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HANSARD

**Monday, June 2, 2008**

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**The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**Hon. Paul Delorey**  
(Hay River North)

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(Tu Nedhe)

**Ms. Wendy Bisaro**  
(Frame Lake)

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(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Kevin Menicoche**  
(Nahendeh)

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**Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
Monday, June 2, 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 Chamber. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to raise a point of privilege.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Member for Hay River South has risen on a point of privilege. What is your point of privilege, Mrs. Groenewegen?

**Point of Privilege**

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday your Committee of the Whole considered a motion to delete funding from the Department of Justice for planning towards the renovation of the Territorial Women's Correctional Centre in Fort Smith. In a very unusual step a Minister other than the Minister responsible for the department whose estimates were before the committee spoke to the motion. Mr. Miltenberger is the Member for Thebacha, which includes the community of Fort Smith.

In speaking to the motion, the Member made the following remarks, and I quote from the unedited Hansard of May 30, 2008: "And as we keep open minds to look at all the options, one of the options that hadn't been considered is we're talking about repatriating a bunch of adults into a supportive living structure that has yet to be built. Has that been considered as a possibility for Arctic Tern? I don't know. But clearly it's a circumstance that strikes me as interesting and somewhat ironic."

Mr. Speaker, under section 2 of our rules the privileges enjoyed by all Members and the House as a collective are defined. One of the fundamental privileges that each of us as Members enjoys is freedom from obstruction and intimidation in relation to our duties as elected representatives.

Mr. Speaker, the comments made by the Member for Thebacha last Friday are a great cause of concern for me and should be cause for concern for all Members. While it is very unusual for a Minister to speak in favour of a project in his or her riding, it is a mystery to me why the Minister would make reference to a completely unrelated project in this debate. The adult supportive living facility referenced by the Member is a project that has already been approved by this House and has no relation to the project in Fort Smith. I am concerned that residents of Hay River listening to the debate now may be wondering whether the supportive living facility is now in question because their MLA dared to speak against a project in a Minister's riding based on the merits of that project at this particular time.

We cannot do business this way. As 19 Members in this consensus system of government we owe it to the people of the Northwest Territories to carry out our debates with integrity. We adopted a code of conduct at the outset of this Assembly. This included a vow to do our utmost to distribute resources fairly and justly. How are we to do this if we cannot question the allocation of those resources if some resources are off limits because they are in a Minister's constituency?

We have an obligation as Regular Members to hold the government to account. We need to be able to weigh the proposed spending of public dollars and infrastructure projects on their merits. This involves asking questions and sometimes voting against the government proposals if they do not bear up against that scrutiny. This is our responsibility and our duty.

I believe the Member for Thebacha's comments were made to intimidate me as I attempted to carry out my duty and my right as a Member to vote the way I wished on this potentially contentious motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Before I rule on your point of privilege, I'm going to allow some debate on the point of privilege. To the point of privilege, the honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have reviewed Hansard. I've also reviewed Hansard from last February 18, when we were in Committee of the Whole. The Member for Hay River South called me on a point of order when I was speaking, stating — if I could quote from page 387 of Hansard: "I have a point of order. Is Mr. Miltenberger speaking to this as a Minister of the Cabinet, or he is speaking to this as the MLA for Thebacha?" The chair at the time, Mr. Krutko, said, "Mrs. Groenewegen, you do not have a point of order, since you didn't specifically state your order. But to be fair to all Members, this motion is before the House, and every Member has the right to speak to the motion. To be fair to everyone, everyone has had the right to speak."

When you look at the Hansard from Friday, clearly there's a context here. The Social Programs Committee had come forward with a motion, in fact a number of motions. They had spoken about Arctic Tern. They spoke about the need to look at all options. They asked the Minister what plans were there for Arctic Tern. They made comments about thinking outside the box.

My one comment on that issue was that there's an option that hasn't been considered that I think is fully valid, and in fact, other Members, when it was discussed with them, agreed that it should be worth at least looking at.

In the course of the debate, which is the place to bring this issue to the floor, I raised that comment and I raised that option. It was done within the context of the broad debate. It was no threat. It was stated very calmly, quietly, briefly as something that should be considered.

The irony, if you look at the whole text of my comments, speaks not to that but to the other issue of the comments and concerns I had about this issue being brought forward by a Member for Yellowknife. So while I respect the Member's right to stand up and raise those issues, very clearly I do not agree that there's a point of privilege. It's part of the debate, and I believe it was entirely within keeping within the context of that debate.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. To the point of privilege?

Members, the Speaker's role when a point of privilege has been raised is to determine whether the matter was raised at its earliest convenience, earliest possible opportunity, and to decide whether a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred.

As the events that are brought out under the point of privilege happened during Committee of the Whole, I will take the point of privilege under advisement and come back to the Members at a later date with a ruling. Thank you, Members.

Orders of the Day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

### Ministers' Statements

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 44-16(2) WESTERN PREMIERS' CONFERENCE, 2008

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 28, 29 and 30 I attended the 2008 Western Premiers' Conference in Prince Albert Saskatchewan. As I stated in my Budget Address, I intended to focus my attention on delivering the message of our territory and our people to those that need to hear it. The Northwest Territories had the full attention of western Premiers and succeeded in getting their support for issues important to us.

The Premiers from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut and the NWT, along with the Deputy Premier from the Yukon, talked about the strength of the western economy, our collective accomplishments and our shared sense of optimism for the future. Over the last few years we have witnessed tremendous economic growth in the west, a region quickly becoming the economic engine of this country. The North is clearly part of the new west with little doubt that the economic development of the Northwest Territories is important to the west and ultimately to Canada's future.

There is a genuine interest by all western Premiers to lend their support to do their part to make sure that the territories are part of the unprecedented growth of the western economy. My fellow Premiers joined me in my call to the federal government to provide strategic federal infrastructure investments for the North. I reminded Premiers that this country has a long history of making large investments in infrastructure in support of a broader national vision, and it is only fitting to articulate that support in the hometown of John Diefenbaker, who had plans to open up the North for development through the construction of basin opening infrastructure.

At the meeting all western Premiers also expressed strong support for Jordan's Principle — the principle that jurisdictions should not get in the way of providing health or other services to aboriginal children in need, no matter where they live. Premiers are committed to do their part and look to the federal government to do theirs. In fact, the example of the NWT was cited, where the cumulative shortfall for health care funding provided for services to aboriginal people on behalf of the federal government is equivalent to one-third of our annual health budget. Premiers agreed that this is unacceptable and called on the federal government to meet these responsibilities for health care services. To show their continued commitment to advancing aboriginal interests, Premiers also joined

leaders on the National Day of Action and participated in their efforts to raise awareness of the issues affecting aboriginal people across this country.

Mr. Speaker, during our discussions Premiers also discussed the need to consider alternative energy sources to reduce the dependency on diesel as a fuel source for communities in the North. Premiers were receptive to our message about the great work that is being done in our territory to develop our rich hydro potential and to be a leader in the area of wind technology. In considering clean alternative energy, there is widespread recognition that we are sitting on huge resource potential that will eventually be tapped through the development of the Mackenzie Gas pipeline.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, this was a very successful meeting in advancing the priorities of the GNWT with our western counterparts. Investment in infrastructure, seeking health funding from Ottawa and development of new energy resources are just a few of the important priorities that all Premiers supported at this year's Western Premiers' Conference. Building and maintaining strong partnerships with our provincial and territorial neighbours is a key component to achieving the goals of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Ministers' statements, the honourable Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Bob McLeod.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 45-16(2)  
COMMITMENT TO TOURISM —  
TOURISM WEEK 2008

**Hon. Bob McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, today is the first day of Tourism Week in Canada. It is a chance for us to highlight the tremendous importance of this sector to our national and local economies and to our lives as Canadians.

In the Northwest Territories tourism is a \$113 million a year industry. More importantly, it is an area of investment that offers many spin-off benefits and has the potential to establish and grow viable and sustainable ventures in almost every one of our region's 33 communities.

As a government we are acutely aware of the importance and significance of our tourism industry and the economic opportunities that it offers, particularly at the local level. Our Tourism 2010 Plan and the \$15 million it represents in direct and leveraged investment is designed to capitalize on this potential and is one of the most significant commitments that has ever been made for tourism in the Northwest Territories.

The new Tourism Product Diversification and Marketing Program is a good example of Tourism 2010 in action. It is providing our industry and its operators with the insight and means to reinvent or expand their products and operations to meet the trends and demands that we anticipate will provide growth for our tourism industry in the future.

Meanwhile, the LookUp North campaign, sponsored last year by the NWT, Yukon and Nunavut governments, heightened the profile of Canada's North to a new level and resulted in a significant increase in visitor traffic to the NWT last summer.

These tourism-based initiatives and others are the tools with which we are working to balance and increase the diversity of the Northwest Territories' economy, maximizing opportunities and contributing to an improvement in the quality of life for all NWT residents.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the time today to recognize the board, staff and members of Northwest Territories Tourism, NWTTC, who in their role as our destination marketing organization are an important and valued partner in our efforts on behalf of the tourism sector. In particular, I would like to offer best wishes on behalf of this Assembly to David Grindlay, whose guidance and vision have allowed the NWTTC to significantly advance its role and resources in the last seven years and who will be leaving his position as executive director this summer.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and salute the men and women who work in our valued tourism sector, individuals at every level whose service and reputation are building our industry and who are the face of our tourism industry to the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, Ms. Lee.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 46-16(2)  
DISABILITY AWARENESS WEEK —  
JUNE 1 TO 7, 2008

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Disability Awareness Week is from June 1 to 7, 2008. This year's theme is Disability Is Not a Choice...Your Attitude Is.

One of the priorities for the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly is to improve support for children and adults with special needs and disabilities. The week is an opportunity for us all to recognize the contributions that persons with disabilities make in our communities and to consider how persons with disabilities can contribute or participate in the

social, recreational and educational lives of communities across the Northwest Territories.

The July 2000 report *Living with Disability... Living with Dignity* told us that approximately 13 per cent of the population of the NWT has a disability and that many of these individuals have multiple disabilities. For many years the Government of the Northwest Territories has worked closely with the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living and the YWCA through the Disability Steering Committee Partnership to consider how we can best meet the needs of persons with disabilities in the NWT. This collaborative work has led to the completion of many of the actions in the 2004 NWT Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities and has been invaluable.

One of the greatest needs for persons with disabilities is the need for supported living options. For many years the GNWT has had to send many persons with disabilities to live in the south due to the limited housing options in the North. The Hay River Territorial Supported Living Initiative as a part of the Strategic Initiative Committee on Building Our Futures will enable us to offer additional supported living services to residents of the NWT. The cost of the facility operation will be offset by repatriating clients currently in the south. This initiative fulfills one of the action items in the NWT Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities, in which the GNWT committed to develop additional supported living options for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to highlight the work of the staff of the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities and their local committees across the NWT. The council has been an active and consistent advocacy group working on behalf of persons with disabilities for many years.

With support from the Department of Health and Social Services the council has been able to initiate such programs as the Disability Information Line, the successful Parking Placard Program and community outreach programs. With the support of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority the council operates the successful Early Childhood Intervention Program.

The executive director for the council, Ms. Cecily Hewitt, will soon be leaving her position with the council. Ms. Hewitt has been very dedicated to the work of the council and of bettering the lives of those with disabilities. I would like to personally thank her and wish her luck with her future endeavours.

There are many other vital organizations dedicated to working on behalf of persons with disabilities in the NWT. I would like to acknowledge the work of

the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living, the YWCA, the Autism Society, People First, the NWT Literacy Council and the Learning Disabilities Association. These organizations make a difference in the everyday lives of persons with disabilities and have a long-term commitment to enhancing the future quality of life of all persons with disabilities.

I encourage everyone to watch for activities that highlight Disability Awareness Week in their communities. We honour and thank persons with disabilities throughout the NWT for their contributions and strength that they provide to our friends, families and communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Yakeleya.

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 47-16(2) ARCTIC GATEWAY AND TRADE CORRIDOR

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.  
[English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the interest in the Arctic gateway that I've recently heard about from various leaders and my counterparts in other jurisdictions.

I am pleased to report that on April 8, 2008, at the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety meeting in Gatineau, Quebec, the federal Transportation Minister committed his department to undertake a feasibility study on the Arctic gateway and trade corridor. This study is expected to commence later this year.

I am also pleased with the support we received from the Arctic gateway at the recent Western Canada Transportation Ministers meeting in Victoria, B.C. The federal government recently released the National Policy Framework for Strategic Gateways and Corridors. This framework defines the elements of a national strategic gateway and guides federal investment. Factors such as economic efficiency and competitiveness, sovereignty and security and environmental sustainability are considered within this framework.

I would like to provide Members with an update on the proposed NWT Arctic gateway and trade corridor through the Mackenzie Valley. This NWT gateway has the potential to re-arrange logistics for major resource developments in western Canada and in the North. The centrepiece of this gateway is the Over the Top marine shipping route.

An Arctic gateway and trade corridor through the Mackenzie Valley will provide efficiencies and

savings. The shortened distance from Asia and Europe would reduce current weight and dimension restrictions now experienced on delivery routes from either Atlantic or Pacific gateways. An Arctic gateway also provides the advantage of relieving congestion for the southern ports, highways and rail links.

The importance of developing an Arctic gateway will continue to expand due to the rise in the demand for imported goods and exports from Canadian commodities, climate change and technology advancement.

Over the past year the Department of Transportation completed an initial assessment study of the route, held meetings and information sessions on the route with proponents, oil sands stakeholders, various regulators, interested territorial, provincial and federal departments, including Transport Canada, and Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation. This work has helped generate national interest in the concept of an NWT Arctic gateway and trade corridor.

Industry has also been busy promoting the NWT Arctic gateway concept. Recently Arctic Module Inland Transportation Ltd., or AMIT, was established, a new joint venture between the Inuvialuit corporation, NTCL and Mammoet Canada, to focus on planning, testing and promoting the Over the Top marine shipping route. In March of this year AMIT started an engineering study for a major resource developer. This study will look into logistical aspects of this long-used historical route, as well as technology, vessel and regulatory requirements. AMIT will also be investigating an option that involves shipping modules up the Mackenzie River through the port of Hay River and via surface transportation to sites in Alberta and Saskatchewan. It should also be noted that NTCL completed a successful run of the Over the Top route in 2006 and is also proposing to test a barge delivery via Lake Athabasca to a site in Saskatchewan later this summer. These activities speak to the high level of interest and support for this transportation route.

The Department of Transportation view an Over the Top marine shipping route as an opportunity to promote additional economic opportunity in the Northwest Territories and to further assert Canada's sovereignty over the North. An Over the Top marine shipping route could improve the sustainability of our current marine transportation industry and further develop the communities of Tuktoyaktuk, Hay River and Fort Smith as significant marine service centres.

As the Over the Top route gains momentum, opportunities for development of the Mackenzie Valley all-weather highway also increases. Together, the Mackenzie Valley Highway and the

Over the Top marine shipping route have the potential to become a major national strategic gateway.

In conclusion, I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues, AMIT and other proponents of an Arctic gateway and Over the Top marine shipping route. This work is a good example of how industry and government can partner to improve our transportation system.

Advancing the NWT Arctic gateway and trade corridor is both in the national and Northwest Territories' interest. An Arctic gateway and trade corridor should provide long-lasting benefits to the residents and businesses and communities of the Northwest Territories.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before we go on, colleagues, I would like to draw your attention to the presence in the visitors' gallery of His Excellency Jose Brillante, Philippine Ambassador to Canada. Accompanying him are Joseph Angeles, Minister and Consul General, and Miss Rhenita Rodriguez, Consul. Welcome to Yellowknife. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONSTRUCTION AND HOUSING REPAIRS IN NAHENDEH

**Mr. Menicoche:** [English translation not provided.]

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to you today about the serious delays in housing repairs and construction programs undertaken by the NWT Housing Corporation in the communities in my riding.

A number of houses are in serious need of repair, and there are many units that have not even been constructed yet. I have heard over and over again from my constituents that timelines to repairs and construction are not met. This can cause a great deal of disruption to clients.

When major repairs are needed, people are required to either move into a vacant house or move in with family and friends who often are already living in overcrowded conditions.

In one case an elderly couple in my riding has been waiting for over a year to move back into their house. This situation creates a vicious circle. The longer the delay, the less housing is available as people are moved into temporary units while they wait for these repairs or for new construction to be completed.

Timely repairs and construction schedules lead to fewer costs down the road. I call on the NWT Housing Corporation to work with the local housing organizations to review a commitment to tenants and clients, and to improve its repair and maintenance program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROGRAMMING AT NORTH SLAVE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to speak about programming at North Slave Correctional Centre. I believe that it is inconceivable that the Department of Justice would look to programming as a way and a means to appease the government's reduction exercise.

The Northwest Territories has four times the national average in the areas of sexual assault and incidents of family violence. It is hard for me to comprehend why we would look to reduce program delivery officers at our largest correctional facility. It makes absolutely no sense. The government's own strategic goals talk of safe communities and strengthening treatment of addictions and mental health. The actions proposed by the Department of Justice fly directly in the face of both of these goals.

I just do not feel comfortable without the adequate resources available at North Slave Correctional Centre to ensure that those inmates who require treatment and programming get that service in a timely, coordinated and professional manner. We can't slough off the delivery of family violence and sex offender programs to other personnel. It took nearly three years to recruit a psychologist to the centre, and the caseworkers are busy with other duties. The affected positions are entitled "program delivery officers," because that is their role and that is their function, not someone else's.

The safety of our community is at stake, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to see us shortchange our community's safety by offering programming on a substandard basis. The department has also collapsed the deputy warden of programs position, which is also very, very unsettling. Those duties are now in the hands of a sentence administrator, who obviously would not be an expert on the programming that would be required at the centre. The department has chosen to take these measures, and I am left wondering what is next — the teachers at the centre or perhaps even the chaplain? Again, this is a classic case of reductions that are just not well thought out. Certainly the safety of our families and our communities should

have gotten a higher billing from this government than it obviously has.

Mahsi.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INFLUENCE OF SOUTHERN AGENCIES ON NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

**Mr. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too many years the people of the NWT have had little say into the decisions affecting our territory, decisions that were made on exploration rights, land issues, traditional territory issues, royalty sharing agreements — too many decisions that are made for us by Ottawa. Everybody seems to have an opinion as to what is in our best interests. We have seen too many examples of people outside the NWT telling us what is best for us.

The most recent example, Mr. Speaker, is the World Wildlife Fund call to postpone the sale of oil and gas exploration rights until an environmental plan is done for the region. Do they think that we have no idea what we are doing up here and need someone to tell us that we need a plan? This has been going on for too long. Do they actually believe that we would let exploration happen without concerns for the environment? We do appreciate people's concerns, but we are not going to just stand by and watch our land being pillaged for the sake of a few barrels of oil.

I continue to be frustrated by groups outside of the NWT using our issues up here to advance their own agendas. I think this government, along with working with the aboriginal governments, knows and can decide what is best for us. For too long we have had decisions made for us that are supposed to be in our best interests, and I think we know what is in our best interest. There must come a time when we have to say that enough is enough and take the future of the NWT into our own hands. I believe we do have the capabilities of making our own decisions.

Mr. Speaker, Ottawa is always using our resources as a piggy bank, thinking we owe them something. The time has come. We have to put a stop to that. When the resources and the money they generate run out, then Ottawa will say, "Okay; decide for yourselves" and they will give us that power. We must not continue to watch our wealth leave the NWT. We can't always allow outsiders to stick their nose into our business and decide what is best for us and the NWT. We are quite capable of sticking our own noses in there. We have to take a hard line and protect the NWT and our grandchildren's future. I think we do have the capabilities up here. I

think it's time that this government, along with the aboriginal governments in the Northwest Territories, decides to unite and let Ottawa know that we're not going to be putting up with this anymore.

Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Bromley.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
WORLD WILDLIFE FUND CALL FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. World Wildlife Fund of Canada, a long-term northern conservation partner, has been attacked by Inuvialuit leaders and, most disturbingly, by our own Premier. The attacks are based on false premises and completely ignore the point — a valid point, I might add. World Wildlife Fund of Canada has called for a postponement of the lease sale in the Beaufort until a comprehensive measurement plan is available for the region and the capability is in place to quickly clean up oil spills.

Mr. Speaker, planning is as yet unfinished in the conservation of the Beaufort. In fact, the World Wildlife Fund is a partner with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Inuvialuit Game commission. They've all agreed that it's unfinished and need to take those things into consideration.

Secondly, an Arctic Council report has just been published that confirms that we do not yet have the capability to clean up oil spills, and I'd like to give you a quote from that: "Oil spills under ice or in ice-covered waters are the most challenging, simply because they cannot be contained or recovered effectively with current technology." This is a report out last month from the Arctic Council, of which we are a member.

Federal Minister Lunn has also made a comment, saying, "We are a long way from resources development, but we need to make sure no project proceeds unless the proper protections are in place." Clearly, there's mutual agreement on that.

Finally, the Canadian public has said the same thing. Over 55 per cent have said that environmental concerns are the number one priority for Canadians, and in fact, only 7 per cent of Canadians say that economic development is a top priority in the Arctic.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make clear to everyone that many, many people in the Northwest Territories, in the Beaufort-Delta as well as in the Deh Cho and the Tlicho and in Yellowknife — in fact, in all regions — support sustainable development. The World Wildlife Fund is talking about sustainable development.

Sustainable development means that any economic development must incorporate an effective response to environmental and social concerns — not a new statement for me here today. I'm frankly quite disappointed that our Premier is so quick to state his opposition to the perspective of the World Wildlife Fund.

I support the Inuvialuit and their strong interest in protecting their land. I support their land-use planning process. I support their social well-being initiatives. These are all components of sustainable development.

A fanatic focus on mega-development projects benefits some...

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

**Mr. Bromley:** ...but certainly not all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
PUBLIC DEBATE OF  
TRANSPORTATION SAFETY ISSUES

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about a couple of transportation issues that have been on the horizon of that industry.

Across Canada there have been a number of concerns emerging that are under public discussion, which are all about cellphones and smoking while driving in vehicles with children present. The issue really is about the public debate and the fact that there needs to be a public debate on these types of issues for transportation here in the North.

I've had a number of constituents come forward through e-mail to talk to me about what our government is doing on these issues that have come on to the horizon of safety of our people, whether there's the safety of children inside the car or, of course, there's just the safety of other people driving along the road. Many supporters of cellphone usage, of course, say that drivers won't be distracted. But other people say that there are a number of distractions on the road, so would that add to any better situation?

I'm not an expert in these areas, but I think it's critical that we get out there and have these types of debates. Provinces like Nova Scotia moved forward and banned smoking with children present in vehicles. I think that's an interesting and bold move, because they're worried about the safety of those children. There are a number of provinces

who talk about things like enforcement and the difficulty of that.

When we look at these emerging transportation issues, you don't need to be a rocket scientist to know that if you're not distracted, you'll probably be driving safer. And, of course, we all understand that smoking in cars is a concentrated focus, and affecting children is a very difficult thing that we don't want to do.

The reason I raise this as a rising transportation issue is that the concern is out there, and at this moment I don't see the Department of Transportation leading a discussion, and that's really all I want.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to add the fact that it's on principle that we get out there and find out what the citizens need to know. It's critical we find out what they want to hear, and I want to hear from them as well.

The fact is that public discussion is the principle and the basis of why I raise this issue today. I'll have questions for the Minister of Transportation, to make sure we get out there, find the facts of these issues and find out if these types of things really work in the Northwest Territories and if would it make our roads safer and better.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PERFORMANCE BONUSES FOR SENIOR GNWT MANAGERS

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February I asked the Minister of Human Resources some specific questions on bonuses for deputy heads, senior managers and excluded employees of the GNWT.

At that time I was informed that approximately \$1.65 million is paid out annually to these employees. Further, approximately \$550,000 is paid out annually to senior managers of the head staff of the NWT Power Corporation. This is around \$2 million per year.

Given current fiscal realities, it's definitely time to reconsider how this government awards bonuses to senior managers. Currently virtually every senior public official gets a bonus. It's time for senior management to earn their fat bonuses. When bonuses are expected rather than earned, it breeds mediocrity. It even encourages senior managers to keep their mouths shut about problems, and it does not encourage thinking outside the box, which would have been really useful during the budget process that we're currently going through.

We can't afford to reward senior managers who happen to have technical skills, or are very gifted technically, but are lousy people-managers or run over their staff in order to get results.

Recently the federal government developed a more rigorous assessment process for their performance pay. With their new plan and process fewer than 20 per cent of their senior executives will receive bonuses. Under the federal program senior managers are assessed based on performance targets and a 360-degree review, which includes input from fellow senior managers, colleagues, ministers and others.

Implementing a process similar to the federal government's will ensure that when bonuses are earned, they will be paid, and when they aren't earned, they won't be paid. This ensures that we can remain competitive with the private sector by providing our high-quality performers with financial incentives, which encourage their continued commitment to the GNWT, as opposed to jumping ship and seeking employment with the private sector.

It's time to review how bonuses are paid. It's time to ensure that staff are rewarded for outstanding performance — performance that is above and beyond expectations — for thinking outside the box, for streamlining government through increased efficiencies or better use of resources rather than cutting jobs, which is the easiest solution.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I'll be asking the Premier some questions concerning bonuses in the GNWT.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NWT ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITIES BUDGET PROCESS

**Ms. Bisaro:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give voice today to some concerns about the proposed budget that have been heard from our communities.

NWT communities are generally pleased with the budget, except for the process followed. Budget development lacked any public consultation and effectively handcuffed the communities' own budget processes.

As a result, at the NWT Association of Communities' annual general meeting, held in Simpson last month, the membership passed the following motion:

"Whereas the Government of the Northwest Territories...announced in January that it will cut approximately \$135 million in expenditures; and

"Whereas it is unknown what impacts the cuts will have on public services...."

"Whereas no consultation has been undertaken by the GNWT, and no rigorous fiscal analysis providing justification for the proposed cuts has been made available to the public or community leaders, and given the negative impacts the cuts would cause to families and communities in the NWT."

"Therefore be it resolved that the NWTAC immediately urge the territorial government to defer any decision on job cuts until the government's analysis and rationale for the need for the cuts has been made available for public review and consultation."

While the NWTAC is appreciative that core funding for communities will not be reduced — that it will remain at last year's levels — they're very concerned about core funding for future years. As the motion from the AGM states, NWT communities are concerned about the effect position cuts will have on our communities.

As well, communities have been adjusting to the GNWT's New Deal for several years. Control of one's own destiny and resources is great, but communities, especially small communities, lack the human resource capacity to take on these downloaded responsibilities.

To MACA's credit they've been providing assistance to communities to help them over this hurdle as much as they can, but that assistance has been shrinking every year.

A particular concern of the NWTAC is the projected loss of the position of emergency planning coordinator. This position exists to assist communities in developing emergency plans and to work with communities after a disaster or an emergency has occurred.

The emergency planning coordinator is, at this time, still dealing with the aftermath of the Fort Good Hope flood in 2005 and the Aklavik flood in 2006, trying to get home repairs done for the impacted residents. Who will help our communities be adequately prepared for any and all emergencies when this position is gone?

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

Unanimous consent granted.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues.

Who will help our communities be adequately prepared for any and all emergencies when this position is gone? Who will help our residents, following a flood or a forest fire, to access the federal funding they are due when this position is gone?

In closing, our residents, our voters, through their elected local governments are telling us to delay this budget — that it lacks analysis, rationale and that the proper consultation was not done. Sounds kind of familiar, doesn't it?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HIGH OCCURRENCE AND COSTS FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard a lot in regard to residential schools and the high number of children that were mentally and physically abused in residential schools.

The Auditor General of Canada reported on the high number of children on reserves that are in foster care and in permanent custody of the provincial government. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is no different. In 2002 in my constituency, there were 58 children in care in the three communities I represent. Compared to other jurisdictions in Canada and other groups in Canada, aboriginal people have the highest number of children in care.

This government is budgeting almost \$11 million to deal with this matter in the Northwest Territories, which is a million dollar increase from last year.

In Fort McPherson alone — I checked in regard to government expenditures — they spend some \$30,000 a month to deal with children in foster care, which is a cost of \$360,000 a year.

We must move away from putting people and children in care, regardless of whether it is an institution or a home. What we have to do is remedy the situation by avoiding the situation that happened in the first place and working with families, children and the communities to find solutions on how to keep families together in their home communities and to be able to give those communities the tools they need to confront these problems.

One of the biggest drivers for children to be apprehended is alcohol abuse in the family. The communities have been looking at ways to deal with substance abuse in their communities by way of prohibition orders. By giving the communities the legal tools to take on these challenges and keep families together, keep communities together and, more importantly, to reinvest....

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

Unanimous consent granted.

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

Mr. Speaker, the communities need to be able to reinvest the \$360,000 that's presently expended on children in foster care to those types of programs and services that reunite the communities, reunite our families and bring the communities together to work to find solutions to the problems of children being apprehended.

At the appropriate time I will be having questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Members' statements, the honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROFESSIONAL INCORPORATION OF NORTHERN DOCTORS

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, there are a number of issues which impact on our ability as a territory to attract and retain physicians for our communities. There is competition for doctors' services both at the national and international levels. This means we have to be realistic in wages that we pay doctors and offer the same incentives and inducements that other jurisdictions provide.

For the most part we are competitive. We can promote the positive lifestyle and virtues of living in smaller communities all we want, but if doctors can easily make more money in another jurisdiction, we will lose them. This is what is happening right now because of the legislative gap, and it is impacting on our ability to attract and retain doctors to actually live in the North.

Because doctors can incorporate as a professional corporation in other Canadian jurisdictions, they are taxed at a lower rate and can make significantly more money. For example, if a doctor was professionally incorporated in British Columbia and making a good living, why would they take a pay cut to come to the Northwest Territories?

I've also heard that there are locums, which are doctors that we pay to fill in when there is a short-term need, that would consider moving north if there were the ability to professionally incorporate. Using locums to fill doctor positions is a costly way of meeting the health care needs of Northerners.

I understand that this inability to professionally incorporate also impacts other professions, like lawyers and accountants, and is actually discouraging people from moving north and setting up practices.

Mr. Speaker, we need to move on this before we lose any more doctors. We need a legislative regime that encourages professionals to move or return north and put down their roots in our communities. We need a professional corporations act.

Later today I will have questions for the Minister of Justice about what we can do to respond to this need in a timely manner. This is something that has just this past week affected Hay River, and it is something of very critical importance.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Members' statements, the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Beaulieu.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCOME THRESHOLD FOR PUBLIC HOUSING APPLICANTS

**Mr. Beaulieu:** [English translation not provided.]

Today I would like to talk about a situation that puts single parents at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing public housing.

Many of our constituents are single parents with young children, who are trying their best to earn a living and provide for their children. Unfortunately, many of these single-income earners are struggling to make ends meet. Some have families and friends to assist them, but many rely solely on government assistance.

One such program is the social housing program at the NWT Housing Corporation. Under the current policies individuals can become eligible for housing assistance if they are within the Core Need Income Threshold.

The Core Need Income Threshold is a total of both assessable and non-assessable income used by Housing to determine eligibility for public housing units. The criteria which are used for determining an applicant's Core Need Income Threshold do not fully take into consideration the costs associated with child care.

Interruption.

**Mr. Speaker:** You may continue with your statement, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, numerically they are factored in, but the nature of these costs is not. That is to say, child care expenses would be considered the same as a car payment.

Of course, costs like these represent two completely different circumstances with varying degrees of need. As such, more often than not the applicant's true discretionary income is not really

captured, so a single parent's eligibility many times falls just over the predetermined Core Need Income Threshold, and they become ineligible for public housing. This is happening all too often to single people who are making an effort to provide a better living for themselves and their children. I feel we need to do something immediately. We need to do an immediate review of the policy so that special circumstances associated with child care costs are properly factored in determining an accurate evaluation of an individual applicant.

Today I will have questions for the Minister Responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From my spot I don't know if they're still up there, but I certainly would like to make recognition of Cecily Hewitt and Bill Burles, both constituents of mine. When I came in earlier, they were both in the gallery. I certainly hope they're still there.

**Mr. Bromley:** I don't know whether I'm his constituent or he's mine, but I'd like to recognize Chief Stanley Sanguez.

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** I would like to recognize staff and board members from the Yellowknife Association of Community Living and the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities. First of all, the executive director of YAACL, Jane Whyte. Then the board members of the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities: Judy Sharp; Bill Burles; Don Gillis with his wife, Ann Gillis; and the staff who I believe were here earlier, Corine Nitsiza, Beth Lenardon, Linda Noseworthy, Heather Clarke and the executive director of NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities, Cecily Hewitt.

**Mr. Speaker:** Welcome to everyone in the gallery today. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

### Oral Questions

QUESTION 227-16(2)  
PUBLIC DEBATE ON

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY ISSUES

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be directed to the Minister of Transportation today.

In my Member's statement I talked about good public discussion on issues such as using cellphones while driving and, of course, smoking in cars with children. As a package issue would the Minister be willing to get out there and see what Northerners want and what they're willing to have as new, or potentially new, road-safety rules?

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Yakeleya.

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My department is always very committed to the safety of the travelling public, and I'd be happy to listen to what the people of the Northwest Territories have to say about these two issues that the Member has raised.

**Mr. Hawkins:** I actually didn't hear the answer. I was trying to listen very carefully. Would the Minister be willing to get out there and call for a public dialogue on these issues to make sure that we're hearing the needs of our citizens out there and absolutely making sure we're meeting the basic needs of our citizens?

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, I would repeat that the department is monitoring the situation of cellphones that he raised and also the banning of smoking in vehicles while children are present in the vehicle. The department is monitoring the situation and monitoring the reviews that are happening across Canada. The department is interested in engaging in some discussions with the MLA and the public in terms of what emergent issues need to come forward in terms of continuing on and seeing what we can do with dealing with these two issues.

**Mr. Hawkins:** I heard that very clearly this time around. Does the Minister have any suggestions as to how we're going to get public feedback on this issue? I'm glad to hear the Ministry is....

Interruption.

**Mr. Speaker:** We've got a technical problem.

Continue with your question, Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, whomever.

Mr. Speaker, the issue really is: can the Minister tell me how he plans to get out there and get that feedback? He did say his department is monitoring the situation, but how is he getting out there to get feedback from the general citizenship of the Northwest Territories?

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, there are seven communities in the Northwest Territories that have cellphone coverage out of 34 communities, which are the larger centres. That's 8,000 — in my estimate, from NorthwesTel — cellphone users in

the Northwest Territories. We do not have this coverage all along our transportation infrastructure road system. We're not at that level yet. So in that sense we are monitoring the situation. We certainly have to talk to these centres that do have cellphone coverage.

On the banning of smoking in vehicles with children in them, we understand that Nova Scotia and Yukon do have this ban. We have to, again, monitor the situation. There are lots of issues of this type that are talked about amongst the Ministers of Transportation. Alberta is into that type of discussion. When we are coming closer to the amendments of the Motor Vehicles Act, that will enhance some issues in terms of amendments to the act. I am following the issues with the department, and I'll continue reporting to the Member as to how we're doing with our progress.

**Mr. Speaker:** Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My position is quite simple. I'd rather not be in the back seat riding along with this issue. I'd rather be in the driver's seat on this issue.

The Minister did mention some potential amendments. All I'm calling for is some public discussion, maybe an ad in the paper or on the radio saying that we're looking for feedback from citizens of the Northwest Territories on this issue. Let's get control of this issue. Let's get ahead of the bubble. Let's grab hold of it and make sure we know what people want and put safety first. Would the Minister do that?

**Hon. Norman Yakeleya:** Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct in terms of the education process. I do apologize that I didn't mention that the Department of Transportation has a campaign, a single-window approach, in terms of all drivers on the road: the Drive Alive campaign. This is one process that we will be sure the Members in the House and the public in the communities know. We will enhance our component of the Drive Alive safety program to let them know about the issue of any type of distraction in the vehicle and the dangers of second-hand smoke, especially when there are children in the vehicle. We'll certainly work closely with our Minister of Health and Social Services to ensure that this issue does have front-page notice and that we are in the front seat driving this issue.

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

QUESTION 228-16(2)  
HIGH OCCURRENCE AND COSTS  
OF FOSTER CARE

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are spending a lot of money in regard to foster care,

like I mentioned. It increased almost a million dollars from last year. We're spending almost \$7.6 million in this area. I'd just like to ask the Minister: do you have a program in place that allows families to be reunited with their children so that we can reinvest this money that we're spending, the \$7.6 million, in trying to keep families together, reunite them, and be able to keep the children in their home communities?

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Health and Social Services, Ms. Lee.

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Member's question. The million dollar increase that the Member mentioned is part of our new initiative funding in the budget which increases the rates that the foster parents receive. I could also advise the Member that in his communities of Mackenzie Delta, Aklavik, Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic, there are currently, as of March '08, 36 children in care. The vast majority of them are with either the families or with extended families under various arrangements that makes it possible, with agreement from the government and the parents and the children involved.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister give me a breakdown on the cost for the number of children who are in care and also the cost associated with the children in care in my riding?

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** I don't have that level of detailed information, but I'd be happy to get the information for the Member.

**Mr. Krutko:** In my statement I made a reference to the Auditor General's report in assessing children who are being apprehended on reserves in southern Canada. I believe that also affects us in the Northwest Territories. Has anybody in the department looked at the recommendations of the Auditor General and at exactly what alternatives and options we can look at to try to stem the flow of children being put into foster care and find solutions to those problems?

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** I do agree with the Member that if it's at all possible we should try to keep our children in our communities and with extended families. This is information the department keeps close tabs on. Currently in the Territories there are about 620 children in care. The vast majority of them are with extended families. Back in 1999 there were only 100 children who were with the parents or guardians or extended families. This year, as of March 31, 264 children are with parents retaining guardianship, and 316 children are with extended families. Many of them are in their communities. I think we could make a very strong case that we are improving, but obviously, it's an area we continue to work on.

**Mr. Krutko:** It's good to see numbers going down, but I think there are a lot of children who have fallen through the cracks, who have now ended up in institutions such as our jail systems, our young offenders facilities. I'd like to ask the Minister: do you track the children who are in care, and exactly where do they progress? What happens to these children after the age of 18?

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** I don't have the information as to what happens to children after 18, but I could see if I could get that information. For the children who are under 18, there are currently 18 children in care outside of the Territories: two children, because they have a specialized medical condition; four children moved out to be with extended family; two moved south with their extended family; and ten children have moved to go with a formal foster family, because it was thought to be in the best interest of the children that they stay in the family they know for now. But in terms of the numbers, this is quite small in comparison to over 600 children who are in care.

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

**Mr. Krutko:** Again, Mr. Speaker, 600 children are too many children to be in care. I think that, if anything, it is the trend that started off with residential schools, where children were taken away at a young age, put into residential schools and came into that cycle. I'd just like to remind the Minister that we have to do everything we can to get out of this cycle. I know there was the Plan of Care established under legislation. I fought long and hard to get that in my constituency. I'd just like to ask the Minister: what are we doing to ensure that all elements of the Child and Family Services Act are being implemented, especially in the area of the Plan of Care committees in communities.

**Hon. Sandy Lee:** I agree with the Member that we need to do more work on that. I appreciate the work the Member did on that Plan of Care provision of the Act that we amended. I supported that as a member of the committee. Regrettably, we do not have as many Plan of Care committees set up as we would like. The department is working with any committee that acts interested in it, to give them workshops and to help them set them up. That is something we need to do a lot more work on, which I am planning on doing more rigorously as we move forward.

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

QUESTION 229-16(2)  
STATUS OF PROFESSIONALS  
CORPORATE LEGISLATION

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my Member's statement today, we are

probably the only jurisdiction in Canada that does not have legislation enabling professionals to become incorporated. I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice if this type of legislation is forthcoming in the Northwest Territories.

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

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Just to address the question on the Medical Profession Act and what the Member is alluding to — the changes — yes, there is a draft comprehensive professional corporation legislative proposal coming forward. So we are working on that with the Department of Health and Social Services and our department — working closely together on the particular statement.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, we're all aware in this House of some of the pressures that have been on the resources and the capacity that we have to draft new legislation and get it enacted. I'd like to ask the Minister if all the consultation and everything has already happened that would allow this legislation to go forward and if it will be given priority status.

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Mr. Speaker, this has been an ongoing issue for a number of years, highlighting the doctors and the lawyers. I believe Mrs. Groenewegen raised that issue on numerous occasions in the past. It has triggered our department and also Health and Social Services to draft up legislation on this particular issue. We are currently establishing a draft proposal to be submitted, and then we will be discussing that further. It is one of the priorities that our department is also working on with the department.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** To the issue of this being given some kind of a priority here, we cannot afford to lose any more professionals out of our community. As I said, I believe that the lack of this legislation is something that has affected Hay River just this past week in a very detrimental way. What kind of time frame could we be looking at to have this legislation in place and approved in this House?

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** It is true that we need to move forward on this. We certainly don't want to lose professionals to the south. We certainly want to attract them and retain them here in the North. The draft legislation proposal will be forwarded for our review within the next month, so it is coming in a progression period.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with what would be the normal turnaround time required for a piece of legislation like this, I'd like to ask the Minister: is there any way to fast-

track this? If there is, when could we possibly see this legislation work concluded and this bill passed in the House?

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Mr. Speaker, we'll do what we can as a department to fast-track this particular piece of our proposal.

We will, as a department, continue to work with the Department of Health and Social Services and the other parties that are involved with drafting of the proposal. We'll do what we can as a department to move it expeditiously. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 230-16(2)  
INCOME THRESHOLD FOR  
PUBLIC HOUSING APPLICANTS

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today I talked about an issue that hits home with many single mothers and fathers: the Core Need Income Threshold and the issue of being eligible for public housing. Today I have questions for the Minister Responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. I'd like to ask the Minister: how often is a thorough review of the Core Need Income Threshold completed by the NWT Housing Corporation?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The honourable Minister Responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The homeownership Core Need Income Threshold is done on a two-year cycle. The rental Core Need Income Threshold, accepted by CMHC, is provided to the NWT Housing Corp every five years, in accordance with the Social Housing Agreement.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** I'm interested in the Core Need Income Threshold for public housing. Did I hear correctly that the Minister said the numbers come from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or is there other data that's used to determine the Core Need Income Threshold?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** My information is that it comes mainly through the CMHC. As well, we do our own. In 2009 the Housing Corporation will be doing, as well, another housing survey to check on the number of core needs for just housing in general.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Can the Minister advise if the NWT Housing Corporation would look at a different way of determining Core Need Income Threshold? I can't see how they could capture all community-assisted expenses if they're using the Core Need Income Threshold handed down from the federal government.

Can the Minister advise if at some point the corporation would look at having all expenses to determine that core need income be community-specific?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** The Member has raised a number of concerns in terms of housing policies, like with seniors and how that repair program is profiled. This is another issue. I'll just make the commitment in the House that we'll be willing and interested to sit down with committee to look at suggestions as we look at the broad policy review that's underway currently in the Housing Corporation. As we move through this budget process, we will be moving right into the business planning process, so there'd be an opportunity to work with the committee to look at these very specific issues.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good. I'm glad that the Minister's prepared to sit down with committee.

I would like to ask the Minister if he could commit to looking into creating some sort of special status for single mothers and fathers, in their need, to determine a different type of CNIT — Core Need Income Threshold — when the calculations are done. So if the Minister could commit to looking at some sort of special status for this group of people.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** As we engage in the process we just talked about with committee, in terms of the review and the issues and concerns in regard to the various policies that are currently there, those would be the types of things we would hope to be able to come to resolution on. So yes, we're prepared to talk about that fully.

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

QUESTION 231-16(2)  
WORLD WILDLIFE FUND CALL FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions have to do with the Premier's statements in his recent press release on the World Wildlife Fund's role in conservation. Does the Premier realize that the World Wildlife Fund has been a key partner, working with all of our communities — closely with all of our communities — for many years in the development and implementation of the NWT Protected Areas Strategy?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Bromley. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm aware they do work in a number of initiatives with

the government. The simple fact is we also disagree with some of what they say in the Territories, this one being the case.

**Mr. Bromley:** It's good to know the Premier is aware of that contribution.

Does the Premier also realize that his press release totally ignored the point that the World Wildlife Fund was raising while simply focusing on writing off the World Wildlife Fund of Canada as a southern organization?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** When you look at what we do as the Government of the Northwest Territories, we're committed to a number of things: World Wildlife Fund, other groups from outside the territory. They may do some work in the territory, but they originate outside the territory.

**Mr. Bromley:** Not surprisingly, that failed to answer the question.

Does the Premier realize that the representative of the World Wildlife Fund of Canada is a 40-year resident of the Northwest Territories and that the previous representative is a long-term resident who has retired and currently lives on the land well away from any community in the Northwest Territories?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Whether I agree or disagree with the Member on the World Wildlife Fund and about who makes up that body, who gets appointed from time to time or who gets put on a contract, the fact is they made a request of the federal government that has a direct impact. In fact, if you look at what the Inuvialuit did, a part of the Arctic Council as well.... They're dissatisfied with that result. You heard another Member in this House say something similar. The fact is we need to make those decisions in the North, not have lobby groups ask another government to make decisions that impact our lives.

**Mr. Bromley:** This is very good actually to hear the Premier actually speak to the issue, finally.

Does the Premier acknowledge that organizations that partner with our communities and work with them have something to contribute sometimes, especially when they're supported by a regional planning process, the Arctic Council and the majority of Canadians?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we're going to get our message out to the people who need to hear it. We've also worked with a lot of groups. Whether or not they are the ones that specialize in environmental concerns or issues across the country, they're still welcome to help and work with us in partnership. The message here is the fact that we in the Northwest Territories need to be making decisions about what impacts our lives, the economy and our environment. They need to be

made here, not through some office someplace else, advising another government to make those decisions for us.

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

QUESTION 232-16(2)  
HOUSING REPAIR AND CONSTRUCTION  
DELAYS IN NAHENDEH

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up on my housing statement earlier today with respect to delays in repairs to constituents' housing, especially in the community of Fort Liard, where I notice the apparent delays. I just wanted to see what stage or what the current status would be, from the Minister's office, in terms of delivery of repairs and home construction in Fort Liard.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister Responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is now the first part of June. The process should be well along. I take the Member's point about the need to look at how we improve timeliness and completion rates. Clearly, we're interested in working with the Regular Members as well as the communities to do that. We're also fully engaged with the infrastructure committee as we look at how we improve the capital planning process and the capital delivery process which is not only for government but for the Housing Corporation as well.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Mr. Speaker, I'm just wondering if there's some type of structure you use to identify how progress is going, if they're completing four out of eight houses or ten out of 20 repairs. What type of reporting mechanisms are they using?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** The LHOs in the district office have their files, and they have their planning and delivery schedules and technical staff who track the projects. They try to keep a handle on it to make sure that things are proceeding apace, the materials are there, the contracts are met and the work is being carried out.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Without getting too specific, I've got this instance in Fort Liard of this elderly couple I spoke of in my Member's statement. Last fall they were going to get their repairs done. I don't know what happened there, but somehow they slipped through the reporting mechanism and they were forgotten. On my recent visit just last month their home was still not repaired, and there is no indication whatsoever of when they will get the work done. Once again, just for the recording mechanism, how would someone's repairs slip through on an issue like that?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** I appreciate the Member's concern, and what I will commit to is to get a listing of all the projects that are to be delivered this summer and over the course of this building season. If the Member would share with me the name of these two clients, I'll make sure that update is provided to him as well.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker. I'll certainly do that. I just want to ensure that once it looks like they'll have to reapply, they're not bumped off the list.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** I'll get the name from the Member, and I'll make sure that we get any information and make sure that they've received fair, full and due process.

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

QUESTION 233-16(2):  
NWT ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITIES  
BUDGET CONCERNS

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are directed to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. In my Member's statement I mentioned two questions, which I'd like to ask the Minister at this time. I stated that the emergency planning coordinator position at MACA is an affected position. Assuming that the position is removed, I'd like to ask the Minister who will provide assistance to the communities in them preparing emergency preparedness plans.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. Michael McLeod.

**Hon. Michael McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The responsibility for preparing community response plans in emergency situations lies with the community governments, and that will continue.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Assuming that the capacity of local governments remains as it is — it tends to be quite stretched, I guess would be a good word — I appreciate the Minister's answer, but at the moment the local governments do have the assistance of the emergency planning coordinator. If that position is gone, they'll be left on their own. Is the government planning to provide any assistance to community governments to help them get these plans done, which should be an important part of their local government planning?

**Hon. Michael McLeod:** We will continue to provide assistance with community emergency plans. Most communities do them on their own right now. We provide a lot of support through our

territorial emergency planning coordinator and will continue to do so.

**Ms. Bisaro:** The other question I asked was: who is going to assist the communities to access federal dollars to help to refurbish the communities' and/or residents' homes if there is, for instance, a flood or forest fire which creates damage to infrastructure within the community?

**Hon. Michael McLeod:** That responsibility will continue to lie with the community governments. We will provide support through our regional superintendents and our territorial emergency coordinator.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Final supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

**Ms. Bisaro:** I appreciate that regional offices will be providing some assistance. I suggest that's probably not going to be enough. I'd like to know whether or not the department is going to be monitoring the situation should the emergency planning coordinator position not be there after this budget. I'd like to know if the department is going to be monitoring the situation and evaluating whether or not the communities are able to do these jobs on their own or if things are going to be falling through the cracks.

**Hon. Michael McLeod:** We'll continue with business as usual. We monitor the situation now with all the communities in terms of where they are with their emergency planning and support that they require and request. We will continue to do so.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Oral questions, the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

QUESTION 234-16(2)  
ENVIRONMENT PLANS THAT  
ACCOMPANY RESOURCE EXPLORATION

**Mr. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my line of questioning today to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. When applications are made for exploration rights within the Northwest Territories, I'd like to ask the Minister if he's aware of any environmental plans that have to go along with these applications.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources, Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're involved with the processes directly on the land. Yes, there are comprehensive plans. There's a very rigorous regulatory process that has to be followed.

**Mr. McLeod:** I'd like to ask the Minister if the Department of ENR monitors environmental plans and the work that goes on with the exploration companies.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we do.

**Mr. McLeod:** I'd like to ask the Minister if we have the capabilities to monitor environmental concerns without outside interference.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Clearly, we've evolved and matured as a jurisdiction over the years. We've built up our capability in the North. We work closely with industry, but we also work closely with Indian Affairs and the federal government, as well as the aboriginal governments. I believe — all the complaints about timeliness aside — that we have that ability.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. McLeod.

**Mr. McLeod:** I'd like to ask the Minister who would have the final approval on environmental plans that go along with the exploration rights. Is it the Government of the Northwest Territories or the Government of Canada?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** It generally goes forward with the responsible Ministers — the appropriate Minister from the Northwest Territories as well as from the federal government. In this case it would be myself as the Minister and then generally the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

QUESTION 235-16(2)  
PERFORMANCE BONUSES FOR  
SENIOR GNWT MANAGERS

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier. Currently virtually every senior manager and deputy head of the GNWT gets a bonus. I'm curious if bonuses have been awarded to deputy heads and senior managers for services provided during the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. The Hon. Premier, Minister Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of bonuses or performance pay is under review right now. We are looking at it. I don't believe any departments have paid any out, and there hasn't been any paid out at this point to deputies.

**Mr. Abernethy:** By "under review" does the Premier mean that he's developing a process that will actually award or reward senior managers for outstanding performance as opposed to the typical or standard "everybody gets a bonus"?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** We are looking at the process of how it happens. We know, for example, that there are some staff that work for departments that fall out of the UNW side, and they're excluded. But within departments they're treated differently than deputy minister levels, so we're having a look at trying to come up with a process that would make sense. It would look at performance for work done.

**Mr. Abernethy:** I'm hoping what that means is yes, performance pay will be based on merit rather than the standard.

I'd like to encourage the Premier to review what the federal government is doing with respect to bonuses to their senior managers. They put in a real comprehensive plan that ensures that not everybody gets one because they are a senior manager but for outstanding performance and doing more than is required or above and beyond. So I'd like to encourage the Premier to check out what the feds are doing.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** I'd be more than prepared to have a look at their work and what it entails. Just for the record, I don't believe every manager gets performance pay in the Northwest Territories. I understand there's a process, and it's limited. We're undertaking that review to have a look at how it's been done in the past, and we'll be prepared to take a look at what the federal government is doing going forward as well.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Minister Roland. Final supplementary, Mr. Abernethy? The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 236-16(2):  
FUTURE OF SOMBA K'E HEALING LODGE

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll have questions to the Minister of Housing. My questions are about the subject of the Samba K'e Healing Lodge.

Mr. Speaker, I've been informed recently that a deal has been reached with another organization to turn this into a training centre. I'm just trying to get some sense as to what's actually happening, who will be responsible for the cost of that and who will be the benefactors.

Can the Minister of the NWT Housing Corp tell me exactly who is in control of this now? Are they paying for the full cost of running this facility? Who owns the facility?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Three questions there. The Minister can answer one or all. The honourable Minister Responsible for Housing, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's been an arrangement made with the Mine Training Society. After the first three months, part of the getting-started agreement is going to be covered by us. But after three months they will be covering all the O&M and mortgage costs. We've been paying the mortgage to CMHC.

**Mr. Hawkins:** My questions shouldn't be perceived in any way that I'm against the building actually being dusted off and used. I think it's a real shame that it's been empty for so long and probably heated forever at an exorbitant rate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know: will we retain ownership of this building, or has that been given away in this agreement? If it has been given away, what financial gains has the territorial government made?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Speaker, this is a lease arrangement. We haven't reached a point where there's any proposal before us to actually buy the unit outright.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Has the Department of Housing considered giving it to Aurora College as an asset for them so they can include it in their programming as opposed to just giving it away to an organization?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** That facility has been through the government process a number of times, to see if there was any interest within government.

This is the first real deal we've been able to sign, and it's a lease arrangement that has a three-year life which could possibly be extended or evolved into ownership at some point. But we're very glad to be able to report that we've finally got a paying tenant.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Well, again, I state that I'm pleased that it's going to a training group. I didn't realize we had so many treatment centres that we had to get rid of one, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know what the total cost has been for the number of years since we had it on the books. What was the total cost to maintain that facility while it's been empty?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** The facility, I believe, has been unoccupied since about 2003 or thereabouts. The O&M costs, I understand, currently are about \$70,000 a year, and that doesn't include the mortgage.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Oral questions, the honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

QUESTION 237-16(2)  
PROGRAMMING AT NORTH SLAVE  
CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Justice. This gets back to my Member's statement, where I was speaking of the collapsing of the deputy warden position at North Slave Correctional Centre, which happens to be in my riding of Kam Lake, and the fact that that position was collapsed. Now it's going to be the responsibility of the sentencing administrator. There's been much talk about the program delivery officers at that facility as well being let go.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice: what are the department's plans going forward for program delivery at North Slave Correctional Centre?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Minister responsible for Justice, Mr. Lafferty.

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. There are proposed changes to the North Slave Correctional Centre and also the young offenders that we're faced with. At the same time, there are no changes to the program delivery. We will continue to deliver those programs with the staff that we have at the centre.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, if you get rid of the program delivery officers and the deputy warden of programs, I'm wondering what expertise there is in the sentence administrator position and the managers. What experience do these folks have in delivering programs that are going to rehabilitate inmates so that our communities and our families can be safe?

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** We do have the expertise from within. We have one continuing staff member who has taken on the role of delivery officer. Also, the two current members whose positions are proposed for reduction do have the opportunity to become the case officers, or case managers. So they will continue to deliver the programs at the centre.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Speaker, our communities being safe should be of paramount importance to the government. I've heard from folks who work at North Slave Correctional Centre, and a couple of the words they use are "directionless," "leaderless." There's no direction there when it comes to programming. If you're going to carry out the removal of the deputy warden of programs and the two program delivery officers, it's absolutely going to be directionless.

I'd like to ask the Minister: can he produce evidence that the expertise is in-house to deliver the programs on a frequent basis and on a professional basis?

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Member's discussing this particular area of concern for his riding. We will do our part as the Department of Justice to monitor the programs that are being delivered at the centre. Wherever there needs to be improvement, we'll highlight that as well. Certainly we will continue to monitor the progress of the centre.

**Mr. Speaker:** Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to reiterate: I think community safety is of paramount importance. I want the Minister to tell me where the experience and the education and the professional credentials are at North Slave Correctional Centre so that people can deliver these programs effectively. I want to have some faith in those folks that are delivering these programs. If it's a psychologist.... Like I said in my Member's statement, it took three years to recruit a psychologist for that centre, and I don't want this left to just anybody.

Interruption.

**Mr. Speaker:** Now that we have the power back, we will continue. We were at Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Lafferty.

**Hon. Jackson Lafferty:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Safety is one of our top priorities as a department — safety of the inmates, also safety of the correctional officers and, as the Member alluded to, safety of the public. We'll certainly do what we can. We do have a psychologist on hand to assist us with program delivery at this facility, and also the two individuals that are in there currently and also the third individual that does deliver the program. So we will continue to deliver the programs that have been delivered for a number of years, and we'll certainly monitor that as well on a continuing basis. Mahsi.

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

QUESTION 238-16(2)  
CONDUCT OF MINISTERS  
DURING HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Premier. I would like to ask the Premier if he provides any guidance or direction with respect to Ministers' conduct in this House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, as we conduct ourselves in this Assembly, we would review any particular incidents that occur. We know, for example, there's a process of being ready and available for Members during question period as well as Committee of the Whole, and overall conduct of Ministers. Yes, if there were an issue that came up, we would sit down and have a discussion and see where we could correct things, if that were the case.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been in this House as long as I have. It has been a commonly accepted practice, if not a rule, that members of Cabinet do not use this House as a forum to discuss their constituency issues. Is that the Premier's understanding?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** We know for a fact that Members that become Ministers are somewhat tied down to a process — what they can do — in trying to work on behalf of their constituency. But there's still an avenue for Members to address issues in the House, whether it's through Members' statements or speaking to motions that may come up from time to time. We generally vet that to see where that may go and would reflect on that as we come out in the discussion.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier if there is any reasoning why, in his mind or that he knows of, it would have been a practice of this government for many years not to have Ministers use this House as a forum to promote the interests of their own personal constituencies.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of — maybe I don't understand the question — a rule or practice that stops Ministers in Committee of the Whole from having a discussion on issues that may affect their constituencies. In the formal House, as we are now, we're unable to, for example, question government direction or where it's going. But in Committee of the Whole we have from time to time had Ministers and Members as well question what is occurring at that time, whether it's a motion in the House or an item under debate.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Speaker, I fully understand why Members would be questioning things in Committee of the Whole. I would suggest that Ministers using Committee of the Whole as an opportunity not to be wearing their Minister's hat, so to speak — to be promoting or expressing views on issues of their constituencies — has been extremely rare. It's probably only happened a couple of times in my 13 years in this Assembly. So if we are going to have a change in that practice or that convention, I would like to ask the Premier if his voice will be the one that will represent the Members on the other side of the House with respect to how that practice will be going forward.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** We haven't changed the convention or rule of the Legislative Assembly. From time to time Members have, when it's a motion in the House that affects their constituencies, spoken to it. It's not been a very common occurrence, but there is no convention or rule that says that won't be done. If there's a need for further clarification, we're prepared to sit down and have that discussion.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

QUESTION 239-16(2)  
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY INITIATIVES  
ADDRESSED AT WESTERN  
PREMIERS' CONFERENCE

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is in regard to his statement in regard to the Western Premiers' Conference he just attended. There were a few issues in there in regard to the conference itself, but more importantly, there was a lot of discussion around energy — looking at ways of bringing down energy and looking at alternative energies that are out there. I'd like to ask the Premier: exactly what type of responses did we get? Are those responses going to be put by way of ideas and sent to the federal government, to ask them for certain funding? You talk about hydro; you talk about wind energy; you talk about other initiatives. I'd like to ask the Premier: what's the next step in regard to these issues that were discussed at the western Premiers' meeting? Where do they go next? Also, when can we see some results on those discussions?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The Hon. Premier, Mr. Roland.

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, the Western Premiers' Conference, as I was saying earlier, is one that I felt went very well for the Northwest Territories. To have our issues part of the communications package that went out from that meeting across Canada does a number of things. It raises our level of interest. It sends a message to the federal government. The next steps for us from the Western Premiers' Conference would be on issues that we feel would be encouraged by further bringing them to the Council of the Federation — that is, all the Premiers across the country — and then coming up with a specific plan or actions that we would go to the federal government.

A number of these initiatives are ongoing. The western Premiers themselves are setting up areas that they're inviting other jurisdictions to become a part of their practice and join on to the work that's being done. In our case, because we're a small partner in this, we can join on some programs or we

can work out an initiative that's going to be supported by other provinces and Premiers as we go forward. For example, the wind energy piece: we know there's technology there, but it's been problematic in the North because of the cold winters and our climate. So here's an avenue where they've come behind us to support us and look at initiatives that we may be able to become a part of.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, one thing I didn't see in the Premier's comment is the whole area around the trading of carbon tax. We know Ontario and Quebec are looking at something. With the global warming effects we have in the Northwest Territories, you'd think that issue would be top and centre for the Northwest Territories. I'd just like to ask the Premier: exactly where are we in regard to the carbon tax issue? Also, what is the position of the Northwest Territories?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** There was much discussion amongst Premiers about the initiatives of other jurisdictions. Of course, the media was very interested in what was happening in B.C. as well as in Quebec and Alberta. I was asked as well about our stance on it, and I did inform them that we were preparing to go out to the public on a tax initiative process for review and then see what initiatives would come back to this House.

**Mr. Krutko:** Mr. Speaker, also in regard to the Premier's comments or statement he made in reference to the new west, I know that there's an initiative going on where all the western Premiers are talking about going down to the States to lobby in different areas. I'm wondering: are we part of that delegation which would be going down to the United States to lobby in regard to the western Premiers?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** Mr. Speaker, we are invited to be a part of that group that goes down there. Right now I believe it is only the western Premiers from southern Canada that are going down there. I'm not aware of the northern Premiers attending. For myself, I've had to look at the dates that would conflict with that. At this point the calendar hasn't changed, so I would not be attending that, though the option was there for me to be there.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for question period has expired. However, I will allow the Member a final supplementary. Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Premier if he also had discussions in regard to the western climate change initiative, which includes western parts of the United States and Canada. I'd just like to ask the Premier: are we also part of the western climate change initiative?

**Hon. Floyd Roland:** We are a part of that. The Premier of British Columbia, Mr. Campbell, has

initiated that work. It started off in January with the conference on climate change. Again, other jurisdictions are working with their leaders and coming up with initiatives and sharing some of the work that's been done. For ourselves, from a territorial point of view working with other northern Premiers, coming up with our piece of that work, we are plugged into that process.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Roland. Before we go on, colleagues, I'd like to draw your attention to the visitors' gallery. A group of senior civil servants is visiting here to witness consensus government working. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. I hope you're enjoying your tour.

The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Unanimous consent granted.

**Mr. Speaker:** Return to item 5 on the order paper, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

### **Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)**

**Mr. Hawkins:** Mr. Speaker, I thank Members for not naying that, of course. I just want to make special mention of Daryl Dolynny. He's up there in the gallery. He's the owner of Shoppers. He's presently the Chair of the Yellowknife Community Foundation. I think he's the past president of Stanton Foundation. He's here today to watch the Pharmacy Act get through first reading. He says if it's not done by 4 p.m., he has to sneak off to be a swim coach today. So he's many things to Yellowknife. He's an important guy.

**Hon. Bob McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize two long-time senior managers with the federal government: Mr. Daniel Watson and Ms. Liseanne Forand.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Again, welcome to the gallery. Item 8, written questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Abernethy.

### **Written Questions**

#### QUESTION 16-16(2) GNWT SENIOR MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE BONUSES

**Mr. Abernethy:** Mr. Speaker, my written question today is to the Minister of Human Resources. The question is:

- 1) Over the previous four fiscal years how many deputy ministers and senior managers were employed and eligible for annual performance bonuses?
- 2) How many of them actually did or did not receive bonuses in each of these fiscal years?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Abernethy. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to opening address. Item 11, petitions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

### **Petitions**

#### PETITION 7-16(2) CUTBACKS TO PUBLIC SERVICES IN FORT SIMPSON

**Mr. Menicoche:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of cutbacks to the public service in Fort Simpson. The petition contains 12 signatures of Trout Lake 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...

Interruption.

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

#### PETITION 8-16(2) FORT SIMPSON AIRPORT MAINTENANCE SERVICES

**Mr. Menicoche:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of the Fort Simpson Airport maintenance services. The petition contains 12 signatures of Trout Lake residents, and the petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly represent Nahendeh residents by opposing plans to privatize Fort Simpson Airport maintenance services. Mahsi cho.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

### Motions

MOTION 10-16(2)  
SETTING OF SITTING HOURS BY SPEAKER  
(MOTION CARRIED)

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that the Speaker be authorized to set such sitting days and hours as the Speaker, after consultation, deems fit to assist with the business before the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question is being called.

Motion carried.

MOTION 11-16(2)  
NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY  
(MOTION CARRIED)

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS quality and affordable housing promotes health, social and economic well-being of people and communities;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada has been a vital funding partner in the development of affordable housing in all 13 provinces and territories;

AND WHEREAS CMHC Operating and Maintenance funding for social housing is currently declining and will lapse completely by 2038;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada has not committed to making additional capital investments in affordable housing in the future;

AND WHEREAS 1.5 million Canadian households continue to be in core housing need;

AND WHEREAS core housing need in Canada's North continues to be above the national rate of need;

AND WHEREAS funding for the three Federal Housing Trusts, including the Northern Housing Trust, is set to sunset on March 31, 2009;

AND WHEREAS funding for the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program and Homelessness Partnering Initiative are also scheduled to sunset on March 31, 2009;

AND WHEREAS the federal government has yet to commit to funding a third phase of the Affordable Housing Initiative after March 31, 2009;

AND WHEREAS provinces and territories unanimously agreed to a set of principles that outline roles and responsibilities for the delivery of housing to Canadians;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nunakput, that the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories call on the federal government to extend the housing programs due to expire on March 31, 2009;

AND FURTHER, that the Legislative Assembly, strongly urges the Government of Canada to commit to discussing a long-term funding strategy with the provinces and territories;

AND FURTHER, that a copy of this motion be sent to the House of Commons.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. The Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to speak briefly in favour of this motion. Across the land, in all the provinces and territories, the Legislatures in these jurisdictions are going to be passing motions of support to encourage the federal government to come to the table and look at extending the programs that are going to lapse, as well as help to negotiate a long-term housing strategy that will provide long-term sustainable funding.

Mr. Speaker, I've been the Minister of Health for five years, and I've been the Minister of Housing for the last eight. I've been to communities, and housing is probably the most critical issue that comes to people's minds when they see government people. It outranks even health in terms of its urgency. It's an important issue. We know that there's not enough money; there are far more needs than there are resources.

This motion will be a signal that the Northwest Territories Legislature supports the initiative of all the other provinces and territories to try to get the federal government to engage with us so that we can stop the loss of funding, get some certainty and get enough resources so that we can plan for the long-term future of all the citizens we represent.

**Mr. Speaker:** To the motion. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that was well said, and I don't think the motion could have been written any better. There's only one aspect that I'd like to highlight, which is housing for

the disabled. It's a concern and a passion of mine to make sure that we have appropriate housing for those in need. Although this motion doesn't speak to it specifically, we know that this funding goes to help people in that area.

It's a principle I really believe in, Mr. Speaker. In the past I've had the chance to work with Mr. Krutko, when he was Housing Minister, to help bring better living, a better quality of life to people with disabilities. At that time I was very thankful and grateful that we were able to move forward on that initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to close by saying that housing for everyone is fundamental. It's a basic principle we all know we need — safe and secure housing, especially appropriate housing — and we can't forget about that group known as the group of disabled folks, because their well-being is important to me, and I know it's important to this Legislature as well.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, shall be voting in favour of this motion. It is very timely. I've got the riding with the most communities, and we're having many housing issues. One of them is access to funding and different types of funding arrangements. Right now we're really, really limited, and the pool of funds is getting smaller. It limits the types of actions that we can have in the community, especially when it comes to federal assistance, as they do it to all our reserves down south and the other jurisdictions.

When it comes to the North, there's always a barrier in terms of providing adequate aboriginal housing and First Nations housing. I believe this is one of the ways that our government can work toward that. I'd like to applaud the Minister for moving this motion forward. It's actions like this that we've got to get knocking on the doors in Ottawa and let them know that our needs are real. They must heed up and listen to us. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion.

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question is being called. The honourable Minister Responsible for Housing, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like, for maximum effect, to ask for a recorded vote so that when we send this motion to Ottawa, it's very clear that this Legislature has spoken.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Member has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

**Clerk of the House (Mr. Mercer):**

Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Roland, Mr. Michael McLeod, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Bob McLeod, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Bromley, Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Menicoche, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Robert McLeod, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Lee.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

Results of the motion: 18 for, zero against, zero abstaining.

Motion carried.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters with Bill 8, Tabled Document 37-16(2), Committee Report 6-16(2), Committee Report 7-16(2), with Mr. Krutko in the Chair.

### Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

In consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters is Bill 8, Committee Report 2-16(2), Committee Report 3-16(2), Committee Report 4-16(2), Committee Report 5-16(2), Committee Report 6-16(2), Committee Report 7-16(2), Tabled Document 37-16(2). What is the wish of the committee? Ms. Groenewegen.

**Mrs. Groenewegen:** Mr. Chair, the committee today would like to continue on with the '07-08 Main Estimates of the NWT Housing Corporation. Thank you.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Does the committee agree?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** With that, we'll take a short break and come back and continue on with the Housing Corporation.

The Committee of the Whole took a short recess.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** I'd like to call Committee of the Whole back to order.

MAIN ESTIMATES 2008–2009  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
HOUSING CORPORATION

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** We've decided we're going to move to the Main Estimates of the NWT Housing Corporation. So at this time I'd like to ask the Minister responsible to provide opening comments in regard to his department's estimates.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to present the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's Main Estimates for the fiscal year 2008–2009, for the total contribution of \$52.512 million. This is an increase of 2.3 per cent from the 2007–2008 Main Estimates.

Including other revenue sources the corporation will spend approximately \$120 million on housing in the Northwest Territories this year. This funding includes contributions from the Government of Canada under the final year of the Northern Housing Trust. Through 2008–2009 the NWT Housing Corporation is planning a substantial housing delivery program to help address the housing needs of our residents.

Through our Capital Acquisition Plan the corporation will invest over \$38 million in our housing stock. This includes \$35 million to construct 174 housing units in communities across the Northwest Territories, as well as \$3.4 million in major modernization and improvement projects to upgrade existing rental housing stock. The units to be constructed include 76 public housing replacement units and 98 home ownership units to be delivered to clients through the Housing Choices program.

The Housing Corporation also plans to invest \$844,000 in minor modernization and improvements to our rental stock through our local housing organizations and has set aside \$1.669 million to fund home ownership repair and renovation programs. These projects will be completed through the NWT Housing Corporation's Contributing Assistance for Repairs and Enhancements program, which is an element of Housing Choices, as well as through federal renovation programs such as the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.

The Housing Corporation remains committed to meeting the housing needs of our residents. While our construction and renovation work is the most significant activity we are undertaking, there are several other efforts underway to improve corporate performance and ensure that our mandate is met through strategic planning and policy control.

Through our new plan, Framework for Action, 2008–2011, we are charting a course for future corporate activities in pursuit of our mandate to

provide affordable, adequate and suitable housing for residents of the Northwest Territories.

Other important efforts include a corporate reorganization designed to improve the support we provide to regional offices and LHOs and to make strategic planning and policy a more integrated component of our business.

As with all departments and agencies the corporation identified specific target reduction options for consideration in light of the GNWT's current fiscal situation. This goal has been achieved with only a \$100,000 reduction to our \$38 million capital acquisition plan during the final year of the Affordable Housing Initiative.

Our ability to continue with this ambitious delivery plan is due to both the federal government's investment to the Northern Housing Trust along with the commitment of this government and Members of the Legislative Assembly to match this contribution.

While federal support for new construction beyond this year is uncertain, I'm hopeful that this Assembly will see fit to continue our investment in new housing into the future.

With that in mind, during the upcoming year the Housing Corporation will develop a new housing construction strategy that, through a combination of new construction and maintenance and repair activities, will address core need, expand home ownership repair assistance and alleviate some of the infrastructure deficit in public housing.

Mr. Chair, as mentioned, our capital plan for this year will total \$38 million. Nearly half of our \$38 million capital plan is funded through the Government of Canada's Northern Housing Trust. This funding along with the federal funding for renovation and repair, as well as homelessness funding provided directly by the federal government to community groups, will lapse as of March 31, 2009. As of today the federal government has made no commitments to extend funding for affordable housing programs past this date, and CMHC's social housing funding continues to decline rapidly, leading to its eventual end in 2038.

While the GNWT's fiscal situation is a cause for concern, it should be noted that the cumulative shortfall of social housing funding between now and 2038 is over \$300 million. Without renewed federal support and a continuing commitment by this government to make investments in housing, the future of our housing programs and services will be in jeopardy.

That concludes my opening remarks. At this time I'd be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** At this time I'd like to ask the committee responsible for overseeing the department's reviews if they have any opening general comments or comments to the department's estimates. Mr. Ramsay.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The committee met with the Minister and his staff on April 9, 2008, to consider the department's 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates.

The committee noted that the total operating budget is \$81.427 million. Committee members offered the following comments on issues arising out of the review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates, and for that, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to go to my honourable colleague Mr. Jackie Jacobson, deputy chair of the committee.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Jacobson.

**Mr. Jacobson:** Thank you. Regarding the Market Housing Initiative, the purpose of the Market Housing Initiative is to attempt to improve availability of rental accommodation for essential services personnel such as teachers and nurses who are working in smaller communities. The committee recognizes that the lack of rental accommodation has caused serious implications for delivery of essential programs and services. Members support the corporation's efforts to address the need for the market housing communities to encourage all parties to work together to achieve positive results.

The CMHC funding — the funding through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to support operation amortization costs for public housing — is declining on a yearly basis and will lapse entirely by 2038. This will result in a total shortfall of O&M funding of over \$340 million. Committee members recognize the critical importance of this funding to maintain social housing. Members support the efforts of the Minister and the government in working with their provincial and territorial counterparts to lobby the federal government to retain investment in Canada's social housing programs.

Affordable housing initiatives. In 2006 the federal government committed \$50 million to the Northwest Territories through the Northern Housing Trust to be drawn down over three years. This funding was matched by the GNWT. The program is delivered through the Affordable Housing Initiative, AHI. It commits the government to construction of as many as 533 housing units within those three years.

The availability of suitable land and the lack of land within the communities continue to have significant impacts on delivery of housing under the AHI. Given these challenges, committee members expressed concern about the corporation's ability to meet commitments within the designated time

frame. Members encouraged the Minister and officials to negotiate the extension of funding through the federal government.

Committee members also understand that under the Northern Housing Trust agreement, if land issues cannot be resolved in the community, the corporation has no choice but to move new housing to new communities that do have available lots. Members encourage all parties involved in the process to continue to work to resolve these outstanding issues.

Internal audit function. As a part of the reduction exercise the Housing Corporation is proposing to eliminate the internal audit function. The two audit positions will be re-employed within the NWT audit bureau. Committee members expressed concern about the reduction and noted that one of the key findings from the Auditor General's report was the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of its operations. Members noted that the loss of this function diminishes the capacity of the corporation and the LHOs to carry out these important functions. The Minister and his officials indicated that the reorganization of the corporation would help to focus the operations on the continued improvement through monitoring.

Reporting to the staff training committee. Members are prepared to accept this approach but to see some significant results and improvement in the future through regular updates to the committee.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to pass this along to the EDI chairman. Thank you.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Ramsay.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Jacobson. Committee members expressed serious concerns with the proposed reduction to the homeownership repair program. Members noted that the reduction would impact the number of low-to moderate-income families being able to afford necessary repairs.

As community housing stocks increased through programs such as the Affordable Housing Initiative, repair programs are critical to maintaining the value of the housing stock and avoiding larger repair and replacement expenditures in the future. Members recognize that the corporation is committed to maintaining repair programs for seniors and persons with disabilities and supports their efforts.

Interruption.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Ramsay, would you continue.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some Members raised the issue of the use of bundled contracts by the Housing Corporation. These

contracts usually involve the supply, transportation and construction of housing units as part of the bids. Members indicated that this process has the potential to favour larger companies, as smaller contractors do not necessarily have the capacity to meet all of the requirements of the tender. Members suggest that the corporation consider breaking out the contracts to allow local contractors to bid on a portion of the required work.

The support of these programs is the transitional step into the homeownership program, whereby assistance is provided through a lease on a Housing Corporation home. After completing a successful two-year lease period, the tenant is expected to transition into owning the unit.

Committee members were concerned that if tenants did not want to move into a homeownership position or were unable to take on the responsibility, the units then could become additional public housing units by default. This could then drive up operations and maintenance costs for public housing stock at a time when the resources to support this work are diminishing. Members request regular updates on this program in order to monitor results.

Seniors living in public housing pay no rent, utilities or maintenance costs regardless of their income. There are currently 400 units assigned to seniors' housing across the NWT. In many cases seniors living in these units have the financial means to either pay market rent or contribute to the cost of utilities for their units. Members questioned whether it was fair for a program of last resort like public housing to have a segment of the population that is not subject to the same means testing as the rest of the program's client base. Committee members believe there is a need to strike a balance between respecting the contributions made by our elders and the financial constraints facing the social housing system.

Members also identified the need for a coordinated approach around the delivery of programs that would encourage seniors to stay in their own homes. Committee members suggest the NWT Housing Corporation along with ECE and Health and Social Services work together to provide a more focused approach to housing supports for seniors.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes the committee's opening comments on the Main Estimates for the NWT Housing Corporation, 2008–2009. Individual Members may have additional comments and questions as we proceed. Mahsi.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. At this time I'd like to ask the Minister Responsible for the Housing Corporation if he will be bringing in any witnesses. Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** 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 witnesses in. For the record, Mr. Minister, could you introduce your witnesses?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me the president, Jeff Polakoff, and the vice-president, Jeff Anderson.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Welcome, witnesses. General comments in regard to the NWT Housing Corporation. Mr. Menicoche.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Like I said in my Member's statement at the beginning of today's proceedings, I've got six small communities in my riding, and we've got many, many housing issues. Every time I travel to the communities, my constituents come to me, and they're concerned about their program or if they're being approved or about their housing and home repairs and even the condition of the homes. There are mould issues; there are construction issues.

The way I see it is that what they're actually doing is that, because they're not getting satisfactory answers from the Housing Corporation, they're actually approaching me and appealing their needs because they aren't being heard. I convey those issues to the housing department, and I'm sure the Minister can attest that he's got many, many inquiries from my office to his on many, many follow-up issues. The latest is seniors being delayed by over a year in the delivery of their repair program. In fact, they had to move out of their home for almost a year.

To me, one of the solutions is about getting an appeal-type system, something independent. I've conveyed this time and time again, Mr. Chair, that the constituents and the Housing Corporation clients are not satisfied with their answers. They're appealing to the district office, to the people that told them no, so they're going to get the same answer. That continues to happen. There's no appeal system, no independent appeal system.

I think that one of the examples that constituents talk about is the ECE system — Education, Culture and Employment system — where they have an independent appeal system. When a client is written a letter, even if it's a negative letter.... Sometimes approvals do happen in our government, so it's not always a negative. But in any of the correspondence of the clients, at the bottom of the letter....

Interruption.

**Mr. Menicoche:** At the bottom of these letters there's an actual paragraph that says that if you're not satisfied, here is the appeal system that's involved in ECE. Here's who you can contact. You've got only so many days to contact them in order to launch your appeal, and it must be in writing.

But with the Housing Corporation — at least, the last letter I looked at — it just said: please be advised that your application was received, and due to your particulars you've been refused for the program.

It's not only appealing a negative letter, Mr. Chair. There are also issues with people being previously in arrears. It's well known that we've had many, many clients in arrears. What's happening there is that the arrears are based on.... And they're very old too. One should ask that question — how old the arrears are — but they stem back sometimes even up to ten years or more. It's because clients at that time weren't satisfied with the product. They didn't sign any agreements, and they disputed the type of work, the level of work, that had occurred.

So that issue is ten years old, and today their need is that their house is getting worn down. It needs repairs; it needs some new shingles; it needs some exterior work done. A lot of it is interior work as well. But as soon as they approach the Housing Corporation, because of our new guidelines and procedures, they're denied any assistance because they've got existing arrears — and rightly so. If somebody did make a commitment to make a repayment because of a program or loan and they stopped paying it — and in this case it's certainly a clear violation of an agreement, where someone is not doing their part — it should be subject to some kind of penalty, and that's certainly the case.

But in the Housing Corporation's case, Mr. Chair, I think that if you look back at some of the disputed things, they just kind of sat on the books. They were never really addressed, so people aren't satisfied and they're not making payments. They say: I'm not paying until this is resolved.

I think that an appeal system, as well, will help sort this out, because the denial levels are coming and it's clear that they've got arrears. The Housing Corporation keeps saying no, they're not entitled because they're in arrears. But if we try to work backwards and try to resolve these arrears....

For a lot of it the Housing Corporation does have to take the blame. A lot of the constituents I speak to in this particular area are saying they don't think they got full value of, for example, a \$20,000 repair program that they're entitled to, to repay. But now the Corporation is saying that it's now \$25,000 of arrears. They have shown some flexibility there, Mr. Chair. They wanted to roll it into any new repair

program, but constituents and clients are saying: "Well, look, I wasn't happy with \$20,000 worth of work; I think there was only \$10,000 worth of repairs" — which is true, in many cases. If you research it, many programs got started, but they never finished because of contractors not finishing their work previously, or else they weren't qualified or they just left the smaller communities altogether.

I think that if we work towards this appeal-type structure, it will go a long ways in addressing many, many of our concerns. For me, I'm getting frustrated enough. I like to do the old diamond jubilee kind of approach, where you just forgive everybody's debts and say let's get on to making new and affordable houses for everybody, and let's start from scratch, because that seems to me the only way to do it.

But there are other ways — you know, restructuring the Housing Corporation to have this type of system in place where somebody can sit down with the Housing Corporation and have an open dialogue instead of just a door slam: Sorry, arrears; sorry, you're left out. In one of my communities at least 80 per cent of the program clients are in arrears. That's out of, I think, 100 homes. You've got 80 people in arrears, so 80 people who aren't eligible for any programming. They've still got leaking roofs. They've still got lots of interior problems. There's overcrowding there. They're looking for additions to expand on the current living arrangements, exterior work — the siding and the windows and the doors. Well, the list can go on from there.

Addressing these issues is getting to one of the big core issues right now: how do we address the arrears, and how do clients and constituents appeal the existing circumstances there?

I'll just end on that note, then. If the Minister can respond to that and what kind of strategy he thinks should happen here, or is there an existing strategy they're using and are looking forward to implementing to better the lives and the way constituents can use our housing programs?

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** The Minister Responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Member's comments.

The issue and concern about the appeal process has been identified clearly by the Member as well as by the Office of the Auditor General. It's been built into our framework for action. We're planning on having a process ready that we can bring forward as we gather here in the fall.

Clearly, we have a number of other things to look at. Arrears, as the Member's indicated, has been identified. We are doing an analysis of these

arrears — some of them are quite dated — to take a look on a case-by-case basis to see how much, in fact, of that amount of money — \$8 million, roughly — of rental arrears would be collectible, given whatever statutes of limitations may be there or whatever other legal impediments may be there to collect it.

While we're not looking at an amnesty — as the Member's indicated, a diamond jubilee approach — clearly, we are going to go through the amount owing. Just by that review, we're going to come to a number that we think will tell us what is collectible given the age of some of the debt.

So we will be coming forward this fall with an appeal process. As we work through the list of arrears, we're going to be coming forward to committee with that as well to show the dates and what we think is collectible in our opinion.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Next on my list I have Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Abernethy and Mr. Jacobson. Mr. Hawkins.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just would like some overview on the Minister's thoughts. I noticed some of the opening comments seemed to be missing some highlights where disabilities were concerned, from my point of view.

I have a number of constituents. From time to time they come forward, and they discuss the issue of housing, accessible housing, and the sense of what stock exists there. I've got constituents who just don't have anywhere else to go. They're waiting for opportunities that don't exist.

I'm just curious what the Minister is doing about the situation, in light that it's pretty thin in his opening remarks, as well as availability throughout the North. I'd like to hear what comments the Minister has regarding that.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** We have, as the one indication of the work we do with folks with disabilities, about 267 barrier-free units across the North. There are 51 in Yellowknife Housing Authority, for example. Then we start at the top with Aklavik; there are 14. I'd be happy to share this list with the Members if they wish.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll get that circulated so the Members can have a chance to look at it.

**Mr. Hawkins:** I thank the Minister for that. I'll certainly be more than willing to accept that copy and review the detail further myself.

I find that one of the challenges is.... As an example, I have a constituent who goes to the Yellowknife Housing Authority, and they just don't

have any — not necessarily barrier-free — disabled units; they just don't have anything available. I don't think what they're looking for is the all-inclusive barrier-free unit where every door is fixed, whether the fixtures are changed, whether the ramp is there or not. They're looking for accessible living, and we just don't have that stock available in Yellowknife. Although I would be extremely surprised if the Minister has that specific number of what's available in Yellowknife other than what's in the portfolio as a whole — I'd be surprised if he knew how many were free at this time, because there just doesn't seem to be any, or I should say that there doesn't seem to be any free available stock for those people coming forward.

It's very disheartening when you have someone who also has a family. That causes a further problem: how do you house people with social needs who have families? That challenge is very disheartening when you send them down to the Yellowknife Housing Authority, where they're supposed to go. Outside of ministerial intervention, they have to sit there and wait and wait. It's really sad.

Mr. Chairman, if I could hear how the Minister plans to improve that housing stock for families specifically with disabilities I would really appreciate some highlights and some information today.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** The president of the Housing Corporation, Mr. Polakoff.

**Mr. Polakoff:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the Member for that question. I think it's an excellent question to be posed. From a public policy perspective what I'd like to do is just comment on where I think the Housing Corporation is going as it relates to the need for disabled units.

The Member has indicated that perhaps everyone who requires more accessible types of design may not require a fully accessible unit, and I would agree. I think one of the solutions to that is looking at visitable design. That's something the Housing Corporation has been looking at over the past year or so.

When I'm talking about visitable design, I'm talking about a design that looks at such things as levered door handles, wider doorways and so on. It's not a fully accessible unit, but it's a unit that can be looked at from the perspective of features that are more visitable in nature. It's a concept that's been utilized in other jurisdictions, and it's gaining in popularity. It's also something that's not nearly as expensive as fully accessible units. So I would say that visitable design is an area we're looking at right now in terms of all of our units, as opposed to just looking at units for the disabled only. We're taking a more visitable-design approach.

**Mr. Hawkins:** I appreciate the president's point of view. He and I probably agree very closely on this matter. In some cases accessible living just means you have a unit to access on the main floor. It means you don't have to go upstairs. Accessible living could mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people. I would agree further that not everyone needs the full-blown fit up.

But, Mr. Chairman, I think the housing pool is a little thin out there — I can't speak for the territorial communities, but I can certainly speak for Yellowknife community — and that's presenting a challenge.

To elaborate a little further, we have a number of constituents who wish to.... I'll use terminology such as aging in place. I'd like to know what programs exist right now in the sense of making modifications so that we can keep some of those people who are disabled or who are seniors in their houses. It will be a lot cheaper if we can keep at them at home, and of course, in the context of comfort, they enjoy being at home rather than being institutionalized. Can somebody inform me as to what's available for folks who wish to age in place?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Chairman, from the actual physical—infrastructure point of view, the Housing Corporation collapsed 14 programs into four. Seniors' home repair and such is now encapsulated within the broader CARE program. There have been some concerns raised that while we raise the amount of money that individual seniors may be eligible for, it's more difficult to access. While we've made that change, we've committed to taking a look at that, along with committee. The aging in place also speaks to other issues across the department, things like home care support so that individuals who need some assistance around the home can get that — if there are issues with their medication or if there are issues with meals on wheels and those types of things.

Of course, there is the other support for seniors with the fuel subsidy program. The taxation relief, if you live in your own home, and those types of things all are geared to create as much support as we can to keep seniors or elders in their own homes as long as possible.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Will there be detail in this budget that demonstrates where I can look and see what value is placed on a potential program? For example, if a senior — I have a few of them in the riding — wanted to access aging in place money for a walk-in bathtub, those types of things.... Those are the types of things I'm talking about when I say aging in place. Is there something here that a senior could tap into if they wanted a ramp into their house? They are finding the stairs just a little difficult to challenge as they move on in years, but

they have many good years left in their own home. That's the type of detail I am looking for.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Under the CARE program seniors are a priority. That's where the money for those types of initiatives would be housed.

**Mr. Hawkins:** How much money is housed in that CARE program?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Chair, I'll ask Mr. Anderson to give you the number.

**Mr. Anderson:** We have \$742,000 set aside for our CARE program.

Interruption.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We also have some of our CMHC renovations programs that are cost shared with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that provide some money toward disabled and emergency repair programs as well.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Thank you. Next on my list I have Mr. Abernethy, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. McLeod and Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Abernethy.

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to speak to the opening remarks from the Minister Responsible for the NWT Housing Corp. I am happy to see that the department is going to be investing \$35 million to construct 174 new units in communities across the NWT.

I think we need to continue to invest in the infrastructure. I think we need to continue to invest in houses. However, based on my comments in my Member's statement a few days ago, I talked about the fact that where we're constructing these homes doesn't always make a ton of sense to me. For instance, there were four units in Fort Res that are sitting vacant — that have been sitting vacant for two years.

To me, if we are going to be investing in building new homes in these communities, I think it would be important to make sure we have done a really thorough analysis to ensure that there are people eligible for those houses. Now, I understand that times change and people's situations change, so I understand maybe building some on spec. I think four is a little excessive in a little community the size of Fort Res. I think we would have been better served in Fort Res by assisting those individuals to upgrade their homes or make them more fuel efficient to help them reduce costs, as well as maybe enhance the stock for the public housing we have available. Four in Fort Res sitting vacant seems excessive.

I strongly encourage you to get out there and start putting homes in communities where they're needed, but I encourage caution. I encourage a little bit of research and analysis into each of the communities through the LHOs, as well as the band councils, to ensure that any houses we're building are going to be utilized. I'm a little on the cheap side, so having houses sitting there costing us money every day that people aren't in frustrates me.

As far as Fort Res goes, I would love for you to work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and come up with some alternative solutions for those homes in Fort Res for the people of Fort Res. When you build new ones, be cautious where you put them. Like I said, I can understand one or two extra that you think might be able to go to somebody in the community or, as people's situations change, having a house available for those people would be good. But building them and having them sit vacant for extended periods of time doesn't do anybody any good.

I'm also a little concerned about the reductions to the repairs of public housing stocks as well as the home ownership repair programs. I'm sure the department is going to indicate that they're undersubscribed and they're underutilized and therefore we can justify reducing them. I would suggest that they may be underutilized due to the fact that the Housing Corp isn't getting out there and advertising the programs to the degree that is necessary.

In my travels through some of the communities I saw a lot of homes. A lot of them were in really great shape, but some of them were in pretty rough shape, where some funding and assistance would go a long way. I believe most of the people who live in these houses would love to take advantage of a program that would help them upgrade their homes, fix them where necessary, as well as help them put in alternative heating sources and other cost-saving measures that would help them save money in the running and maintenance of their homes.

I was a little disappointed to see the cuts to those programs. I think they were important. I think the Housing Corp has an opportunity to get out there and promote the programs, enhance the programs and help people access them, rather than just claiming that they're underutilized when clearly you go to the communities and you see some need for some repairs and renovations. I was disappointed there were some cuts there. So no real questions, just comments. As we move through, I will ask some specific questions, and that's that.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Polakoff.

**Mr. Polakoff:** Thanks to the Member for the question. I'll add one more thing to the Member's

statement, just in terms of making sure we get the best use out of units. It's also a matching of units to the programs that are available and making sure that the programs are conducive to that. In the case of Fort Res, we had identified some potential last summer, when we were working with our colleagues at ECE, for utilizing units for teacher housing and so on.

The points he raises are well taken. We need to make sure that the units are used appropriately and make sure we use them in such a way that they fit the needs of the community as well. We would agree with the Member's comment.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Jacobson.

**Mr. Jacobson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Today, regarding the housing up in Nunakput and in the Beaufort-Delta regions.... We have a lot of problems with professional housing for our staff, or teacher housing, and the nursing staff. We need to really help them: help BDEC, help the hospital in regard to housing and staffing problems in Nunakput.

The Minister and I and the president of the Housing Corporation went on a tour of Nunakput, which they seemed to really need. Teachers and nursing staff shouldn't have to worry about the problem of housing. I think they should be able to just go in there and do their work and be able to go a place at the end of the day that they call home. I really think the Beaufort-Delta Education Council needs help in regard to finding teacher housing. Some teachers are not coming back just because of the housing issues we have in my riding.

Another issue I have is people who are hard to house, clients being evicted. They have to really rely on family once they're evicted. I really think we should look at that at an LHO level, as well, to help them to be able to provide for themselves and give them a roof over their heads.

Another big issue goes right back to the homeless in our communities. I think they're coming from the communities to the southern part, to Yellowknife. It's a big problem down here, with all the homelessness issues that we could try to fix if we work together in our communities. I wish NWT Housing would look into one unit in each community as a homeless shelter and give it to the community to run.

We really need to look at our elder situation due to the high cost of fossil fuels and of home ownership for elders, even for regular elders living in the facilities. Everything's going up in price. Old-age pension cheques are not going to go so far. Elders are facing a high cost of living. I really worry about it this coming year. Also the Housing Corp should look into more subsidy programs at ECE in regard to that as well.

In my riding there are a lot of safety issues, such as black mould. Elders can't open doors or windows in Paulatuk in the winter with an east wind because of blowing snow coming in. We need to do more in regard to that issue of having a safe home and broader issues that we could deal with.

The biggest thing, I think, is that we all say we like working together to help our people. This is the place to do it, and I know it could be done.

Again, I'd like to thank the Minister for travelling up with me into my riding. He knows my problems, and I'm here to work with you to get these problems fixed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue of housing for professionals is clearly a source of concern. As the Member indicated, we travelled around Nunakput, and it was raised in almost every community. We've offered up a couple of things. If there's market housing units that are there that are available, we're prepared to look at those. We're also looking at the issue of loan guarantees so that we can work with hamlets or development corporations or businesses, to look at putting some houses in for professionals that are basically a business opportunity for the community. We've started working with Behchoko on a pilot basis. We made the offer in every community in the Member's riding, in Tuk, Paulatuk, Sachs and Ulukhaktok. We're committed to that process as well.

The issue of the hard-to-house is a challenge for us all. We don't want people freezing to death in the wintertime. But the reality is, in many cases, these folks have had, in fact, more than one roof over their heads over the course of time and that their lifestyle choices often make it difficult even for their families to be able to be a support to them. So it's a challenge to us all, which is why we had set up a homelessness fund to deal with emergency situations like that.

The high cost of fuel and more subsidies is going to be one that's going to require some discussion. We know that the Territorial Power Support Program is going to go up probably by another \$5 million here in the next number of months. The price of fuel is something we don't control at this point.

But, clearly, the cost of living in communities is high. The price of power.... How do we deal with fuel? Can we switch to biomass? Are there other ways, as we've talked about, in terms of changing the capital planning process with NTPC to bring down those costs? These are all things we have to look at.

We do have on the list, clearly, the units that the Member pointed out, with the doors freezing shut

and having to use to a rope and a winch to open them up. So we're going to follow up on that as well.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Jacobson.

**Mr. Jacobson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have nothing more to add at this time. I'd just like to thank the Minister and hope we get all my list done. Thank you.

**Chairman (Mr. Krutko):** Mr. Robert McLeod.

**Mr. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just going to take a few minutes here to make some general comments on the Minister's opening remarks. The first thing I noticed in his opening comments is the word "increase." I've noticed in a couple of departments now where we're talking reductions. I look at that and think, "There must not be anything for Inuvik in here, because it's an increase." I'm starting to think Inuvik means "Place of Reduction" instead of "Place of Man."

One of the things I've noticed is that in some communities with older units I've started seeing some of those come down. I think that's appreciated. I think that's a result of the CMHC funding and transferring of numbers. I'm not sure if that's the case. That's not really even a question.

Another issue I always have is with the home ownership programs. I've been dealing with a couple of constituents for the last couple of years that have gone through the application process. They've done the educational part of it, which they're required to do as a condition of their application. I don't agree with that. I think once they're approved, they should do the educational part of it. These are folks that are living in public housing, and they're both making good money. They're able to maintain a unit if they're given a home ownership unit. In some communities I see some empty units that you can't find clients for. I don't think you'd have that case in Inuvik.

One thing I've suggested in the past and I'll suggest again is the difference in the amount of money that people are eligible for. I still think there should be blocks of funding, a set amount. They make applications for it. If they're approved from the Housing Corp, they take that; they go to the bank and they get a mortgage. With the high cost of living up here it's harder for people to try to save for a down payment on a mortgage. I think we're able to help them that way. I think the money would go a lot further if you had \$50,000 blocks that are approved. Then they can use that money, go to the bank and apply for a mortgage. If they're turned down by the bank, then — and that's between them and the bank — at least the Housing Corp's done their part in trying to assist these people with getting into home ownership.

The Supported Lease Program is another one that I always have concerns with. I still think, sometimes, that it's second-tier public housing, because I'm not sure what's going to happen after two years. If they find they can't maintain the unit, do they stay in there as tenants of the local housing authority? Do they vacate the unit, and we put another person in there? In the meantime, what happens to them? So there are still some questions that I have on that.

Housing does seem sometimes to try and address some of the needs that are out there. Whether they do it properly or not is subject to debate. We see the Market Housing Program, where they were trying to meet a need. That somehow didn't work out quite the way that we wanted it to.

Another concern I have is with our contributions to the NWT Housing Corp. I'm not quite sure if our contributions go up as the CMHC funding sunsets. That would be a question that I would have.

As for seniors' repairs, I've had the opportunity to deal with Housing on a few occasions to do with funding for seniors, and they've been quite helpful. They've managed to take care of a few problems. It's still not perfect, though. We hear from seniors who are trying to access something as simple as furnace repair. I'm dealing with a senior on that right now. All in all I think Housing does try to look after housing needs. Some of the disagreements that I have and some other Members have is how they go about it. They seem to be changing their mind every couple of years. The 14 or 17 programs that they had going, they put them down into four programs, so I'm not quite sure how that's working out.

Then again, I'll mention my reluctance or my — I don't know how you would say it. Does the ECE housing transfer...? I mean, we had a briefing just recently, and we were given an update, and I'm still following that quite closely because some folks still have some concerns about that. I've been trying to give it the benefit of the doubt for the last two years, but I still seem to be hearing from the tenants that it's something that's not quite working.

With that, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to make a few general comments to the Minister's opening remarks. Of all the issues we have across the Northwest Territories, the one that we hear about the most would probably be in the Housing department. Housing does try to supply a need, and I've seen some small steps forward, but I also see a step backward in a couple of other cases. I'm not quite sure what the overall solution to the problem is.

We hear about arrears all the time, and that's another one that I've had some concerns with: mortgage arrears that are paid to the Housing Corporation. I think if we do the block funding,

where they take the money that we approve, go to the bank, then the onus is on the tenant and the bank. The Housing Corporation would basically be out of it other than the forgivable portion of their \$50,000 block that I keep suggesting. The arrears are another concern, when you have too many people not paying their mortgage. Some are faithfully paying month after month after month. They see their next door neighbours basically staying in the house for nothing with a yard full of toys they themselves really can't afford. They're trying to make their mortgage payments. They took the contract they signed very seriously. I think that's an area that Housing is trying to address. I think we're up to \$6 million or \$8 million now in mortgage arrears. I think that has to cause us some concern, because the longer we let this thing go, then everybody is just finally going to throw up their hands and say: "Why bother paying? Nobody else is paying, so why should I? They're going to forgive me; they're going to give me the house at the end of the day." That's an attitude we have to work on.

There are still some issues with the condition of some of the houses. I've heard a couple of comments about black mould, and I think Housing is trying to address that. Not to sound that I'm all on board with everything Housing's doing — I mean, I think they're trying to do some good stuff. I think they're trying to find some direction. I think listening to the concerns of the Regular Members....

Interruption.

**Mr. McLeod:** I think I'm still on here, right? I am? Okay. I think I was pretty well coming down to the end of my comments, anyway. I don't think there were really any questions there. If I have any questions, I'll save them for the page-by-page. So with that, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments. Thank you.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Even though there's no specific question, there are a lot of good points raised. In terms of funds going to Inuvik, out of the \$41 million this year for all our programs, it's \$5.1 million. There are 20 units scheduled to be built this year as well in Inuvik to help meet some of their housing needs. The issue of having to take this step program before as opposed to after you get approved is one that we agree with as well. We're going to look at revamping that so that once you've been identified as a successful candidate, you can take that. We do have arrangements right now where you can get basically block-funded with a non-repayable loan up to \$90,000, depending on your income and where you fit on that priority, to be able to go to a bank to help you get a full mortgage.

As for seniors' repairs, the issue has been raised, and we're committed to looking at how we deliver that one. One of the things that has provided us with more clarity in our purpose and more direction has been the fact that we finally just released our strategic plan that we have been working on for the last six months or so. The Auditor General pointed out the need for a plan as well — not only a plan of where you want to go but laying out how you're going to get there and how you're going to be measured.

As for the issue of rental assessments, we'll continue to work on that. As we move on boards and agencies to integrate health, housing and education, I think it's going to bring those services together in a way that will allow it to be hopefully even more effective. We are committed to dealing with the arrears. We have been talking about that. That has been very well laid out for us by the Office of the Auditor General.

Another issue that is of interest that hasn't been touched on yet: we are going to be moving to regionally debundle contracts so that there is an opportunity in regions for local businesses to be able to bid without having to bid for the whole territory. We are very concerned about the issue of mould, and we have some workshops being held north and south here in the territory with CMHC, who are recognized as the national leaders on the technical side of dealing with that particular issue.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just general comments on the Housing Corporation from what I have dealt with over the past nine months or so since our election.

To date, about 80 per cent of all of the concerns from communities in Tu Nedhe have been on housing. The majority of those concerns have been on seniors' housing and home ownership. I look at this as a serious problem. I see it as a problem that started with the fact that the NWT Housing Corporation changed completely. They changed their focus on housing without completing a needs survey. The needs survey is essentially a tool that allows you to develop some sort of a housing plan. The housing strategy lasts until the next needs survey and is then based on the needs survey, looking at what the needs are, the incomes in those communities and so on. Then some sort of a focused housing strategy is developed.

What happens here is that the NWT Housing Corporation, without the benefit of a needs survey, has proceeded to change programs designed and put in place for the needs survey that was looking at the needs at that point. It changed their focus by, as mentioned earlier, reducing from 14 programs to

4 programs. I don't really understand the concept of that. To me, it eliminated the focus on communities. Not every community in the Northwest Territories has the same needs.

The way I look at the communities, there are some that have a core need lower than the national average. An example would be, although I'm not trying to take away from these communities, the city of Yellowknife or the town of Norman Wells. Both of those communities have core needs far below the national average, while we have many, many, many communities across the Territories that are three times the national average. What I expected the Housing Corporation to do was to focus on reducing core need across the territory by addressing the core need issues that were much higher than the national average.

When I talk about focus, I am talking about a focus on the communities. In reality I don't understand how the Housing Corporation can develop a strategy when you have needs survey data that's old. Therefore, how do they know what has happened over the last 40 years, with the strategy that was in place up until that point, to be able to rewrite the programs? How do they know which communities have the highest core need or the lowest core need, except if they look back into history and see the trend? I'm assuming that may be the only way, and you can imagine how inaccurate that could be.

In addition to that, additional focus on the needs of various core needs groups.... Back several years ago seniors had the highest core needs. Individuals over 50 years old had the highest core need across the country, followed by single people with single incomes. So there was some focus on those two groups, and then the communities with the highest core needs were also the focus of the Housing Corporation in order to address the core need issues. Like I said, it's a matter of maybe lifting some serious core need issues.

I don't know if this is correct, but assuming that the national average core needs issues is around 12 per cent across the country and that there are communities in the Northwest Territories that are well below that, and there are communities that are above 36 per cent — more than three times the national average.... My theory is that the Housing Corporation has to be able to concentrate its resources on the areas where there is most need. Right now it seems like the contribution from the Housing Corporation, the Infrastructure Acquisition Plan.... Although there is not enough in repairs really to do any really significant work other than maybe maintain a few people in their private homes for a few additional years, there is no real strategy to address the big issue of repair programs for senior citizens.

Like I said, the majority of the work in Tu Nedhe that has been dealing with seniors, where they have lost a program that was at one time in place — an easy program to administer by the Housing Corporation and an easy program for the seniors to understand.... That was taken out; it was replaced with a program which requires a lot more documentation than the seniors are used to dealing with. This will go on, and I'm assuming that eventually the seniors will get to a core needs point where the houses will not be repairable.

Concentrating a little bit of money on helping the seniors before their housing goes beyond economical repair would go a long way to assisting housing in general. I know that some complained about a lot of the seniors just jumping into public housing so that they don't have to pay rent. However, that's a program that's done, and that's a path. But right now we have seniors that are in their own homes that can just afford to operate their houses. They can't really afford to do any enhancements in their units. I think that the Housing Corporation, with a little bit more expenditure, a little more focus on what they have to do in order to address these issues, could keep a lot of seniors out of core needs and eliminate additional pressures on the public housing inventory.

I think the affordable housing strategy is a good strategy, if the Housing Corporation had a good idea of the core need in each of the communities and were able to compare core needs from one community to another. Like I've indicated several times, my community of Fort Resolution in Tu Nedhe has empty AHL units — four or five empty units. What's happening is that those units are based on the core need of the community, and they end up being inaccessible to the community. So what happens generally is that those houses will slowly, eventually address another housing issue that could be housing for professionals.

However, that's not the issue that those units were attempting to address, so they do nothing towards addressing the core need issue in that community. They will address other important areas, mind you, for teachers who need housing and so on. But that money is supposed to be focused on addressing core needs issues, so it's beyond me why the houses were built and not allocated by this time. I hear that the houses were only there for eight months, but I know they've been there longer. I don't know if they weren't finalized until eight months ago or whatever.

The other thing is that I hope the Housing Corporation would have some sort of a strategy in place that would address the whole issue of the CMHC declining fund. It seems like this is starting to hit us, and it looks like the Housing Corporation is going to be ready to react. I'm hoping that when

the CMHC money starts to decline sharply a couple of years from now, the Housing Corporation has a strategy in place to address that issue and not just a reaction.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Chairman, we're in the final year — actually, the final months — of the current needs survey that was done in 2004. Granted, it's in its last year, and as the Member suggested, the information is somewhat dated. We are looking at moving forward in January to March of '09 to look at redoing the needs survey, working in conjunction with the Executive as well. We're also using, where it's applicable, the 2006 census data, which gives us some information that's more current.

The move and consolidation of 14 programs into four was done after a process of consultation. One of the big concerns from folks across the North was the need to simplify the access and the number of programs to make it easier to understand. That was one of the intents of consolidating from 14 to four. As I indicated in this House and I indicated to the Social Programs Committee, clearly we're prepared to look at and revisit how those programs are structured, the number of them, and things like the seniors' repair program possibly being moved out of there into a stand-alone program again. So we're prepared to look at that.

We have tried to be flexible, and we recognize that there have been houses built that have been sitting empty. But as the Member for Tu Nedhe will recollect, we went to the LHO and talked about the housing delivery coming up. Initially it was geared for single people, and we were told very clearly that it in fact should be geared more to larger families. So we adjusted that. We also are going to convert one of the housing units into fundings, to put more into the repair program. So we are interested in trying to be creative, responsive and flexible.

We struggle with our public housing stock. If we can take new units that are built and make them public housing, then it usually has to be done.... If we can take one of the older, more deteriorated units off the market.... The issue of owner money is what's critical for us with the public housing units.

We are working, both at the national table and locally, in terms of what we do with the declining CHMC funding. I'm optimistic at this point that the federal government is going to step up to the table to make some kind of arrangement with us. In the meantime we have to look at picking up the slack. It's a very, very big-ticket item, especially when you listen to the fiscal circumstances we're currently in.

**Mr. Beaulieu:** I have one more short comment on the Housing Corporation Mains. I notice that in the

Infrastructure Acquisition Plan, which is part of the O&M inside the Mains, they have a fairly good-sized budget of over \$38 million for this fiscal year, and then it drops off considerably, like in half. Again, I guess it's due to the fact that there would be no AHF funding coming in.

If this is the level of money that's needed in order to keep up to the core need issues across the Territories, I'm wondering if the corporation has any plan at all to somehow replace that money, aside from the motion that was made today that hopefully, if that gets anywhere, addresses the problem. If not, and it ends up being the resources that GNWT is going to be addressing the problem with, it would be good to have the corporation be able to tell us in advance, beyond this year, how they hope to address that issue.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Chairman, we have \$17 million — that's the GNWT's share — that we're hoping to be able to carry on with. Even though the AHF at this point is not scheduled or slated to be extended, we're going to continue to work with the federal government, hopefully to get them to the table. We're going to be looking at trying to reinvest, once we start collecting on arrears, into housing.

We're very interested in partnerships like we did with Bailey House, to allow us to move forward on projects as well, and we're moving seriously to look at loan guarantees, as we've indicated, trying to deal with housing for professionals in communities — with hamlets, dev corps, any other businesses that are interested in putting up housing. So there are a number of things that we have on the go. But there will be a big hole if there's no extension to the AHF program and the federal funding dries up completely.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Bromley.

**Mr. Bromley:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have one brief issue at this time, and it's referred to in the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure.

The Affordable Housing Initiative had a progressive goal of getting 530 units in place, and I understand there are 174 planned for this year. I am concerned about the availability of suitable land and the land tenure issue in communities. It's something that's come up a number of times with my constituency concerns and also with a number of people who have been stymied in their home-ownership plans through some of the Housing Corporation's programs. I'm interested in what's being done about that and specifically how many of the 174 proposed units for this year have land secured for them now. Comments on those questions would be appreciated.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you. We'll give you the information we do have. I do agree with the Member that the issue of land tenure is the significant one, to the extent that we've put some land where.... In fact, we're looking within the Tlicheo, for example. They're looking at bringing in a lands person to help sort out some of the land issues. I'll get Mr. Polakoff to speak as much as he can to that type of detail.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Mr. Polakoff.

**Mr. Polakoff:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to reiterate what Minister Miltenberger has indicated and what the Member has indicated, we would agree with Mr. Bromley that land is a significant issue.

We do, however, think that we've made some significant progress over the last couple of years simply because by focusing on the need for land tenure, that's required us to get into some fairly detailed discussions with communities on different options that may be available to them. When you're dealing with situations like land claims, we want to be absolutely sure that we're not interfering with land claims. At the same time, we also want to be sure that we're working with communities toward the same end, and that is getting housing on the ground.

While we have to secure our land tenure, we also understand that there are different ways of doing so through long-term leases and so on. As I say, we feel that we've made some pretty good progress. We've done so with folks in the Akaicho and other groups. Overall, we think that the kind of progress that we're making now on land is going to serve us very well over time.

**Mr. Bromley:** I understand that you'll get me the information on how many units we have land secured for this year out of 174. Are things looking better for next year, and do we see an end to this issue in the near future? Or is this going to be an ongoing situation?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Yes, we will get you that information. This issue has also been pointed out by the Office of the Auditor General — and, no, we don't anticipate it diminishing in importance or any more land being freed up. The process is going to continue to be, I think, quite difficult in terms of being able to put houses down on land where there's tenure. We do have units, but in some cases no land to put them on. But we will get that information for the Member.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is in regard to the whole area of home ownership programs. As we all know, the government in the past couple years has re-profiled its programs. We went from 14 programs to four general programs. It was supposed to simplify the process. It was supposed to make dollars more accessible in regard to homeowners and people who need emergency repairs but also dollars to repair their units.

The thing that frustrates me is that going through the budget process, we can see under the Main Estimates for 2007–2008 that they were looking at \$2 million for this program, which was just being rolled out. It's a new initiative. A lot of money was spent on PR and advertising and promotion of this program, yet in regard to the Revised Mains, it was \$3 million. So that tells me there was a major increase in people applying for this program; it went up by \$1 million, yet in regard to this budget process, it's being cut to \$742,000. If anything, we should be enhancing the program rather than cutting it by almost two-thirds.

For myself, it's critical. I know a few Members touched on that if you go into a community, you can see the nice modern houses. But there are a lot of homeowners who basically have units that were built some 20 or 30 years ago, in regard to Webers and access units, HAP units, whatnot. Those homeowners need to be able to access emergency repairs or repair programs. Again, going through the budget process, we've enhanced the Housing Corporation's executive profile by putting more positions there; we've established a few more senior positions in the corporation. Yet we have drastically cut on the program side. For myself, that's an area I have a real problem with.

Just on another item, Mr. Chair, in regard to the area of housing programs, emergency repairs, seniors' repairs, we get a lot of frustrated people in our constituency who apply year after year after year for programs. On the one hand, they get accepted for.... They wait and wait and wait to get a response back from the regional office. But the whole idea of emergency repair is because it's an emergency. It needs to get quick attention, needs to be quickly responded to so that you can deal with the emergency at hand.

I think that as a corporation we have to do a better job of dealing with emergencies that come up by way of the Emergency Repair Program, especially for seniors in our communities who, in most cases, need the seniors' assistance program. For a lot of them we want to try to keep the seniors in their own homes as long as they can but, more importantly, make it a safer environment for them to live in. Again, that program is like pulling teeth in communities just to get someone to go in, service the individual's burners or check to make sure that

things are being maintained and basically serviced on a regular basis.

Again, you know, there's no reason that these programs couldn't be delivered by the Local Housing Authority, a local contractor. Give him a contract to do it every year so that he goes in and does it.

For the amount of time that we deal with applications, people calling their MLAs.... I mean, I spend more time dealing with housing issues as an MLA than I probably deal with other health care issues and education issues. It's always one of those issues that's complicated by the process. There's so much process, so many applications, so many review processes that we have to streamline it with the whole idea of making it more manageable. That was the idea of getting away from 14 programs to four areas. But, again, I don't think we're doing justice by cutting that program before it even gets off the ground.

So, Mr. Chair, I'll leave those questions with the Minister and hope to see what his response is. I will have more to say on this.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just make a couple of comments. I'll ask Mr. Polakoff if he could fill in with more detail.

Clearly, the issue of home repairs is an important one. But one of the struggles we have — and that's why we have money in the budget for apprentices — is every community is struggling for an adequate number of tradesmen to actually get the work done.

We're interested in, of course, sitting down, as I've indicated already. If there are ways that we can further streamline or improve the process in terms of how programs are delivered, we're prepared to do that.

I'll ask Mr. Polakoff to speak in more detail about the money that was moved out of this home repair program and the corporation plan of how we're going to carry on doing business.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Polakoff.

**Mr. Polakoff:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. As the Minister has indicated, maintenance is an area that we think is very important. We think it's important now. We think it's important into the future.

At the same time we do have some capacity issues, and we've got some issues that we're dealing with from a planning perspective as we move forward. I guess we're in the happy circumstance that we did

get money from the federal government for a pretty robust capital program over the last three years. We're in our final year of that build, with some potential for some additional building.

It becomes a matter of trying to prioritize where we're going. We're also hopeful that once we get through our major capital build project, we can put increased emphasis on our maintenance program.

But the Member's correct. Maintenance is absolutely important, and it's something that we recognize as an important issue for Housing and just about as important as getting the houses on the ground. Right now our focus has been on the capital delivery. We hope to move into a more robust maintenance program in the future.

**Mr. Krutko:** You know, as a government and as a corporation, I think we have to develop a comprehensive report or some sort of a process in regard to looking at the holistic approach of housing. I'm not just talking housing as a stick-built unit. I'm talking about housing for all classes of people, from disabled people to seniors to families to singles to transitional housing to basically shelters. I mean, we have to look at the whole configuration of housing, right from, like I say, the time an individual is born to the time they pass away, through a seniors' home or whatever, through that system of housing.

I think that most jurisdictions in the country have looked at that. They have a comprehensive approach to housing. They work with NGOs. They work with seniors' societies. They work with the private sector to look at housing and exactly what our long-term needs are — not five years down the road or ten years down the road — and where we're going to be in 20 years, where we're going to be in 50 years, and look at it through a comprehensive approach, looking at housing.

Also in regard to urban housing, rural housing and a comprehensive idea of where we're going as a government.... Not just have a reaction every year to the budget process but look long term at where we're going for housing.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask the Minister: would he seriously consider re-profiling or putting the dollars back with regard to the contribution assistance for residential enhancement programs, in which there was \$3 million and now it's \$750,000 less? Is this something that the Minister can look at, re-profiling that amount, knowing that it has a detrimental effect on the whole idea of the programs and services that we deliver, and especially in regard to home repairs and assistance for homeowners?

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** We were given targets, like other departments, and we had tough decisions to make. If we look at re-profiling or putting that money back, we'd be looking at trying

to find where we could take it from, unless there's new money made available. Given our financial circumstances, that's not a very imminent reality or possibility. So if that recommendation is made, of course we will look at it to see how we can adjust or accommodate to the best of our ability.

**Mr. Krutko:** Maybe I could suggest something to the Minister. I notice that amortization is increased by over \$1 million, so maybe that's a start.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** We appreciate the suggestion from the Member, and we'll be looking at all opportunities.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Menicoche.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to revitalize an old friend of mine, Granny from Nahanni. She's got one of our new modern homes that we had built for her, but we're finding that the cost of living and the pressures are impacting her income. The cost of heating fuel has really risen astronomically, as well as the cost of power and electricity. Actually, I tell people we're fortunate that summer has come along here, because I don't think that people could have afforded their homes much longer. It's very stressful on households and on everybody throughout the North.

I know that we had discussions about fourplexes, sixplexes, that type of unit, to get away from individual heating units and start moving toward more different — well, to me it's moving towards district heating. In the units that we're building, I believe that if we move towards duplexes or fourplexes, it would be a lot better, especially in this day and age, and more efficient. I'm quite certain of that. I'd like to know if the Housing Corporation is moving in that direction.

As well, with respect to efficiency, what types of homes are we planning? Are we going to continue to build the old homes, or are we looking at something more efficient and more useful to people in our communities? I'd like to know if the corporation is moving in the direction of looking at any strategies toward that area.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** We are looking at the issue of multi-built — where you have more than one unit built together to minimize your costs, to minimize your outside walls, to reduce your energy consumption. In some cases we're also looking at the use of pellet stoves. One of the broader things we're looking at is new construction. We're not just going to build houses to old standards, but look at the R value, the types of windows, the types of

doors, the types of entryways, so that you minimize heat loss and all those types of things.

We want to look at the types of heating systems we're using and, in the broader term, in the communities that are diesel communities, I think the issue of some type of district power and heating generation. They have generators now that can turn out up to ten megawatts of power, that can operate on wood pellets, which are used extensively in Europe, in places like Sweden. I think there's a tremendous opportunity for us to investigate that type of technology for those communities that rely solely on diesel generation. It would help drop the cost, get us off diesel and uncontrollable costs. So there are a number of areas that we're working on.

**Mr. Menicoche:** I just want to switch gears a little bit and talk about the whole area of on-the-land programs and housing available to build on the land. I think this is the second year where that program has disappeared. I don't know. With the Elders on the Land program constituents have been asking me time and time again, "Can I get my application in for the Elders on the Land program? Mr. So-and-so got it, and he's doing quite well." In fact, a lot of people in my riding are looking at returning to the land, and some of them still live there. For whatever reason, they didn't get their allocation or apply to build a home in their traditional area and actually still live out there too, Mr. Chair.

Particularly in Fort Liard they have lots of land users out there, and they ask me about it. I'd just like to know: will the department look at that program again and bring it back in another form? Because it is providing homes for families, and in this case it's supporting their traditional lifestyle and building that home in their traditional area. I'd just like to know if the Housing Corporation will be looking at that again, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Chairman, if the client or individual is in need of a primary residence and it happens to be not in a community, we have the capacity to work with them. If it's going to be a secondary residence for other partial use, then that program has been, as the Member indicated, discontinued. Given our circumstances, just trying to meet the needs of people for primary residences, we don't have the capacity and aren't contemplating bringing that forward to help people with secondary or tertiary residences.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Absolutely. I certainly agree with the Minister that building secondary homes for people is not a goal of this government or should be for anybody else. If they want to do that, they should certainly do that on their own, but primary residences are certainly something that I believe we have to continue with, and I certainly support that.

With respect to elders eligibility programming, I'm finding that some of our elders are actually being denied programming. I don't think it's an arrears problem at all there, Mr. Chair, but it's an income threshold problem. They're senior citizens, and their sole source of income, of course, is Old Age pension in many cases. Many of them don't have the benefit of any corporate or government pension at all. The Old Age supplement is pretty much all they're entitled to. So maybe the Minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but based on that type of income, are they still eligible for programming, or indeed they're being held to the letter of the law where they're not making enough income to make a mortgage payment, Mr. Chair.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. Polakoff.

**Mr. Polakoff:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Member for the question. Just from a public housing perspective, as far as seniors are concerned, there is no minimum requirement; it continues to be based on income. As far as seniors are concerned, their income is not counted once they are seniors.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Mr. Menicoche.

**Mr. Menicoche:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That's all the questions I have for right now.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Ms. Bisaro.

**Ms. Bisaro:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a number of comments which have already been made, so I'll just highlight them. I don't expect answers. I think they've been answered already, but I wanted to point out some concerns which I have.

We just discussed housing for seniors. My concern is housing for seniors — I don't know a better way to put it — who have money. I believe there needs to be — probably more so in Yellowknife than in any other community — some sort of housing source for seniors who have a certain amount of money. There needs to be some sort of a subsidy for seniors who can afford their own place but can't afford the full cost of it.

I am concerned about the lack of housing for disabled persons, particularly those who have a family, who have children. Yellowknife certainly has units right now for disabled persons, but they don't accommodate somebody who has a family.

I am concerned as well about the success or lack of for the transfer of the Rental Subsidy Program over to Education, Culture and Employment. I appreciate that we've been getting regular updates from both the Housing Corp and from ECE, and I hope this will continue because there's still a lot of concern out there on the part of residents. I am a little

dismayed at the reductions in the repairs and enhancement programs. I feel very strongly that that's one of the areas that we need to enhance, not to reduce, and as has been mentioned earlier, repairs for seniors.... That program, as well, needs to be extended or made easier to get at.

Something that hasn't been mentioned yet but which is a concern for me is the reduction of the internal audit function of the Housing Corp. I understand that these two positions will be transferred over to the Audit Bureau, but it means that the Housing Corporation will no longer have their own auditors to perform an internal audit function.

I'm particularly concerned that the corporation is losing its ability to monitor the local housing authorities and to monitor that they are adequately applying the policies, which I can't get hold of, and that the programs and services are being applied and being doled out in a fair and proper manner. This was something that was noted by the Auditor General, and I appreciate the Housing Corp has advised that they will continue to do this. But without specific dedicated auditors for the internal audit function, I see it as a bit of a problem. So most of those don't need answers; probably all of them don't need answers, but I did want to highlight my concerns.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Mr. Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll take the direction from Ms. Bisaro. The one issue that has come up that hasn't yet been touched on is the internal audit function. I'll just ask Mr. Polakoff to briefly explain the rationale.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. Mr. Polakoff.

**Mr. Polakoff:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and I thank Ms. Bisaro for the question. The internal auditor positions of the Housing Corporation, as Ms. Bisaro already indicated, had initially been identified for moving to the GNWT Audit Bureau. Over the last several weeks, however, we have made some internal changes within the Housing Corporation. We've been able to retain the services of those two individuals as a result of some internal shifting of positions. So on the one hand, we have not lost their skill sets, which we think are very important. On the other hand, they are in fact doing different jobs, and we are in the process of sorting through that now.

On the issue of the internal audit it's important to understand that we made this point with the Auditor General insofar as we recognize the need for internal audit. But we already recognize the need based on the recommendations from the OAG to

provide more targeted services to our districts and to our LHOs. Through the reorganization of the Housing Corporation we have done that. It is our hope to ensure that we don't have as many audit issues identified at the back end and, rather, that we deal with them at the front end prior to them becoming issues. We have got a bit of a combined approach here. The other issue as well to remember is that LHOs are not losing any services from audit as they are done privately.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Polakoff. Mr. Krutko.

**Mr. Krutko:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regard to the issue around individuals who may have been evicted for one reason or another, especially who have families and children involved.... As a government we still have units in our communities that may not be perfect in the sense of a modern house, but the Housing Corporation still has these units. They still maintain them. I think that everything should be done to deal with the homeless issue to have some sort of transitional housing or shelter in communities. Like the Member for Nunakput tried to state, where do these people go once they are evicted from housing? Housing still has units in our communities that could accommodate that family. It might not be as good a dwelling as they had just left, but at least it puts a roof over their heads.

I think that as a corporation and as the Department of ECE, dealing with the homeless issue, we spend a lot of money dealing with institutions here in Yellowknife. We have transitional housing. We have the youth facility here where there is homelessness money being expended, but when it comes to our communities, it seems like there is very little being done to deal with the homelessness issue. You might not see people sleeping on the streets or sleeping under buildings or in the doorways, but I think it is real. It's there in our communities. A lot of these people have been evicted from housing for one reason or another. Most of it has to do with substance abuse or drugs. But for these people it's still a problem.

As a corporation we do have to somehow.... I can't say forgive and forget, but these people, despite arrears or whatnot, are still citizens of the Northwest Territories. They should have an opportunity to have some sort of means of maintaining some lifestyle by being able to provide for their family members. I know I raised the issue previously. We should have designated one or two units in the communities, which may be the old SHAG units that basically are over 35 years old anyways. We are either going to mothball them or get rid of them. So maybe make arrangements with that individual and Social Services that they work with that individual to — they won't pay the costs — at least provide some means of housing for these

individuals regardless of the condition rating of that unit.

We have to do something by way of homelessness issues in our communities. What we are seeing are problems with people in arrears and also problems of people with substance abuse. These people are still citizens or residents of our communities, and we still have to find ways to accommodate them. In the larger centres we do have organizations like the Salvation Army or the drop-in centre for youth that are providing means for these individuals to accommodate them to sleep at night and put a roof over their heads. I think that we should find some system to deal with that in isolated, smaller communities where this government does have surplus housing that isn't being used, basically accommodate these people in the interim until they work out their problems with Social Services and whatnot.

I'd like to know: has the Minister, as Minister responsible for housing and as a member of that homelessness group with other Ministers, ever considered that as an option to deal with the homelessness issues in communities, knowing that we do have these units? They might not be perfect, but at least that puts a roof over people's heads, a home for people who have children and whatnot, when you can't just throw them out on the street.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Mr. Chairman, we have a small settlement homelessness fund that's been in place for the last number of years as well. We stand ready to work with communities with whatever housing stock may be available, providing there is a group or some agency in the community that is prepared to play the lead in terms of dealing with the hard-to-house homelessness issue, where there are addiction issues and other social issues that are probably at play in terms of the lifestyle of the individual. We have the two approaches. The opportunity is there. It requires the community to step forward, either through an inter-agency group or through the hamlet or the community, to play a lead role, but we stand ready to work with communities in terms of trying to identify infrastructure, if it exists in the community.

**Mr. Krutko:** I'm wondering, does the corporation — and we do have a committee of Ministers who deal with the homelessness issue — have a comprehensive policy or procedure in place to deal with homelessness in small communities? When we know there are ways that we can accommodate where we may not have....

Excuse me, Mr. Hawkins. I'm asking a question of the Minister. Did you get it, Mr. Minister?

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Minister Miltenberger.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know there is a committee of social envelope Ministers. The committee that looks after the fund for small communities is currently working on their terms of reference and looking at moving forward to deal with the broader scope to address some of the issues that the Member has raised.

**Mr. Krutko:** Another issue we have is that with a lot of these individuals the government pays for them to travel home from the larger centres. They'll pay someone who is homeless in Yellowknife to get back to their home community. Under your existing policy you have to be a resident for three months, but the government is the one that moves these people back to their home community in which they were homeless to begin with. So once they get back to the community, there's no way that these individuals can be provided housing because of the residency clause.

Have you looked at the residency clause for individuals? You or Social Services or whatnot may have paid for those individuals to go back to their home communities and not realized that these individuals won't be able to access housing once they get there because of the policies that we have for residence.

I'd just like to know: have we looked at the residency policy when it comes to people who may have left the community for less than a year or are being encouraged to go back to their home community through this reintegration of homeless people in the larger urban centres back to their home communities where there presently is a program for that? Is that something that the Minister is dealing with in the homelessness issue, or has contemplated or looked at it?

What are you doing with regard to waiving that residency clause for those individuals and residents who are from those communities? It's very frustrating to know that these individuals are born and raised in these communities. They're on the band list. They're basically identified as that being their home communities. They're registered under the land claim groups as that being their home community. But then these individuals go away for a short period of time, and when they get back to their home communities, they're very frustrated by having to hear that they're not a resident, yet that's where they were born and raised and spent almost all their lives in that community. I think it degrades aboriginal people who have signed land claims and have settled in those land claim areas and had their rights applied to those geographical areas. I think as a government we have to live up to the land claim obligations, also realizing that these are land claim beneficiaries of those geographical areas.

I think what we're doing is discriminating against individuals because they're leaving those

communities by stapling with them their residency clause. For these individuals, for them, home is where you find it, but more importantly, they ain't gonna be buried anywhere else than in that home community.

So as a government have we ever looked at ensuring that the policies and procedures of the government are considered in light of the residency clause? People are being told: "Well, you go back to your home community. We'll pay your way there." But once you get there, you're doubly jeopardized by having a residency clause thrown in your face. Has the department seriously looked at this matter in light of the concerns and issues that have been raised through your department?

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Before we move on, noting the clock, I'll let you respond to the question, Mr. Miltenberger, and then we'll rise and report progress.

**Hon. Michael Miltenberger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Clearly, if there is a repatriation circumstance and there's a case planning function that involves other departments or other agencies, be it Health and Social Services or whoever it may be, we want to work as well with the community where the person's being repatriated to.

As we work with the mandate for this new homelessness committee, that ability to make sure that we have a consistent approach that is not going to trip ourselves up as we move them from one community to another is one of the things that is going to be looked at. Thank you.

**Chairman (Mr. Abernethy):** Thank you, Minister Miltenberger. As indicated previously, noting the clock, committee members, I will now rise and report progress. Mr. Miltenberger, you can allow your witnesses to go.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

The House resumed.

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

**Mr. Abernethy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 37-16(2), Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2, and Committee Report 7-16(2) and would like to report progress.

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

Motion carried.

**Mr. Speaker:** Item 22, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, item 23, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

#### Principal Clerk of Committees (Ms. Russell):

Orders of the Day for Tuesday June 3, 2008, 1:30 p.m.

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Ministers' Statements
- 3) Members' Statements
- 4) Returns to Oral Questions
- 5) Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
- 6) Acknowledgements
- 7) Oral Questions
- 8) Written Questions
- 9) Returns to Written Questions
- 10) Replies to Opening Address
- 11) Petitions
- 12) Reports of Standing and Special Committees
- 13) Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
- 14) Tabling of Documents
- 15) Notices of Motion
- 16) Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 17) Motions
- 18) First Reading of Bills
  - Bill 9: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No.4, 2007–2008
  - Bill 10: An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act
- 19) Second Reading of Bills
- 20) Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 8: Appropriation Act, 2008–2009
  - 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
  - CR 3-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2006–2007 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner
  - CR 4-16(2): Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

CR 5-16(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

CR 6-16(2): Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

CR 7-16(2): Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure Report on the Review of the 2008–2009 Draft Main Estimates

TD 37-16(2): Main Estimates 2008–2009, Volumes 1 and 2

21) Report of Committee of the Whole

22) Third Reading of Bills

23) Orders of the Day

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, June 3, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6:07 p.m.