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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2001

Members Present

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

ITEM 1: PRAYER

-- Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Whitford): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Please be seated. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 53-14(3): Team Canada Trade Mission to China**

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from heading a delegation that participated in the Team Canada Trade Mission to China. The official Northwest Territories delegation included Mr. John Bayly, principal secretary and my wife, Ms. Marie Wilson, who participated in the spouses' program. For those who may be wondering, the delegation's costs were covered by the federal government. We were accompanied by Mr. Darrell Beaulieu, who participated in the trade mission as a business representative of the Northwest Territories. Today, I would like to report to this House on the events of this trip to China and the meetings that took place there.

The trade mission provided two key opportunities for the Government of the Northwest Territories. It was an opportunity to explore first-hand what business opportunities may exist in China for Northwest Territories companies. Equally importantly, it was an opportunity for the Northwest Territories delegation to spend time with the other Canadian politicians, bureaucrats, private sector and banking representatives and Canadian business media representatives who participated in the mission.

On the domestic front, we took the opportunity while enroute to talk with the Prime Minister and his senior staff about economic development in Canada's North. I spoke to the Prime Minister about the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and Common Ground, the Northwest Territories' Economic Development Strategy.

We talked with investment banks and business executives from across Canada and from Asia about the Northwest Territories' positive investment climate and resource development opportunities. Energy is on the national agenda and all those who took part in Team Canada are aware of the issues surrounding it.

Media representatives who were part of the Team Canada Mission were also interested in hearing about resource development in the Northwest Territories. The trade mission gave us an opportunity to continue to inform and educate the press about issues surrounding the development of our oil and gas resources and a Mackenzie Valley pipeline, about

development of Northwest Territories diamonds and about our tremendous hydroelectric potential.

Once in China, we discovered a fascinating country with a huge population and a burgeoning middle class. It may come as a surprise to some to learn that China has an active diamond cutting and polishing industry. I had a number of meetings with Chinese mining and diamond industry representatives to share and exchange information.

The Land and Resources Ministry is the highest government authority regulating natural resources in China, including minerals and diamonds. I met with Vice Minister Shou Jiahua and with several key members of her ministry. The meeting with Vice Minister Shou was very informative. We discussed the sharing of information and expertise.

At the invitation of the Vice Minister, the CEO of "Diamond," one of China's larger diamond cutting and polishing companies, also attended our meeting. Afterward, this gentleman met with Mr. Darrell Beaulieu of the Deton'cho Corporation. In his meetings, Mr. Beaulieu was briefed and assisted by Mr. Jian-Hua Sang, a Chinese mining and minerals specialist.

In Shanghai, Mr. Beaulieu joined us in a meeting with Mr. Nanhai Yan, the director and deputy general manager of the Shanghai Diamond Exchange. We toured the Shanghai Diamond Exchange. We discussed the advantages to China of setting up a diamond exchange. This discussion was very useful because we have been considering the future need for a North American diamond exchange that could be located in the Northwest Territories.

Air transport issues are a shared interest with the Chinese and were discussed with Chinese officials during their visit to Yellowknife in 1998. So, while in Beijing, I met with Vice Minister Yang Yuan Yuan of the General Administration of Civil Aviation of China, who is responsible for international cooperation. He and I talked about the potential of Yellowknife as a staging, stopover and/or emergency landing spot for the airline industry. This was an introductory meeting only, but it was significant because we were the only Canadian delegation to arrange for a meeting with the Chinese General Administration of Civil Aviation in China.

We met with Chinese officials at both the national and provincial levels including the governors and vice-governors of several western provinces. They represent the less developed and more rural jurisdictions in China and, in spite of the great differences in our populations, we share many problems including the need for environmentally responsible development.

While in China, we were fortunate to have the assistance of Mr. Cameron Zubko in arranging meetings for us. Mr. Zubko, who

is from Inuvik and once worked for our Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, now lives in Beijing where he has established a consulting firm. It was a pleasure to have a representative on site in China who knows the North, its people and its potential. Mr. Zubko, whose experience includes working as the Northwest Territories representative in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, helped us set up senior level meetings with Chinese government officials and offered sound advice on how to navigate through a system that in many ways is very different from our own. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him publicly for his able assistance throughout our trip.

Mr. Speaker, China has indicated its interest in entering the global economy as a full member of the World Trade Organization, where it will enjoy all of the advantages of full membership and be bound by the rules and policies of this organization. With the opening of Canada's first diamond mine and the establishment of a territorial cutting and polishing industry, the Northwest Territories has just entered the global economy in diamond mining. We are poised to enter the global economy in the production of oil and gas and hydroelectric power for export from the Northwest Territories. The emergence into world markets is something that we have in common with China.

The Team Canada Trade Mission to China introduced us to this interesting country and impressed upon us that, with its growing middle class, China offers new and exciting opportunities to the Northwest Territories in trade and in the exchange of information and expertise. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Kakfwi, and bienvenue. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Allen.

Minister's Statement 54-14(3): Seniors Housing

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to provide an update to all Members of this House on recent initiatives launched by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation that help to solve seniors' housing problems within the Northwest Territories.

Results from the 2000 Housing Needs Survey show that 32 percent of seniors are in core need, compared to 20 percent for the rest of the population. Demographics indicate that the seniors' population will increase over the next several years. In response to these trends and concerns raised by some communities, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, in consultation with those communities, has developed a Seniors Housing Strategy. This strategy covers a four-year period up to and including the 2003-04 fiscal year. During this period, we plan to construct 97 public housing units targeted specifically to seniors.

Mr. Speaker, the strategy was developed based on community input on the following criteria:

- Community request;
- Seniors' needs;
- Over-housed seniors living in public housing while families remain on waiting lists;

- Lack of public housing units targeted to seniors;
- Lack of proper seniors' housing; and,
- Culturally unacceptable seniors' housing that can be converted to singles accommodations.

On the basis of these factors, units were allocated where they were needed most. Thirty-seven units will be constructed this year, 12 in the following year, and 28 and 20 in years three and four respectively. The 37 units that are being finalized now are spread out over six communities. The six communities are Detah-Ndilo, Fort Good Hope, Paulatuk, Rae-Edzo, Tsiigehtchic and Tulita. Future years will see construction of units in Tuktoyaktuk, Hay River, Inuvik, Fort Smith and Yellowknife. The Housing Corporation is also discussing the provision of seniors housing with communities other than the ones mentioned here. These allocations will likely occur after 2003-04. I would also like to add that the Housing Corporation will take community specific, culturally sensitive issues into consideration when designing these seniors housing projects.

Other recent initiatives that we are launching to provide housing support to seniors include the Elders on the Land Initiative and the Seniors and/or Disabled Preventative Maintenance Initiative.

The Elders on the Land Initiative will provide financial support to assist seniors in core housing need, who live on the land on a full-time basis, so they have the opportunity to repair or replace their unit with a modest, simply constructed shelter. This initiative not only allows elders to maintain an independent traditional lifestyle, it will make their homes safer and healthier to live in. The assistance is limited to \$30,000 plus freight per household and is in the form of a forgivable loan over a five-year period.

Mr. Speaker, another initiative developed to assist seniors, the Seniors and/or Disabled Preventative Maintenance Initiative, provides assistance to those who own and occupy their own homes and who require servicing and maintenance repairs to the homes to keep equipment and systems in a good state of repair. This program is aimed at those who cannot afford the cost of routine maintenance checks, to encourage low-income seniors to continue living in their own homes.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to consulting with the communities, I have also discussed these problems with my colleague, the Honourable Jane Groenewegen, Minister responsible for Health and Social Services and Minister responsible for Seniors, to ensure we received her valuable input. I firmly believe that we have moved as rapidly as possible to address the issues and that full implementation of these initiatives will assist in reducing the number of seniors in core need of housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Allen. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Madam Groenewegen.

Minister's Statement 55-14(3): Count Me In Disability Conference

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government has a vision of the people of the

Northwest Territories -- that of "a vibrant, prosperous and unified Territory that we can all be proud of." As part of this, we recognize the importance of ensuring "safety, security and respect for all citizens, with a focus on women, children, elders and persons with disabilities." To achieve our vision overall, we must ensure that all residents are given the opportunity to contribute to their families and communities.

Mr. Speaker, on January 25th to 27th, the first ever Northwest Territories conference on disabilities issues was held in Yellowknife. I was pleased to have attended this conference with my colleague, the Honourable Jake Ootes, Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. We both spoke to delegates on the various initiatives which our departments are undertaking to address the needs of persons with disabilities. I was pleased to be able to return to the plenary session on the last day to hear the conclusions that came out of the three-day conference. I found this to be very illuminating, as did, I am sure, Mr. Braden and Ms. Lee, who also took the time to attend.

The title of the conference, Count Me In, speaks to the need for including people with disabilities in all aspects of family and community life. This includes ensuring disabled people help identify program supports and services that will improve their quality of life. It also speaks to the need to create greater awareness in our northern society about the issues facing those with disabilities, and how our communities can involve and provide them with opportunities.

The conference represented an important step in making sure that the views of people with disabilities are indeed heard and considered in program planning by both government and non-government agencies. "Count Me In" brought together a number of people, groups and agencies with an interest in this area, including frontline caregivers, people with disabilities and their families from across the Northwest Territories. Community groups, service providers, aboriginal organizations and all levels of government are now more aware and informed of their needs.

During the conference, the findings of the recently released report, Living with Disability, Living with Dignity, were presented. This report provided valuable information for government and non-government agencies, which deliver programs and services, as well as for people with disabilities, their families and caregivers. Participants discussed the report's findings and moved the dialogue on to identifying the actions that should be taken to improve service delivery and supports.

Count Me In allowed the opportunity for people to provide information on available resources, share personal stories and experiences of living with a disability in the Northwest Territories and discuss how quality of life and program supports can be improved. The outcomes of this conference, together with findings of the disabilities report, will send a clear message about the needs and priorities of people with disabilities and we are looking forward to receiving the final report of the conference. As a follow up, we have received letters from many of the conference delegates detailing some of the personal challenges and circumstances that they face in their own life and we will be taking the opportunity to respond to each and every one.

In the budget address, the Minister responsible for Finance indicated that the allowances for disabled persons who receive income support will be raised in order to help cover additional costs that disabled Northerners face in their daily lives. Also, as Minister Allen stated, the Seniors and/or Disabled Preventative Maintenance Initiative has been implemented to assist persons with disabilities who own and occupy their own homes and who require servicing and repairs to their homes in order to properly maintain them. Our government wants to continue to work with representative organizations such as the Northwest Territories Council for Disabled Persons in order to address these and other needs of persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Northwest Territories Council for Disabled Persons and their partners for organizing this important event -- for their key role in and contributions to the Living with Disability Report and for their ongoing commitment to ensure the needs of the disabled are not overlooked. I would also like to thank all of the conference participants for helping all of us understand how important it is that everyone is "counted in." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Groenewegen. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement on Achievements of Ferguson Simek Clark Engineering and Architectural Firm

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to acknowledge the efforts of a leading NWT businessperson, Mr. Stefan Simek, and his company Ferguson, Simek and Clark, who have been involved in the development and contribution to cold weather climate engineering technology and construction. They established their firm in Yellowknife some 25 years ago and today they have a staff of some 60 people in Iqaluit, Whitehorse, Edmonton, but the majority of them are here in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, they are significant contributors to our economic development with a well-deserved reputation in cold weather climate engineering and technology. Some 15 years ago, Mr. Speaker, the NWT government got involved in supporting trade missions within the circumpolar community, led by Mr. Simek and his company and their vision and drive.

They went on to gain experience in the Russian Federation through the design and construction of a Canadian village in the Republic of Sakha, and have developed an enviable reputation for their cold region construction projects within the circumpolar community.

Currently, Ferguson, Simek and Clark is investigating opportunities in the Chukotka region, which has a population of more than 80,000 indigenous people in small remote communities, very similar to our situation. They rely largely on reindeer herding in that part of the world.

Last month, FSC hosted a delegation from the Chukotka province of the Russian Federation to the NWT. This included Governor Roman Abramovitch and his colleagues from the Siberian Oil Company, Sibneft, and seven other members of their administration. The Governor and his party also travelled to Wekweti to observe community life, and the engineering and infrastructure that we have put into that part of the country. As

a result of this visit, Mr. Speaker, FSC hopes to open up future construction opportunities in that part of Russia using NWT business expertise.

It is estimated that various circumpolar cold climate engineering construction projects like this have benefited Canada and the NWT to the tune of some \$100 million. Like all developing economies, we need to diversify ours and exporting our technology is a great way of doing this.

Mr. Speaker, this government needs to be supportive of this kind of initiative, and I hope we can look forward in the future to the support of companies like FSC. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Member's Statement on Future Transportation Infrastructure Developments

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to comment on the budget address which was given last Thursday. This impacts on all areas of where we are headed as a government.

Let me begin by saying that there were a lot of good things in this budget. There were a lot of goals established with concrete deadlines that will allow us to track our progress. Of course, in any plan, there are always things that could be done better or that require further understanding.

One of the concerns I have with the budget address is in the area of future planning for transportation. I did not see any plans for future development of the Mackenzie River bridge, or for an all-weather road to the communities and the mines. Apparently, they are only to build on existing infrastructure. To me, this budget is a list of expenses for operating and maintaining what is already in place. It is not a vision.

The Minister states in the third paragraph of the first page that, in finalizing strategies for this budget, the suggestions and concerns of the Members of this Assembly were listened to. I disagree. I have been extremely vocal about the need for an all-weather road to go through the Dogrib communities and the mines. I have heard other Members express the need for a bridge over the Mackenzie River. I do not see these suggestions included or even referred to.

Further along, on the first page of the budget address, it states:

"We need to take control of and develop our resources. We need to invest in our economy and infrastructure."

I am puzzled as to how we can develop our resources if we cannot access them.

Global warming is a key area affecting our winter roads and limiting access to our resources. As I have stated many times, we need to adapt to the changing climate and begin planning for overland routes to remote communities and the mines. This requires a vision.

A catch phrase of the budget has been that we need to invest today for a better tomorrow. I agree. It is the investment that we make today that will determine what kind of tomorrow we have.

Let us be sure that the investments we make are not limited to improving the existing infrastructure, but that they allow for a long-term vision that benefits our changing North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Member's Statement on Health and Social Services System-Wide Review

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement today is with regard to the NWT health care review underway by the Minister responsible for Health that is becoming known as the Cuff review.

A number of good issues have been raised about this review in this House already, Mr. Speaker, but the focus of my concerns boils down to two questions: one is whether or not the Minister is clear about what it is that she is trying to get at through this review. Second, whether the Minister and the Cabinet are really prepared to make some tough decisions and choices that will most likely come out of this review.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member of this Legislature, the state of our health care system is by far the most frequently raised issue of my constituents. There is a real problem in the way we currently manage our health care and we are running out of time to deal with it before we see a real decline in the quality and availability of essential health care services to our people.

The thing is that everyone I have talked to, whether they are patients, doctors, nurses, board members, administrators or departmental officials, et cetera, has an insightful opinion and idea about what is wrong with it and how they can fix it. However, I am not sure if all of these are reconcilable.

As have other Members, I have had occasion to talk to Mr. Cuff and I am also aware that Mr. Cuff has spoken to many of these individuals and other stakeholders. I am sure he is beginning to see the scope of the monumental and complex problem he is dealing with. Because this is so important to all of us, I am prepared to give Mr. Cuff and the Minister a chance to come up with a plan of action.

I believe this is one study that should have happened long before now.

My concern, however, is that a good plan of action means nothing without a resolve to do something about it. So many government studies fail to produce any result and people are tired of it.

The reason why this is so, Mr. Speaker, is because inevitably recommendations in these reports need a lot of money, a lot of courage or both. So my point and my advice to the Minister is, be careful about what you ask for because you might get it. When you do get it, be sure to find enough courage or money or both to carry them through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Establishment of a Fort Providence Community Services Board

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My statement today concerns a request from Fort Providence for the establishment of a community services board in that community. Mr. Speaker, it is the opinion of the Fort Providence leadership that a thorough review of the service delivery to Fort Providence in the areas of health, social services and education be undertaken in the community of Fort Providence.

The Government of the Northwest Territories currently delivers health and education services to Fort Providence through two regional administrative bodies based in Fort Simpson. The community of Fort Providence views the current arrangement as being impractical and ineffective. The net effect of a system that supposedly maximizes community input is actually the complete opposite. There is actually very little decision making on matters that concern Fort Providence residents the most. In fact, the regional bodies have little, if any, strategic influence and absolutely no operational input over their organization they supposedly direct, Mr. Speaker.

The regional bodies essentially act as a rubber stamp for bureaucratic decisions made in Fort Simpson and Yellowknife. Far too much power and discretion lies in the hands of the unaccountable CEOs. The community of Fort Providence believes that a properly constituted community services board could help resolve these issues.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, it should also be possible to undertake these changes in a way that does not effect the Government of the Northwest Territories fiscal constraints by combining the service delivery administrator funds at the local level and close attention to administrative overhead in Yellowknife, it will be possible to create a well-resourced and robust local administrative agency in Fort Providence that can deliver effective health and education services in addition to being accountable to both residents of Fort Providence and to the Government of the Northwest Territories Minister.

Mr. Speaker, community services boards are not appropriate for all northern communities. Some are too small, some are not interested. However, Fort Providence is a community of over 800 people with a capacity to undertake this challenge. Mr. Speaker, I believe this government should take a creative and open approach to making a community services board happen in Fort Providence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement on Impacts of Global Warming

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of global warming has come up with greater and greater frequency in the press and is of greater and greater concern to all the people of the world and the North is no different.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Donella Meadows of the Global Citizen gives some very sobering facts. The place to watch for global warming, a sensitive point, the canary in the coal mine, is the Arctic. If the planet as a whole warms by one degree, the poles

will warm by about three degrees, which is just what is happening.

Ice now covers 15 percent less of the Arctic Ocean than it did 20 years ago. In the 1950s, that ice averaged ten feet thick, Mr. Speaker. It is less than six feet thick at present. At the current rate of melting, in 50 years the northern ocean could be ice-free all summer long.

That, says an article in Science, January 19th, would be the end of polar bears. In fact, many creatures of the Arctic Ocean are already in trouble. Until recently, no one knew that there were many creatures in the Arctic Ocean. In the 1970s, a Russian biologist named Melnikov discovered 200 species of tiny organisms, algae and zooplankton hanging around the ice floes in immense numbers, forming slime jungles on the bottom of bergs and plankton clouds in every break of open water.

Their carcasses fall to the bottom, Mr. Speaker, to nourish clams which are eaten by walrus. Arctic cod live on algae scraped off the ice. The cod are eaten by sea birds, whales and seals. The king of the food chain, hunting mainly seals, is the great white bear.

That was the system until the ice started to thicken thin. In 1997 and 1998, Melnikov returned to the Beaufort Sea and found most of the plankton species, many named by him and for him, were gone. The ice was nearly gone. Creatures that depended on plankton, like the cod, were on the ice, dens for seals or for travel like bears were gone too.

Mr. Speaker, the Arctic is changing faster than scientists can document. Inuit hunters report the ivory gulls are disappearing. No one knows why. Mosquitoes are moving north, attacking murrets which will not move from their nests, so they are literally sucked and stung to death. Caribou can no longer depend on thick ice to support their island hopping in search of lichens that sustain them. One biologist who spots caribou...Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays, Mr. Miltenberger. You may continue.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, caribou can no longer count on thick ice to support their island hopping in search of lichens that sustain them. Hudson's Bay polar bears are thinner and are producing fewer cubs. With the ice going out earlier, their seal-hunting season is shrinking. The town of Churchill in Canada has more jail cells for bears than for people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this global warming is an issue. It is something that has come up that affects us directly as Northerners. It is land that covers some of the constituencies in this House. The questions I will be asking later today to the Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development will be, are we doing our share in terms of dealing with global warming in the Kyoto Accord?

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Impacts of Global Warming

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will speak on an issue that was just covered by Mr. Miltenberger and to a certain extent by Mr. Braden. It is also an issue that might bring tourists to the Northwest Territories for a very different reason, Mr. Speaker. In 100 years or more to come, the Great Lakes might become a beach resort area if we do not pay attention to what is going on regarding global warming, Mr. Speaker.

This week in Nunatsiq News, it was reported that the world's temperature is rising even more rapidly than expected, as Mr. Miltenberger indicated. Melting permafrost in many Arctic regions is part of the chain reaction, Mr. Speaker. This is the finding of a recently released United Nations report on climate change. As we know, this can create problems for infrastructure of pipelines, roads and houses. We also need to think seriously about our new construction, keeping in mind that the permafrost is melting. Our climate and water resources will also be affected.

Mr. Speaker, we need to protect our water resources for future generations. Global water consumption is rising quickly. Water availability will be one of the most pressing and contentious resource issues of the 21st century. Some say those will be the cause of the wars in the 21st century.

Greenhouse gases are being dealt with on a global scale, but we all know that efforts to reduce them are not working fast enough. The report says to expect more freak weather conditions such as floods and droughts, and we are starting to see that in the news on almost a daily basis -- massive displacement of the earth's population and loss of life, and the greater risk of water-borne diseases.

Temperatures will rise more than 10.5 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century. Polar regions are at risk. In fact, the world is at risk. For centuries to come, scientists expect irreversible impacts on ice and snow, and water circulation and sea rise. It is not a legacy that we want to leave our future generations.

We as a government and as a people have to start planning for the future, not only for ourselves as human beings, but for the wildlife that ultimately depends on our prudent management. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Mr. Nitah. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Member's Statement on Funding for the Hay River Family Support Centre

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring attention to a matter that should be of great importance to every Member in this House. Mr. Speaker, the issue that I am referring to is family violence. Every Member of this House stood up and proclaimed an end to family violence. This very important initiative was brought to light once again from October 30th to November 5th during Family Violence Awareness Week.

Mr. Speaker, the Family Support Centre located in Hay River is a very well run 12-bed facility that provides shelter and counselling for women and children seeking an end to family

violence. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Family Support Centre also operates what is called a second-stage house in Hay River for women who have been through their program and want to commence independent living.

Mr. Speaker, these facilities and programs are very costly to maintain. In addition, this year has been more taxing for the centre given the recent increases in fuel prices. The Family Support Centre has not had an increase since 1996 to their budget, despite several requests for an increase to cover operating costs.

Mr. Speaker, the Members of this House have all shown a willingness to do whatever is necessary to put an end to family violence. I suggest to you that a way to do this would be to put the money where our mouths are. Mr. Speaker, the Family Support Centre deserves our support as they continue to do good work to put an end to family violence.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will have some questions for the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Member's Statement on Student Child Care Subsidies

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of priorities, especially in this government, and one of the priorities is improving the quality of education and ensuring that we have an educated workforce. Mr. Speaker, I think it is also important that we assist those students when they are going back to school, either through Arctic College programs, high school and secondary education.

One of the biggest challenges that we face, especially for a student, is the whole area of child care and child care subsidies. The students of the Fort McPherson Arctic College Program have requested myself, along with this House, to find a way to review the way the Student Subsidy Program that is presently being carried out. They feel that because of the long delays with regard to accessing and delivering the program, it has caused several students to drop out due to not having the resources to maintain or sustain suitable people to baby-sit. These are the ladies and the young mothers who are trying to go back to improve their lives by attending the Arctic College programs.

With regard to the students, in some cases it takes up to four to six weeks to get paid from this government -- in some cases even longer. Students are losing out in retaining good babysitters, and at the end of it all they leave school and have to take care of their children themselves.

One of the things that they are requesting is that the funding that is presently going to pay for the Day Care Subsidy Program should be administered at home, at the community level where presently we have income support workers. In Fort McPherson, we have the Gwich'in Education and Training Society, which is a local education organization delivering programs and services on behalf of the federal government.

What the students are requesting from this government is, is there a way to improve the delivery of programs and services to students, especially for single mothers. With regard to this issue, students feel that we have to do more to improve programs and services and take down those barriers that students are finding themselves in. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister responsible for Education questions on this matter. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week I tabled a document, Inuvik Twin Lakes Profile. Today I wish to highlight one of the important visitations in the riding of Inuvik Twin Lakes.

I am speaking of the Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre. Ingamo Hall provides various programs and services to the elders and the youth of Inuvik. A prime example of this is that every second Thursday of the month, Ingamo Hall hosts an elders luncheon where the youth assist in serving food to the elders.

In January, Ingamo Hall organized and hosted an Elders Sober Gathering to acknowledge several of the elders in the Mackenzie-Delta region. There were 97 elders in attendance, along with their families and other community members. There was a total of 1,107 years of sobriety at this gathering.

Youth activities are also very visible at Ingamo Hall. The Ingamo Hall youth group have been actively involved in promoting awareness regarding various issues in Inuvik. They have participated in the Take Back the Night Walk and Candle Vigil, and also hosted the AIDS Awareness Walk. The youth has accumulated approximately 1200 volunteer hours by assisting in a variety of activities held at Ingamo Hall.

Ingamo Hall also offers cultural programs and activities such as drum dancing, beading and sewing, traditional cooking and Arctic sports to residents. Not to leave out probably the most favourite activity open to all residents of Inuvik, which is the regular Tuesday night bingo.

I wish to applaud the efforts of the staff at Ingamo Hall. Without their dedication and efforts, these programs would not be the success they are today. These individuals include Gloria Allen, Jamie White, Bette Lou Bergeron, and all the other members of the staff at Ingamo Hall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board, Mr. Handley.

ITEM 4: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Return to Question 309-14(3): Evaluation of Chief of Staff Position

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question asked by Mr. Roland on February 14, 2001, regarding the chief of staff position and the pay range for executive assistants working in the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The chief of staff position, like many other senior level positions, is an at pleasure appointment and does not have a formal job description. These types of positions do not lend themselves to traditional job descriptions upon which to base a Hay point evaluation. Instead, salary and benefits are negotiated and established through an employment contract.

Similarly, executive assistants do not have formal job descriptions and are not evaluated through the Hay Job Evaluation System. Again, this is because duties of and qualifications for these positions vary widely with the different functional and political requirements of each Cabinet Minister.

The salary range for executive assistants to Cabinet Ministers is \$63,139 to \$71,592. In some circumstances, the salary range is exceeded. For example, where an executive assistant is there on a transfer assignment from a position in another department at a higher salary, he or she will continue to be paid that salary.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is aware of the anomaly that is created by including positions such as executive assistants and the chief of staff in the public service. It is for that reason that the GNWT is currently considering amendments to the Public Service Act to bring clarity to the issue of political staff.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize and welcome someone who has spent many hours in this House in the past, Mr. John Ningark, former Member of this Assembly and former Deputy Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. (No translation provided). That means welcome colleague in Inuktitut. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize in the gallery someone who has spent many hours making sure I got elected to this House in the first place. She is a friend and advisor and confidant. Her name is Joy Stewart. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a group of students from Weledeh School. They are from the grade 6, 7 and 8 class, as well as their teacher, Cecilia Boyd. Mr. Speaker, I assure that if every one of these young people complete high school and college or university, we will guarantee them a job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: It does not get better than that, Mr. Handley. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The National Metis Youth Role Model Program provides an opportunity to recognize the achievements of Metis youth and share their successes with others across the country. A member of the community of Yellowknife, a constituent of Great Slave, Ms. Amber LeMouel has been selected, along with five other Metis youth from across Canada, to receive this award. The ceremony will take place in Regina this weekend, Mr. Speaker. Amber is a very busy young lady. She is off to Australia tonight to continue her university training. As Amber will be attending school, a member of her family will be receiving this. Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing a very talented and very deserving young member of our community, Ms. Amber LeMouel, and her mother, Evelyn.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. We wish the young visitor bon voyage over to the other side of the world. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Premier.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize Vital Manuel, originally from Fort Good Hope, who is a constituency worker of mine. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Yes, Vital has served time as a page as well, so welcome, Mr. Manuel. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Ms. Stewart, the daughter of the former Speaker, the Honourable Donald Stewart. Also, of course, my colleague, Mr. Ningark, the former Member for Natilikmiot, in Nunavut. I understand that at one time, he was the boss of our distinguished Finance Minister, Mr. Handley, so you are here to keep an eye on him.

-- Applause

Welcome to the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 338-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the budget speech, the Minister responsible for Finance announced relief for northern residents for high fuel costs. This announcement has been welcomed by many of my constituents, but details have been very sketchy. I would like to ask the Minister more about this initiative.

I was wondering, Mr. Speaker, if we could find out what is proposed as the income under which people would receive this rebate?

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

Return to Question 338-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the intention of the government is to use the core need income thresholds that have been developed by the Housing Corporation as a base for which we would provide the fuel rebates.

The core need income threshold is a threshold that was established and is maintained by the Housing Corporation to determine the income levels under which people would be eligible for assistance for their housing purchase and maintenance costs. We felt this was a good base for the fuel rebates as well. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary to Question 338-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the budget speech, the Minister said the fuel rebates would be \$320 for those who owned their homes and \$150 for those who rented. I have been called by constituents who wanted to know if this would be a flat amount or if it would be graduated according to income.

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

Further Return to Question 338-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to get the rebates out to the homeowners and apartment renters in the Northwest Territories. We are looking at this as being a flat amount. The reasons for that again are to keep the administration simple and efficient for us to administer, and therefore be able to get it out before the end of March with the least administrative difficulties and cost. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary to Question 338-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Minister would reconsider that. I know I have had constituents who have said if a family with an income of \$70,000 is going to qualify for the full \$320, why would a family with a \$73,000 income not qualify for at least a portion of that and do it on a graduated basis? I would ask the Minister to reconsider. I do not believe the administration would be that much more onerous to set up a graduated scheme, so the amount that was paid per family depended on income. Will the

Minister reconsider and actually introduce a graduated scheme? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 338-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the intention of the rebate is to help those who are in the most need of help. The easiest, most efficient way of doing that is to use some sort of income threshold for a household. I realize looking at need can be very complicated, but we wanted to have a system that could be administered easily and would enable us to be able to get the help out to people as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, we need to have a cut off somewhere. No matter how we do it, it seems we will have some people who feel that their income is just above that threshold and they really need to have some help. We really have to have a threshold. It was felt that this one was the most efficient one in terms of administering it and one that was the fairest to most people.

Of course I will consider alternatives. As we speak, our staff are looking at this, but I have to say that given the need to get the rebate cheques out quickly, we need to have something that is fairly efficient to administer. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary to Question 338-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the Minister follows through on that promise to have another look at this issue. I would hope that when we are comparing easy administration for this government versus fairness for our constituents, fairness will win out.

I wonder if the Minister could advise, how were the amounts of \$320 per household and \$150 per renter household determined?

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

Further Return to Question 338-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we took a look at the cost of fuel increases over the last year. If you take heating oil, it has increased from 41.4 cents to 57.4 cents in Yellowknife. It is different for every community, of course, but the amount of the increase for people in detached dwellings or in homes is roughly one-half of the estimated \$640 increase that people would face in home heating costs on average. So on average, it is half of the average heating cost increase. In the case of apartment buildings, we had to look at it a bit differently and do an estimate based on the rental increases that have been put in place by landlords over the last winter. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Question 339-14(3): Student Child Care Subsidies

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Education in regard to my Member's statement. The students at Arctic College in Fort McPherson are requesting we do a review on the Child Subsidy Program. In light of that, one of the questions is if there is a possibility that the funding would go to the students to be paid for their babysitting, administration, to be delivered locally through the Income Support Program for the Gwich'in Education and Training Society. Also, they are requesting that the students be paid on a biweekly basis, so they can retain the babysitting services or people that they have sitting for them.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Education, is there a possibility that this program, which is presently being delivered out of Inuvik, could be delivered in Fort McPherson by one of the two agencies mentioned, the Gwich'in Education and Training Society or the income support workers?

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

Return to Question 339-14(3): Student Child Care Subsidies

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This program is under the Early Childhood Program, the day care user subsidy program. Payments are made to income support and others for day care subsidies. It is unfortunate that this is occurring to students who are dependent upon this and I will check into this issue. I already started to enquire today. Once I learned of this, I made an enquiry to see what the reasons are for the delay and what the process normally is in this particular case of the day care user subsidy, Mr. Speaker.

As well, of course, we are looking at the Early Childhood Development Program. The day care area has been one of my areas of interest to ensure that we provide expedient and good service, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 339-14(3): Student Child Care Subsidies

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that seems to be a real concern or problem is the length of time it takes for this government to have those subsidies delivered to the students. I would like to ask the Minister, would he also consider looking at the possibility of trying to streamline this process so it could be conducted a lot smoother than it presently is?

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

Further Return to Question 339-14(3): Student Child Care Subsidies

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This definitely is an area that we need to do some work on. I want to ensure that cheques are received expediently by those who are in need of them and that we do have an efficient system in place. As I mentioned, we are looking at the Early Childhood Development Program and one area that I have taken a particular interest in is the child care area. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Ootes. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 339-14(3): Student Child Care Subsidies

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister make an attempt to see if it is possible to deliver the program through the Gwich'in Education and Training Group that presently delivers scholarship programs and other programs that they administer on behalf of the federal government through aboriginal programs? Since they already are an agency that deals with education programs in the community and they do serve a portion of the population of the people I represent, is that a possibility and will you consider looking at it?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 339-14(3): Student Child Care Subsidies

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do make arrangements with various communities to deliver income support on a local basis. It is an area that we will look at to see if this can be done in this particular circumstance to see if there is the possibility of local delivery. If it is already done with the income support portion, then we can also do the same thing with the day care user subsidy program. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 339-14(3): Student Child Care Subsidies

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to this being an issue not only for Fort McPherson, but probably all the other communities in the Territories which have similar problems, I would like to ask the Minister would he consider looking closely at the request made by the students of Fort McPherson in other areas to ensure that the subsidy programs that are being delivered are being delivered in all communities, not just this one requested by Fort McPherson?

I think it is important that we find ways of taking down these barriers that are affecting the education of our students and not to deter them, or them having to drop out of school. Would he consider looking at the overall program?

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

Further Return to Question 339-14(3): Student Child Care Subsidies

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. We would look at the universality of the program, of course. As I mentioned, in a number of cases, we provide local delivery for income support and make arrangements with local organizations to be able to do that. In the case of the day care subsidy program, we will also look at that to see if we cannot apply this in a more efficient way across the Territory. I must emphasize though that I do not know whether this is an isolated case or whether this is a common problem and we would have to look at it in light of that to see if this is a more prevalent problem and that we look at some universal problem-solving on this.

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

Question 340-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask today again, a follow-up echoing Mr. Dent's concerns about the fuel subsidy. I would also like to weigh in with my constituent's feelings that this thing likely should be on a graduated basis and have an inverse relationship to income and that setting a cut off, wherever we set it, is going to leave some people out. I do not think that is fair. I would like to direct my questions to the Minister responsible for Housing, since it sounds like his department will be responsible for administering this.

Mr. Handley suggested that the average household fuel price went up by \$640. That is home heating oil. What about those households on propane, which I believe have taken an even larger hit? Did we take a look at that and what would they be having to endure? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Allen.

Return to Question 340-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been advised that yes, they will be treated in the same manner because they are similar, the home heating fuels. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Allen. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 340-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I assume they would be treated similarly, but I am just suggesting that the Minister responsible for Finance indicated that \$640 was the average increase and that this rebate would offset 50 percent of that hardship. I think it is much less significant for those who are on propane because the increases have been greater. Would the Minister indicate whether or not they have looked at the costs that homes on propane have had to endure? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Minister responsible for Housing, Mr. Allen.

Further Return to Question 340-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have been advised that yes, there is an acknowledgement that the prices have increased as well and they will be treated the same as home heating oils. We will definitely take a look at that as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Allen. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 340-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that the department will take a look at that. I know the propane has doubled, more than doubled in comparison to home heating oil. I also wanted to ask about this idea that we are shooting for ease and simplicity here and maybe at the expense of fairness. We are already asking households, I assume, to prove that they are in fact paying heating bills. We are probably already asking them to prove that they are already not receiving other subsidies, say from a corporate entity. Would the Minister indicate that this is in fact the case and we will have to do that? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. Allen.

Further Return to Question 340-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not clear on the exact question, but I do want to make a comment here. This program was just announced during the budget session on Thursday of last week, so we are doing a lot of preliminary work trying to iron out all the wrinkles here and, if we can, come to some immediate conclusion so we can begin the rebate program. That is the objective of the Housing Corporation taking over the program at this point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Allen. Final supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 340-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take it from the response that we have not quite worked out the details yet and we are hurrying to do that. I am wondering if the Minister can look into another matter. We talked about a commercial truck toll that will increase the price of fuel and I am wondering if he will consider that when he looks into the rebate. This \$320 could quickly be eaten up by the increase in commercial tolls. Will the Minister look into that as well? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. I think that question would probably be better answered by the Minister responsible for Finance, however, we will have to direct it to the Minister responsible for Housing. Minister Allen, if you choose.

Further Return to Question 340-14(3): Fuel Subsidy Rebate Eligibility

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, I would just like to say that we will deal with this issue as we try to assess the costs of rising fuel costs. I just want to reiterate my previous answer. This is preliminary. We will try to keep the House informed of how we are going to administer this program and implement it as rapidly as we can. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Allen. I would just like to remind Members about the rules for questions. The preamble for supplementaries, according to your rules, should be much shorter as you get onto the supplementary questions. So if you would indulge the Chair by limiting your preamble in your supplementaries. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 341-14(3): Highway User Toll

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for Finance, the Honourable Joe Handley. In the budget address, the Minister proposed the introduction of a highway user toll on commercial trucking in the Territories. This money raised from this toll would go into a highway trust fund. One of the dilemmas we face in the Territories is that when we increase our revenues, there is a drop in federal funding. I would like to ask the Minister, has the government looked at what implications this toll will have for federal funding on future northern developments? I wonder if the federal government will have a claw back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 341-14(3): Highway User Toll

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member that for the life of the current financing formula, there will be no claw back of this revenue. That is again through the toll. With regard to future formula financing agreements, how this will be treated will be subject to negotiations between myself and the federal Minister responsible for Finance. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 341-14(3): Highway User Toll

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result of the toll, there will be increases all over the Territories and we know we will be giving fuel rebates to residents of the Northwest Territories. Are we going to be giving extra rebates to the communities that are only accessible by air who are paying, whether they have a road to them or not? We know the freights and travel costs will be increased to these communities to make up for these tolls. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary to Question 341-14(3): Highway User Toll

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my budget address, we are intending and working on a Northern Tax Credit Program. That one will be on top of the current northern tax credit. That tax credit is there to help Northerners with the rising cost of living in the North. It will be available to all income earners in the Northwest Territories whether they live in communities on roads accessible by road or whether they are in fly-in communities, it will not make any difference. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Further Return to Question 341-14(3): Highway User Toll

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the Minister's department is looking at this, but I would like to ask the Minister if he could look at giving an extra rebate to the communities that are fly-in communities that have no road to them. We are making them pay for the extra costs even if we are not putting infrastructure into the communities. To me, this is not fair and I ask the Minister if his department can look into giving extra rebates to those communities who are being double charged? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 341-14(3): Highway User Toll

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, everyone will be eligible for the increased tax credit that we are making available as long as they have some income or they make application through their income tax. The fly-in communities will get the benefit the same way as everybody else does. So certainly it should be a fair system. It is very difficult under our current income tax arrangements with the federal government to be able to have a tax credit program that is different depending on whether there is an all-weather road, winter road or no road at all to your community. So we have to treat all people the same under the tax administration system we work with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Lafferty.

Supplementary to Question 341-14(3): Highway User Toll

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a final question on the tolls. The toll we are putting in place now, will it have an implication on future tolls, for example, a Mackenzie River bridge or an all-weather road to the communities or even the winter roads if we are going to put this infrastructure in place in the future? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 341-14(3): Highway User Toll

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the toll we have put in place is essentially a fee we are charging heavy trucks for the use of the road that they are travelling on. So we cannot take

the money from that toll and use it for something else. We could not take it and use it to build a winter road or to build an extended road someplace else. We have to spend it on the area from which we take the revenue. Will it have an effect on the bridge, for example? If there is a proposal to build a bridge, it would certainly have to be taken into consideration because I think there is a limit to how much we can afford to increase tolls by. In terms of winter roads, we could put tolls on winter roads if they are our responsibility, but that would be a different program. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

Question 342-14(3): Status of Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question was for the Premier on his recent trip from China, but since he is not in the House at the moment, I will ask Mr. Handley a few questions.

-- Laughter

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I just want to caution Members that your rules do not permit you to comment on who is or who is not in the House.

MR. NITAH: Thanks for the little break, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is back in the House and I will ask him a question. Thank you very much. I figured I might as well ask some questions of the Premier since he has been out of the House for a while and now he is back. Might as well get him back into...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Nitah, I would caution you about my comments about recognizing who is not in the House. These are your rules and I would ask you to observe those rules.

MR. NITAH: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I was referring to the time he was gone, not just now.

-- Laughter

Mr. Speaker, the question I have for the Premier deals with his discussions with the Prime Minister. As Mr. Handley just answered a few questions to Mr. Lafferty on the road toll that he mentioned in his budget speech, he has also addressed a lot of other issues and a lot of ambitious budget items in his budget speech. Many of us on this side of the House are concerned of the rising cost to the people of the Northwest Territories deriving from the tolls, fee increases, et cetera. A lot of us base our decision on the potential for devolution and revenue sharing.

I would just like to ask the Premier if there were any discussions with the Prime Minister on revenue sharing and devolution. If there was, can the Premier share that information with us in this House today? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Premier. There were two questions there. You can answer whichever one you choose.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure what the question is. It was not clear to me. Perhaps he could make a short, concise question? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr. Nitah, could you perhaps rephrase the question to the Minister?

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were a lot of proposed increases and fees and charges for services provided by this government. One of them includes tolls. The question that I asked the Premier is for us on this side of the House to accept these tolls and fees, we have to have faith in devolution and revenue sharing from resource development in the Northwest Territories. Has the Premier discussed the issue of revenue sharing with the Prime Minister on his mission trip to China with Team Canada? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Return to Question 342-14(3): Status of Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I in fact raised it in a meeting I had with the Prime Minister earlier this year. The Prime Minister is aware. He had made a commitment to complete devolution during the time that he serves as the Prime Minister responsible for this country. We had indicated to him that we would prefer, seeing as he may like to stay on forever, to see it concluded during the time of my term as Premier. He seemed rather sympathetic to that, assuming that I would be here for at least three years.

We also discussed the item of revenue sharing that his Minister, Mr. Nault, had committed to us, that there would be a commitment on the federal government's part to negotiate a revenue sharing agreement between the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories and aboriginal governments. The Prime Minister was particularly interested to know that there was a partnership approach to revenue sharing and that the federal government would always be a part of this equation. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 342-14(3): Status of Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I am glad we have a time line, at the very least, of three years. Some say that the Prime Minister, Jean Chretien, will not be there for three years. There is talk within the Liberal Party that there might be a leadership review and there might be a new leader, hence a new Prime Minister.

I am just wondering if there is any further commitment. We have heard there is commitment for devolution. We have heard there is commitment for revenue sharing. Those commitments were made to the last Assembly. In the Assembly before, there was discussion.

Is there a plan B by this government to approach Ottawa for the areas of devolution and revenue sharing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return to Question 342-14(3): Status of Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Intergovernmental Forum was established with the aboriginal groups, the aboriginal governments. It is the intent of the Intergovernmental Forum, with the support and agreement of the aboriginal governments, to put on the agenda for a timely discussion and conclusion of an agreement on devolution and revenue sharing through this intergovernmental process. It is a new approach. It is an approach that so far has had the support of the federal government, the aboriginal governments, and the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 342-14(3): Status of Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am quite familiar with the Intergovernmental Forum. Those forums have been established by past Assemblies and past aboriginal leaders. We have all seen how the Government of Canada uses the divide and conquer methods. Give a little bit of dollars over here, which groups want to fight for that? That could very well happen again.

Will the Cabinet, will the government, along with the Intergovernmental Forum with the other aboriginal governments, approach Ottawa en masse? Go down to Ottawa and have the meetings there and educate the Canadian public with why...

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, order. I would just remind the Member of my earlier comments about preamble. The Chair has been very lenient, Mr. Nitah. Please just go straight to the question.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Intergovernmental Forum is a very slow process. Can the government speed up things a little bit so we can see some fruition through these discussions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return to Question 342-14(3): Status of Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have ongoing discussions with the aboriginal governments. We will proceed in a manner that is agreeable to them, both in terms of content and strategy and also time. That is the way we will do it. I think it is the best way to proceed. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 342-14(3): Status of Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. One of the most contentious issues when we talk about revenue sharing is that nobody knows what we are talking about. I have no idea what we are talking about when we talk about revenue sharing. Will this

government establish an example or a process that will show the people of the Northwest Territories what we mean by revenue sharing? Can we get...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. We have the question. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return to Question 342-14(3): Status of Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing Negotiations

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been made clear by the aboriginal governments as well our officials that we need to take some time to review the history of devolution and discussions on revenue and the Northern Accord. It is important that all of us have a common understanding and common definitions, that we understand the concepts. As well, with all of the leaders and governments that are discussing this, we have also agreed to an appellate process to make sure that our people in the communities understand and appreciate and support the agenda items that we are engaged in to ensure that there is a broad understanding and support for it at every level possible. Thank you.

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

Question 343-14(3): Child Welfare Study Recommendations

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is directed to the Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services. It is further to my statement earlier today about how so many of us in the public are so skeptical of government studies these days. Often, we see that not enough action is coming out of these reports.

One example may be this report that I have in my hands, which is called *It Takes a Community*. It was a study done by the Child Welfare League of Canada on the dire situation of child welfare in the North. I wonder if the Minister could advise this House as to whether she has had the time to review the recommendations and what action she has taken, if any, on those recommendations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Return to Question 343-14(3): Child Welfare Study Recommendations

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department and I have both had a chance to look at the recommendations contained in the report that Ms. Lee refers to and some of the action we have taken in response to the report is contained in the critical investments that we have identified for the Department of Health and Social Services in the budget that we are in the process of considering now. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 343-14(3): Child Welfare Study Recommendations

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the report contains no less than 58 recommendations. I realize that one of them has to do with additional funding for child welfare workers and part of that has been addressed. I wonder if the Minister has any plans to do anything about the rest of the 58 recommendations, one of them being necessary changes to government structures.

Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister whether she is planning on doing a formal reply to the report to the House or to the Social Programs Committee? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 343-14(3): Child Welfare Study Recommendations

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The critical investments that I just spoke of that will be contained in this budget that we are considering now include a broad range of coverage on the recommendations that were received in the report.

We recognize the need for more people in the area of child protection and more workers because of the caseloads and the workload which child protection workers are faced with right now. We recognize that required training specific to child protection is required. We recognize that child protection workers need resources in their communities and in their regions with respect to where they might be able to place children that are in at-risk situations.

So there are quite a number of elements that are covered under the critical investments. I could not say exactly how many of the 58 recommendations are addressed in our initial request for \$1.2 million to respond to the report.

As far as the response, the department has developed a three-year action plan to respond to the report's recommendations. If the Member has not received information about that, I will undertake to get that for her. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 343-14(3): Child Welfare Study Recommendations

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind the Minister that all Members here would recall that she was very enthusiastic about this report. She talked about this report in this House with great fanfare and I would like to really see concrete action coming out of this report. So, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister could commit to providing us with a report that shows clear linkage between these recommendations and what she is planning to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 343-14(3): Child Welfare Study Recommendations

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we consider the \$1.2 million critical investment that the department has requested and put forward in our budget, we will show the clear linkages between the recommendations in the report and what we plan to do. We recognize that this is not sufficient resources to address all the recommendations, but we do believe it is a good start and it will address one of the very critical recommendations in the report, which speaks to the number of workers that we have working in this field now in the North. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Final supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 343-14(3): Child Welfare Study Recommendations

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many of the Members here have met with the child welfare workers on the issues that they face. One of the things they were facing was the fact that they might not meet the requirements under legislation under the resources they have now, because they do not have enough resources. So, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister could provide in the report, once again, a very detailed account of how she is following up on these recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 343-14(3): Child Welfare Study Recommendations

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Lee is correct about the recommendations contained in the report and that we feel they are very relevant and very constructive and we may not have the resources to implement all of them, but we still do recognize that this review was required and that more resources are needed and I hope that I can look forward to the support of the Members of this House for this initial investment of \$1.2 million. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Question 344-14(3): Hay River Women's Resource Centre Funding

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my Member's statement, the issue of family violence has been an issue very important to this House. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that the women's resource centre in Hay River has not had an increase in their funding since 1996. The women's resource centre has submitted three requests for an increase in their funding to the Hay River Community Health Board and they have not received a response to their request. Would the Minister have any information as to why their request has not been entertained by the Hay River Community Health Board? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Madam Groenewegen.

Return to Question 344-14(3): Hay River Women's Resource Centre Funding

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Delorey is correct that the NGOs receive their funding for this program through the health boards. This is money that is devolved to them. So as to why the health board has not responded to this request or included it in their budget planning, I cannot answer that question. That is a responsibility of the boards. As for increases, the board did provide an increase under the contribution agreement to the women's resource centre in the 1999-2000 budget. That increase does remain in place for the fiscal year 2000-01.

There has also been an increase to health boards of two percent to address the cost of utilities and we are checking into this matter right now to find out if this two percent increase has been passed on to the women's resource centre.

As for their request for an additional \$100,000, I would need to speak with the health board to find out what their response has been to this request. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary to Question 344-14(3): Hay River Women's Resource Centre Funding

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister indicate to this House what measurements the Department of Health and Social Services has in place to monitor the budgets and fiscal affairs of individual health boards after the department has devolved the yearly funding allotment to the health boards? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 344-14(3): Hay River Women's Resource Centre Funding

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we rely on information and feedback from the boards in terms of the accounting of the monies that they receive from us. This accountability for these financial resources is one of the things that has been identified in the terms of reference under the Cuff review and how that accountability towards the funds is something we are looking forward to recommendations on as a result of this review. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary to Question 344-14(3): Hay River Women's Resource Centre Funding

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the recent budget announcement, would the Minister know what funding increases may be going to the regional health boards to be targeted specifically to the area of family violence?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 344-14(3): Hay River Women's Resource Centre Funding

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I am not able to provide that level of detail of financial information right this moment, but I will provide that to the Member. I also want to indicate that the department does agree that non-government agencies involved in family violence protection have been under-resourced and have not seen the kinds of increases that they have needed to keep up with the work that they have carried out in the communities and in the regions. This is something that the department will address with the Standing Committee on Social Programs under the family violence prevention streams of the addictions and mental health strategy, which we will be working with the committee on very shortly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Groenewegen. Final supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary to Question 344-14(3): Hay River Women's Resource Centre Funding

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware of how many facilities there are throughout the western Arctic that provide similar services to family support centres? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Madam Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 344-14(3): Hay River Women's Resource Centre Funding

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there are 42 bed spaces available in the NWT as family violence shelters. The Sutherland House in Fort Smith has six beds; the Family Support Centre in Hay River, 12; the Inuvik Transition House, eight; Tuk Women's Shelter, four; and the Alison McAtteer House here in Yellowknife has 12, for a total of 42 bed spaces for shelter for women and children.

In addition to this, there are also a number of safe homes, and we are aware of 12 safe homes located in four communities that are currently for women and their children who find themselves in a crisis situation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 345-14(3): International Trade Opportunities for Northern Businesses

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my statement this afternoon, I have a question for the Premier, and I think it is timely because he has just returned from an international trade mission.

My question is, in light of his recent travel, could he advise this House of ways the government might provide support to local businesses, to NWT businesses, in fostering international

trade, particularly in northern expertise and the region's cold weather technology and construction? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Return to Question 345-14(3): International Trade Opportunities for Northern Businesses

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has in previous years, through the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development in its trade and investment division, provided support to businesses to look at trade missions and to support ways to encourage business overseas for our companies in the NWT. We will continue to do that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary to Question 345-14(3): International Trade Opportunities for Northern Businesses

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we saw some strong initiative from the government and the leader of the Chukotka region of the Russian Federation, would the Premier engage his offices in fostering and growing the relationship with this region at the diplomatic and political level? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return to Question 345-14(3): International Trade Opportunities for Northern Businesses

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Mr. Speaker, we will be very happy to support our northern businesses and work in partnership with the Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, to do what we can through my offices to support such initiatives. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary to Question 345-14(3): International Trade Opportunities for Northern Businesses

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The inside of an airplane is probably the last thing the Premier would like to look at after such a long journey around the world, but I would like to ask the Premier if the government would consider initiating a trade mission not only to the Chukotka region, but to other circumpolar regions. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Further Return to Question 345-14(3): International Trade Opportunities for Northern Businesses

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are suggestions that will be considered by the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, and I am sure they will take such recommendations and advice from the private sector and use their own contacts and expertise in this

area. The answer is yes, we will consider them as they come forward from our officials. Thank you.

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

Question 346-14(3): Draft Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is addressed to the Minister responsible for RWED, and it is in relation to the climate change which is affecting all of us in the world, especially the North, and specifically the government's long-awaited Greenhouse Gas Strategy as it ties into the broader energy strategy, and how we are going to as a Territory deal with this very important issue that costs a lot of money and has such a significant impact on climate. Could the Minister indicate where the Greenhouse Gas Strategy is in its development? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 346-14(3): Draft Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the draft Greenhouse Gas Strategy is at the printers. We expect to have it back by March 1st and available to all Members as quickly as we get it back. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary to Question 346-14(3): Draft Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister indicate to this House whether this particular strategy will tie in as well to some of the other broad strategies that the government has talked about, such as electrical transmission, the issue of regulatory reform, all of which tie in to the whole issue and the consumption of energy, the amount of emissions and greenhouse gases that are emitted in the NWT? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 346-14(3): Draft Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, this Greenhouse Gas Strategy will tie in with the other initiatives that have been undertaken, including the 13 energy efficiency initiatives that were part of the programs and services review exercise they went through.

The Greenhouse Gas Strategy has been developed with the support of, I think, about 40 different agencies, including the Power Corporation, government, industry, aboriginal organizations and so on. It sets out a plan of action that is proposed to do two things. One is to begin to do things that will control greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories and, second, to dovetail those with the national Greenhouse

Gas Strategy, so that as Northerners we are doing our share but at the same time not being penalized in any way, or being given unreasonable expectations as a result of a national strategy. This has to tie in there. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 346-14(3): Draft Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as has been said in this House at a different time, a strategy without any adequate resources is just a slogan. I would like to ask the Minister, will there be resources required to implement the strategy and will those resources be available? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 346-14(3): Draft Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the strategy, as it will be presented after it comes back from the printers, hopefully on March 1st, is a draft strategy. I intend to use it, assuming we get feedback that is positive and does not cause us to make major changes, as one of the backup documents as we prepare our business plans for the next fiscal year. For the 2001-02 fiscal year, we have some money but very limited. As we prepare for our next round of main estimates, this document will be a key one in giving us some direction and where we should be setting our priorities in Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Your final supplementary, Mr. Miltenberger.

Supplementary to Question 346-14(3): Draft Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister indicate how soon after March 1st, or a date that is close to that, when the draft comes off the printing press will the committees and Regular Members be able to see the document, as it is a very important piece of the plan? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Minister responsible for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 346-14(3): Draft Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, if the committees want a copy of it, I would be happy to give that today if you want to have it. I could do it right away. However, the nicely printed one that will be going out for consultation will not be available until March.

Mr. Speaker, I will take the question as being a request for it and I will provide a copy to the committee. Thank you.

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

Question 347-14(3): Highway User Toll

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for Finance and it relates to our new taxation initiatives. My understanding of the commercial trucking toll and the reason for putting the money into a trust and the fact that it is a toll and not a tax would be that then the federal government would not be able to claw the money back. Is that in fact the case?

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

Return to Question 347-14(3): Highway User Toll

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the federal government would not be able to claw it back under the current formula agreement. The reason for putting it into a trust is primarily to assure the public that this money is going to be used for upgrading, repair and so on of the existing highway system; that it is not going to be used somewhere else. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 347-14(3): Highway User Toll

MR. BELL: Thank you. So under our current agreement then, I will take it that tolls going into a trust cannot be clawed back, but taxes can. The Minister explained that this will give public assurance that the money will actually be spent on highways. Why did not he consider this with the hotel tax? Why not a hotel toll that could not be clawed back, that would be put into a trust and spent on tourism? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 347-14(3): Highway User Toll

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, if we introduce a new tax, the federal government cannot claw it back. So if we introduce, for example, a new hotel tax, it will not be clawed back during this financing agreement with the federal government. If we increase an existing tax, then that is subject to claw back. So it would not matter if we called it a hotel toll or a hotel tax, it would not be clawed back for the life of this agreement. What happens in the next agreement, of course, is dependent on our success in negotiations. So calling it a toll would not change anything. The proposed hotel tax will not be clawed back either during the life of this agreement. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 347-14(3): Highway User Toll

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, but my understanding is that, as he mentioned, the hotel tax would be clawed back when our new agreement starts, which is only a couple of short years away. Do we have any assurance that they will not do the same with the toll no matter whether we put

the money into the trust? We may be borrowing \$60 million, \$70 million or \$80 million on the premise that we can get the money back with tolls. What if they claw it back? What does Mr. Handley proposed to do then?

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

Further Return to Question 347-14(3): Highway User Toll

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I do not think we can say with any certainty that any revenue that we generate will be clawed back by the federal government on the next formula financing agreement because what that agreement looks like and what will be clawed back and what we will get for tax adjustment effort and so on is going to be dependent on our success in negotiation that next formula financing agreement. I am going to do everything I can to ensure that the next formula financing agreement looks quite a bit different than the one we have now.

I do not think as Northerners we are getting the benefit we should be from the formula financing agreement. We need a better deal. We need to have resource revenue sharing and I hope to have some progress made in those things.

I would not want to make the assumption that any of these things we are doing now are going to be clawed back in the future because we are going to do our darnedest to make sure that they are not. If, for some reason, we are not successful and the federal government has determined that they are going to claw back on a highway toll, then we have to really reconsider whether we wanted to continue with that sort of mechanism or whether we would just drop it and say it is not worth it if all we are going to get back is 20 percent or something of the revenue that is generated. It is a bit hypothetical. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 347-14(3): Highway User Toll

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The public certainly had reservations about where the hotel tax money might have been spent. I am wondering why the Minister did not consider setting up a trust in order to guarantee the public that the money would in fact be spent on tourism?

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

Further Return to Question 347-14(3): Highway User Toll

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Member's suggestion-recommendation, advice. Yes, I will certainly take that under consideration as we implement the hotel tax. I really appreciate having Mr. Bell's support on this one. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. The time allocated for question period has expired. I would like to take this opportunity before the next item to welcome to the visitor's gallery, visitors from northern Saskatchewan, from the Athabasca Denesuline representatives. We have the vice-chief from Prince Albert Grand Council, Ed Benoanie; Jimmy Laban

from Black Lake, councillor; August Mercredi, councillor from Fond du Lac; Flora Natomagan, negotiator from Hatchet Lake; Kevin Mercredi, negotiator from Fond du Lac; David Knoll, legal counsel, Prince Albert Grand Council; and, Peter Brook, management consultant for Prince Albert Grand Council. I take this opportunity to welcome you to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly.

-- Applause

I do apologize for the pronunciation of your name, but you can read the Hansard. It will be spelled correctly there.

Next item, item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, replies to budget address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

ITEM 14: TABELING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 105-14(3): Letter From Fort McPherson Aurora College Students Regarding Child Care Subsidy Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a letter I received from the students of Arctic College campus in Fort McPherson requesting that the funding be going to students be paid and administered through the local authority, through the income support program or the Gwich'in education and training program, and students be paid on a biweekly basis, every second Tuesday. It is signed by four constituents of mine. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Item 14, tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motions. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. 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: Bill 19, Committee Reports 5-14(3), 6-14(3) and 7-14(3), with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

ITEM 20: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Welcome to committee of the whole. We are dealing with Bill 19 and dealing with the Department of Health and Social Services. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would recommend the committee continue consideration of Bill 19 and Committee Reports 5-14(3), 6-14(3) and 7-14(3) concurrently. Specifically, our consideration of Health and Social Services, perhaps followed by Transportation.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree? Okay. We will take a short break and begin with the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

-- Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I will call the committee back to order. Would the Minister like to call in any witnesses? Minister Groenewegen.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I would like to bring witnesses.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses in? Madam Minister, could you introduce your witnesses for the record?

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, today I have Ms. Penny Ballantyne, deputy minister responsible for Health and Social Services and Mr. Warren St. Germaine, the director of financial and management services. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Madam Minister. Welcome, witnesses. Before concluding yesterday, there were several questions asked by Mr. Miltenberger. At that time, I stated to the Minister that when we continue on today, she will be replying to those questions. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister if she can reply to Mr. Miltenberger's questions.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Miltenberger raised quite a number of issues in his general comments just before the committee adjourned yesterday. A lot of the questions that Mr. Miltenberger outlined in his comments, I was struck by the resemblance of the questions to the terms of reference for the Cuff review. In fact, he touched on quite a number of the areas that are being looked at and we presented to the Cuff team in terms of the things we want them to look into.

With response to the working relationship between the boards and the department, I just wanted to outline to Members a few of the initiatives that the department and the boards have undertaken to ensure that there is a strong relationship between the department and the boards. One is the joint leadership council. This is a face-to-face meeting quarterly between the board chairs and myself as the Minister.

This is a recently created meeting and council and we do talk about recommendations on system-wide planning and we share information and discuss issues that are relevant to the boards. We try to ensure that the planning processes at the leadership level and senior management level are linked.

In addition to that, we also have a joint senior management council. Again, this is a face-to-face meeting between the CEOs and senior management within my department. This particular council has been in place for the past two years. The purpose of this council is to share information of relevance to the whole health and social services system, make decisions on operational issues, conduct joint system-wide strategic planning and establish new joint board-department advisory committees and receive regular reports from these committees.

In addition to this, there is a monthly teleconference between the boards, CEOs and senior managers of the department. This particular initiative has been in place for 18 months now. The primary purpose of this teleconference is to share information between the department and the boards and to receive interim reports from the joint task groups.

The joint task groups, there are a number of joint steering committees and working groups made up of board and department staff. These groups work on projects or issues of common interest. The roles of these groups include sharing information and best practices, providing input on program design and reform, to improve programs and services to clients and developing territorial strategies and collaborating on the development of standards or procedures.

Some of the things that might be included in the work of the joint task groups would be alternative treatment programs, Arctic nursing leadership network, Child and Family Services Information Steering Committee, Child and Family Services Advisory Committee, Child Welfare League Review, Health Suite User Group, Job Evaluation Committee, planning and communications peer group, Addictions and Mental Health Steering Committee, Territorial Health Safety and Well-being Committee and Recruitment and Retention Working Group.

In addition to this, Mr. Chairman, almost all departmental staff play some role in supporting health and social services boards.

In addition to that, many departmental positions are fully dedicated to provide direct assistance, support and advice to the boards. This is in a number of areas including recruitment and retention, board operations, financial analysis, human resources, program consulting.

So I wanted to share this with Members so they would be aware that there are a number of linkages between the boards and the department to offer the kind of support and exchange of information and dialogue that is important to both the departments and the boards doing their work.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps for the sake of brevity, I will leave my response to Mr. Miltenberger's...actually, one thing that was mentioned in closing is Mr. Miltenberger's suggestion that Mr. Cuff got his spurs in the wrap up of some health boards in northern Alberta. I have today taken the opportunity to provide every Member again with a listing of some of the different kinds of work that Mr. Cuff has undertaken to show the broad spectrum and scope of issues that he has looked into as he puts together his team of consultants and associates to address various subjects. I hope that that is helpful. I have also provided more background information to the media in terms of the credentials of Mr. Cuff. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, in your comment, you said you were going to be sharing information with the Members in the House. Do you have that information available so we can circulate it to the Members in the House?

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Chairman, thank you. The letter with the attached information has been circulated and handed out to Members this afternoon at some point. If they do not have it yet, we can arrange to have it brought down here. There was a letter that I had signed today with the attached information that has been sent out. I think some Members have it, Mr. Chairman, and if others need it, we can arrange for my staff to bring that down and circulate it to Members. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Madam Minister. The information would be helpful, especially on this department. I have on my list Mr. Miltenberger for general comments.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to listen to the list of practices and procedures that are in place in the department, as the Minister indicated in some cases for many months, a year, maybe more. It would appear, unfortunately, that they do not seem to be working or we would not be in the middle of this review and we would not have heard, unfortunately, in a growing sense, that the system is out of control.

My question to the Minister is what specifically does she intend to do as Minister, the ultimate responsible person for this whole department from communities on to her position, in terms of the management functions within the department, the administrative functions within the department, and the financial functions within the department that are obviously not up to the task currently required of them and need substantive work done to them? Can she just give some key examples in those critical areas what she intends to do to address those issues? Or is she going to wait for Mr. Cuff to tell her that? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, when we talk about a system-wide review, we are not just talking about health boards. There seems to be a fair amount of focus on that. Certainly the ability of the department to respond to those needs, the capacity, the specialized kinds of experience that may be required to do that are all included in what the Cuff review is intended to look at.

Mr. Chairman, as I have stated before, this is not intended to be an exercise in faultfinding. We have tried to be very upfront and open with the Members about some of the shortfalls and some of the concerns that have been raised and have been brought to my attention.

If Mr. Miltenberger is suggesting that we need more staff in order to perform this role in the department, then that would be very contrary to previous positions he has taken about the concentrated manpower at the headquarters level. He has repeatedly indicated that he has concerns about that.

Mr. Chairman, I am also hoping that Members will avail themselves of the opportunity to speak with the consultants involved in the Cuff review. I know Mr. Miltenberger specifically is scheduled to have an interview, or make a presentation, or speak with somebody from the review team in the next little while. We would expect and hope that Members would be very specific in their concerns and that, as I said, this does not include only board operations. It includes the entire system, including the department. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister, I am sure not advertently, is trying to put words in my mouth in terms of some reference to more staff at the headquarters level, which is nowhere, anywhere in my comments is my intention.

My question relates more to the functioning of the department right through down to the boards, where there are clearly problems with the financial systems, administrative systems and management systems. I am not saying put more people

into doing these functions that are not working. I am asking the Minister what particular steps in these key areas, what key changes does she plan to implement that is going to make these systems function properly, ensure there is a connection with the boards, allow the department to be able to count the money, to monitor and evaluate the programs that they are in charge of, the 26 pieces of legislation that they have that they are responsible for...the department is telling us the system is out of control. Are we sitting by to wait for Mr. Cuff to give us the chapter and verse on what we should be doing as a department?

It is very amazing to me that given the comments and the state of the department, we would be standing by with all of the talent we have in the North and all the talent we have in the government and the department, and basically say we need this particular gentleman to come in to cure these problems after the multitude, the plethora, the overabundance of studies and reviews we have had, some of which are not even cold off the press, such as the Ministerial Forum on Health and Social Services Review. As my colleague pointed out, the Child Welfare League one where there was no response to the 58 recommendations. One plane load of consultants barely leaves the tarmac heading back south and we have another coming in.

I am very concerned of this incredible reliance that seems to be on these folks to come in and tell us how to save this sinking ship of Health and Social Services. This is very critical. The programs and services we run are very important, as has been pointed out in this House and as everyone is aware.

Yes, I am going to meet with Mr. Cuff because he is here. I will not miss the opportunity to pass on my concerns. I am also very concerned about what the Minister and the department are doing right now aside from waiting for Mr. Cuff to tell them how to fix the problems in the department. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I feel that as the Minister, it would have been difficult to approach the situation without the kind of expert advice, without the kind of data the Cuff review team is collecting, to take an 'This is what I think' approach to this problem. I think we need to rely on good, solid information and recommendations from people who are experts in this field.

As to Mr. Miltenberger's comments about what I am doing right now, we have been very proactive. Last fall, I requested the territorial Audit Bureau to conduct an audit on the pay and benefits function in selected health and social services boards. Those audits are underway and the first report is expected in a few weeks.

As a result of the initial audit findings, an agreement between the department and the board pay and benefits authorities have been transferred to the Financial Management Board Secretariat in the case of one board. I would say that has been something that we have responded to without waiting for the Cuff review to come in.

Also, Mr. Chairman, in December, I established a new clinical oversight function within the department under the direction of the newly appointed assistant deputy minister for population

health and clinical services. This will allow the department to provide clinical leadership and more direct support and supervision to boards in clinical service delivery.

We have already initiated clinical audits in two boards where problems have been identified.

Mr. Chairman, we have been taking action. We have been responding to information as it is becoming available to us. We have not exclusively relied on waiting for the Cuff review to come in. However, I do think that it is better to approach the solution to these issues with the Members on a broad basis, as opposed to piecemeal board-by-board. We need to look at the entire system. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I understand the Minister to say then that the work, all of the information pulled together from the much reviled Med-Emerg report, or all of the work done by the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services, or all of the work done by the Child Welfare League of Canada, is still not adequate?

In addition to all of the information prior to that, especially given the Minister's very strong opposition to any more southern people coming up to study northern problems and giving southern solutions to northern problems, is the Minister telling me that all of that information is for naught? We will just leave it on the shelf and we will go from scratch and have Mr. Cuff possibly reinvent the wheel? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we have been very clear in all of our communications to date. We do expect the information gathered as a result of the former work that was done that Mr. Miltenberger refers to, would be used in the current review that is being undertaken. The terms of reference for this review stress that the consultants are to build on the many existing reports and recommendations rather than starting from scratch.

This report is intended to come as an action plan, not general recommendations. The emphasis is on practical, specific recommendations that can be implemented.

Mr. Chairman, some of the most recent remarks Mr. Miltenberger has made with respect to northern solutions to northern problems, I would suggest that those are his words. He has made an issue of me putting words in his mouth, Mr. Chairman, which I will try not to do, but I would ask him to not put words in my mouth. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General comments? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, yesterday when I was making general comments, I talked about the issue of boards and my concern about where the Minister and the department might be headed in terms of their relationship with boards.

I know that in her response to me, the Minister talked about what she saw as a difficulty with the accountability level being at the ministerial and the departmental level, with the authority for program delivery being at the board level. In fact, she

referred to...one of the things she was waiting for in the Cuff report was some discussion about this gap. The Minister did indicate that using that very word, about the gap between those two areas, that she thought that this report would reveal some areas where there might be some concerns.

Again, she had rejected the suggestion that the committee has made that there is a similarity between health boards and education boards. The relationship between the Ministers here should be seen as pretty much the same, I would argue. We have education boards that have been devolved almost ultimate authority for delivering the program that is set up by statute and regulation. They are provided funds, basically block-funded. A formula is used to allocate the funding to the boards, but the funding, once it gets to the boards, is pretty well up to the boards to determine how it is actually spent. The formula is only there as a means to allocate the funds.

So the accountability is still there for the Minister and the government. They are responsible in this House to answer questions on the delivery of the program, and yet the Minister has very little involvement directly with the boards in how the program is delivered.

I think what we were trying to point out is that in one instance, one department in this government has managed to develop what seems to be a very positive working relationship and there is not a concern about that gap. There may be a concern, but they have found a way to deal with it and make sure that the program is delivered, and that the boards are supported properly in doing it. In making note of that and by trying to point out that the situation should not be any different with health boards, yes, the authority for the delivery of the program is at the board level and, yes, the accountability is with the department. The challenge is for the department and the Minister to find a way to support the boards adequately so that they can in fact deliver the program that they are expected to deliver.

I would like to move on to another issue and it is to follow up on the comments that were made by Ms. Lee and Mr. Miltenberger about the Child Welfare League report. I too made note of the supportive comments that the Minister made early on about this report. I would agree with her that it was a very good report. But she just now said that the one difference between the Cuff report and previous reports is that they do not make specific practical recommendations for action.

I would say, as Ms. Lee pointed out earlier today, that there are 58 specific recommendations for action contained in the report *It Takes A Community*. The Minister today said that there is \$1.2 million in the budget for critical investments. I think again, as Ms. Lee noted, it is hard to see how much we are really seeing of those 58 recommendations in \$1.2 million. I do not think it is very much.

I have a really specific question for the Minister. How many workers increase will be covered in the Northwest Territories in that \$1.2 million?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Dent. The Minister responsible for Health and Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, included in the \$1.2 million critical investment, in

response to the Child Welfare League Review, is ten additional child protection social workers.

Mr. Chairman, I should also clarify that when I was talking about the specific recommendations that we expect to receive as a result of the Cuff review, I was referring to less specific action recommendations in the Med-Emerg and the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services. I agree with the Member that the recommendations contained in the Child Welfare League Review were fairly specific.

With respect to the response to the recommendations, the approach that we are taking is a phased approach, and that is why we have prepared a response which will be phased in over a three-year period. We want to pay some attention to hiring Northerners for these positions as well. At this time, we may be able to, if we are very lucky, identify ten Northerners to work in these positions that we intend to fund through this critical investment.

Mr. Chairman, the correlation or similarity between education boards and health boards has been raised here again today, so I would like to take the opportunity to -- although, as I said yesterday, I think that if education boards are doing well and working well that is something that should be celebrated and we are not wanting to take anything away from that -- but there are some fundamental differences between the boards. Granted there are a lot of similarities, but I would like to identify for the Members what some of the differences are.

Education authorities have a more limited scope than health and social services. They are responsible only for schools. Education, Culture & Employment has not delegated or devolved all program authorities to their councils. Health and Social Services has a very broad and complex scope of authority, including 26 pieces of legislation. Each education district is a fairly self-contained system. Educators require professional contact and the support from others, but on a day-to-day basis, they can manage their activities entirely within the system.

The health system consists of levels of integration, and communities need to be able to refer patients to regional hospitals, further on to Stanton, and professionals need to be in close contact, sharing information and resources.

The Education Act allows for the election of local education authorities. Divisional education councils include a representative from each elected local board. Health and social services trustees are appointed by the Minister, except in the case of Hay River, Lutsel'k'e and Deninu, where the department has agreements with the local or aboriginal governing bodies.

In the collective agreement, teachers have a separate bargaining unit. The NWTTA can negotiate based on the unique needs of their professional members. The NWTTA had three collective bargaining units, two in Yellowknife and one in the rest of the Northwest Territories. One-third of the education board staff are UNW.

Nurses and social workers are lumped in with all other public servants, which makes it difficult to accommodate their issues, and leads to recruitment and retention challenges.

CEOs of education councils and health and social services boards are considered to be deputy heads under the Public

Service Act. They share the same delegated authorities. However, divisional education councils do not administer pay and benefits for their employees, except for casual employees. All pay and benefit services for indeterminate staff are provided by FMBS.

Both health and education boards are responsible for all human resources and labour relation functions, except for the Fort Smith board, whose pay and benefits authorities have recently been revoked.

The education field is not facing the same pressure in terms of an aging population, rising costs, new technology, international recruitment and retention challenges and forced growth. Education pressures are more predictable. Student enrolment can be predicted, based on demographic information, whereas medical travel is subject to fluctuation based on factors such as medical conditions and the availability of physicians. Thus, planning and budgeting is somewhat less of a challenge for education boards.

Education councils are funded through a formula based largely on student enrolment in the previous year, with an allowance for adjustments in the case of unanticipated fluctuations. Both types of boards are allowed to maintain surpluses and are responsible for deficits. Teachers in small communities have a slightly broader base of professional support than nurses and social workers, again mitigating recruitment and retention challenges somewhat.

Legislated education boards have been in existence since shortly after the Government of the Northwest Territories was established. Thus, it had a longer history and have had time to mature and stabilize. Up until 1985, they primarily acted in an advisory capacity. There was a period about ten years ago when education boards were facing deficits as well.

So, Mr. Chairman, as I said, there are some significant differences between education and health boards. I hope this information has highlighted that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Madam Minister. Next on the list I have Mr. Nitah. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services. I think we can call detail on Education right now. Mr. Chairman, the significant concerns on this side of the House on the health and social services boards and the state they are in, I do not want to repeat myself or others who have already spoken on it. It just reminds me that we are here doing a budget. If I go into a bank and I say I am going to do this, but I do not have a plan for what I am going to do, but can I have the money now? It reminds me of that. I think we are faced with that very situation.

The health boards in the communities have been established -- and thanks for that extra time, Mr. Chairman -- to deliver programs and services on behalf of the territorial government. From day one, I have always said that it was almost set up to fail. The very first thing that was asked of me when I got elected was to help trim the board's budget by ten percent. My understanding is that the budget that was associated with the transfer of those responsibilities was never that healthy to begin with.

There are all kinds of questions pertaining to medical travel. There are people who travel without interpreters; inadequate services, you could call it, I guess.

I want to return back to the non-insured health benefits today. I asked the question yesterday: is there a transition plan? What do treaty Indians, Inuit, Inuvialuit do after April 1st if the territorial government transfers or reneges on their contract with the federal government in delivering non-insured health benefits to the said people? What do individuals like myself who are treaty Indians do when I go see a doctor or when I have to go pick up a prescription drug or if I need a pair of glasses or get some dental work done? Are we going to be seeing rotten teeth, blind-eyed Indians and Inuit in the Northwest Territories? Those are some of the questions that I have. Is there a transition plan? What is the transition plan?

The one question that I have asked is what kind of services has the federal government not paid or stopped paying in 12 years that the Government of the Northwest Territories has been under contract and delivering the programs and services under the non-insured health benefits derived by treaty Indians and by Inuit? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, in Mr. Nitah's comments he has indicated that there are significant concerns on this side of the House. Mr. Chairman, I think it would be accurate to say that there are significant concerns by all Members of this House because I think we have a very fundamental responsibility to ensure the quality and sustainability of our health and social services system in the North. So I think this is a solution that we need to approach together and that is why I am hoping that Members will take the opportunity to have very open and frank discussions with the review team. It is difficult to implement a plan that is under construction at this time. So we are working on getting that plan. We've taken proactive measures to identify the problems and the challenges and now we are being proactive in coming up with a plan to address those.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Nitah has touched on the non-insured health benefit program. Certainly we recognize the importance of these services and delivery of this program to status Indian and Inuit constituents. We are quite comfortable right now that some of the problems that have caused that breakdown between the Government of the Northwest Territories and Health Canada, that these factors have been addressed in our most recent discussions. If it looked like we were not going to be able to retain responsibility for delivering these we, as I stated yesterday, would be putting in place a transition plan which would ensure that there would be no disruption or interruption in the services that are provided under this program. As I said, right now we are fairly confident that the concerns can be addressed.

As to some of the change in the policy that contributed to the deficits and the subsidizing of these services that we have referred to as reaching as high as \$1 million per year, I am going to ask Mr. St. Germaine if he might elaborate on some of those things that were disallowed due to policy changes and some of the disagreements over funding some of our claims. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. St. Germaine.

MR. ST. GERMAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some of the areas where we encountered disallowances in the program related to eyeglasses. In terms of the benefits provided to our residents, they were sometimes more frequent than the policy required or in cases where individuals had broken glasses, the policy would not allow for that, yet we would provide the eyeglasses regardless because there was a client need for that.

A lot of the disallowances revolved around the utilization of boarding homes in terms of patients in boarding homes for extended periods or extended family with them. Those costs were refused by the federal government. So it is in the nature of those type of expenditures where disallowances have occurred historically in the past. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. St. Germaine. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess there are several million dollars worth of glasses out there and boarding homes are doing very well. I cannot believe those are just the two items. It would be good to have a detailed list.

The reason I ask for a detailed list is because these are treaty rights the Department of Health and Social Services are obligated to almost protect under contractual arrangements with the federal government. These programs and services no longer exist for aboriginal people or treaty people. Who is responsible for the loss of these treaty rights? Is the department taking any responsibility for that?

I understand the Minister feels confident that discussions would allow the department to continue to provide these programs and services for an additional year. What concerns me is there does not seem to be a transitional plan just in case that does not happen. If there is, it has not been explained to me or to the House or to the people of the Northwest Territories.

April 1st, 2001 was the date selected, as stated in the programs and functional review, as the date the responsibility gets transferred back. That is not a very long time away, Mr. Chairman. It is right around the corner. Yet there was no plan explained to me of how that transition was going to take place.

Sure there are aboriginal organizations in the Northwest Territories in terms of band councils and Inuvialuit, but the Inuit still enjoy those services today. How are they going to take advantage of it after April 1st if there are no organizations that are able to take the responsibility on their behalf? Was there a transition plan for this? If there was, please let it be explained. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, before we got to the point of requiring a transition plan, the negotiations with the federal government improved to the extent that we did not feel it was necessary to have a transition plan, because we did not feel it was necessary to give up responsibility for the delivery of the program.

As for the policy changes that have taken place along the way that the federal government has made the decisions on, they are responsible for establishing the criteria for this particular program. If Members are interested, my department and I

would certainly be happy to set up a meeting with a representative or representatives from Health Canada to meet with MLAs to talk about some of the changes that may have occurred in the policy over the past several years.

Mr. Nitah raises the point of responsibility and whose responsibility it was to protect the rights of aboriginal people in terms of the kinds of things that were covered in the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program. It would be good to speak to Health Canada about that and I would certainly be pleased to arrange for that.

As well, we have offered and could extend it to other Members as well, for senior people in the Department of Health and Social Services to meet with Members tomorrow at lunch time to have a more in-depth briefing with briefing materials available, to shed some more light on this particular program and what some of the challenges have been in administering it.

I have already extended that invitation to Mr. Nitah. We are planning to get together tomorrow at lunch time. Certainly if any of the other Members have a particular interest in this NIHB and what the next steps are -- for example, a meeting with Health Canada officials -- we might benefit from that. I would be happy to have that discussion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Madam Minister. General comments. Next on my list I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to take an opportunity here to add some of my views on the general issues surrounding our health care in the North. I have already commented in the House yesterday and today on some of these issues, so maybe I can elaborate on it and ask the Minister some questions.

Mr. Chairman, as I stated this morning in my statement, I do not have an objection in principle with doing a study. I did raise questions about whether or not the Minister is clear about what it is she is trying to get at through this review. What I meant by that is I recall getting a letter from the Minister explaining what this review was supposed to achieve. In that letter, attached was a nine page terms of reference. It is very extensive. It is basically asking for answers to almost everything under the sun.

That brings up questions on what it is the Minister is trying to achieve there. I think the overriding concern, what the Minister is trying to get at, is the governance structure in the Northwest Territories with respect to our health care management. In light of the fact that issue was also addressed in the other report, *It Takes a Community*, as well as being touched on in the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services. I did not get a chance to read *Med-Emerg*, but I believe it was addressed there too.

Mr. Chairman, what I would like to tell the Minister is I recall about 11 years ago when I was a researcher for a committee on agencies, boards, and commissions, we studied health structure. I remember a consultant who was here from down south kept saying to me "the form has to follow function." I did not really know what he meant then, but when I think about it now, I think that is very apt in trying to address what we are trying to do with board governance.

I think we have to remember that whatever governance structure we have to deliver health care programs has to be there to serve the purpose. They are not just there to overtake or get in the way. I am not saying that they are, but obviously I believe very strongly that the bottom line for all of us here, and the Minister, has to be the delivery of services. If the structure we have now or the way we are doing things now, or cost overruns, or anything is going to cause having to make a decision to reduce programs in any way, we have an obligation to look at the total picture and make some really tough choices.

For that, I am supporting the study in principle, but I would like to hear from the Minister as to what has driven this need on her part to do this study and what it is she is trying to get at.

Second, Mr. Chairman, I just want to indicate that yesterday when I made a statement recognizing the long-term services of physicians in our Territory, I also mentioned casual discussions with doctors at Stanton. What I realize now is that we have a very fragile health care system in the North where we are lucky in many ways. Many specialists are here providing services and as a unit, they are able to provide more than what they could as an individual.

We have a system built and I believe very strongly that we cannot tinker with that. It cannot be a choice between whether we are going to have a surgery unit or whether we should just combine them because they make sense on paper. There have to be other decisions we could make on the overall structure of the health care system before we come down to one surgery every two days versus every five days. We cannot be talking about these issues at that level. There has to be something else we can do. Choices have to be between health care and maybe government employees going to conferences. I do not know. We have to look at the overall structure and what our priorities are.

In that way, I really want to stress the point that I hope the Minister is really clear about what it is she is trying to get out of this study. Second of all, that she keeps her focus on keeping the services and making sure we provide essential services with the structure in place to do that. I would be interested in hearing the Minister's comments to that end, and I will follow that up with some questions on the shortage of nurses at the hospital. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, when Ms. Lee asks why we need to review the system, what is driving the need for a review and an action plan, I did identify some of these in a Minister's statement I made last Friday, but I will just touch on a few of them again.

Today, we have a very complex, fragmented system with multiple boards serving the needs of our 42,000 residents, so we have a relatively small population. We have everything from a community health board for a community of 300 people to a territorial board like Stanton, with a territorial role, with budgets of \$48 million.

We have a lot of duplication and overlap and we do not take advantage of the economies of scale.

The accountability relationships are also fragmented. The legislative and policy responsibility is held with the department.

The operational functions, which we have devolved to the boards, make it difficult to enforce standards of care.

There have been a number of things that have contributed to the erosion of our capacity to monitor and enforce the standards and provide administrative and clinical leadership and oversight. One of those things that has contributed to that, Mr. Chairman, is the downsizing within the department over the past years.

The things we are beginning to see because of a lot of the pressures on the health system are the operating deficits that the boards are experiencing. We want to be able to respond to those kinds of pressures, but we need a better way of accurately reporting what is contributing to that.

As I mentioned in my comments yesterday, some of the things that drive the deficits are things that really are out of the control of the boards. Some of the forced growth costs or expenditures that are not within the control of the CEOs that manage the facilities and the boards. In order to be able to clearly identify that, we need very good accounting and reporting structures in place.

A lot of the functions that we have devolved as well, such as the pay and benefits, are very complex. It is difficult for there always to be the capacity for stand-alone boards to be able to fulfill those functions.

When you consider all of the pressures on the system, it really is important that we find ways of making it as efficient and, as I said before, as good quality as possible.

Mr. Chairman, Ms. Lee also referred to a lot of the question around the review relating to governance. I just wanted to point out that the four key areas of the review are:

- To optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of the Northwest Territories health and social services system today and for the future, which speaks to the sustainability;
- To establish an appropriate accountability framework that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and authorities;
- To recommend a governance structure that supports the accountability framework while respecting strategic directions of Northwest Territories governments, which includes things like self-government negotiations and regionalization; and
- To recommend an appropriate financing framework for the health and social services system. We are committed to ensuring the system is resourced so it is able to carry out the much-needed programs and services it delivers.

When we talk about the previous reviews that have been done, the reason why we say we are looking for very clear recommendations is, I will give you an example. Recommendations from some of the previous reports have tended to be fairly general. For example, the following recommendation and priorities from the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services report entitled Our Communities,

Our Decisions, "Initiate a new way of governing health and social services programs in the Northwest Territories."

This is characteristic of quite a number of the recommendations contained in that report. They are good recommendations, but we need to take it to the next step so we have a very clear action plan for implementing some of those former recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Madam Minister. General comments? Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to refocus my question to the area of communities, especially the frontline workers who are usually the nurses at the health care centres. They are the ones who get the people coming in on a day-to-day basis.

One thing that I have always wondered is why is it that they are limited on the type decisions that they can make as an individual, especially when it comes to a situation when we talk about the possibility of medevacs. In my riding, there is a bus service that takes people from the communities to the regional health centre in Inuvik. Even there, they have to get permission from Inuvik. One thing I feel we have to do more of, especially as a government, is give more authority and responsibility to the people who are dealing with the patients on a one-to-one basis and make those decisions and give them the tools so they can make decisions without feeling threatened by someone above them or if they did something by saying, "Okay. We think that personally, you are not well. We do not want to take a chance, so we will send you to Inuvik," without them having to pick up a phone to phone Inuvik and ask what they think. If the doctor is coming in another three weeks, should that patient have to wait for three weeks to make a doctor's appointment?

I think we have to start finding ways to make better use of the people we have in the system. I think that is one of the frustrations we find with the frontline people, especially the nurses in our communities. When you talk to these nurses, they love what they do. The frustration that they have is when they are stuck in a position where they know the decision that they want to make is the decision that is not being supported by someone else. We have to look at allowing more flexibility in that area.

Another frustration you hear from frontline workers is having the tools to do the job that they are supposed to do. In many of the health centres, you do not have small things like a bus service or a small little vehicle to get you from point A to point B. A lot of the frustrations they get is that people are calling them saying so-and-so is sick and cannot make it to the health centre. They have to say sorry, there is nothing they can do. People assume because they are the nurse, they should come down to them. If the communities have the ability of having, not an ambulance service, but some vehicle that is accessible where you can have someone from the health centre go and pick up the individual and bring them to the health centre; it could also be used for the nurses to do their community tours. Many of these communities do not have the little things such as a vehicle to get them to do their job, to do their elder care, to go to home care where they go to the different elders within the community. A lot of these people have to find their own rides or walk to these communities.

Those little things we do to keep those nurses. The other thing is the facilities they work in. The big concern in Aklavik is sure, they know there is a new health centre that is going to be coming, but again, it is having to work within a cramped space. You have four people crammed into one little office, not having the luxury that other people have where you can go somewhere else and have that luxury. I think we have to improve the conditions these nurses are working under.

I think it is also important that we seriously consider looking at how we work within the First Nations communities. You talk to the nurses, the mayor, the chief, they seem to work together on community issues. However, it seems like when they need the tools or they need the resources to take on more authority and more responsibility, that is where they run into the problem with the red tape, or someone at the health boards is not responding or cooperating with them to do these unique things, to find ways to simplify the process or try to deal with these problems, especially where you have over-worked nurses and what not in the community, to try to find alternative ways of assisting nurses by having to either hire somebody to work part-time, be answering phones, or having somebody there that they can have just to be translating to an elder so they can explain to them what is going on.

Those little things that I see can go a long way to ensuring the health care of our communities.

Another area that I feel we have to do more of is start working in partnership with communities, especially First Nations governments such as band councils, in trying to access resource dollars that presently the federal government has a lot of.

I am talking about programs such as the aboriginal healing program. You are talking \$100 million in that area. You are looking at programs such as Brighter Futures, community wellness. I think we as a government know we cannot do everything but if we pool our resources together, we are able to deal with these problems a lot better and a lot of the aboriginal communities I represent are frustrated because of the red tape trying to get the nickel and dimes out of this government, yet they are working okay with the federal government when it comes to the aboriginal healing program and other federal programs. So they are able to access those funds, but they are having problems accessing funds from this government.

There has to be a more cooperative and open process to allow for this government to streamline or pool the resources we have so we are able to get more mileage out of the resources that are out there, not only our resources but federal resources, so that we can pool our dollars and communities can deal with the front line issues, especially when you talk about problems we see in our communities; FAE/FAS, alcoholism, drug abuse. Those people need to have those resources so we can have healthy people who will assist us in the government. Without healthy people, it is costing us more money in the long run. So there are things we have to do to look at alternatives that are out there.

Another area is the alternative treatment program that you touched on. I for one have been hounding this House, especially in the 13th Assembly -- poor Mr. Ng, I think he is probably having nightmares about me today with regard to T'loondih. That facility is still there. It is being used by the aboriginal groups in the region, yet it is not being used by this

government. As a government, we cannot afford to build new facilities.

We should start partnering up to use those resources and facilities that are out there where the aboriginal groups are using a lot of the resources they are getting through the aboriginal healing programs to run programs, regardless if it is the Inuvialuit or the Gwich'in. Again, that comes to looking at alternative treatment programs. Right now, we only have one treatment facility within the Territory. We have to start using those facilities that are out there.

I just want to touch on a few areas that we have been talking a lot about here. There is the whole area of reports, studies and what not. Since I have been here, we have been talking about the Med-Emerg report, which was back in the 13th Assembly. Then there was the Ministerial Forum on Health, which submitted a report to this House. Now we are doing another review on another report that is coming forth shortly. Again, I think that we have to start dealing with the problems that are out there. I am not trying to put as much emphasis, onus on studies, reports and what not. What we are seeing is we are being studied to death.

Our problems are compiling. It is costing us more to deal with these problems. Unless we deal with the problems that are there now, I do not think we can continue to put the resources and dollars into these reports. We have to start implementing the reports and the recommendations that come out of those reports, which a lot of good people and a good pile of information has been compiled over the last number of years. I think it is important that as a government we start implementing those recommendations that come out of these reports and not continue to one report after another report after another report. I for one am seeing that as a waste of resource dollars that could be better spent in the health care system.

I just wanted to make sure I got as much mileage out of my ten minutes. With that, I will leave it to the Minister to respond.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am sorry, I guess on some of these previous speakers, once they made their comments, my response goes against their time.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Krutko raises a number of very good points. Just in respect to the review that is being done now and some of the reports that were done in the past, like I said, we are hoping that the recommendations of this review will be very specific and will build on the information that has been collected and reported on previously. Sometimes whether or not these reports and the recommendations get implemented or not has to do with the political will of the people who are serving at that time.

In her statement today, Ms. Lee talked about the necessity to find the courage and the money to implement some of these responses. I think that is a commitment that is going to be required on the part of all Members of this House is to work together to find the kinds of solutions we need, and then commitment again by us as a government to ensure that the system is adequately resourced in order to be able to do what it is intended to do. I suppose that is one of the other things that

makes the particular recommendations that we are awaiting different.

Members of this House who were not here when the Med-Emerg report surfaced, there is a different Minister; there are different people at senior levels of the department in some instances. I remain optimistic that there will be the courage and the will to come together to make the necessary changes that we need to make in order to make the system better for everyone's benefit.

Health and social services is such an important part of people's lives. At no other time are people more vulnerable than when they are not well. People's health is something which is very personal and a person's ability to have the confidence that they can access good services is so important in a person's well-being. For people living in the North, I know that is a major consideration in quality of life.

So with respect to some of your points that you made about some of the reporting and communications structures, the way they are set up now where nurses may have a good sense of what needs to be done to address problems but need to seek approvals from other places and that whole chain of command, that is part of the reason why we are conducting the operational audits to identify those kinds of areas.

With respect to operational audits, I am going to ask Ms. Ballantyne if she could elaborate on the kinds of things that the operational audits are going to look into. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Madam Minister.

MS. BALLANTYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, just briefly with respect to the operational audits, they will be touching on the types of issue that Mr. Krutko raised. On specifically the protocols around medical evacuations, generally the protocol would include a consultation with a physician to determine whether there was anything else that the nurse ought to be doing at the community health centre to stabilize the patient, to provide appropriate treatment and also to make the decision as to the best point for the evacuation to occur, and to allow some time for the planning for reception. I believe what Mr. Krutko is referring to is the need for approvals prior to the medical evacuation taking place. That is a protocol that would be included in the operational audit. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Ms. Ballantyne. General comments? Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a couple of areas, Mr. Chairman, that I would like to raise with this at this time in general comments. I am aware of previous work that was going on within the department to try to address some of the increased cost pressures the department was facing. I am not sure if anything has come out of the initiative that was undertaken, especially when I was involved in the department myself. As well, I have had opportunity to view the transcripts of the committee and there are a number of points there that -- I do not know how else to put it -- I am concerned with upon seeing some of the information.

Mr. Chairman, in particular in the area of cost drivers and pressures, we have heard this across Canada; of the costs increasing and one of the initiatives as well, as we were looking at in the 13th Assembly, was in the area of nurse practitioners. We have not heard much of that area for quite some time. I

would like to know from the Minister if there has been any further work done in this area.

As we know, we have a lot of small communities that do not have doctors. We have nurses in these communities that have to take on a lot of extra duties.

Along that area to try to help remote communities out was the area of telehealth, so we would not have to medevac as many patients out because of the concern of diagnosis or misdiagnosis. There was work being done in that area and that is an area where again I have not heard much about as we go into year two of our term.

I know it was fairly new when we first looked at it in the 13th Assembly and some work was going on. I know there have been connections made with Inuvik and a few of the larger health boards. I am not sure if it was at that time being used to the best of its ability in a sense of reducing some doctor visits.

I have heard comments from individuals and from those involved in the field to a certain degree where patients would be seen by a doctor through the telehealth. They were quite impressed with being able to do that, but still having to come down and see the specialist in Yellowknife and be sent back home again. It is almost seeing twice. Once through the telehealth system and then coming back down and being seen again.

We can all pull examples out of stories we have heard or people telling us directly of some of the concerns of being flown down here and then being flown home the next day because they saw the doctor for 15 minutes. That is a concern. You would think those cases could be dealt with through the telehealth system instead of having someone on the plane down here and going back shortly afterwards.

I am not sure if that is associated with the fact that there has been a high turnover of doctors. It is a concern that is there and needs to be addressed. These are on the ground, day-to-day issues for health practitioners that impacts the department because of the costs of initiatives like this and the cost of medical travel.

I would like to know again, specifically in those areas of cost drivers and what we have done to promote nurse practitioners in the Northwest Territories. Where is that work going? Is it ongoing? Are we going to hear something soon? I know there has been some support initially from doctors in the Northwest Territories. I think that was conditional. I do not know if we have moved much farther than where we were over a year ago. So if we could get some information on that, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, Mr. Roland identifies some areas where there has been some advancement and movement within the department.

First of all, the nurse practitioners. The department, the board, the college and the Northwest Territories RNA are working together to develop advanced nursing educational programs. I will be making a ministerial statement some time during the session on some of the nursing program areas.

The advanced nursing educational programs would include an introductory nurse practitioner course and a university accredited nurse practitioner program. A needs assessment of nurses registered in the Northwest Territories was conducted by the college, which was just done in November-December 2000. It resulted in the return of 227 surveys. Seventy-six respondents indicated an interest in the nurse practitioner program and 43 indicated interest in both Bachelor of Science in nursing and nurse practitioner programs. There is activity taking place around that and there is interest. Those are encouraging pieces of information.

Mr. Chairman, this fall the college is planning to deliver a 15-month nurse practitioner program. The introduction to nurse practitioners is ongoing now and they have three points that they have intake. At each intake point, there is three more people added to the program. Those start in September, February and May and that is ongoing now. So that is some of the information on the nurse practitioners.

With respect to the telehealth services, there is a plan underway to expand those services as well. You raise an interesting point with respect to the telehealth contact being made and then requiring a trip to the specialist. It seems that it may be adding to our costs as opposed to diminishing. That is quite possible that that could happen.

With the telehealth technology, what can happen is that more things can be diagnosed. However, the good news is that quite often it can be an earlier diagnosis. It does identify needs for face-to-face visits with specialists and physicians. It does require travel and follow up. Telehealth is not necessarily a big cost saver, but it certainly does enhance the system and enhance the quality of the service that we can deliver to Northerners.

With respect to some of the specifics around the development of the telehealth network, I am going to ask Mr. St. Germaine if he would describe some of that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. St. Germaine.

MR. ST. GERMAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the expansion of the telehealth network, the intention was to expand four additional sites this current fiscal year in Holman, Deline, Fort Simpson and Hay River. The sites are all ready. All of the preparations are done with the staff involved. However, when we went out to request for proposals for the equipment, we were unable to get any compliant suppliers, so we have had to cancel the RFP process and reissue. We will be proceeding with that work in the upcoming fiscal year. It is just not physically possible to have that work completed by March 31st. The intent will be to expand into those four communities next fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Maybe if I could get a bit more information on the telehealth side. Was it because of not getting proper equipment or was it linkage for satellite sort of thing? Was it anything to do with the DCN or digital backbone, as it was called? It was a pretty flimsy one at that. Or was it more related to the cost of trying to set it up? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Chairman, I will ask Mr. St. Germaine if he would respond to that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. St. Germaine.

MR. ST. GERMAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not have all the details with me today but fundamentally, it revolved around issues of the technology working appropriately with the satellite linkages we have in the Northwest Territories. It was a question of whether the equipment they were proposing would actually work on the communications network that we have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. General comments? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, rather than belabouring the issue about the similarity or dissimilarity between education boards and health boards, I guess we will just have to say that the Minister and I disagree about what level of similarity there might be.

I think we should be looking, though, at those areas of similarity, why there seems to be a better relationship, from the boards' perspectives, in education then there does in health. I still think it is worth investigating why that might be.

I would like to get back to the one issue that I had started in on, the issue of the recommendations from the Child Welfare League report. The Minister told me that there were ten additional workers, their salaries included in the \$1.2 million in critical investments in this budget. Could the Minister tell me is that ten additional workers to the three or four that were already allocated in Yellowknife in the fall? Is this in addition, so we will actually see an increase in total numbers of 14 over what we had when the report was issued? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the three employees who were added to the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board last year were two workers and one support staff. If the board can accommodate those three in terms of their financial resources, we think it would be fine if they continued to have them.

The ten workers would then be in addition to that and unfortunately all of those, depending on where you live, are slated for the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So there were no additional resources provided to Yellowknife Health and Social Services to put in the two extra workers and the support staff?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the additional funding for the three workers that were brought in to address some of the pressures last year, I am going to ask Mr. St. Germaine to speak to how they were funded. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. St. Germaine.

MR. ST. GERMAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those additional resources were funded by the department. Funding was provided to the local board for that purpose. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question then is was that included in their base? Was that ongoing funding or was that limited funding to provide a short-term solution?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. St. Germaine.

MR. ST. GERMAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was one-time funding.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Mr. Chairman, the Minister just said that not all ten workers were going to go into Yellowknife. I know the report indicated there were two areas in the Territories that were in critical need of additional workers and one-third that was in not quite as critical but almost as critical need for workers. So if there are no ongoing funds, the Yellowknife situation is not likely to improve in the next 12 months is what it sounds to me like I am being told here. Is that true?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, certainly some of the ten new positions that have been identified as part of the \$1.2 million investment are slated to go into Yellowknife. The exact breakdown of where the ten workers are going to go, I do not have that information in front of me so I do not want to provide incorrect information. So I will undertake to find out for Mr. Dent exactly where the ten workers are scheduled to go. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would have to go back and check the transcripts, but I believe that the Minister and the department did give us an initial breakdown when we talked about this in committee, so I take it that they are backing away from what we were initially told.

What causes me some concern is I have a copy of a letter from the Minister to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Programs that was sent out just on the 16th of February, in which the Minister has made clear that there is no commitment to any particular community for where these resources will be placed.

It really comes back to, as Ms. Lee has asked earlier today, where is the commitment to follow through on recommendations? There were very clear, precise, specific recommendations in the report It Takes a Community as to where these positions should be allocated. Very clear by number.

In the letter that we most recently received from the Minister, it is indicated that those recommendations will not necessarily be followed and that there is now going to be some consultation to determine where the workers should be. Again, the question is are we really going to follow the recommendations if we have had what the Minister has already herself characterized as good ones, and the initial indication to the committee was that

she was in fact going to follow those recommendations and now it sounds like she is backing away. Where is the commitment to follow through when we do get good, specific recommendations?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I do not really appreciate the insinuation that Mr. Dent makes that we are backing away from the information provided to the committee. In fact, what I stated is that I do not have the allocation of the additional workers in front of me right now and I do not want to run the risk of providing incorrect information, but I will find that. I believe that where the allocations will go is consistent with the information we provided to the committee. Nothing has changed. It is just that I do not have that information in front of me right now and I will undertake to get it for the Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman, the recommendations in the Child Welfare League report are very good recommendations, I believe, and we are committed to responding favourably to the recommendations in the report. We did develop a three-year plan and we are initially approved for the first year's implementation of that three-year phased-in plan. If there was no concern about financial resources, perhaps we could do more all at once, but right now what we have is a commitment and hopefully when we go through the mains -- that is where the plan is outlined -- we will receive that support. It is difficult to provide specific details when the approval has not yet been received through this budget process we are in for the \$1.2 million. I guess we will come to that when we consider the detail of this department. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General comments? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister may be offended by my insinuation that she is backing away from her commitment, but it is not just an insinuation. The letter we received some time after the meeting with the committee, in which numbers were spoken, does not contain any numbers. In fact, the letter makes it clear that there is going to be some consultation now to determine where the positions are going to go and, as the letter says, "Will not only take the Child Welfare League's information into consideration." So it seems to me that there has been a clear backing away from what was a commitment made to Members earlier.

My question though, and even of more concern to me, is the fact that it appears that I had assumed that we were going to see a quicker response in the city of Yellowknife. I thought the funding that had been provided to get us the increase in two workers and one support staff person would be provided as ongoing funding to Yellowknife Health and Social Services, so those positions could at least be there in the base and we might be looking at perhaps another three or four of the ten positions coming to Yellowknife to try to deal with the shortfall here.

Will the Minister commit to re-examining that issue and see whether there is some way to maintain the funding that has been provided as one-time funding to give a head start, at least to Yellowknife Health and Social Services, to deal with their critical problem? Then also ensure that there is a reasonable allocation from the ten that comes to Yellowknife.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, yes we can commit to reviewing the specific needs of Yellowknife. However, Yellowknife is not the only community in which there was a deficiency in the availability of child protection workers.

We have to look at the needs system-wide, but certainly we are prepared to review the needs in Yellowknife and any changes in information that may have become available since the Child Welfare League review was done.

Yellowknife is certainly a magnet community for outlying communities. It seems that people do come here for quite a number of different reasons, and I think we see probably more fluctuations in population here than in some of the other communities where the demand on the services is somewhat more predictable. So yes, we would commit to reviewing that, again bearing in mind that we do have some pressures in other regions as well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General comments. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When last I had an opportunity to speak with the Minister, I made a comment to the effect that hiring a southern contractor seemed somewhat strange, especially given the Minister's stated commitment to northern solutions for northern problems. The Minister indicated that I was putting words in her mouth. I would just like to make it clear that I was not putting words in her mouth.

"I know that we can work together to solve the problem and find a northern answer to this very northern challenge." Mr. Chairman, that is a direct quote again from page 722 of Hansard of July 30, 1999. Unless the Minister is backing away from this support for northern solutions to northern problems, it is here, so I am not putting words in her mouth.

I do have questions about Mr. Cuff. The Minister did provide us with some information about Mr. Cuff's background and the work that he has done. I notice that he has worked for Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Infrastructure and the Capital Health Authority, but it does not say specifically what he has done. There is a wide range of activities. I would just like to know from the Minister, Mr. Cuff and his associates, were they part of the major reorganization and downsizing and collapsing of the health boards exercise that took place in Alberta a number of years ago?

I notice that the Minister's letter says that several members of the team have participated in the review and restructuring of hospital and health service administration. I was wondering if the Minister has that knowledge, or her deputy, in terms of Mr. Cuff's background. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (M. Krutko): The Minister responsible for Health, Mrs. Groenewegen.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of solutions that Mr. Cuff may have recommended or solutions that he recommended that may have been implemented in other jurisdictions.

As I stated before, he does have a reputation for developing health-related action plans which are very pragmatic. I would also state that each and every consulting contract I am sure that someone like this would take up would have different kinds of factors which would contribute to the results. That is why we have asked Mr. Cuff to closely look at some of the other initiatives of this government and some of the unique realities of the Northwest Territories.

With respect to some of the comments previously about the operations of education boards, we have also asked Mr. Cuff to look at that as well, to look at the way some of our other board structures and government structures are set up in the Northwest Territories, so that he will have a very good understanding when making his recommendations of, as I said, some of the realities of delivering services in the North. Not to say that we probably do not have some similarities as well with some other rural and remote areas in which Mr. Cuff has performed work in the past.

As to the specific recommendations that he may have provided to other agencies and some of the results of those recommendations, Mr. Chairman, I do not have that available. I would suggest that when Mr. Miltenberger meets with Mr. Cuff on the 27th that he might ask him about that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I must say that I am surprised. Mr. Cuff, in committee, was given what was almost a eulogy in terms of his ability and the fact that he, of all people in western Canada and the Northwest Territories, was the one that was the most suited to do the kind of work that the Minister talked about with governance issues, with this wide range of requirements, and yet the Minister tells me she has no idea what kind of major work this man did, other than he came highly recommended. We are entrusting recommendations on the future of the health care of the Northwest Territories and yet in this public forum for the people to be reassured that in fact this knight in shining armour on his white horse is in fact the man for the job, the information is not there.

I would like to ask the Minister, could she find out? I do not want to wait until next week once we have passed this budget to ask Mr. Cuff if he was involved in the almost continuous reorganization of health and social services that has taken place in Alberta in the last number of years. If that is where he has cut his teeth and won his spurs, I think it is important we know that, because the Alberta government took a very specific position and strategy in dealing with health boards and health care services that put them on a roller coaster in terms of services, cutting and slashing and downsizing and dismantling. Then once they had money from oil, pouring money back in, trying to shore up the system that they so vigorously a few years prior were dismantling.

This man comes to us from Alberta with high praise and I would like to know, and I think the people have the right to know, what kind of work did he do that makes him the man who is going to be able to provide the recommendations that are going to guide this government and the people of the Northwest Territories for the next number of years? The recommendations that are finally going to be put in place after years and millions of dollars of studies.

I would like to ask the Minister, if she does not have that information, can she get it? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Before the Minister responds, I just want to remind the Members that what happens within the committees is not privy to this House and that should stay in committee unless there is a report tabled in this House. On that particular matter, it has not been. I would ask the Minister to reply, especially in regard to the knowledge of the Minister and her department.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Cuff and his team of associates do come very highly recommended. Mr. Chairman, I hope that Mr. Miltenberger feels that he has an adequate number of sound bites for the media in his remarks today.

I would like to suggest that Mr. Cuff is a very highly respected and very professional individual, and I am very embarrassed that in this House he should be referred to as things like "a knight in shining armour" and the other myriad of analogies and remarks that Mr. Miltenberger has made about Mr. Cuff. I am very sorry for that.

As far as the fear-mongering about Mr. Cuff's ability to provide this government with recommendations, I would like to, for the confidence of the people, assure them that we have chosen the best person we could find with experience in this area.

The recommendations that come forward from the Cuff review will be exactly that, and it will be myself and the Members of this Legislative Assembly who will responsibly work together to look at those recommendations and decide whether or not they should be implemented and whether those recommendations will benefit our system for the benefit of all our residents.

As to some background information on some of the previous work that Mr. Cuff has done, I am going to ask Ms. Ballantyne if she could outline a few more details of that. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you. Ms. Ballantyne.

MS. BALLANTYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to provide some additional details on the background and related experience of Mr. Cuff and his firm. The firm has recent and currently ongoing experience in conducting comprehensive reviews of child and family services authorities in Alberta; recent experience conducting a comprehensive review of the authority charged with providing housing for low-income seniors; related experience working with complex health and senior related issues for Alberta Health and Wellness, reviews of the Lakeland Regional Health Authority; the Alberta Mental Health Board; Persons With Disabilities Board; work on the long-term care review recently underway for Alberta Health and Wellness; relevant recent experience conducting a review of CMHC's Residential Rehabilitation Program; knowledge of governance and related issues as a result of 300 studies in the public sector; they authored the report on governance for Alberta Health as it impacts regional health authorities; co-chair and principle author of the regional health authority's best practices review; faculty member of the Banff School of Management pertaining to governance, leadership and management practices; advisor to Alberta Health on the regional health authority board expectations for the department's orientation packages; lectured to all regional health authority boards on the roles and responsibilities as board members; advisor to the Minister of Health on specific dispute resolution related to shared services and funding issues involving a number of health authorities in Alberta.

In addition, Cuff and associates has undertaken a number of specific projects for regional health authorities. For example, for the Capital Health Authority report on boundary adjustments within the authority's area, for Alberta Health arbitration and long-term care between a number of health authorities, some on specific request of the Minister.

In addition, advice to specific facilities managed by boards of NGOs, reviews of best practices for Alberta Health, including reports on corporate governance, et cetera.

I think that is an overview, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. General comments? Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you. I do not have many more comments to make, but I did not have enough time last time around to ask a question, a specific question with respect to nursing shortages, specifically in Yellowknife.

When I was talking to some people about what was going on and the question surrounding the reopening of the surgical unit at Stanton, I received mixed messages about what is happening with the respect to the shortage of nurses. Some of the people I talked to said that there are nurses in town who could possibly apply for jobs there and work there, except that they may be looking at some flexibility, working on a part-time basis or working on weekends only. The more I found out about it, and I talked to nurses and nursing representatives from the Registered Nurses Association and anybody I could get a hold of, it appears there is quite a complex system of how we recruit and retain nurses and the compensation packages that go with that.

I do not know. I am not very clear about how this works.

Maybe I could ask the Minister to explain about what is involved in the market supplement? I asked a question in the House and the Minister was supposed to provide that information. Can I just get that information on market supplement?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, specifically in relation to the recruitment that Stanton is undertaking right now, the recruitment efforts, our indications are that if sufficient staff could be hired, the surgical unit will reopen on Monday, March 5th. All indications are that they are putting all of the effort that they can into identifying those nurses.

One of the recruitment tools that we have used for RNs in the past has been the temporary nursing market supplement. This was something that was put in place to address the shortages in the Northwest Territories. It was to ensure that the benefits are competitive with other jurisdictions across Canada.

The current two-year funding agreement expires March 31st, but the main estimates do include funding for one more year for this program. We feel that the shortages and the demand for nurses is still such that we need to continue that.

There are some UNW issues surrounding the extension of that supplement because there are some ramifications of having

something like a market supplement in place for a number of years. We do agree that adequate compensation is critical to retaining staff, keeping pace with the recruiting efforts that are going on in other jurisdictions.

We are feeling that the Stanton board is doing everything that they can with the offer that they have available to make to nurses to recruit for those positions that would allow the reopening of the surgical unit. I do not have the most recent information on the results of those efforts, but we can certainly keep Members apprised of that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Madam Minister. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Following up on that, I think it is now February 20th. March 5th is not too far away. I am not sure if a lot can happen in two weeks. I hope that the Minister is keeping track of that and she is working with the board on a contingency plan on how to address this.

In talking to some of the doctors, I think the reality is that we have doctors who are sitting around and cannot do the surgeries because there are no nurses. It is a very critical situation, as the Minister is aware. I do not know if all of the plans on paper are going to be adequate. I am not sure what I can tell my constituents. I know there are people really anxious to see that open. I cannot emphasize enough the crucial and important nature of this problem. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we can undertake to speak with the Stanton management again, but just to restate that our latest information that we have from Stanton is that they do plan to reopen the surgical ward on March 5th. In response to the Member's concerns and in view of our support for that happening, I will follow up with the management at Stanton to find out what the latest information is. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Madam Minister. General comments? Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have had a lot of concerns, and I have been receiving calls from my constituency, especially when children end up being taken away from their families because of alcohol problems within the families. I think that we as a government have to do more to try to reunite families than to take their children away and not deal with the problems at home, especially when we are dealing with alcohol. In a lot of the native communities, it is a problem, but there are people there who can help to try to offset that problem.

When it comes to aboriginal children being taken away from the communities and are brought here to Yellowknife, because of the distance and what not, we have to do more as a government to find ways of working with the families to work out their problems or their difficulties so that we can reunite families instead of having the problems that we have seen in the past, especially where we have seen children taken away to go to hostels for quite a few years, and the problems we are now seeing because of that.

I think aboriginal children should be allowed to remain in the communities with relatives, grandparents, if possible. I have been approached by grandparents who wanted these children to remain in the community but yet the department made the decision to have them sent to Yellowknife.

I think it is important that as a government, you just mentioned that we will be spending a couple of million dollars to find these people to deal with the major problem. We cannot continue to do what we think is best for someone because we know best. I think we as a government have to start realizing that we cannot continue to play big daddy or big momma, because we are not there to take people away from families. At the end of it all, we have a bigger problem after doing that, especially learning from the hostel experience in the Northwest Territories. It is not a perfect world that we think it is.

In the long term, we pay for it through the correctional system, the jail system, and also the health system because of the effects on the family in areas of alcoholism, drug abuse, and whatnot. We as a government have to start doing more to find ways to assist families where we know there is an alcohol problem, to send them for treatment as a family, as a unit. If there is a problem with one person in the family, you do not send the one person away and then they come back to the family and nothing changes. You have to change the problems that originate in the whole community.

The biggest problem in our communities, as everyone knows, is alcoholism, especially when it comes to family break-ups or children being taken away from families. I bet you 99.9 percent of the time it is because of alcohol. I think if anything we should be putting more money into alcohol and drug treatment programs and make sure that the parents of those children have the option; that they take the treatment, take the program and then they will be able to access their children. Do not take them away from the community, their region, their grandparents, and take them to another foreign place, regardless of if it is the city of Yellowknife or Edmonton.

We have seen too much of that where people say, "We know what is best for you. We will take your problems out of your community" and at the end they do not help with the original problem in the community to begin with. I think as a government we have to do more and find new ways and initiatives rather than just being the big hammer and saying "We know what is best for you, and will continue to do it because we have the laws, regulations and jurisdiction because we passed legislation in this House giving us that power".

I think you have to put some of that power back to the people, back to the communities, especially in the communities where you have some good people who are trying to do some good things. They get frustrated when they see that the problem is there, and all you do is take the individual out of the community. You do not deal with the problem at the root.

With that, I would like to ask the Minister exactly what she is doing to improve reuniting families and children with their parents, especially the First Nations people, tribes and cultures that are up here to ensure that those children do not lose sight of that because they were taken away? We have seen that happen elsewhere in Canada.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Krutko raises some very good issues that do need to be addressed. Just by way of information about the removal of children from their community, our statistics indicate that over 80 percent of the children who are placed in care are placed in their own communities. In order to enhance the availability of foster care placements in communities, as a part of that \$1.2 million critical investment that we have identified in the budget, part of that is training foster parents to make them more confident in their ability to deal with special needs and children who may need to be in temporary care in a more adequate way.

Certainly enhancing the number of child protection workers and social workers will also enhance our ability to get involved in families where there may be some indicators that would suggest that there are going to be problems in that family. It allows for the human resources for earlier intervention before things escalate to the point where children do have to be removed from the home. I agree with the Member that needs to be viewed as a last recourse.

Mr. Chairman, what we try to find is the balance between the intervention of removing children from their homes and the need to protect children. We have an obligation as a government to protect children, so we try to find that balance. Sometimes it is not always easy. I totally agree with you, that we need to address what the underlying causes are of the conditions in these families that might cause them to not be able to properly care for their children. You have identified probably one of the most prevalent causes, that is dependence on and abuse of alcohol.

A lot of our programs are very interconnected and try to address the needs of families. The \$1.2 million critical investment also includes funding for a pilot project to have a plan of care committee in the community which could include extended family members, and elders as well, who certainly would have something significant to contribute. Advice and direction on the care of children who may be, for whatever reason, at risk. On this pilot project for a plan of care committee, the Dogrib region has expressed interest in piloting this project, and certainly that is very welcome news to us.

I think that the more responsible people who can get together and get involved at the community level, the better it is for the children in question. Sometimes it is difficult for social workers because there are constraints around the sharing of confidential information that they may have when they go through their screening process of people who may be interested in fostering. There are certain standards and criteria that are important to meet so that we can be assured of the safety and security of the children while they are in care.

Sometimes it is not possible to share that kind of information, so it may be frustrating to people who are interested in this. Again, that is just part and parcel of the safeguards we put in place for the care of children. We are recognizing this as an issue and are attempting to respond to it by enhancing the services available and the quality of care in individual communities.

I agree with the Member that it is very traumatic to remove children from their home, and certainly that trauma can be further realized when they have to be removed from their community as well. Then, not only do they not have the

familiarity of the family circumstances, but also things like school, friends and those kinds of surroundings.

We are encouraging communities to become involved in this important issue, and are hoping that they will realize the need that we have for them to work with us and the front-line workers to ensure the best possible circumstances when there are unfortunate circumstances of risk for them. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Madam Minister. General comments. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, rather than being embarrassed and apologetic about my measured tactful comments and questions, I would suggest that the Minister might want to consider being embarrassed and apologetic about once again turning her back on the public tendering process, yet again going out to a sole-source contract for hundreds of thousands of dollars to a southern contractor, by-passing the northern expertise and turning her back on the northern solution for northern problems.

Having said that, I do have some questions about budgets. If in fact we have at least four health boards that do not have approved budgets for this year, that it is uncertain what the deficit is, what the bottom line will be at the end of the fiscal year, what figures are being used in the main estimates given that uncertainty and lack of clear financial information to make that determination? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, all of the boards currently have contribution agreements from which they are working. The area of uncertainty is surrounding the deficits which have come to light in the past fiscal year. These are all being worked on and attempting to be addressed under the current policy that exists for deficit recovery.

Where the boards have been able to provide clear information and an indication that the costs are associated with forced growth and costs that are outside of their control, there have already been approvals made in some instances and money extended to these boards. In areas where there is still some uncertainty surrounding them, that there is not a clear plan of action with respect to the deficits.

As to how we prepared the estimates for our department in view of this particular information which is not available at this time, I am going to ask Mr. St. Germaine if he would respond to how we developed our main estimates. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. St. Germaine.

MR. ST. GERMAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the deficits that are projected in some instances, for instance, in the situation of the Stanton Regional Health Board, we were able to ventilate the forced-growth pressures that contributed to a portion of their deficit. That is included in the main estimates.

In other instances where we do not have the detailed information or substantiation for the cause of the deficit or the impact of the recovery plan, those amounts are not included in the current main estimates and, if necessary, will be subject to a request for supplementary appropriation, depending upon

what the cause of the deficit was determined to be and what the solutions were. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman it has been indicated clearly that the problem in coming to a determination on the financial situations of the various boards has been the information and where it is right or wrong. So my question to the Minister is where does the information breakdown occur? Are the boards saying that these are apples and you are saying that these are oranges? Is the board saying that these are tomatoes and you are saying these are tomatoes?

It seems to me that after a year, you would have all the systems in place and the FAA and all these other myriad of procedures, protocols and regulations that you would be able to sort through the money for the various health boards. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the reliability and the availability of information from the boards is the circumstances which contribute towards is probably as varying as the boards themselves. We are attempting to get a handle on this.

If we were expected to manage the expenditure of funds from the boards, the money that we devolve to them in such a way as to know the level of detail of every transaction, that would be really costly and really duplicating the function which the boards are responsible for at this time. I do not think that is the intent of anyone.

As to where the information actually breaks down, I will again ask Mr. St. Germaine if he could shed some light on that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. St. Germaine.

MR. ST. GERMAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Minister mentions, the issues vary, but the breakdown of the information is not necessarily in the financial reporting, but is in the explanation and understanding of how the numbers arose in terms of what program activities or what cost drivers effected the negative variances. So the negative variances are fairly clearly defined, is the question I am getting a clear understanding that is supportable as to why they occurred. That is usually where the communication breakdown, if you will, for the information occurs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This once again speaks to the processes, the accountability, the monitoring, and evaluation systems that are in place between the department and health boards.

Is there is a standard financial accounting format, budget process that is in place for all the boards? Are there quarterly variance reports done as is the standard in most parts of government? And if those variances are not up to speed or if there is questions are they not checked? Is there not a

common vocabulary or a common understanding of the definitions and terms of what constitutes acceptable expenses?

Mr. Chairman, these are fairly basic questions but it speaks to the issue before us with the budgets. That there seems to be some very basic flaws in the processing systems to the extent that the department cannot with any certainty come forward and tell us what the expenses of the boards are. After a year of trying, we are going to end the fiscal year still with no clarity on the issue of deficits. What is going to be done starting April 1st so that we are just not propagating this problem, but rectifying these accountabilities, processes and structures that may be missing? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we do have projected deficits for all the boards. The difficulty is in substantiating what has contributed to those operating deficits. Yes, there is a standard common financial reporting system. Yes, there are quarterly variance reports that are received.

The difficulty is in identifying what contributed to the discrepancies. I will again ask Mr. St. Germaine if he could elaborate on that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you. Mr. St. Germaine.

MR. ST. GERMAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is a standard budgeting format and budgeting process. There is also a standard set of financial statements that the boards provide, as well as quarterly variance reports as the Minister mentioned. So there are standardized reporting formats. There is also a standardized chart of accounts, which a chart of accounts basically defines what transactions, how they are recorded, accumulated and rolled up.

So the accounting systems and structures are in place. The issue really evolves around getting a clear understanding for what transactions occurred, what contributed to variances in terms of program delivery details, what were the contributing factors as opposed to the nature of the transactions or the accuracy of the information that is reported to us. It is the underlying business situation that result in the deficits that becomes the problem. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, that is a very interesting comment. It appears the information is provided, but the department does not accept it on face value and is trying to possibly understand what underlying issues are there, or is it in fact correct information. Is that what I understand the answer to be?

If that is the case, it speaks to a pretty fundamental problem in terms of trust. If in fact you are not confident you are getting accurate information and you have to go in and do all of the extra work yourself, the issue of the relationship between the department and the boards comes back up. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Madam Minister.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the issue is not so much about trust as it appears to be. Again, these are the kinds of questions that will be answered when our esteemed Mr. Cuff comes forward with the results of his investigations. It seems to be more around the capacity of boards to be able to provide this kind of financial information. A lot of the financial management functions are very complex. Sometimes there are issues of staff turnover. When financial records begin to deteriorate, it becomes a really major exercise to try and go back and find out where there might have been a change in the expenditures and really look into those things.

In my estimation, it is not as big an issue of trust as it is of capacity. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Lafferty): Thank you, Madam Minister. We will recognize the clock and report progress. I would like to thank the Minister and her staff and all of the Members.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will come back to order. Item 21, report of the committee of the whole. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 21: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2001-2002 and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move the report of the committee of the whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee, who seconds the motion. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Item 22, third reading of bills. Item 23, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 23: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Speaker, meetings for tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. for the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, and at 10:30 a.m. for the Standing Committee on Social Programs and also for the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development.

Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 21, 2001:

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

10. Replies to Budget Address (5th of 7 allotted days)
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 Motions for First Reading of Bills
17. Motions
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2001-2002
 - Committee Report 5-14(3), Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Report on the 2001-2002 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 6-14(3), Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the 2001-2002 Main Estimates
 - Committee Report 7-14(3), Standing Committee on Social Programs Report on the 2001-2002 Main Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 21st at 1:30 p.m.

-- ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:15 p.m.