want to let Cabinet know that I struggle with this, knowing that by supporting this budget, to some degree you support the layoffs. I don't. I don't support the layoffs in principle. I don't support privatization as a principle, because I don't think in the end anyone wins. We end up recuperating that service in the long run, and we're no further ahead.

I don't want to tie today up very much longer, but I will say I'm in support only in the principle for debate. I'd like to say that's where my support ends today. Tomorrow's a new day, budget by budget, line by line. I'm going to tell Cabinet that third reading will be the test of my resolve in this situation, because I'm uncomfortable with the plan put forward thus far. I think they still have to sell it to me. In my mind they still have to sell it to a number of Members here. Certainly I'd like to see that.

Mr. Speaker, today's a very important vote, and I couldn't miss it. I feel that I had to be here at all costs. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the principle of the bill. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Mr. Menicoche: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just with regard to the bill and the budget that's before us, I've given it lots of thought. I've read the budget documents. I've given them lots of thought, as I have as well to all the requests that I've been working with Cabinet for the past seven months. It's been my experience as a previous Member in the 15th Assembly that often when we're lobbying Cabinet and the Ministers on the floor of the House here, we're talking about our issues. We're talking about our roads, our housing issues, our health issues, our lack of teacher housing. It's been my experience that a lot of those little things make their way into the budget. What I found to my great dissatisfaction this time around is that a lot of

my issues did not make it to the budget. When I talk to my colleagues, I get passionate about it because I fought hard to get them in the budget, and I just don't see them there.

I've got no ownership over the budget. I don't know what happened to my requests. They must have gone out into the open air. I think part of the system is that the Premier is right. They make an effort to contact us and work with us, but they have to listen to us too. I just don't feel that's happened in this case. In fact, when I go back to my riding people phone me; they contact me and say, "Look, Kevin, did you know this is cut or this is not going to happen this year?" It's like I'm the last to know.

That should not be the case. People expect me to be involved with government, to work along. When I don't know stuff like that, to them it's a negative. They think I know and approve of the actions that are before us or the actions they are faced with. That's just not the case. I always find I'm explaining myself that I didn't know anything about it. That doesn't make me have good stature when I say I didn't know about it. I should be the first to know about it.

In that sense, there are a lot of issues. I go to Fort Liard. With Highway No. 7 there, we've had some good initiatives over the past four or five years. We were rebasing, reconstructing those roads there. Now I find that has been discontinued. So to me that's money gone from my riding, and where did it go? I'm not too sure what the priorities of Transportation are. They're certainly not Highway No. 7 if they're not going to finish this project. There's only something like 22 kilometres left there, Mr. Speaker. It wouldn't have taken very much to complete that.

There are several other initiatives. I was working with the last Cabinet in the last government, and it looked like we were going to get some kind of test chipsealing from the Providence junction towards Fort Simpson. I was hoping that would have made the books. Twenty kilometres is not very much for a good road that was rebuilt and restructured, got new culverts, et cetera. It wouldn't have taken very much to chipseal 20 kilometres, but that's not in the road. I'm really upset about that.

As well, I'm working with Housing. I still go to the communities, and people are still coming to me for their housing issues, Mr. Speaker. They're appealing to me because the programs aren't working. I keep telling the Housing Minister, "Look, get this appeal system up and running, because people have to be heard. They want to be heard, and there's a gap there that needs to be filled." They keep telling me it's going to be in fall or sometime next year. That's just not good enough for our constituents.

Once again, I don't think that the government has done a good job communicating with the people. They've cut back. I heard it was five or six people from my riding in Nahendeh. I was working with the fellow from the UNW in Fort Simpson. He showed me it's actually 13 positions that are really being affected that I didn't see.

The first thing I did when I got the budget document: I opened it up, I went to my riding, and sure enough there are lots of positions gone. That's distressing to me and my constituents. I've got many, many small communities, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I've got the most communities of all the MLAs, and they're all small communities. The impact of the loss of even one job is about \$120,000 or so. It depends if it's a fully funded position or not. That's dollars gone from the community. Multiply that by 13, and that's a huge impact for my region alone.

Like my colleague from Inuvik Mr. McLeod said, his region's been adversely impacted. I'd like to make the same argument as well. Per capita my region is being impacted quite severely. It just does not make sense to me, to my constituents, my communities or my leadership.

So I'm up here today, Mr. Speaker, to tell you I cannot support this budget. I did not have any input into it. At least I don't see my input in the budget. For that reason, today I'm going to vote no for this budget, and I hope it fails at second reading. If not, I'll do like Mr. McLeod says: I'm going to fight like crazy to get what I want in this budget, and I'll do what it takes to get my needs met and my constituents represented in this budget. Mahsi cho.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The principle of the bill, the honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cannot support the principle of the bill for this budget for many reasons. I'm going to attempt, in the time allotted today, to explain some of those reasons.

There is so much wrong with this budget that, in fact, there is more wrong with it than there is right with it. During the budget process which would follow this if this were given second reading, we only have the ability to delete. Anything that we'd like to add is only a recommendation. What would make the Cabinet listen to those recommendations now? Maybe some people are hopeful, but I'm not.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet Ministers did not accept these recommendations when we responded to the Main Estimates. They have not, obviously, responded to the issues that have been brought forward on the floor of this House. As I mentioned in my Member's statement, when I asked the Premier on Friday if the government would consider delaying the job cuts and the reinvestments until after a program

review had been concluded, his one-word answer was "no."

Mr. Speaker, a lot of Members have spoken to the fact that they do not recognize this budget as their budget. When I look at the reductions and the reinvestments, they are far off the mark and not recognizable to me, a person who was involved in our session when we got together to identify strategic priorities of the 16th Assembly. I don't know how they came together, but they seem random. If you took this Budget Address document and you were a completely objective, independent observer of this, and you were asked to find a theme, a vision, a direction in this document that is concise and understandable, it would be very, very difficult to do that. It doesn't emerge; it just doesn't come out of the actions that are being taken and that are reflected in this budget.

Now, albeit I've said it before and I'll say it again, this budget was produced in a fairly short time frame, and the government did ask Regular Members to consider postponing this budget until the fall. There was concern on this side of the House, and by myself as well, that to be in office for almost an entire year without having developed a 16th Assembly budget did not seem palatable. We were reasonably confident that the departments and the people could roll up their sleeves and come back with something that would be acceptable. So for that part of it, I feel like I could take some responsibility for this not being acceptable.

However, I won't take responsibility for the lack of responsiveness on the other side of the House. We, as Regular Members, did work hard to make sure that we had input when we knew that there was a potential for reductions. We got together and we came up with a very comprehensive and very good list of areas where we felt there could be substantial savings that would be low-impact. It would not be doing drastic things like cutting 135 positions or 80-some positions that are unoccupied right now in the public service. It did not include any measures like that.

That list was sent to the Cabinet. They said they would need time to analyze that. But that comes to the very point of what's wrong with this budget. Neither the reinvestments nor the reductions have been properly thought out. It is not in-depth; it is random. It is not reasoned, and it is damaging. It is costly damage, not just in a monetary way but also to the lives of people who have devoted themselves to the public service and this government, to the people who are the recipients of the programs and services, and to the economies of our communities. Government jobs in communities.... Not that that's the only reason they're there, but certainly a side benefit of having those jobs in those communities is that they do create an economy. Communities of all sizes greatly depend on that economy. So, Mr.

Speaker, there are far-reaching negative implications of this budget.

There's also really a mixed message about this budget. The Premier went to the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce recently and talked about major infrastructure development, like a road down the Mackenzie Valley. That, in and of itself, is not a bad idea. We just agreed to build a \$165 million bridge. Again, that in and of itself, is not terrible, but do you see the mixed message, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about megaprojects, hydro expansions, roads, bridges? It sends a mixed message in a very prosperous economy, the fastest-growing economy in the country, that we as a government can't figure out a way to realign, refocus, reassess our spending without having to take drastic measures such as just randomly laying off and deleting 200 positions in our public service. It's a real mixed message, and I don't like that.

When you add into the same budget this absolute necessity to reduce spending and reduce jobs and mix in the reinvestment, it really shoots the argument of the necessity for the reductions all to heck. I mean, I don't know how else to describe it. Here we are, we're crying poor, saying we can't afford this. Yet in the same budget, we're undertaking and identifying all these reinvestments. Like I said, all of them together all wrapped up don't look recognizable to me as anything we have discussed as a government.

If I had wanted to identify possible reductions in the public service, first I would undertake a much needed program review. After that, I would find out if any of the public service members were interested in voluntary separation, early retirement or reassignment. Then, and only then, after every reasonable option had been exhausted, would I be making position cuts as an absolute last resort.

In the February sitting of this Legislature, many of us asked the government, asked the Premier, if these kinds of decisions were going to be made without consultation, without really in-depth analysis. And we were assured that that was not going to happen. I was just looking at 60 pages of Hansard, where many of the Members on this side of the House wanted — sought — reassurances that we would be consulted before something like that happened. As you know, we've said it before, but let's say it again: we get up; we walk out of here; the next day, letters go out to 135 potentially affected employees. Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable.

For me, it's all about getting a good budget. I'm not interested in taking valuable time, the month of June, to debate this budget — I don't think the budget is salvageable, not for me — when strides could be made during that time to perform the thorough analysis and study that needs to go into

the changes, as opposed to spending it here with limited opportunity to change much about the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to stress that at the end of the day, I respect every Member's right to choose if they can live with this budget or not, or their choice to get into that line-by-line, activity-by-activity, program-by-program debate. I do applaud every Member for taking the time today to explain the reasons for their decisions, because I do believe that the public has the right to know where we stand.

I also want to state, Mr. Speaker, that for me, this is not a confidence issue. This is a consensus government. People can make it a confidence issue if they want to. But I asked for this budget to be prepared on a compressed time frame; I was one of many votes for that to happen. I do not see any loss of face or loss of confidence if the government was to say to the Members on this side of the House, "We realize there are problems with this budget. Let's get together. Let's find out if we can salvage this." But when we ask those questions, we get flat-out refusal and raising the stakes, so to speak. I think that's completely unnecessary in a consensus government. I think that we are owed the opportunity to come up with a budget and a product that we can all feel confident in.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the things that I think are wrong with this budget. It doesn't take into account the input of 11 of the 19 Members of this Legislature; it's premised on questionable fiscal forecast information; it is a contradiction to the growing economy and prosperity opportunities around us; the process shows disrespect to the public service. Even if we had to cut positions, there's a way to do that after all other options have been exhausted. We must provide good fiscal planning, policy and process, premised on guiding principles of reasoned analysis. The damage that this budget, if it were to proceed as it is, would cause would be very costly and would not be demonstrating prudent financial stewardship by making reasoned decisions.

If I didn't feel so strongly about his budget, I would just go with the flow. But I'm here to make decisions and to defend those decisions. My decision here today — respectfully, Mr. Speaker — is to vote no to the second reading of this budget document. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the principle of the bill, the honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

Ms. Bisaro: At second reading, we're discussing the principle of the bill, and I don't think it's any secret that I've struggled with the content of this

budget. I've struggled with whether it's a good budget or a poor budget.

I've been trying to look at the big picture, to look at the Territories as a whole. I've been trying to stay away from whether or not there's something in the budget that's going to benefit me and my constituents in particular. And I am still conflicted. I really don't know whether or not this budget is going to be.... I don't feel at the moment that this budget is going to be a good thing.

Basically, I can't agree with the principles that are in the budget as it has been presented. I agree that we certainly can't spend more than we take in. Our revenues have to match our expenditures. I have no problems with that principle. That is one principle in the budget that I can agree with. However, there are other principles that override that for me.

My goal at this point is that I want to get to debate. I'm looking for Ministers to hear my opinions, to hear the opinions of my constituents — and I've heard from many of them. And I'm looking for Ministers to respond to the concerns and to the opinions that are going to be presented during debate.

If changes are made by the government, and recommendations from this side of the House to add things back into the budget are accepted by the government, I personally don't see that as a confidence issue. I see that as perhaps a matter of negotiation, if you wish to use that term. I see it as good consensus government, in that we are having a dialogue. We are discussing both sides together and coming to something on which we can agree.

I've mentioned in my statement today that there are three stumbling blocks for me in this budget, and things which are creating difficulties and not allowing me at this point to accept the budget. A new source of revenue isn't considered; the job cuts, I think, don't all need to be there, and perhaps none of them; and the lack of emphasis on a coordinated and comprehensive plan for climate change and energy planning.

As I stated in my statement, I need to be convinced. So the bottom line for me is that I want to get this bill to debate. And I'm going to stay firmly on the fence; I will be abstaining. I can at this point neither vote for it or vote against. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: To the principle of the bill, the honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud my colleagues for standing up here today and discussing the principles of this appropriation bill that's before us. At second reading, I think it's important that we do that. It's important that we let

the government once again know what our feelings are on the proposed appropriation bill.

Mr. Speaker, I've said it before, and I'm going to say a few things here again today that Members have heard me say: this is not our plan. It's not our budget.

If I can, we'll go back to just after the election in October when 19 Members recently elected got together to develop a plan for the future. *Northerners Working Together* was the title of the strategic vision document that was developed at the Baker Centre those two days that we spent there. It wasn't much after that that the government came back to Regular Members and said, "We're going to look at reducing spending by \$135 million; we're going to reinvest \$75 million." Some of us bought into that; some of us questioned it. But it led us down a path, Mr. Speaker, again where it just wasn't our plan. Nobody — not one Member — at the Baker Centre had any inkling that major reductions were on the horizon. And we had returning Members that were Cabinet Ministers. There was nothing there.

That's what's missing, Mr. Speaker. The public needs to know how we could have surpluses running for four years, we get elected, and all of a sudden the sky is falling, we need to reduce spending by \$135 million, and by the way, we're going to reinvest \$75 million into strategic initiatives that are those of Cabinet. Regular Members on this side of the House have not had input into where that money's being spent or directed. Even though we've asked, we've yet to get a seat at that table. And that causes me a great deal of concern.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier likes to say that I've stood up in this House — and I have stood up in this House — and questioned the size and the growth of the public service here in the Northwest Territories. That was two and a half years ago, and two and a half years ago when I stood up and I questioned why the government didn't have a comprehensive human resource strategy and didn't have any clue as to what it was doing in terms of hiring, we were hiring in positions where I felt we didn't need to hire. We needed a plan; we needed a vision for human resources. Yes, I questioned the size and the growth of the public service. Yes, I wanted to go out and have a zero-based review, look at programs.

I said this before and I'll say it again today: I make decisions for a living, as do the rest of us. That's what we do; we make decisions. When we make decisions, not only for ourselves but for the constituents we represent, we better make sure that those decisions are based on something sound and concrete, Mr. Speaker. Some of the decisions that have been arrived at by Cabinet, contained in this budget, just do not have that level — that

foundation — of analysis, of proof, of justification: call it what you will. That hasn't been done.

Other Members have said it. We've made recommendations to Cabinet. They come back and they say, "Well, your recommendations sound really good. We're going to have to go out and study them further and have a look at them before we can implement any of them." Those are our recommendations. But when the government goes back to the departments and says, "Departments, you cut \$6 million here, \$7 million there, \$10 million there," and they get the answers back from the departments, there's no analysis there. That's the thing I struggle with most, Mr. Speaker: where is that analysis? Where is our comprehensive human resource strategy going forward?

Mr. Speaker, we have to be financially prudent, and being financially prudent means taking a look at your operations from time to time — getting that analysis done so that you can make some decisions. Because we're here making decisions on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories, and we owe it to them, at the very least, to at least do a review and get some analysis done before we make decisions, especially decisions that are going to affect the lives, livelihoods and families of our residents. Many of these folks who have received notification letters are already leaving the Northwest Territories, and that's a shame.

We should be doing everything in our power to maintain the workforce that we have. If we're going to look at reductions, there are other ways to go about those reductions. But none of those were palatable to Cabinet. They didn't come over to us and suggest alternatives. This was it; that was the way it was going to be, Mr. Speaker. I think the residents here in the Northwest Territories are owed more than that.

As I mentioned, they just have not included Regular Members in the strategic initiatives. The day-to-day operations of this government is what Cabinet was elected to their posts to do. The oversight, the day-to-day operations: that's why they're there, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to setting the direction, the strategic vision of the people of this territory, in a consensus government that is to include all 19 Members.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put the government on notice that there are 19 Members in this Legislature, and we are going to get to work on developing a strategy and getting a budget for the people that all 19 of us can buy into. Today, the budget that's before us — the appropriation bill — just is not something that I can put my stamp of approval on, because it doesn't have my input into it. By extension, by not having my input into the budget, it doesn't have my constituents' input. If you could protract that around this table, that's 11

constituencies that really have had no say in the development of this budget.

Yes, we do have to wear some of it. We forced the government. We asked the government to come forward in May or June to have a budget session with us so we could debate the budget. Yes, we asked that. We could have waited until October; that would have been a full calendar year after the election for the people of the Northwest Territories to have a budget to look at. To some that was unacceptable. To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what would change this document — we all know there's a hiatus during the summer months — between now and October. We may have a business planning process to go through, but that would be about it.

Mr. Speaker, we've been left out. We've been left out of the eco-trust dollars that have been divvied up. We've been left out of the Building Canada Fund monies that have gone to various projects across the territory. We're let in the door after the fact, after the decisions have been arrived at, and that's just not good enough.

I don't believe there's any utility in making a bad budget worse. I do respect my colleagues, those that want to debate the budget for the next three and a half weeks. They're to be respected. I want them to know and I want my colleagues to know and the public to know that I will be in here day in and day out fighting the budget — fighting the good fight.

At the end of the day I'm not sure what we can arrive at. I've been here long enough to know that the more things change, the more they stay the same. It's going to be a difficult task. It will be monumental — let's put it that way — if things change.

We'll have a vote here today at second reading, and again I just want the government to know and to be on notice that we are over here trying to do our job, trying to put our stamp of approval and our mark on this budget. Hopefully, Cabinet will let us in the door and will listen to our concerns and make some changes to this document. They owe it to the people of the Northwest Territories and, thus, the Regular Members of this House. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, I've thought long and hard about exactly what's happened here in the last couple of weeks, but more importantly, after living through the 13th Assembly, I don't see anything different that we're doing here through this budget process than we did back then. Like I stated, we do have some major implications of what we did in the 13th Assembly.

Coming from small communities, our services in our communities are next to nil — nil, no mental health workers, no social workers, no policing. Look at the services we have in our communities where you depend on locums to come and fill in, because you can't find a nurse. You have a situation where you go to the different communities and health centres. It's a revolving door trying to attract nurses in a lot of these communities. That is a major problem. I feel this budget does not do anything to basically resolve that situation. If anything, it adds to it.

You talk about the easy things — “Well, let's get rid of vacancies.” The problem with vacancies is that the majority of those vacancies are in communities that can't fill the positions to begin with, because they lack housing. We have a lack of stable, healthy communities, because the basic programs and services aren't being delivered. I find it awfully difficult to stand here and support something when I know what the consequences of this decision are going to be.

Mr. Speaker, we have had an opportunity through our business planning process. Yes, it was rushed. Again, in order to make some very drastic changes to the way government works there have to be some changes, but if you're going to make changes, make it for the best, an improvement of services to all Northerners, especially the ones in small communities.

We follow the Canada Health Act by way of ensuring services to Canadians, yet when it comes to aboriginal communities, we're no better off than most of our brothers and sisters in the northern provinces. I think it's that type of reality that sometimes we have to face. Simple things like community empowerment and self-government are slogans that we throw out there when we want to make ourselves feel good.

The reality is that we can't even hire our own local mental health worker or alcohol and drug worker. They don't think we have the capacity to take on that job, because somebody didn't give you the certification to say that you're competent because you didn't go to university. Yet you're there when they need to call you when there's a suicide in the community or a problem in relation to a crisis in another community. That tells me that there's no real empowerment ability for communities to really take hold of government programs and services; the controlling mechanism is either at the top or is being muzzled in the middle.

I think we do have to change the way we deliver government. We do have to look at how this government delivers programs and services. I think we also have to be realistic to the potential that we have in the Northwest Territories by way of oil and gas, minerals and, more importantly, megaprojects. We talk about projects where we're talking a couple

hundred thousand here or a million there. We're talking megaprojects: the \$365 million Taltson expansion, the \$1.8 billion highway expansion up the Mackenzie, \$60 million to put a bridge across the Bear River. We had a battle in this House in regard to the \$165 million bridge across the Deh Cho in regard to the Mackenzie. Yet we seem to have a crisis on our hands because of something that might happen in the future.

I've been here for a while, and it's amazing how many times the sky was falling and basically we were in trouble, and then all of a sudden a bag of money falls from the sky. I believe that we have to review exactly how government governs, how programs and services are delivered. Again, it has to be done in a way that's just and fair to our employees, our communities and the people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I stood up in the House in the February session, during which I asked the Premier a question.

"Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier if he has a system in place to notify affected MLAs if there are going to be any vacancies in their ridings by way of positions. Then we can be informed ahead of time, and we are able to react to our constituents when they find out there are notices given or that positions are going to be removed from our constituencies."

The response from the Premier:

"We're going to work in a way that is respectful for Members as well as for employees when we do make decisions on what positions may be affected. We're going to work in that environment, where we're working in a transparent form. We definitely don't want Members to walk back to their communities when a decision has been made and you're approached by people who you're not aware have been affected. We are going to try to do business differently."

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what didn't happen. I went home and found out second-hand, "Did you hear that so-and-so got laid off?" I didn't even have a notification letter.

The part that really gets to me is that one of the areas that was cut is an individual who's been with marine operations for almost 30 years. One of the areas that they wanted to cut for savings was this individual's livelihood. He has a large family. For him that's the only means of employment for the whole year. The government wants to save \$30,000. For \$30,000 you're taking away someone's livelihood — someone who's been committed to the Department of Transportation for years. I can see it in light of the expansion with the Department of Transportation, where you have

assistant deputy ministers or assistant to assistant deputy ministers or a deputy minister responsible for marine operations, a deputy minister responsible for transportation operations. Why don't you take out one of those guys and save yourselves \$165,000?

Again, no thought was given in regard to how these positions were going to be eliminated. No plan was in place in regard to how that was going to be effected. But in a small community like Fort McPherson \$30,000 is the average earnings of most people. For \$30,000 you have to sustain yourself in these small communities, yet the cost of living is somewhere around \$60,000.

I think we've got to be realistic how we position ourselves and where those cuts are going to take place. Yes, I know there are a lot of cuts that are going to take place in headquarters, regional level and whatnot, but we do have to review how government operates. We do have to review exactly where the expenditures of government are. The biggest cost to our budget is in the area of salaries and benefits, looking in the range of \$340 million. I think it's important that we do look at that once in a while to impress on ourselves what programs and services are needed and, more importantly, when they're not needed, to have a transitional process in place so those employees have an opportunity to transfer from one area where they work to a new field where they may have to be educated.

Again, I do have areas of concern with this budget. I hope deep down that with Members on the other side of the House we can try and find ways of looking at government-wide reductions, looking at the budget to see where we can possibly find savings. I know there has been some effort made by government, but it's not enough. I think we do have to do a better job of finding those reductions. I don't think we have to continue to help big business get bigger than what they already are but to help the little guys in the small communities who are struggling simply to get access to a nurse, a doctor, a mental health worker or even a teacher. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

Mr. Bromley: Mr. Speaker, there are some things I like in this budget, and a number of them were emphasized in the highlights of the budget by the Minister of Finance last week: \$3.1 million for nurses in small communities, \$500,000 extra for the arts and culture programs. I like the land-use planning focus and policy development on water and some of the renewable energy initiatives. However, many of these — and all of the highlights, essentially — add up to about 6 per cent of the

budget and really don't reflect the degree of change that I think we need.

I have concerns regarding the lack of a cohesive and apparent vision throughout this document. At least, I don't see it. It may be there in some other perspectives, but I don't see it.

I think we all agreed on the need for living within our means and for some redirection, which would be based on program review. I think that was a starting point, and we were all at the table at that point. However, this budget to me appears more "business as usual" with a few exceptions: the early childhood development and child care. I like those programs.

In particular, the lay-offs. My understanding of our agreement on how to approach this was that they would be truly based on program review, that to sort of randomly lay them off or even to eliminate positions that were vacant or with retirees was not appropriate for redirection that was based on some thorough and comprehensive analysis, yet that is what appears to me has been done here.

Another aspect of this that I think goes against our vision is that there is centralization. I think we're talking about 70 layoffs in the regions and about 50 in Yellowknife. As Members have pointed out, from time to time repeatedly, the loss of even one or two people in a small community is a huge blow to that local economy.

I have to acknowledge that we were dealing with the impacts of coming into this situation in the middle of a budget year, that we had some time pressures that we all played a role in ramping up and that the layoffs were an added complexity that we had to deal with. I want to stress that we really should only be changing what can be based on a thorough program review, and that was the understanding that I think we were moving forward on, and that hasn't happened. I asked the Premier, the Minister of Finance, about this the other day, and he didn't provide a response to that question. I still have that question, as I know a lot of other people do. We simply haven't been provided with that reasoning, and that's what is lacking here.

The communications — I've said this before — have not been sufficient to enable the public to participate in this debate. I see in the budget presented that there's a commitment being made for consultation on revenue generation and so on in the future, and I wholeheartedly support that. But, again, I think that should have been part of this. We repeatedly brought this up, and it didn't ever seem to result in more effective communication or a serious attempt to address that issue.

Finally, I still don't see a visionary and progressive response to the issues that are most fundamental to me and my constituents and that got me to the

table. These are the issues that I mentioned in my Member's statement this afternoon: that of climate change and the rising costs and declining availability of oil.

There's been a lot said already on process, and I've said a few additional comments. I can't compare it to the past, but what I will say is that the Premier, when we met with him on a number of occasions, made commitments that we responded to positively. Unfortunately, they did not seem to come to fruition for whatever reason. I'm not laying blame here, but the fact is that those commitments didn't ever get realized to the point where we actually felt like we had serious input into this process.

I want to acknowledge the commitment of this government to form a special joint committee on climate change. I think that's an indication of some interest there. I do have a continuing lack of confidence that recommendations from that would fall into fertile ground based on some of the statements I've heard on what our direction is going to be. But anyway, I wanted to emphasize that I do appreciate that.

Finally, I look forward to debating this bill, and I will fully participate in that. I hope that we can clearly identify the opportunities that we have and move in that direction, something that I don't think has been done yet, and if there's any way to get that done through this debate or through some flexibility on the part of the Cabinet, that would be much appreciated by me and my public. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Nanukput, Mr. Jacobson.

Mr. Jacobson: Mr. Speaker and colleagues, today I will support the second reading, only because of the debate and the opportunity that I'll have a chance to.... There are a few good things in my riding that'll be coming out of this. There is the access road for my community of Tuk. These are little problems in the south which are big problems in the smaller communities. Access to gravel: we haven't had gravel in five years. Water source: there is a water shortage in my community right now. Sewage lagoon: decanting problems earlier and earlier every year because the community's.... Our graveyard's full. We have nowhere to put our deceased and our loved ones. The high cost of living in regard to the Power Corporation and putting it onto our people, trying to get gasification for my community of Tuk....

This is a back door also, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the global warming that we've been having every year. That's why I'm supporting it today. But it doesn't mean I support everything in this budget. I want to let the colleagues across the floor know, and I'll be fighting line by line against the layoffs

and for better things in my community and the communities that I serve in the NWT as a whole.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Jacobson. To the principle of the bill, the honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy: To the principle of the bill, I won't be supporting the bill today. When the Premier came to us originally and told us that we were in some financial woes and that we had to redefine how we do business, I was actually quite optimistic. I thought, okay, great, finally we're going to be able to break into the government — you know, find some efficiency, stop wasting money, stop bleeding out money.

I was also optimistic, when we asked the Premier across the floor, that jobs would be the last resort. I was hopeful that that would in fact be the case. When the Main Estimates came forward, it became incredibly obvious incredibly fast that in many of the departments that are out there, the primary way of reducing money was job cuts. There doesn't appear to be a lot of logic to me in many of the job cuts that have been brought forward.

I'm not opposed to job cuts necessarily. I think in an organization this size there probably are some redundant positions out there that aren't adding a whole lot of value to this organization, and the money could be better spent elsewhere for the provision of services and programs to the people of the Northwest Territories. I'm not opposed to cuts, but I'm opposed to these cuts, because I don't see the logic in them.

There's been a lot of discussion. If you listen to the previous ten speakers, it becomes pretty clear pretty fast that there isn't anybody on this side of the House that supports this budget. Everybody is opposed in some way; even those that are supporting it today are opposed and have indicated that as well. I could go with them. I could say, "Okay, let's get it into debate."

But the longer I sit here, the pessimist in me is now starting to think that all the good things that are said are not necessarily going to occur. And I could sit here and debate these things line by line, which I will do. I will be debating them line by line. If I sit here and debate them line by line, we can throw motion after motion at you and we could delete a whole lot of stuff from this budget. The problem is, then we have a worse budget than the one you guys are putting in front of us today. So that's the main reason that I'm not going to be supporting it today, because I think we need not waste our time.

We need to scrap this budget. We need to go back to the beginning. We need to put our house in order first before we start getting carried away with all these reinvestments. I like the concept of reinvestment; I think we should do them, but not

until we get our house in order. Right now, the budget that's coming forward is not a house in order. It's a house in cut mode so that we can do some fancy things, so we can put some things up on the board saying, "Look, we've reinvested this money. Look how great we are; we've done great things."

I don't think that's what the people of the Northwest Territories need. I don't think that's what's good for the people of the Northwest Territories, and, as a result, I can't support this budget this time. I will be joining my colleagues, fighting it line by line and hope we will be able to convince you to put some stuff back in. I'm not optimistic at this point. I'm sure we'll be able to cut some stuff out. We're going to end up with a worse budget, and at the end of the day we're all going to have to vote on that.

So in closing, I won't be supporting this budget, and I'd like to request a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. To the principle of the bill. The mover of the bill, Mr. Roland.

Hon. Floyd Roland: Mr. Speaker, when we sat down as Members of the 16th Legislative Assembly, just after territorial elections, we'd heard from people of the territory; they wanted to see things done differently. They wanted to see us continue to reinvest, as well as take control of where we were going. We've heard things almost from the day of the announcement that reductions needed to be done and that we would be focusing on reinvestments. That's been the message from day one: We need to cap or manage our growth and look at the reinvestments. Those reinvestments, Members were aware, would have to come from the internal piece. As well, the idea of revenue growth is looked at. In fact, we want to go out and have that discussion later on in the year, so that we can be properly prepared for the people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard much about the growth of government and some of the graphs that are laid out there. This budget presents a balanced approach to investments and people in the Northwest Territories and some new initiatives to start looking at areas that we've continually looked over. Returning Members are well aware that there are more than numerous requests that are left on the floor when any budget is prepared, because there are just never enough resources to implement, whether it's a new initiative by a department, a new initiative suggested by a Member or a new initiative that's jointly suggested by Members in Cabinet.

Let's talk about revenue growth. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the graph on B2 of the Budget Address, that begins to look at our fiscal picture as the

Government of the Northwest Territories. We talk about balancing and the room we have available, as Members would put it. We've had the UNW and other unions out there saying, "There's plenty of time. Don't do anything. Protect us and we're going to be okay."

Mr. Speaker, when you look at from 2004–2005 to 2007–2008, that's the last government that was in place. Let's account for the revenue that actually came in at that time. We had three different formula financing arrangements. One that we complained about didn't work. We had agreement from across the country that it needed to be changed. By doing that, we got a bump-up of revenue to a temporary amount. Further to that, the second and final one.... The formula financing arrangement we are now in, for the life of this Assembly, sets a very clear path of what the growth will be based on. We also got another bump-up at that time, so in that time slot, between 2004–2005 and 2007–2008, we had two rather large increments made by the federal government as an investment in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at that graph, we started out at around about \$850 million. We ended up, in that term of government, being well over a billion dollars in expenditures. With that rate of expenditure growth, we won't be able to survive as a Government of the Northwest Territories.

This budget puts in place a vision of where we can go. Yes, there are some difficulties in the choices we have to make today, but Mr. Speaker, this budget puts in place a reduction target. In fact, when you look at what was accepted, we're far short of our targets. What was accepted equals about 2.8 per cent of \$1.2 billion. When Members say, "There's nothing being spent in my community," I'm waiting for the debate we will have in the House to show the hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars we're investing in our communities in O&M services — whether it's that nurse, whether it's that teacher, whether it's the Power Corporation, whether it's the Territorial Power Support Program — that grows on an annual basis.

Yes, we need to do it better. As I stood to run for this position, I talked about a need to change the way we do business. That's what I presented to Members. I made commitments to the Members: let's do it differently; let's sit down more often and have that debate and that discussion on how our plan is coming forth. In fact, I got some feedback from Members. For example, the Infrastructure Committee that's looking at how we spend infrastructure in this bill was accepted by Members as a good way of doing business.

Although we've heard Members talk about the Building Canada Fund, Mr. Speaker, the Building

Canada Fund was brought to Members before we sent it back down to Ottawa, and that's not a final list. Ottawa is doing that. And, in fact, we have a Member who had his bypass road project added to it, since our discussion.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've got some things here that show we've responded to committee requests. We've made some changes and we need to make more changes, I agree. I don't think there's anybody on this side of the House that would disagree with a need to look at things differently.

The simple fact that the Refocusing Government initiative will take on a huge workload in the next cycle is because we looked at what was presented as trying to meet the initial targets. If we accepted those initial recommendations from departments of targets, we would be gutting many of our communities. So we sent those back and said that we've got to look at this differently.

I went to Members and asked for more time to give us a thorough review so we could have this back and forth. And I'll say for the record, a couple of Members of this House convinced a lot of the new Members that there needs to be a change. They didn't like what was being presented. It was convoluted, hard to understand. I was talking like a Chinese fortune cookie, I guess.

But, Mr. Speaker, I've been already told probably three times, by Mrs. Groenewegen, that if she were Premier, she would say it this way or would have done it this other way — once in the House, actually.

Mr. Speaker, we're here as 19 Members. I presented an opportunity to change, and I've continued to present that. But imagine if we were to meet our targets that we set, after we talked to Members, if we met our targets.... I mean, it's 2.8 per cent right now. What are we going to do with what we have to do for 10 per cent? By further delaying the process, we would be causing harm at that point.

Mr. Speaker, this budget starts to lay the vision of what the future can be in the Northwest Territories. The reinvestment, going away from the hat-in-hand mentality we've had, going to Ottawa saying, "Give us more, because we need more to turn the corner," and saying, "In the Northwest Territories, we can begin to make our own decisions...."

Mr. Speaker, a lot of this is based on previous directions. We're building on the foundation that was laid before, Building Our Future. We're looking to implement phase two of the framework for action on family violence as a part of this budget. Encourage healthy choices and address addictions — part of this. Safety and security in communities — part of this budget. And they are a small part of it.

As Mr. Ramsay stated, he should send us back to the drawing board for another review. He even stated over the summer you might not get much. What will you get in the fall time — more of the same? Ninety-five per cent of it is accepted with some tinkering around.

That's what we tried to change. Members accepted the need for change. The change still can happen. I believe this starts to set the base for that change.

And when you look at these investments that are being proposed — the forced growth that happens — this wasn't a budget that was randomly thrown together. It's based on the \$1.2 billion expended based on the previous year — forced growth.

The call letters go out in June. New initiatives. Call letters go out later on that summer. Capital investment requests go out that summer as well. A lot of that work was done by the previous government. And I came to Members, and said, "Let's take that budget and let's redo it for ourselves." So we went with an interim appropriation. I came back and I said that we need more time.

Now I believe what we've put together is a balanced approach. It is the beginning of change. I think, as we get into the detail, you'll be able to see that change, the investments made in the Northwest Territories, the investments that start changing the way we do business and thinking as the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Yes, we need to make some more change. But if we continue down the same path we are, the operation and expenditures will outgrow and outstrip the resources. Capital infrastructure Members are talking about in their communities will not be affordable, have not been affordable because we haven't been able to move along. We need to create that flexibility.

Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to change is here. We can make that change. I've asked Members to help with that. Yes, we've had to go back. Members can't deny that when this came up, we were going to go back to the meeting of May-June, and we were going to put this together. But we go back to the typical way of doing business.

So even this isn't a departure from what was done for the Assemblies that I've been involved with. And for those who say that there was no indication that we're in trouble financially as a Government of the Northwest Territories, I just refer you back to my last Budget Address in the last Assembly. The fact is, we knew there was a growing problem and presented that to Members; Members have agreed. Now that we're starting to see that detail, Members are concerned. I share that concern. My community is the second-largest hit, when you talk about position reductions. I look at that and say, well, why

is that? Well, we are a regional centre. It's not that we've picked on communities; we've tried to reduce that.

We went back to departments and gave them targets. They had to review that. They came back forward with initiatives. Like I said, we turned many back. We're far short of meeting that target. That's why we had to reduce in reinvestments as well, and we'll have to continue to do that same thing if this is passed. The government will have to look at not making reinvestments. Guaranteed, if you don't reinvest in critical areas, you will be guaranteeing status quo. The system does not want to change, and I call the system "government."

There's an opportunity to start that change; it's got to start somewhere. If you don't start to make that change now, I can guarantee you, the system will stay the same and the status quo is what you'll have.

I listened to Members; you shared that about notification. Let's go back to near the equivalent amount. In 1995–1996, \$150 million was taken out of government expenditures. A large part of that was capital expenditures. The total amount of impacted individuals in the Northwest Territories was close to 700, and it was discussed at that time. We have \$135 million, we're suggesting, and we're reinvesting. We've limited that now, as we've heard from the Minister of Human Resources, to about 118 and we're working with the rest of them to find alternate placements and potentially early retirement. So we're working with people and being proactive in that manner.

Encouraged by Members: let them know early. Encouraged by the union: let them know early. We did that, and yes, there was an error in HR of getting that information out before Members had a chance to look at the details of all the community impact. There was an error, and I accepted that. I admitted it. I went to Members and I said, "We should have got you the information up front. That was supposed to be what happened." So I've accepted that. We've erred in that area, and we won't be making that kind of an error again. But that wasn't trying to address what Members are saying. So we have a lot of work to do, and there's a lot of detail in this document.

Between infrastructure and O&M, close to \$1.3 billion is being spent in the Northwest Territories. Let's not turn a blind eye to that. Let's not turn away from the opportunity that does present itself, so that change can happen and it starts today, with this process. That's where we come to you and say, "Here's an opportunity" — and I thank Members who support this at least for the debate — "for doing that." Members are aware, Mr. Speaker; they know where I stand about this budget bill. So they can look at it how they like; but the fact is, this bill

has been put together with a lot of work, a lot of effort. Unfortunately, we've had some steps here that have upset Members, and there's an impact on communities. Some would say there's no impact on their communities, or little impact, and there's little reinvestment. Well, we want to change that. We want to make that happen.

When I first got elected, I came down here thinking I could make a change now. Well, it took a while, and those Members that have been around — there are four of us that have been around since the 13th Legislative Assembly — know it takes a while to get things into the books, because there's so much demand pent up for additional reinvestments.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope Members will have lots of debate about what is actually in the document, about what is being spent in our communities and what is being reinvested in our communities. Because we're trying to change things, but change does not come easy, I'll tell you that, and I've been part of this eight months trying to make change happen. It's a painful process. But status quo will not get the Northwest Territories from where we're going to head. I would encourage Members to look at that graph that was pointed out earlier, when you looked at B2, the growth — that's the path of where we should come from.

The fact is we know our future now. We know our revenue situation, and in fact we've got some big hurdles coming up and we have to address those. If we don't address those, then this is going to be.... This budget would be considered a minimal change in the way we do business. If we don't take advantage and draft what the future may hold and take hold of that and start to change it today — just thinking about the impact today — it's going to be greater the next day. And when you look at B3 when you talk about the reduction and the debt situation we have as a government, there will be no reinvestments. We will only be paying for fuel and electricity costs in the existing way.

This budget starts to look at alternative forms, and we will continue to try to do that. But we need to hear from you — agreed, absolutely. And my commitment is still there. When we get past this process and we get into actual business plans, there will be more sit-down meetings about what's being developed, not what's being already presented and stamped. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Mr. Clerk. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Bob McLeod, Mr. Robert McLeod, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee, Mr. Miltenberger.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please stand.

Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Krutko, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mr. Speaker: All those abstaining, please stand.

Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer): Ms. Bisaro.

Mr. Speaker: The results of the vote: 11 for, six against, one abstained. The motion is carried. Bill 8 has had second reading and stands before Committee of the Whole.

Motion carried; Bill 8, Appropriation Act, 2008–2009, read a second time and referred to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker: Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 4, Bill 7, Bill 8, Committee Report 2-16(2), Committee Report 3-16(2), Committee Report 4-16(2) and Tabled Document 37-16(2), with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I'll call Committee of the Whole to order.

We have consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 4, Bill 7, Committee Report 2-16(2), Committee Report 3-16(2), Committee Report 4-16(2), Tabled Document 37-16(2), Main Estimates. What is the wish of the committee? Mrs. Groenewegen.

Mrs. Groenewegen: We would like to deal with Bill 4, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008, and Bill 7, Securities Act.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Is the committee agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): With that, we will take a short break and continue on with those matters.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I will call Committee of the Whole back to order. We will consider Bills 4 and 7.

BILL 4 MISCELLANEOUS STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): At this time, I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice if he has any comments in

regard to introduction of the bill.
Mr. Jackson Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. The purpose of the bill — Bill 4, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 — is to amend various statutes of the Northwest Territories for which minor changes are proposed, or errors or inconsistencies have been identified.

Each amendment included in the bill had to meet the following criteria:

It must not be controversial;

It must not involve the spending of public funds;

It must not prejudicially affect rights; and

It must not create a new offence or subject a new class of persons to an existing offence.

Departments responsible for the various statutes being amended have reviewed and approved the changes. Most amendments proposed in Bill 4 are minor in nature, and many consist of technical corrections to a statute.

Other changes have the effect of repealing certain enactments or statutory provisions that have expired or have otherwise ceased to have effect.

The amendments are of such nature that the preparation and legislative consideration of individual bills to correct each statute would be time consuming for the government and the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Social Programs for its review of this bill. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. At this time, I would like to ask the Chair of the committee which is overseeing the bill if he has any opening comments. Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Social Programs met on April 25, 2008, to review Bill 4, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendments Act, 2008.

During the clause-by-clause review, the committee passed two motions to make minor technical amendments to the bill. The Minister concurred with the amendments.

Following the clause-by-clause review, a motion was carried to report Bill 4, as amended and reprinted, to the Assembly as ready for Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 4. Individual committee members may have questions or comments as we proceed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. At this time, I'd like to ask the Minister if he would be bringing any witnesses into the House.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Yes, I will.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree that the Minister brings in his witnesses?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witnesses in. Mr. Minister, can you introduce your witness, please?

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I have with me here today to introduce Bill 4 Mark Aitken, director of the legislation division.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Welcome, Mr. Aitken.

General comments. Are there any general comments? The floor is open to general comments. Is the committee agreed we go into detail?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Agreed. Tab 4 in the grey binders. Bill 4, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act. Clause 1.

Clauses 1 through 20 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): The bill as a whole.

Bill 4 as a whole approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that Bill 4 is ready for third reading?

Bill 4 as a whole approved for third reading.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister, witness. Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witness out.

Bill 7, Securities Act. It's in tab 7 of your grey binder.

BILL 7 SECURITIES ACT

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice, the Hon. Jackson Lafferty, to introduce the bill.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to appear before the committee today to review Bill 7, a new Securities Act.

The present Securities Act is outdated and inadequate to address the many changes that have occurred — particularly in recent years — in the capital markets and the regulation of those markets in Canada since it was enacted.

The lack of harmonized legislation has been identified as a significant weakness in the current regulation of securities trading in Canada.

Cross-border trading in securities is now the rule rather than the exception. Securities legislation that is not uniform or harmonized leads to inefficiencies in the raising of capital, and inconsistent and unequal protection for investors.

In 2004 an inter-provincial Memorandum of Understanding was developed with a goal of improving securities regulations in Canada.

The MOU established a Council of Ministers responsible for securities regulations and identified several key objectives, the most important of which are:

- the implementation of a passport system, where an issuer or a registrant need only deal with the primary regulator and comply with the laws of that regulator's jurisdiction in order to operate in any or all other provinces and territories; and
- the harmonization of securities legislation, in particular to improve enforcement, investor protection and inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

The Council of Ministers identified a wide range of recommended changes to securities legislation to support the passport system and to strengthen the coordinated national system of regulation in Canada. As the scope of these amendments grew, it became clear that it would be easier to accommodate these improvements within a new act, rather than in an amendment to the current legislation.

Officials in Prince Edward Island, Nunavut and Yukon drew the same conclusion in respect of their legislation. This led to the idea that the four jurisdictions should join forces to develop a uniform-model act that would include all of the measures proposed by the Council of Ministers that are suitable for smaller Canadian jurisdictions.

They began with model legislation that had been developed by the securities regulators from all of the provinces and territories and that had been completed in 2003. The Council of Ministers Task Force supported them in their work. A request for public comments on a Northwest Territories version of the model was circulated last fall. P.E.I. and Yukon did likewise with their versions.

Few comments were expected, given the objective is harmonization with laws already applicable to the industry in other jurisdictions. There were several minor suggestions, all of which were addressed in the bill.

A new act has now been enacted in P.E.I. and Yukon. In Nunavut a bill to enact the model is at a second reading.

The purpose of securities legislation is to facilitate the raising of capital in the private sector while providing appropriate protections and remedies for investors. A new Securities Act would not necessarily promote capital investment in the Northwest Territories, but it would remove obstacles that arise from legislation that is outdated and out of step with legislation elsewhere in Canada.

Most importantly, this bill includes new and significantly improved enforcement and investor protection measures in line with those that have been recently enacted in many provinces.

Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Social Programs for its review of this bill. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. At this time, I'd like to ask the committee responsible for overseeing this bill if they have any general comments. Mr. McLeod.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Social Programs held public hearings on Bill 7, Securities Act, between April 25 and May 1, 2008. No witnesses spoke to the bill other than the Minister and his officials.

The clause-by-clause review of the bill took place on May 20, 2008. During the clause-by-clause review, the committee passed three motions to make minor technical amendments to the bill. The Minister concurred with the amendments. Following the clause-by-clause review, a motion was carried to report Bill 7, as amended and reprinted, to the Assembly as ready for Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the committee's general comments on Bill 7. Individual committee members may have questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. At this time, I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he'd be bringing any witnesses. Mr. Lafferty.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree that the Minister brings in his witnesses?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the witness in. Mr. Lafferty, can you introduce your witnesses for the record.

Hon. Jackson Lafferty: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I have with me here Mr. Gary MacDougall, director of legal registries, and Mr. Mark Aitken, director of legislation division. Mahsi.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses.

I would like now to open the floor for general comments on Bill 7. Does the committee agree that no further general comments are needed and we can go clause by clause to review Bill 7? Members may note that Bill 7 consists of 186 clauses. For the interests of efficiency, I suggest to the Members that we deal with the clauses in groups of about 19 to 20. Members will, of course, have the ability to ask questions on any of the clauses within that grouping. Do Members agree with this approach?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. We will proceed with consideration on Bill 7, clause by clause. Clauses 1 to 20.

Clauses 1 through 20 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 21 to 40, pages 40-47.

Clauses 21 through 40 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 41 to 60.

Clauses 41 through 60 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 61 to 80, pages 57-68.

Clauses 61 through 80 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 81 to 100, pages 69-77.

Clauses 81 through 100 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 101 to 120, pages 78-99.

Clauses 101 through 120 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 121 to 140, pages 101-125.

Clauses 121 through 140 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 141 to 160, pages 125-138.

Clauses 141 through 160 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 161 to 180, pages 138-172.

Clauses 161 through 180 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Clauses 181 to 186, pages 173-179.

Clauses 181 through 186 inclusive approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): The bill as a whole.

Bill 7 as a whole approved.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that Bill 7 is ready for third reading?

Bill 7 approved for third reading.

Chairman (Mr. Krutko): Bill 7 is now ready for third reading.

I'd like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out.

With that, I conclude the two items we agreed to deal with earlier. What is the wish of the committee?

Mrs. Groenewegen: Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that we report progress.

Motion carried.

Report of Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Can I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, please.

Mr. Krutko: Mr. Speaker, the committee has been considering Bill 4, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008, and Bill 7, Securities Act, and would like to report progress and that Bills 4 and 7 are ready for third reading.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. A motion is on the floor. Do we have a seconder? The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the Day for Tuesday, May 27, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements
- 3) Members' Statements

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| 4) Returns to Oral Questions | Bill 8: Appropriation Act, 2008–2009 |
| 5) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery | CR 2-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the Report of the Auditor General on the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Public Housing and Homeownership Programs |
| 6) Acknowledgements | |
| 7) Oral Questions | |
| 8) Written Questions | CR 3-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2006–2007 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner |
| 9) Returns to Written Questions | |
| 10) Replies to Opening Address | |
| 11) Replies to Budget Address (Day 4 of 7) | CR 4-16(2): Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates |
| 12) Petitions | |
| 13) Reports of Standing and Special Committees | Tabled Document 37-16(2): Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2 |
| 14) Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills | 22) Report of Committee of the Whole |
| 15) Tabling of Documents | 23) Third Reading of Bills |
| 16) Notices of Motion | Bill 4: Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 |
| 17) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills | Bill 7: Securities Act |
| 18) Motions | |
| 19) First Reading of Bills | 24) Orders of the Day. |
| Bill 9: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2007–2008 | |
| 20) Second Reading of Bills | Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 27, 2008, at 1:30 p.m. |
| 21) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters | The House adjourned at 5:38 p.m. |