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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	1331
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	1331
65-14(3): PERSONAL PROPERTY REGISTRY SYSTEM (ANTOINE)	1331
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	1331
PROVISION OF PUBLIC WEATHER FORECASTS (DELOREY)	1331
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND LOG HOME CONSTRUCTION (LAFFERTY)	1332
ELIGIBILITY FOR FUEL COST REBATE (ROLAND)	1332
PENSION LEGISLATION (DENT).....	1332
IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS OF NORTHERN VOLUNTEERS (MILTENBERGER).....	1333
MUNICIPAL FUNDING FORMULA INEQUITIES (MCLEOD).....	1333
HEART AND STROKE MONTH (BELL)	1334
ACHIEVEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NWT POWER CORPORATION (BRADEN)	1334
APPREHENSION OF CHILDREN BY CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES (KRUTKO).....	1335
2000 STUDENT SUPPORT NEEDS ASSESSMENT (NITAH).....	1335
SUPPORT FOR THE HIGHWAY INVESTMENT STRATEGY (LEE)	1335
RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS	1336
ORAL QUESTIONS	1336
FIRST READING OF BILLS	1348
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	1348
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	1395
ORDERS OF THE DAY	1395

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 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. Miltenberger. Assez vous. Bonjour, mes amis. It is the nice weather. It takes one's mind off legislative business. Speaking of legislative business, item 2, Ministers' statements. Déclarations de ministres. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Antoine.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 65-14(3): Personal Property Registry System**

HON. JIM ANTOINE: I am pleased to inform the House about the progress the Department of Justice has made to implement a new computerized personal property registry system for the Northwest Territories.

-- Applause

This past December, the Governments of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut signed agreements with Unisys Canada to implement new computerized personal property registry systems for each territory. The system that has been chosen is already being used in Atlantic Canada. It has proven to be reliable and secure in those jurisdictions. Northerners will be able to use this new system with confidence.

This new registry system will allow us to proclaim the Personal Property Security Act in force. We will start training users as early as next month and it is projected that the system will be available by the end of April. Northerners who subscribe to the service will soon be able to start registering and searching security interests at their convenience from home or from their business.

A personal property registry allows various types of financing agreements to be registered. For example, Mr. Speaker, if you were interested in buying a used truck, you could search the registry to see if anyone else had a claim on that vehicle.

The current registry system is located at an office in Yellowknife. Individuals or businesses that want to record or to search financial interests in property have to come in during business hours and search the paper documents by hand. This system is time-consuming and inefficient for the government and for users.

Mr. Speaker, when fully implemented, the new personal property registry system will be a major improvement over the current paper-based system:

- Northerners will have remote access from their own offices;
- manual searches will be eliminated as the system is phased in;
- searches in respect of certain items, such as motor vehicles, may be conducted by serial number;
- users will have access to the system beyond normal office hours;
- the system will provide improved security of information;
- direct input of information by the users will improve the accuracy of the records; and
- the new system brings the Northwest Territories and Nunavut in line with other Canadian provinces. It will also allow Northerners to search and register personal property in several other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation of this new system requires a great deal of planning and consultation with stakeholders. In the next few months, the Department of Justice and Unisys Canada will be in touch with regular users of the registry system. Through presentations, training and the regular distributes of the newsletter, PPR News, users will be kept up-to-date on the progress of this project. I would encourage individuals or businesses that have further questions on the project to contact the legal registries office here in Yellowknife. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. Antoine. Déclarations de ministres. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Déclarations de députés. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement on Provision of Public Weather Forecasts**

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an issue that has been raised by a constituent of mine. The issue I am referring to, Mr. Speaker, is the provision of public weather forecasts by community aerodrome radio stations. Mr. Speaker, this issue has wide-ranging implications for many residents of the Northwest Territories, especially those whose livelihoods are heavily impacted by present and future weather conditions.

Mr. Speaker, public weather forecasts and up-to-date weather information was previously provided to the general public by Nav Canada. Mr. Speaker, on June 28, 2000, community aerodrome radio stations, or CARS as they are referred to, commenced operations in Hay River under contract to Nav Canada.

Mr. Speaker, in Hay River, for example, CARS has a three-year contract in place from Nav Canada with a two-year extension option. CARS is mandated only to assist in the safe operation of air traffic. This does not include weather forecasts.

Mr. Speaker, I have a concern that the safety of hunters, trappers, fishermen and outfitters that are out on the land and water on a regular basis may be compromised. Mr. Speaker, their safety depends on reliable, accurate weather forecasts. These forecasts can only be provided in communities that are served by Nav Canada.

Mr. Speaker, in smaller centres where Environment Canada does not provide immediate weather forecasts and where people may not have access to the Internet, these people are at a very real risk to public safety.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will have further questions to the Minister responsible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Community Development and Log Home Construction

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about a housing initiative that could have significant benefits for the people in my region. The initiative is the reintroduction of sweat equity programs and the construction of log homes.

As Members know, in many territorial communities, there is both a housing and an employment crisis. This situation exists in my region, particularly in the remote communities. Last fall, I had the privilege of going to Tsiigehtchic with the Minister responsible for Housing and some of my colleagues from the Legislature. We examined the log homes built for elders through a training program. We wanted to know if this type of operation would work in our northern communities, and I think it would.

The mandate of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is to assist communities to assume the role of providing housing for the residents and to sustain northern economic development. By providing log homes, by building homes in the communities, we would fulfill the mandate of the corporation and serve our people by providing more affordable housing. We could create training programs for local people to build these homes. We can also create local employment, stimulate small business development and establish a housing market in small communities.

I think there have been positive developments in the area of housing. At the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lakes, Mr. Roland.

Member's Statement on Eligibility for Fuel Cost Rebate

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just returning from my constituency, I have had the opportunity to hear from a number of constituents, and the concerns being raised regarding the Fuel Rebate Program that has been discussed in this House and raised by a number of Members.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents, hearing that there is this rebate, are concerned as to how and who would qualify. A particular point being raised is that the working class will lose out on this subsidy because they will be squeezed out on the top end of the limits that are being put in place. In fact, it is not clear if people in low income housing and public housing will end up getting a rebate if this government carries forward. In a sense, they are already covered because they are included in the government's housing program for public housing units.

Those other families who are on the higher end income -- so far as we have heard to date as it has been set out according to the Housing Corporation's policies -- will lose out, even though in some cases it is a one-income family. They will hit the ceiling and still have to pay and bear the brunt of the increased costs of homeowners in Inuvik.

The concern is that some people living in rental accommodations who are subsidized, or paid through income support, for example, will qualify for that. There are a lot of questions out there as to who is setting up the standards. We are aware that the Housing Corporation will be the delivery agent, but I believe it is the Department of Finance that is putting the policy together as to how it will actually be implemented.

There is a concern about the actual details and how they will flow. Right now, as people from my constituency are hearing, there is not a lot of detail to that, and there is a lot of concern because of the lack of detail. With that, I will have questions for the appropriate Minister during question period. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Member's Statement on Pension Legislation

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about pension legislation. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement on February 21st, I called on this government to lend its support to a private member's bill presented in the Canadian Parliament.

Bill C-203 proposes to amend the federal Bankruptcy Act so that unpaid wages and payments with respect to pensions are given first priority over the claims of ordinary creditors. These amendments will help ensure that other workers across Canada never have to face a reduction in pension benefits, similar to those suffered by former Giant Mine employees.

Mr. Speaker, I also stated that our territorial legislation should be amended. For example, I believe that we could bring in legislation similar to that already in place in Ontario. The Ontario Government has a Pension Benefits Act that authorizes a pension benefits guarantee fund. The fund was established to increase the statutory protection offered to pension plan members in the event that a pension plan is wound up in whole or in part.

Mr. Speaker, in Ontario, when certain criteria are met, the fund guarantees payment of pension benefits. The administrator of the guarantee fund can file a claim against the employer who underfunded the pension plan to recover any amounts paid out by the fund.

Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that in terms of protection of wages and pension plans during bankruptcy, our territorial legislation is both outdated and inadequate. We were unable to provide any relief or protection for the Giant Mine pensioners. It is also obvious, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot rely on the Government of Canada to protect our workers in the North.

Mr. Speaker, we must consider amendments to our own legislation to ensure that a situation similar to Giant Mine does not occur again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Important Contributions of Northern Volunteers

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the Year of the Volunteer and I have been contemplating doing a Member's statement on this very important issue for some time. As I was walking to work this morning, I came across the causeway and there was a nice warm wind blowing. As I got closer to the causeway, I could hear all the flags snapping of all the communities that are represented here from across the Northwest Territories.

It gave me pause to think about the quality of life we have in the Northwest Territories. A quality of life that I would not trade with anybody else in the world. It is something I think we tend to take for granted, or we lose track of, as we in this House debate day in and day out, trying to get good things for our constituents and point out issues that need to be better addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the issue to me is that in large part, the quality of life that we have is due in no small measure to the work done by the many hundreds and thousands of volunteers in our communities. The people who work in the area of sports and recreation; with children; those who do Meals on Wheels; fire departments; those people who work with Brownies, Cubs, Guides and Scouts; the service organizations like the Legion, the Lions Club, Rotary and the Elks; those societies like the seniors societies; and the Society for the Disabled.

Mr. Speaker, I would estimate that they put in hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours and raise countless dollars through their fundraising efforts. They work quietly, tirelessly and continuously for the communities they live in. For me, and I think for everybody else, we owe them a debt of gratitude

because the quality of life that we have would not be the same if we did not have volunteers throughout our communities who labour in all these critical areas for our communities.

As we debate our budget, I think it is important not to lose track of the fact that we have a good quality of life here. I for one would really like to thank the volunteers who labour in all our communities in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Municipal Funding Formula Inequities

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak on the new financing formula that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has proposed for the community of Enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot accept the department's rationale that the new funding formula will be easier to administer because it is simpler. The only reason I can see for the funding being easier to administer is because there is less funding to administer.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame.

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the community of Enterprise will be drastically affected by the new block funding formula. The department has stated that the new formula will make it easier for communities such as Enterprise to do long-term planning.

Mr. Speaker, when a community sees funding reduced over the life of the agreement, the only long-term planning the council can do is to decide what services to cut and what projects to delay.

According to the information I have, under the proposed funding formula, Enterprise will see its core funding reduced by nearly \$91,000 by the year 2002-2003. Similar sized communities such as Trout Lake, Nahanni Butte and Jean Marie River will see increases of between nearly \$79,000 to Trout Lake to a high of approximately \$135,000 in Nahanni Butte over the same period. I ask, Mr. Speaker, where is the fairness in this approach?

The community leaders in Enterprise have been working to improve community infrastructure in order to attract businesses to their community. Projects may have to be deferred because of the funding decreases that will be imposed on Enterprise under the new funding formula.

Mr. Speaker, there is merit to providing block funding to communities such as Enterprise that allows communities to make their own long-term decisions when planning for the future. However, Mr. Speaker, we must also have the flexibility in any funding system to address circumstances communities such as Enterprise present. I will be following up with questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

Member's Statement on Heart and Stroke Month

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. February is known as heart month across this country. Today, February 28th being the end of the month, also marks the end of the annual fundraising campaign for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Since 1950, the Alberta Heart Foundation has been responsible for providing information, awareness and results to the Northwest Territories on heart and stroke disease. In 1990, the foundation's name was changed to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Alberta and the NWT to reflect the work and involvement of Northerners.

Their mission is to fund heart and stroke research, provide public advocacy and promote healthy lifestyles. Mr. Speaker, despite a decrease by 50 percent since the foundation began, heart disease and stroke is still the number one killer in Canada. In the Northwest Territories, such diseases can claim approximately 39 percent of all deaths, which is in fact slightly higher than the rate for the rest of Canada.

Funding for the foundation comes from a variety of activities, Mr. Speaker, many of which you will recognize. Some of them are such things as Jump Rope for Heart, Dress Red for Heart, The Mother-Daughter Walk for Heart and Stroke and the all-important door-to-door fundraising campaign.

Locally, Mr. Speaker, there are 32 staff in the foundation and 40,000 volunteers who contribute to the support of 65 research projects within both Alberta and the North. It is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the government does not provide funding and support for this initiative. It is all public fund raising.

In the NWT, there are eight schools that participate in the Jump Rope for Heart. I would like to specifically point out Ecole St. Joseph in Yellowknife. These folks have been the foundations top fund raising school for the last two years throughout Alberta and the NWT.

The NWT raises approximately \$1.50 per capita. I understand this compares very favourably with that of Alberta.

On behalf of fellow Members, I would like to thank the residents of the NWT who have contributed to the fight against heart disease and stroke. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. Bell. Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Member's Statement on Achievements and Opportunities for the NWT Power Corporation

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I wish to speak on the issue of power generation and the new Northwest Territories Power Corporation. The corporation was created in 1988, Mr. Speaker, to bring ownership and control of the utility from Ottawa and Edmonton into the hands of its northern customers.

Its job was to rebuild the old utility into a modern power system that is safe, reliable and self-sufficient. It has done so. In doing so, Mr. Speaker, it has paid off a \$54 million debt for the purchase of the corporation and has returned a dividend in the form of valuable power subsidies worth over \$40 million to the people of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

The business partnerships it has established with three First Nations, including the Dogrib, Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in, are also very significant.

The Power Corporation has achieved its original objectives. It is time for a new mandate and a new vision.

With the separation from Nunavut, there are new political and economic opportunities for energy management and development in the new NWT. The majority of our power is now created by cleaner, cheaper renewable hydro and natural gas over diesel. In addition, my colleagues, the Members for North Slave, Thebacha and Tu Nedhe, have repeatedly pointed out the tremendous hydro opportunities for community, industry and export.

There are many options as to how we can manage our energy future. The GNWT review of electrical service is generating thought and discussion on a wide range of recommendations. Some of my constituents have said that we should first address our own needs for alternate hydro and gas generation. I heartily agree. This objective is doable and may be enhanced by expanding these new generation options in tandem with sales to other customers outside of the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, on November 9th, I spoke about initiatives to reorganize the Power Corporation in light of the separation from Nunavut. At that time, I indicated that the UNW was involved in planning the reorganization. I have since learned that was incorrect.

For the record, Mr. Speaker, I want to state that while the union was kept informed of the reorganization, it was not a participant. The reorganization was the prerogative of management to prepare the corporation for its new role while the Nunavut Power Corporation comes into being. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues. As we approach the creation of two new electrical generating companies on April 1, 2001, I wanted to take this opportunity to recognize some of the NWT Power Corporation's achievements, highlight some constituents' concerns regarding power generation and, Mr. Speaker, to wish both corporations, the employees and their families well as they continue to keep the lights on and move to fulfill new mandates and new visions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement on Apprehension of Children by Child and Family Services

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I received several phone calls regarding the matter of children being taken from their homes and apprehended and put in other homes in other places.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that we as a government must do more to help families find solutions to deal with problems in the homes and also finding ways to improve the lives of the people and families who live in our communities.

In cases of alcoholism, unemployment, social problems that we see in many of our aboriginal communities, we must find solutions, not ways of breaking up families. I strongly believe that family treatment in regard to family counselling and other initiatives are the way to go.

You cannot heal a family by taking one child or one person out of the family. You must deal with the problem as a whole in which you must deal and heal the family together.

I believe children can no longer be taken away from their homes or taken away from their communities and say that we are solving the problems in our communities. I feel that this government has to enact the responsibilities we take on as a government to provide good health care, good education, improve the social conditions in our communities. Simply taking our children away is not the solution.

Mr. Speaker, I have been receiving calls regarding how children have been taken away. In some cases, it has been very violent and very frightening to the child to have your door beaten down with a sledgehammer. People you do not know or who do not know what is going on with you, grab you and take you out of the home without having an opportunity to say what the repercussions are going to be on that child.

The shock alone of having to go through that experience is unacceptable. We see these situations on television in places like Detroit, Russia and other places in the world, but why do we use that method of abducting children in the Northwest Territories?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions to the Minister on this matter later.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on 2000 Student Support Needs Assessment

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have in our hands a territorial report called 2000 Student Support Needs Assessment. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment conducted research on student support. I have to commend them. They did a great job.

Information is obtained on 9,619 students in the Northwest Territories school system. Upon review, it is clear that Northwest Territories education jurisdictions are still experiencing some gaps though, especially for specialized services. Service demands have increased for speech and

language services, yet there are limited specialty services for students. Only three percent of schools have a speech or language pathologist available in the community. If communities have an audiologist or an eye team, it is a visiting service. The concern here is about the time lag between needing a specialist and actually meeting with one.

In the report, students indicated the highest needs for tutorial and homework assistance, plus smaller group or individual instruction. Counselling was given to about 12 percent of students in the 1999-2000 school year; 28 percent was needed.

Northwest Territories teachers said there was a need for some assessments and professional support services, and teachers are torn. They are spending much time and energy to support the students but while they are giving all this extra support, it can take away from their teaching time in the classroom. The report also made it clear that not all school staff are aware of what services are actually available either in their home community or elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, this document clearly outlines that much needs to be done to support the students in a coordinated manner. I hope there are plans resulting from this report to deal with the gaps in student specialty service needs. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Member's Statement on Support for the Highway Investment Strategy

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to clearly state my position on the new Highway Investment Strategy and the highway toll being proposed. Mr. Speaker, if successful, I believe this initiative will prove to be one of the most important legacies that this Assembly will leave behind. I would really like to kick-start a full debate in and out of the House. I believe, Mr. Speaker, any good debate requires a good, strong position to kick-start. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I would like to state the reasons for my support, as other Members have indicated what is wrong with this proposal of late.

Mr. Speaker, I like this plan because it is a well thought out, comprehensive plan to address the capital needs of our highways in our territories, not just the highway from Yellowknife to Rae.

This is a "what can we do" instead of an "excuse for what we cannot do" plan.

This is a plan to tap into new money in the mining and oil and gas industry, which would otherwise fly right over us.

This is a plan to finish the road from Rae to Yellowknife in four years instead of ten to 11 years as currently planned. In other words, we are looking at 2005 instead of 2015. More simply put, when I am 40 instead of when I am 50.

This is why we do not want to wait until the federal government gives us money for resource revenue or devolution plans.

This is a bold plan to deal with the reality that many of our highways cannot handle the burden of mining and oil and gas development.

This is a courageous plan that accepts and acts on the reality that some parts of our highway are so worn out that it is hazardous to our residents.

This is a plan to deal with the fact that our government's capital budget has been decreasing steadily for the last ten years and that it is our duty and responsibility to find the money now and in a creative way.

Finally, this is a forward-looking plan to invest in our economic development before we lose this rare opportunity.

Most of all, Mr. Speaker, the thing I like most about this one is that this is the first one where Mr. Miltenberger from Thebacha and I are going to be big allies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

ITEM 4: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Return to Question 367-14(3): Standards for Water and Sewer Replacement

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a Return to Oral Question 367-14(3) asked by Mr. Roland on February 22nd, 2001, concerning the standards for water and sewer replacement.

The standards for the design of all water and sewer facilities/buildings are contained in the National Building Code of Canada. However, this code does not generally apply to the parts of water and sewer systems that are outside the buildings.

For these systems outside the buildings, the Government of the Northwest Territories and other provinces use guidelines based on good engineering practices. In the Northwest Territories, we use:

- Water and Sewer Service Connection in Permafrost Areas of the Northwest Territories, published by Public Works & Services in 1987;
- Cold Regions Utilities Monograph, 3rd edition, published by the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1996; and,
- Standards and Guidelines for Water and Sanitation Systems, published by Public Works & Services in 1995.

The Departments of Public Works and Services and Municipal and Community Affairs will update these guidelines with a completion date scheduled for 2002. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Allen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item

6, oral questions. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 406-14(3): Northwest Territories Log Home Industry

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, the Honourable Roger Allen. Last March, I was informed in the House that a number of meetings had been held between Housing, the Development Corporation, Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and MACA to discuss the creation of a log home building industry in the North. Can the Minister tell me what progress has been made in this area? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 406-14(3): Northwest Territories Log Home Industry

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, several partnerships have been developed across the Northwest Territories, particularly the communities of Tsiigehtchic and Deline, where we have provided certain building supplies. They provide their own logs. We have partnered with the community and also with Education, Culture and Employment to provide certain training components to the log construction of homes.

The future of the program looks very positive. We are entering a number of discussions with various communities across the Northwest Territories to facilitate this request. As we go along, we will update the Member. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 406-14(3): Northwest Territories Log Home Industry

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Housing Corporation offers all kinds of programs, but many people are unaware of them. Can the Minister commit to having his department do workshops in the North to inform people of these programs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 406-14(3): Northwest Territories Log Home Industry

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you recall last February, I submitted to this House a communications strategy that would promote and help people in the communities understand the direction the corporation is taking in terms of home ownership and the various programs we offer the communities. I believe that work has begun. If the Member requires further information, I am willing to provide that. Thank you.

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

Question 407-14(3): Stanton Hospital Surgical Ward

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen. It is with regard to the reopening of the surgical ward at Stanton Hospital. She committed to providing an update to this House. My constituents are very concerned about this. I would like to know from the Minister if we are looking at being able to reopen the surgery ward on March 5th, as was earlier indicated. Thank you.

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

Return to Question 407-14(3): Stanton Hospital Surgical Ward

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my most current information is no more updated than what I presented to the members of the standing committee, AOC, when we met with them to discuss this issue of the surgical ward at Stanton.

As I indicated then, the management at Stanton indicated they were seeking nurses to fill some vacant positions, approximately five positions. Once these positions were filled, they would see no other barrier to reopening the surgical ward. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 407-14(3): Stanton Hospital Surgical Ward

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that was weeks ago. Surely, the Minister has an update as to whether we are any closer to getting the number of nurses we need to reopen? My constituents are in the dark here.

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

Further Return to Question 407-14(3): Stanton Hospital Surgical Ward

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand that there has been a press release put out by the Stanton Board with respect to this subject, and it was contained in media reports that came out today. Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to be briefed as to the current status of this initiative to reopen the surgical ward. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 407-14(3): Stanton Hospital Surgical Ward

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Media reports seem to indicate that while we have a recruitment effort underway, we

are up against several stumbling blocks. A national shortage, I think, is the biggest one. I am wondering, in our recruitment effort, are we just trying to hire surgery nurses or will we take any nurse we can get, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return to Question 407-14(3): Stanton Hospital Surgical Ward

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that question involves a level of detail which I would not be able to answer. I do not know the exact credentials the Stanton Board is looking for in their attempts to recruit these registered nurses for the surgical ward. I could attempt to get that information for the Member in a very short time frame. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Question 408-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Details

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following on my Member's statement regarding the fuel rebate that is proposed by this government, the news is spreading fast that there will be a rebate. My constituents have watched and listened to the process in this House when questions about that rebate have come up. They are confused as to the responses the Minister has been giving in this area because there is not a whole lot of detail.

My question to the Minister of Finance is, what is there now? What can the Minister give us that would lay out the detail of the fuel subsidy or rebate? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 408-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Details

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree, good news travels fast and a lot of people are very interested in the Fuel Rebate Program. Next week, the Housing Corporation will have the application forms out and all of the eligibility criteria for anyone who wanted to put in an application. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 408-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Details

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is there any opportunity for Members to look at the application form, to possibly have input that our constituents might be raising concerns about? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 408-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Details

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, this is a program that we have been working overtime on in order to try to ensure that we get the rebates out to those who are most in need. It is one we are working on as we speak.

The Housing Corporation will have the applications out. If the Member wants to see the drafts that are available, then we would be happy to provide those to him. However, we are still working on the application and refining the eligibility criteria. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 408-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Details

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would gladly like to look at one of these draft application forms. Will individuals within the Northwest Territories and all of the communities go to, for example, LHOs, to Housing Corporation offices, or to hamlet offices to get this application? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 408-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Details

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as the Housing Corporation is setting it up, individuals who are interested in picking up an application form or having a look at the eligibility criteria will be able to go to the local housing organization next week. If there is a Housing Corporation office in their community, they could also get the same information there.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. Roland.

Supplementary to Question 408-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Details

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is the time line for this rebate? Is it a one-time grant for this year that ends in April or June or something like that? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 408-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Details

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, our intention is to get the money out to the people as quickly as possible. Our objective is to have the cheques processed by the end of March. We realize people are facing high fuel costs and they want to get this rebate as quickly as they can. Again, if there are delays in getting their application in or getting it processed or it has to be reviewed, I am sure there is some flexibility on that March 31 deadline. Thank you.

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

Question 409-14(3): Public Weather Services in the NWT

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my Member's statement, current, up-to-the-minute weather forecasts are an absolute necessity for our hunters, trappers and fishermen. Any unforeseen changes in weather may result in life-threatening situations for these people.

Could the Minister responsible for Transportation please explain what prompted the government's decision to take over the contract from Nav Canada, in light of the fact that public weather forecasts would no longer be available to the general public from their local airports? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 409-14(3): Public Weather Services in the NWT

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that Nav Canada has stated that the weather services would no longer be available to the public for public weather information through CARS. Their directive suggested people who would like weather information direct their requests through Environment Canada. They also suggest that you could use the local radio and TV or private service providers such as the Weather Network. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 409-14(3): Public Weather Services in the NWT

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my office contacted a CARS employee who was working at one of our Northwest Territories airports. We enquired as to what someone would have to do to obtain a current weather forecast. This employee provided my office with a Yellowknife number, and it was not a toll-free number either, I might add. When my office called this number in Yellowknife, they received a prerecorded message that provided a weather forecast for all regions.

Would the Minister please indicate to this House how often these prerecorded messages are updated? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 409-14(3): Public Weather Services in the NWT

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe the prerecorded message the Member is referring to does not have anything to do with transportation responsibilities. This is under Environment Canada. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 409-14(3): Public Weather Services in the NWT

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister please indicate if his department has any statistics on the number of individuals or groups who access public weather information on a regular basis from Nav Canada prior to CARS taking over? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Minister Steen.

Further Return to Question 409-14(3): Public Weather Services in the NWT

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that we have this information, but I can pass this request on to the department to see what we can come up with to assist the Member in identifying just how much the public was using this form of information to get weather forecasts. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Steen. Your last supplementary, Mr. Delorey.

Supplementary to Question 409-14(3): Public Weather Services in the NWT

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of our hunters and trappers live in remote settlements and they do not have access to a telephone, radio or Internet access for weather forecasts. Would the Minister please indicate, in the interest of public safety, what measurements his department has in place to provide access to up-to-the-minute weather forecasts for harvesters who require them, in view of the fact that they have taken this responsibility over from Nav Canada? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Transportation, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 409-14(3): Public Weather Services in the NWT

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think there is some clarification required here. Transportation did not take anything over from Nav Canada. Nav Canada simply stated they are not going to be having CARS supply public weather information. CARS still supplies that information to aircraft. Transportation's only responsibility that I am aware of is to supply information to aircraft. We do not supply the general public with weather information. Although this service has been available through airports in the past, it is the decision of Nav Canada that CARS would no longer be required to do this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question 410-14(3): Child and Family Services Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. It is with regard to my Member's statement and children being taken away from their families and put into other homes. I think we have to find new solutions to these problems. I do not believe taking children out of their homes is the right avenue. Yes, it could be the final decision that has to be made at the end, but I think government has to do more to find ways of helping families.

Are there programs available for families who have had their children apprehended? Are they able to access programs through this government to assist this either with alcohol programs or what not?

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

Return to Question 410-14(3): Child and Family Services Programs

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there are programs available through this government for parents to access counselling for various types of problems, which may have contributed to situations in their homes where their children may have been at risk and may have been apprehended. There are a variety of counselling services available to deal with these issues. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 410-14(3): Child and Family Services Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister, are there programs specifically designed to assist families as a unit and deal with the problems within the family?

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

Further Return to Question 410-14(3): Child and Family Services Programs

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the child protection workers/social workers who work in all of our communities are there to assist with counselling and support to families. Unfortunately, in recent years, these front-line workers have been quite overloaded in terms of the number of cases that they are called upon to manage. It has not always been possible to work with families where problems may be indicated early before things get to a more crisis type of situation.

One of the things that our department is planning to do is hire ten more social workers with child protection expertise that will hopefully allow these kind of interventions to be made before things reach a crisis. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 410-14(3): Child and Family Services Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister tell me where these programs are? My understanding is we have 39 beds at a treatment facility here in the Northwest Territories. So where is it that families who are having problems are able to deal with their problems in the Northwest Territories?

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

Further Return to Question 410-14(3): Child and Family Services Programs

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of resources available in various communities. These include things such as mental health workers, social workers and addictions counsellors. There are various programs that are set up community by community. It is our intention and hope that we would be able to increase/enhance these services through various initiatives. Certainly not the least of which is the inclusion and hiring of more social workers to deal with family issues. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Madam Minister. Your final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 410-14(3): Child and Family Services Programs

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the apprehension of children should be the last resort and we should look at workable solutions to deal with these family problems. I would like to ask the Minister how much effort is put in from her department to ensure we try to find workable solutions to resolve these family problems?

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

Further Return to Question 410-14(3): Child and Family Services Programs

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the Member that the apprehension of children should be a last resort. We do have an obligation to provide protection to children who are at risk, but we also have a responsibility as a government to families to ensure that proper support and counselling are available to them when they find themselves in difficult situations that may put their family at risk of being split up. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Madam Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Question 411-14(3): Modelling Pension Legislation After Ontario

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Justice. They are in relation to my statement earlier on pension legislation. Mr. Speaker, in the very near future, will the Minister of Justice review the Ontario Pension Benefits Act to confirm that we could pass such legislation in the Northwest Territories?

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

Return to Question 411-14(3): Modelling Pension Legislation After Ontario

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, we will review this legislation from Ontario. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 411-14(3): Modelling Pension Legislation After Ontario

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's commitment to do that. Will the Minister also discuss the manner in which the Ontario fund is set up with our Minister of Finance to determine how a similar one could be established in the Northwest Territories?

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

Further Return to Question 411-14(3): Modelling Pension Legislation After Ontario

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this information of the Ontario pension fund has just been brought to my attention very recently. I would like to review it with the Department of Justice. We will be talking with the Minister of Finance about such a fund to see how it has been done in Ontario and if it could be applicable to us here in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. Minister. Supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary to Question 411-14(3): Modelling Pension Legislation After Ontario

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Wages Recovery Act allows employees to sue employers for wages but it does not set out priority of claims. Will the Minister of Justice bring the Wages Recovery Act forward for amendment to correct this problem?

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

Further Return to Question 411-14(3): Modelling Pension Legislation After Ontario

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will discuss the Wage Recovery Act with the Department of Justice and see how it could be applicable to the whole discussion that we had so far and the whole emphasis on protection of our workers. We will look at it. If need be, we will see what we can do about moving it forward and look at amendments as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. Minister. Your final supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary to Question 411-14(3): Modelling Pension Legislation After Ontario

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to either an answer on this issue or a legislative proposal by the time we next meet at our proposed session in May? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 411-14(3): Modelling Pension Legislation After Ontario

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we will consider it. Thank you.

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

Question 412-14(3): Impact Benefit Agreement Payments as Income

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment regarding income support and other income issues. I would like to follow up with a question that was asked earlier regarding whether the Minister has resolved whether impact and benefit agreement payments should be considered as unearned income and consequently deducted from income support payments? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 412-14(3): Impact Benefit Agreement Payments as Income

HON. JAKE OOTES: If I understood the question correctly, have we resolved the issue of impact benefit agreements with regard to income support payments? Is that the correct question? I have a nod from the Member, yes. No, that is not resolved. As I committed to the honourable Member last week when this particular question was asked, we are looking at a number of areas of concern with regard to the income support matters. I have directed my staff to look at that and to report back to me. That will take a bit of time to accomplish, because there are a number of areas we want to look at. I did commit at that time that when we have a report back to me, I will share that with the Members. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 412-14(3): Impact Benefit Agreement Payments as Income

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also related to income support clients, could the Minister advise if the recent federal fuel subsidy payments in the amount of \$125, which were paid to low income individuals in Canada, are these to be considered unearned income, Mr. Speaker, and deducted from those payments to our income support clients? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 412-14(3): Impact Benefit Agreement Payments as Income

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many of our clients are in housing that is paid for by income support, along with fuel costs paid for by income support. Therefore, those particular costs are not incurred by the individuals. Any rebates would be considered as unearned income, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 412-14(3): Impact Benefit Agreement Payments as Income

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I will just rephrase that. Specifically, I would like to find out if payments that are received from the federal government to those people who normally receive the GST rebate, that is the qualification that the federal government has, if people who are income support clients of this government receive money from the federal government, will that be considered unearned income and subtracted from their support payments? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 412-14(3): Impact Benefit Agreement Payments as Income

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes. As I stated, Mr. Speaker, we, as the territorial government, incur the cost of heating fuel for income support clients, along with the cost of housing. Therefore, any unearned income is taken back. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary to Question 412-14(3): Impact Benefit Agreement Payments as Income

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further, this government is working on its own fuel subsidy payment, a one-time payment. If that goes to any income support clients, would it in turn be subtracted from their regular payments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 412-14(3): Impact Benefit Agreement Payments as Income

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We should qualify that any confirmed purchases of heating and fuel oil by the income support clients would qualify as a fuel rebate. That would certainly be the case in the case of the territorial rebate for income support clients. Thank you.

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

Question 413-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Finance and it is with regard to the fuel rebate. Mr. Speaker, I must say that in listening to the answer the Minister is providing in this House about this, I am very concerned. I am not at all impressed with the lack of respect the Minister is showing to the concerns raised by the Members in this House.

Mr. Speaker, at least a dozen Members have asked questions on this and I, myself, have e-mails and phone calls from my constituents. I have to return answers as to who is eligible, how much...there are so many unanswered questions. Now I hear the Minister was just planning on sending out a criteria and everybody has to go to these offices and deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, this lack of respect is making a mockery out of our procedure. I want to know, Mr. Speaker, does he at all care what he hears in this House? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. I will just caution Members about making suggestions about intentions of other honourable Members. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 413-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, yes, certainly I care about what I hear in this House. I care about what I hear on the street and I care about the e-mails that I get too. I get e-mails as well. I get a lot of e-mails from people saying they want the rebate, they want to know how to apply, they want to know if they qualify, if they will get them, the same as everyone else does.

As I said, the Housing Corporation will be administering the program. In terms of criteria, I am certainly prepared to share draft criteria with the Members. I can tell you that all households in the Northwest Territories who own or rent a detached, semi-detached, condominium or row housing dwelling and directly purchase heating fuel, propane or natural gas, and who do not receive heating fuel subsidies, except for seniors, have a household income below the core need income threshold for the community they reside in, or do not reside in public housing or government staff housing, may be eligible for the one-time rebate.

As well, Mr. Speaker, all Northwest Territories households living in apartments or suites legally registered with the municipality -- row housing, condominiums and rooming houses -- who do not directly purchase heating fuel, propane or natural gas, do not receive heating fuel subsidies, except for seniors. They cannot be getting a subsidy from their employer somewhere else. If they have a household income below the core need income threshold for the community they reside in and do not reside in public housing or government staff housing, they may also be eligible for a one-time rebate of \$150.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Members have been asking me a lot of questions about other people, other situations, so I am working on that. We are working with the Minister of the Housing Corporation to try to refine this to make it better for the people who have needs. At the same time as I say this, we are trying to respond to your needs. I care about what you are telling me. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 413-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is the Minister has not answered a simple question of mine. What constitutes income? Mr. Speaker, I do not think what he has just read out is any different from what it was 12 questions ago. He was not even going to make this available to us if we had not asked for it. His approach is just my way or the highway.

MR. SPEAKER: Ms. Lee, would you just give him a question so he may answer it?

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question only requires a yes or no answer. Would he answer to all to the concerns raised in this House in writing before he gives out the criteria to the public?

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

Further Return to Question 413-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I am unclear on what the Member is asking. If she is asking me to provide written answers to all questions asked in this House, I cannot agree to that hypothetical...we have to be more specific. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Handley. Supplementary question, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 413-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I learned in the House that when a Minister says, "Yes, I am listening to you and I understand your concern," I always thought that he will respond to it, but I guess he is not.

I want to ask the Minister if all the commitments he made in this House to provide us information on the suggestions and questions all the Members here have had about this program, would he provide us the answers before he makes any public move to give out this money? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 413-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I say, with all due respect, I think all the commitments I have made in this House are already in writing and answered. Is the Member asking me to copy the pages out of Hansard again? I suppose I could do that, but the commitments I have made are in Hansard. They are there.

Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the people who need this money, I am not going to get into a long debate back and forth about what is meant on this that is going to go on for months. I

intend to have this money in the hands of people who need it by the end of March. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 413-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that he has clearly stated what his position has been from the beginning. He is saying that he has \$1 million to throw up in the air, with unclear criteria, no definition of what the income is, who gets it, and it does not even have to be who pays the bill. Is that his intention, to just waste a million bucks away because...

MR. SPEAKER: Ms. Lee, would you ask the question? Your last opportunity to ask the question.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister saying that nothing we say in this House really matters because he is going to do what he wants to do with that million dollars anyway? Yes or no?

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

Further Return to Question 413-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, no.

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

Question 414-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. As this seems to be a hot topic, I may as well go with that topic and it deals with fuel.

In the Northwest Territories, we are facing high fuel costs. There are programs for people who are on income support and there are programs for people who are senior citizens. I will deal with that, but I wanted to point one thing out. For those people whom I represent, those working, poor people -- I am sorry there are no programs for you guys -- there are questions that the Minister still has to answer.

On the issues of the seniors' fuel subsidy, I understand that you have to be age 60 to qualify for that. How has that information been distributed to the people of the Northwest Territories, specifically the smaller communities in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The question is directed to the honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Return to Question 414-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the information is distributed through our centres that handle income support and the payments of fuel subsidies. It is generally distributed through mechanisms such as our offices and so forth, and upon enquiries. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 414-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

MR. NITAH: Thank you. How does one qualify for this subsidy? Is it based on the income level? If it is based on the income level, is it a P1, P2, P3 or whatever? Do you have to live in a certain locale? Can the Minister give us an example of how this system works in outlying communities and regional centres? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. There are too many questions in there, but I will allow the Minister to respond if he chooses. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 414-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The methodology of application, of course, is through one of our offices or one of our individuals who may be available in various communities, and through enquiries. The rates are set according to zones. We have three zones in the Territories. Some are on the highway zone and the others are not. We have maximum earning rates between \$30,000 and \$39,000 as the cutoff. Thank you

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

Supplementary to Question 414-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Those zones and the maximum rate of \$39,000, I wonder when those were established, the maximum rates of income. Was it established before the high fuel prices increased the high cost of living in general in the Northwest Territories or were the rates introduced after the rise in fuel prices? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 414-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The seniors' fuel subsidy rates were established in and around 1997, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. Minister. Your final supplementary, Mr. Nitah.

Supplementary to Question 414-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. That is interesting. In 1997, the fuel prices were low. The cost of living is a lot more today. I am sure the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment will revisit the rate and adjust the rate accordingly.

The Minister of Finance mentioned something that caught my ear. He was talking about the seniors qualifying for the fuel

rebate. How does one qualify for the fuel rebate if you are a senior, Mr. Speaker? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 414-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The methodology is the same as for everyone else. The seniors do qualify for it, even if they get the seniors' fuel subsidy. Thank you.

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

Question 415-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my questions again to the Minister of Finance about the rebate program. He indicated earlier that he would like me to be more specific about answers that he needs to give. I would suggest to him that we Members here spend a lot of time putting our questions and statements together, responding to our constituents. I think we deserve an answer. I think he should be advised to go and read those answers and answer to us.

If he cannot do that right now, I could think of the suggestion made by Mr. Bell on the graded allowances. How is he going to determine who is paying the bill? I made the suggestion about tax credits. All those things he said he would take into consideration, but it seems to me that he was just going to put it in his brain and just walk away and go with the program anyway, regardless of anything that is said here.

MR. SPEAKER: I hesitated here, Ms. Lee, because you did not ask a question until I was going to interrupt. This is your second go-around, so be more specific. We are running out of question time. Specifically ask the question. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Minister Handley. Do you have the question?

Return to Question 415-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, certainly I will do my best to answer any questions that are asked of me. It was only yesterday that the Member was asking me questions and giving me recommendations as to how to improve the program. Give me a little bit of time here to put this all together, otherwise I have to just give you the information that we have from the original thinking on how this program is going to work, and I read that out to you.

As I said, you asked me to look at having a graduated scale, you have asked me to look at tax credits, you have asked me about a number of options. There are a whole bunch of things that were asked of us yesterday. I do have to sleep a little bit. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 415-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very reasonable for me to get really upset because the answer he gave to Mr. Roland earlier is, "Oh yeah, you want to see a draft? I will make it available to you, but it is all written out and you are not going to have any say in it." So my question is, do the Members here have any say on the criteria of who is going to get this money, what defines the income, and whether or not there should be a requirement that the people who pay the bill receive the subsidy, not just based on income? This is not an income supplement. We have...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. We have three questions there. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance may answer any one. Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 415-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the question I heard was do the Members on the other side have any say into the eventual, final criteria. They definitely do. I think we have had a number of Members who have had quite a bit to say on this topic and have given me a lot of good suggestions to take into consideration as we finalize the criteria for this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 415-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My worry is that these are suggestions for him to ignore and not to improve the program. It really does not matter what we say. I am absolutely fed up with that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask again, will the Minister have a full, real, honest and respectful consultation with the Members of this House on the details of this program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

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

Further Return to Question 415-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will have as full and as honest and complete consultation with the Members on the other side to the extent that time allows us. We are committed to have the criteria and the applications out next week. We are committed to getting this money into the hands of people who need it by the end of March. We do not have a lot of time to carry on with extended consultations, but any advice, any suggestions that Members have, please give them to me. By the end of this week, we have to make some decisions on what the final criteria is going to be. Within the time frame we have, definitely I will consult with Members to every extent possible. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 415-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if he keeps looking for an idea as to how he can spend a million bucks so that everyone can say what a nice guy he is and he needs to do it in two weeks, I could give him 100 suggestions, Mr. Speaker. Eleven of us could approve supplementary budgets. We could delay this. We have to do it right, and...

MR. SPEAKER: Ms. Lee, order, please. Ms. Lee, you know the rules. This is your final supplementary, no preamble. Go right to the question. Thank you.

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, would he be willing to ignore the arbitrary time line that he set and sit down and talk with us to work out the details? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 415-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people in the Territories who are having a tough time paying their bills and making ends meet. I do not know if they are in Ms. Lee's constituency or not. I do not know where they are, but there are a lot of people out there. I intend to get this money in the hands of those people as quickly as possible. I do not want to get into a long, protracted consultation to try to perfect this thing. This is a one-time rebate program to get money into the hands of people who deserve it and need it and are desperate for that money. I am going to stick with that schedule. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Question 416-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, in responses to questions here about getting this out to residents of the Northwest Territories in the most timely fashion, it was first announced in his budget speech. However, there must have been some time before he put it into the budget speech and some planning must have gone into that.

He stated that next week he wants application forms to be out to all communities in the Territories. What time next week is it? Is it the first of the week or near the end of the week? In fact, do we have much time at all to discuss this as Members of the Assembly? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 416-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, this program is being administered by

the NWT Housing Corporation. Minister Allen tells me that he will have everything out by the latter part of next week. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 416-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If he can be a little more specific in that area as to how they are going to get this information out. Are there documents that are going to have to be put together and mailed out to communities, or is it a matter of getting a fax and sending it in? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 416-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned before, the information we have made available through the local housing associations or organizations and through the Housing Corporation offices. Given the urgency to get this out to people who need the money to get our people in the Housing Corporation to process the applications as quickly as possible, we are probably going to have to rely on a lot of fax material and a lot of that being done electronically rather than mail. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 416-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Being able to deliver in that fashion cuts down on getting it out to the communities, so will there be enough time to revise this application form if that is the case? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 416-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, my intention is, given the advice and the recommendations and so on from the Members and from others who are hearing about the program and suggesting ways of improving it, we want to have that in and make the final changes at the end of this week. That gives us over the weekend and the early part of next week to get it out. We will try to maintain that schedule so, as I said, we can get the cheques into the hands of people without delay. Thank you.

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

Question 417-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Eligibility

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment

regarding the seniors' fuel subsidy. The \$30,000 to \$39,000 that was established as a basis for a qualification by seniors to qualify for the seniors' fuel subsidy was introduced in 1997. Since then, the cost of living has gone up dramatically, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to the people of the Northwest Territories in this House today that he will revisit the criteria, the limit of \$30,000 to \$39,000 for qualification of seniors? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 417-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Eligibility

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about a fuel subsidy rebate program, as well, the fuel subsidy program. I think the purpose of the fuel subsidy program was to address some of these areas of increased costs. Seniors have the ability, providing they meet the criteria, to apply for this as well. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 417-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Eligibility

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know exactly what we are talking about. We are talking about the seniors' fuel subsidy. I am talking about how people qualify for this subsidy. If you make a certain amount of dollars, you qualify. If you make more than that certain amount of dollars, you do not qualify. My point is the cost of living has gone up dramatically since 1997 because of fuel prices. I am just wondering if the Minister and his department could look into the line that qualifies you or does not qualify you for the fuel subsidy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 417-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Eligibility

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time this was set, there was, no doubt, criteria established to set these rates. The fuel prices have increased over the past three quarters of a year. The fuel rebate that we have introduced, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, addresses some of this for many residents in the Northwest Territories, including seniors. There is a lot of criteria that went into setting these zone rates. I am not sure what the criteria was at that particular time. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 417-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Eligibility

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the rebate that has been getting so much attention in the Northwest Territories does not even fill up your fuel tank once. I am talking about a program for seniors that qualifies them to get fuel subsidies. I am not talking about the rebate.

The rebate does not touch it. Can the Minister commit to this House that they will look at the bottom line of qualifications by elders or seniors for the fuel subsidy, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 417-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Eligibility

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We can certainly have a look at it, Mr. Speaker. I have to point out as well that if there are needs on the part of people, we do have the Income Support Program where we address it through the food rates. We are looking at that and we are increasing that particular rate. If there is need out there, we are addressing it in that fashion as well. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 417-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Eligibility

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for people who are working, seniors who are working today. We are not talking about income support here. We are not talking about food banks. I just want a commitment from the Minister that he will seriously consider, no, seriously look into raising the bar of income levels of seniors who may qualify for the seniors' fuel subsidy program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 417-14(3): Seniors' Fuel Subsidy Eligibility

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Speaker, in my previous response, I have stated we would look at what criteria was used to establish the fuel rates, the fuel subsidy program for seniors. I think it is important for me to have that in hand. Once I have that in hand, I can proceed from there.

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

Question 418-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Handley. On January 17th, in the Premier's address to the people of the Northwest Territories, he said:

"With a gas pipeline and low cost of hydro-electric power, we can look at options for dealing with high fuel prices that make it difficult for people to pay their utility bills and heat their homes. In the short term, we will continue to find ways to assist those people who are the most affected by rising fuel prices."

Mr. Speaker, I guess I would like to ask the question that Ms. Lee has already asked. Why are we up against an arbitrary deadline and why are we going to find out about the details when it is released in the paper next week?

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

Return to Question 418-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I guess we can look at this from two sides. One is, as I mentioned before, there are people out there who have minimal income. Those people are often referred to as the working poor. They pay for their own fuel. They need some help now. We are committed to getting rebate cheques to them by the end of March. This is a one-time program. Looking at it from their perspective, it is needed now, not three months from now. I take that into consideration. I have concerns for those people.

Looking at the other side, Members want opportunities to ask me questions. This was announced in the budget address. During this past week -- almost two weeks, week-and-a-half -- we have been listening to and hearing what people are saying. I want to wait until I am sure I have the best advice from the Members, make the final changes, get this program out and hopefully get the cheques into the hands of people before the end of March. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 418-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our real fear is that this is going to miss some people who really need the money. We are very concerned the details will be released before we have a chance to make their case to the Minister. If the Premier has been on this since January and possibly earlier, why has there not been meaningful consultation with this side of the House?

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

Further Return to Question 418-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, we have been hearing from the Members for most of the past year about the need to do something to help people with the rising fuel prices. We have heard Members. We have listened to what you have said. This was discussed during the business planning process and a number of different situations. So there has been ongoing consultation over the past year. It was only the last few weeks that we have been able to put together a program that we feel can help the majority of people. There may be some individuals who will be missed out. We have to deal with categories of people. It would be terribly difficult to administer a program and get cheques out on time if we tried to look after every single circumstance.

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

Supplementary to Question 418-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the problem was raised in the business planning process, but there was no indication of a program. Will the Minister commit in the next few days to presenting us with a draft so that we can analyze it with him and provide him feedback and have some impact on the final program?

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

Further Return to Question 418-14(3): Fuel Rebate Proposal Implementation

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have said we have the initial criteria, which I have explained to the Members. I am waiting for any further input. I said I would have that completed by the end of this week. I hope that early next week, we can say, "Here is what the criteria is that we put together based on our assessment and your advice." Thank you.

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

Question 419-14(3): Consultation on Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for another opportunity to pursue this very important issue, Mr. Speaker. I hear from the Minister in answering various questions here that he says, "I care about the working people. I want to get the money out." I am not going to imply that he thinks that I do not care, but I just want to give an example.

Mr. Speaker, the government recently announced a Literacy Strategy with a budget of \$2.1 million. That went through six to eight months of consultation. This policy involves over \$1 million, at least half of that amount of money. Does the Minister not think this is worthy of some sort of consultation?

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

Return to Question 419-14(3): Consultation on Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I said in answer to Mr. Bell's question, we have been hearing over the past year from people on the other side about the need to do something to help people with the rising cost of energy. So we have listened. As I said, it has been discussed on a number of occasions over the past year, so we have been hearing from people.

This program is fairly simple, fairly straightforward. It is one-time funding. It is meant to help people who are having difficult circumstances. I do not think it is fair for us to sit here for months trying to refine this little strategy, leaving people out there wondering if they will ever see a cheque. I want to get those cheques out, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 419-14(3): Consultation on Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that I have applauded this government for coming up with this policy and I have never failed to compliment the government whenever good work is done. However, I believe it is our job to try to make this as good as possible. Mr. Speaker, would he not agree that he has been hearing noises from the Members, but he is not at all listening to any advice whatsoever? Would he say yes or no? Would he agree to that?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. A bit of a different question there, Mr. Handley. The honourable Minister responsible for Finance, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 419-14(3): Consultation on Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I heard two questions. I will answer both of them. Mr. Speaker, in Ms. Lee's wording, yes, I have been hearing noises from the Members on the other side. Second question, am I listening? Definitely I am listening and I am hearing what people are saying. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 419-14(3): Consultation on Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but does he consciously take into consideration the advice he hears from the Members? Does it at all matter, Mr. Speaker?

AN HON. MEMBER: Does it register?

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

Further Return to Question 419-14(3): Consultation on Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: These are very interesting questions, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I consciously take into consideration anything that I hear. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Your final supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary to Question 419-14(3): Consultation on Fuel Rebate Proposal

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that he is not at all listening to any of the suggestions that we are making.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame.

MS. LEE: He is practicing his "my way or the highway" strategy. Could he please change his position and come to a full consultation with the Members in this House?

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

Further Return to Question 419-14(3): Consultation on Fuel Rebate Proposal

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what I can do to convince the Member. I have told her I hear what people are saying. She does not believe me. She apparently does not trust what I say or does not believe what I say. All I can say, Mr. Speaker, is I am hearing what the Members are saying. I am waiting until the end of this week to get all the information I can. I am going to get that program out as quickly as I can and the money into the hands of the people who need it.

That is simple, Mr. Speaker. That is all I am going to do. I really want to help people who need that money. I do not want to have prolonged debates here on this very simple issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Merci, Mr. Minister. The time for question period is over. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Antoine.

ITEM 17: FIRST READING OF BILLS

Bill 21: An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister Antoine. The motion is in order. The Chair does not recognize a quorum. Mr. Clerk, would you sound the bell?

-- Bells ringing

The Chair recognizes a quorum. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. Bill 21 has had first reading. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters: Bill 16, Bill 19, Bill 20, Committee Report 5-14(3), Committee Report 6-14(3), Committee Report 7-14(3) with Mr. Delorey in the chair. By the authority given the Speaker by Motion 4-14(3), the House is resolved into committee of the whole to sit beyond the time of adjournment until the committee is prepared to report.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): I would like to call the committee to order. Committee of the whole is here to consider Bill 16, Bill 19, Bill 20, Committee Report 5-14(3), Committee Report 6-14(3), Committee Report 7-14(3). What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to recommend the committee consider Bill 19, Committee Report

5-14(3), 6-14(3) and 7-14(3) concurrently, specifically to continue with the detail of Education, Culture and Employment and then start on Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): We will take a 15-minute break and come back.

-- Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): I would like to call committee of the whole back to order. We are on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Minister, do you wish to bring in any witnesses?

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes I do, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Sergeant-at-Arms, would you please bring the witnesses in. Mr. Minister, could I have you introduce your witnesses for the record, please?

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right is Mr. Mark Cleveland, the deputy minister of the department. On my left is Mr. Paul Devitt, director of management services.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are on page 9-9, Education, Culture And Employment, directorate and administration. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, under the activity description on page 9-8, one of the sentences is:

"Activities to maximize northern employment will be undertaken with the participation of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, the federal government and other agencies to ensure Northerners benefit from available employment opportunities."

Perhaps we could get a better understanding of what exactly is meant by this. Where are the areas of cooperation? What are some of the programs we are talking about here, just so we can see how the department is working with other agencies?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The maximizing employment thrust is done through a committee of Ministers, the Minister of RWED, the Premier and the Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs. We look at various areas that we can address to improve employment possibilities for Northerners, including issues with regard to student employment. Also, of course, we are in touch with various federal government departments through the NHURDS program. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am looking to get some specific understanding of what is meant by participation of RWED, the federal government and other agencies.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: One specific example would be the Mackenzie Valley Resource Committee that is in existence, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you. How about an example of how we are working with the federal government in this area?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the LMDA agreement with the federal government is one area where we are working together with the federal government departments. Thank you

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had taken from this sentence, because it is given in the future "will be undertaken", that we were going to hear about new exercises, but neither the committees the Minister has just mentioned nor the LMDA are new. Is this just a restating of existing planning processes?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess it is meant to illustrate both what was in existence and how we are working now, and what is in the future. For example, in the maximizing employment, we have our ministerial committee, but we also have it at the deputy minister level, as well as at the working group level. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was obviously confused by the tie to maximizing northern employment. I had thought we were talking about new initiatives here and was looking for an understanding of what they might be.

Mr. Chairman, I will leave that issue. On page 9-9 under other expenses, the figure shown in the 2001-2002 Main Estimates is \$2,302,000. That compares to the 1999-2000 actuals of \$910,000, so there is about a 150 percent growth there. I wonder if we could get an understanding of what is in this, what constitutes other expenses, and specifically what has caused the 150 percent growth over two years?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The makeup of the cost factor is in the area of employee benefits. A large chunk was for the systems maintenance and departmental contracts, such as fax, copiers, mail courier and purchase contract services. The biggest change was in the system maintenance area, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we are talking about systems maintenance, I assume we are talking about computers. Why are those maintenance costs going up so dramatically? It was my understanding that we invested quite significantly in new systems. I would have expected the new systems would mean reduced maintenance costs. Has that not worked out to be the case?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to provide that detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The increase that is shown and which the Minister referred to has to do with how we split the systems costs. As the Minister indicated, the development costs and the maintenance costs were higher in this past year. Previously, we had budgeted in other areas. We put it in this area of the budget to more accurately reflect the department-wide nature of the funding. In total, the systems costs have not sharply increased across the department. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. At this time, the Chair would like to recognize visitors in the gallery, in particular Mr. Duncan McNeill, mayor of Hay River.

-- Applause

Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 9-8, activity description, I would like further detail as well, specifically on two areas. Could the Minister indicate how they intend to link the Literacy Strategy, Maximizing Northern Employment, the Aboriginal Language Strategy and the Early Childhood Development Strategy? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Early Childhood Strategy, Literacy Strategy, and the Aboriginal Language Strategy are all linked in the way that they affect some of the same individuals. I am not quite sure of what the Member really means by link. Perhaps I could get some clarification on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Minister for that question. I would be happy to respond. There are some links. For example, maximizing northern employment I would assume has a direct link with the Literacy Strategy with workplace literacy. As well, I would see the link with early childhood and the Literacy Strategy in terms of having children preferably born healthy, but at a young age being groomed and ready to go into the school systems and having healthy families. Part of that is the Aboriginal Language Strategy. We are looking at literacy as more than just literacy in English. It speaks to some of the underlying cultural issues. If there is a strong connection with the Aboriginal Language Strategy to have children learn on their mother's knee, their language will tie into early childhood development.

The concern, Mr. Chairman, is that we have had many examples over the years of unrelated initiatives going "willy-nilly" out of the government in different departments that are dealing with the same people, different funding criteria, talking about the same goals, but not related, the people running these programs not necessarily even working together.

That is the kind of clear demonstration I was asking the Minister to provide. Will it be there? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I take the Literacy Strategy as one example, it has a component to it called workplace literacy. That in turn connects to the maximizing employment area. In the early childhood development, we have connections that we are proposing to make to the Aboriginal Language Strategy. Again, the Literacy Strategy connects to the Aboriginal Language Strategy. As we know, we have some funding going forward in that area. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Since these are all basically driven for the most part through Education, Culture and Employment, when they are all finalized and they are put side by side, is the Minister committing to be able to demonstrate how they all link and mesh together? That it will be clear and apparent, so that the money in all of these different strategies will be put to the absolute best possible use? Also, so we are coordinated across the board, not only with the new strategies, but with the other departments? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we have been developing these strategies over the past year. They were in the works somewhat before that. We want to bring these to fruition. We then want to concentrate on ensuring that we refine the delivery and ensure a maximum return out of these. That will mean ensuring there are linkages, ensuring there is an understanding by everyone working in these particular areas of the other areas. That is with respect to our own department.

With respect to other departments, Mr. Chairman, we are now working hand in hand with the Department of Health and Social Services. We have been on the early childhood development plan, but are now working on a number of other areas that are coming to the fore through the Minister's Committee on the Social Envelope. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another area I would like the Minister to speak to under directorate and administration is the reference to the harmonization of income assistance and the social housing programs. There is a start-up date in July. I would like the Minister to speak to the issue of where this is in the planning process. There was a strong concern that the communication and consultation with the communities and seniors – seniors' societies and such -- is going to have to be critical, given the kind of questions that came up in the two briefings with the MLAs.

Once again, there are supposed to be increased efficiencies and standardization and making it easier for the users of these

systems. I was wondering if the Minister could indicate if things are on track and how closely they are working together to do these key areas that are left. As we have seen in this House, consultation is a very critical issue. It is of great interest to MLAs that in fact there is as much consultation as possible before any kind of substantive changes are made. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we are in the process now, between Minister Allen and myself, to send a letter to the standing committee offering to bring forward the areas that were requested in the last meeting with AOC to ensure that we address the issues that were outstanding there, one of which was the information campaign. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some questions as to the thrust of the Maximizing Northern Employment Strategy. I understand that it is still under development, but I would like to talk about some of the partnership arrangements. Specifically, he indicates that there is participation of RWED but also he is working with the federal government in developing this program. I am very interested in this program, but I am wondering if the Minister could tell us which federal departments he is currently working with in developing this program?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I should state that the Maximizing Northern Employment Strategy is a territorial program that we are developing as a territorial government. The reference the Member may be thinking of is the Human Resource Development Plan. That is a plan that we submitted to both the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Department of Human Resources Canada. We are in continuing consultations and discussions with those particular departments on a federal level, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. Specifically to the Maximizing Northern Employment Strategy, I am wondering which federal departments are being worked with. Unless it is being used in generic terms here, it says "Activities to maximize northern employment will be undertaken." It also indicates the federal government is participating in this. I guess maybe maximizing northern employment is the broad, generic term and Maximizing Northern Employment Strategy is a specific thing that is the GNWT and they are two separate things. Is that in fact the case? Or are federal government departments involved? Are they being consulted in the development of our strategy?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, for maximizing northern employment, there is input by the federal government into the oil and gas areas as well. They do provide funding in other locations. Perhaps I could call on Mr. Cleveland to address that question as well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We do work quite closely with representatives of both Indian and Northern Affairs and Human Resources Development Canada with the goal of maximizing northern employment. They have a number of programs that we link to and are relevant to some of our goals. So there is an ongoing relationship between these organizations and ourselves. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. One of the areas I am interested in learning more about -- and maybe also concerned about -- is this idea, and I have spoken about it before, of guaranteeing jobs that the Premier spoke of: teachers, nurses, northern trained students in these occupations getting guaranteed positions. Also, we will be looking to guarantee jobs in other high demand occupations. I have some concerns.

First off, I do not know what we are going to consider as high-demand occupations, which ones will take priority. Will some get left behind? I guess, as to the guaranteeing of jobs, we will see how this shakes out. I am not sure exactly what it is going to mean. I asked about the federal departments. The deputy has indicated that DIAND and HRDC are the two departments being consulted with. One of the thoughts I have had is that possibly the guaranteeing of jobs is a fine idea, but we will wait and see.

One other program that I am aware of in the federal Department of Industry is an initiative to hire recent graduates of universities. They offer private corporations a rebate on recent new graduate hires. For instance, they will help to pay the salary, up to 50 percent of the salary, for a new graduate working in the technology sector for up to six months. It seems like a very interesting concept and probably a good program.

One of the thoughts I have had is that instead of getting into this guaranteeing of jobs, why do we not offer rebates to the private sector for hiring recent graduates? That way, recent graduates would indicate people who are just finished school and looking to get into the workforce in the North. We do not make the distinction, for instance, that says, "Well, we are going to guarantee jobs for nurses. Social workers? No, this is another story. You are out on your own." This way we just say, "You are a recent graduate. We are going to give the employer an incentive to hire you." Specifically, this program I am talking about is provided by the federal Department of Industry, not DIAND or HRDC.

I think if we limit ourselves to DIAND and HRDC, we may be missing out on a lot of good ideas and opportunities for programs which we might be able to piggyback on.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, that is a very good point. I appreciate the Member bringing that forward. We can certainly look into that.

Our particular programs are being flushed out. We anticipate that we will be in a position by March 31st to have some clarity to this particular area. As I mentioned yesterday, we will share the information once we finalize this and once I can get it

through Cabinet. I can certainly sit down with the Members through their committees to discuss it.

We are looking at the private sector as well as the public sector for employment opportunities, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I would like to thank the Minister for that commitment to consult with us before the program is finalized. I am sure that he can relate, having been a Regular Member in the past, to the frustration Regular Members feel and experience in trying to explain programs to their constituents that they have no prior knowledge of and basically, their constituents end up getting program information at the exact same time this side of the House does.

In a consensus government, it is not my feeling that is the way that it is supposed to work, and it does in some indications of it. We have had examples of that come to light today.

I want to thank this Minister for committing to consult with the Regular Members so that we can bring the concerns of our constituents to him and hopefully work with him. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Ootes, any comments on that?

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the Member's comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. We are on page 9-9, Education, Culture and Employment, directorate and administration, operations expense, total operations and expenses, \$4,818,000. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a question on the dollars and where we see compensation benefits and other expenses. Is this the total figure of dollars held in headquarters, or is there some of the other funding pools held at headquarters that further disseminate out to boards?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is funding for the directorate of the department only.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand what is down here, but control of more funding to education boards...where would the department have funding identified that it holds at headquarters and then for application from education boards?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the funding that the Member is interested in would fall under the education and culture section of the budget.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister inform us on a different line of questioning here on their information systems section?

In that area, they say that they have done some, over the past two years, that division has been implementing major system changes. As part of the Case Management Administration System Project, new and replacement systems have been developed in income support, student financial assistance, apprenticeship and labour development careers, student records, and teacher certification.

So it basically sounds like the department has revamped its whole system. Does this new system work with other departments when it comes to sharing information when you have the same client? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is quite correct. This system really replaces a lot of stand-alone systems we previously had within the department. Some of those systems were not Y2K compliant and we needed to replace them. Others were in fairly poor shape and just not responding the way we needed it to.

We built this system to have a series of different components as outlined in the description. Essentially, we have a common database which is drawn on from those subsystems.

It does have the capacity to link to other departments. It is not linked extensively at this point, but it has been constructed so that could happen in the future. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It has been brought up on a number of occasions in government, the history of the departments, how they have for quite some time operated in a stovepipe fashion, as some say. This is our area and this is what you are doing, but another department is doing the same thing.

We have heard much discussion of working together. Is there any time line? What activities might you start seeing this equipment interfacing with other departments' equipment? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, one example of an area that we can share the process would be in income support and housing harmonization. That has been an area that we have been working on. We are looking at implementation in June, providing...we are working as well on the security factors of that, when we do share with other departments.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That does seem to be an area of concern, when we talk about the security of personal information shared from one department to the next. I guess I share a concern by individuals out there that in fact we are one government and the security should be on a government-wide basis, not necessarily on a department basis.

I know there have been some problems that needed to have been worked out. Hopefully we are starting to work in those

areas. As I heard in my previous work in the 13th Assembly, some of it is on the legislative side. Is there any work being done in those areas?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The security factor has to be there from our standpoint because we deal with issues such as clients who are on income support, student financial assistance, teachers' records, students' records and so forth. So we need that.

However, we also need the ability to be able to link to other departments. In the case of housing, for example, the harmonization program looks at being able to ensure we can access, with a limited amount of information, a housing client, for example. Did you wish to add, Mr. Cleveland?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: The Minister also indicated his interest in seeing a broader definition of security, if you will. That certainly has been a discussion. As the Minister points out, probably the best area where we have seen progress right now is in the area of the housing harmonization. We are also talking, for example, to our divisional education councils about playing a more directed role in entry of information relating to student enrolments and that sort of thing. We are looking at broadening it out. However, doing so within the frame of legislative restriction as it relates to personal information. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we move down the road to self-government, as agreements are being signed in that area, I see this as an area that will need some attention. If existing legislation goes forward as it is, we will see further problems within regions. We are not a big territory when it comes to people. That is a concern. As we develop as a government and aboriginal governments come on-line as actual recognized governments, there needs to be the ability to take on new and improved legislation and ways of carrying on business. That is why I referred to the legislative side of it. Hopefully we will see some area there that is more than discussion, maybe some ideas and some places where we can start working on it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, it is a very good point. As a government, we are moving in certain directions that are showing the involvement of self-government areas, that are not moving towards self-government. There is some discussion taking place on the administrative level already in that aspect with regard to legislative processes. Certainly I can relate to that in terms of some of the programs we administer where there is a desire to run some of the programs. For example, it may be in income support, it may be in student financial assistance. Recently, we are already doing that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are on page 9-9, directorate administration, operations expense, total operations expense, \$4,818,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Page 9-11, advanced education and careers. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under the activity description for 9-11 on 9-10, one of the sentences intrigues me:

"In response to the demand for skilled trades people, apprenticeship and occupational certification will expand trades-related programs offered through junior and senior secondary schools, Aurora College and industry associations."

I certainly supported the move to expand the Schools North Apprenticeship Program and to bring trades training to younger people, get them started in trades earlier. I think this is an area in the North where we have tremendous potential for jobs and really rewarding careers. I think this is a fairly important initiative.

I would just like to get some indication from the Minister what they mean by expand trades-related programs. How much expansion are we going to see? Specifically, how many students in this current year do we have enrolled in programs like SNAP? How many do we expect to have in the next year? How many people do we have in junior schools now involved in trades programs and how many do we expect to have in this budget year? How many people are involved in the regular trades program this year and how many do we expect next year? What are the strategies we are going to use to get more people into the trades?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to see if he might be able to address some of the information items the Member requested. Certainly our intent is to ensure that we expand the Schools North Apprenticeship Program. I understand that it has just been revised in Inuvik. Those are the types of areas we are looking at as a department to ensure we can expand it in various school programs throughout the Territory.

There was a reference by the Premier to fast-track our students into trades and occupations. We are still in the early days of that area to refine the programs, but it is an area we want to look at to ensure students do have an opportunity to enter into studies that would lead towards the trades area. Perhaps I could ask Mr. Cleveland to address the area of statistics which the Member asked for.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will endeavour to answer some of them. At the present time, we have about 240 apprentices. I believe we set a target of about 270 in our business plan for the end of next year. We have about 44 designated trades in the Territories as well, of which 29 are eligible for red seal, which allows mobility across the country.

In terms of specific SNAP numbers, I am sorry I do not have them here. As the Minister indicated, we have just opened a new SNAP entrance program in the Inuvik region with ten

students. I understand another one is under consideration as well.

In addition to the specific numbers related to enrolment, Mr. Chairman, we have also looked at expanding our programming that is available in the North so that northern apprentices can stay in the North while they take their training. To do that, we have expanded our welding program, welding apprenticeship theory courses and the plumbing theory courses at Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith.

One other point, Mr. Chairman, is in addition to the specific trades areas, we are certainly involved in discussions at the high school level about occupational certification areas involving students in occupational certification. I guess there are a couple of examples of that that I would point to, such as the Tourism Careers Program that was run last year here in Yellowknife.

There is quite a broad approach. We are certainly looking at what can be done at the high school level as well as the junior high level. We are just completing our career development draft, which we expect will influence how we introduce the careers, specifically how we introduce things like trades a bit earlier in students' education careers so they can do some effective planning. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. From what Mr. Cleveland says, I assume we are not doing anything in the junior high level right now, but this says we will expand trades-related programs offered in junior secondary schools. Is that the case? We are not doing anything now but we are in fact looking at expanding into the junior secondary schools? What sort of programs can we offer for students in the secondary schools that they actually would be able to get into in trades training?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Mr. Chairman, there are a couple of approaches at the junior high level that I think are important. One is that we feel that information on careers and career planning needs to be introduced to students at an earlier age. It can be integrated into the junior high curriculum quite easily. As well, the opportunities for students to gain some experience in occupations is also quite possible at the junior high level.

At the senior high level, we think we should build not only on the existing SNAP program, but we should look at what other resources are available in our communities for programming and look at, for example, cooperative placements for high school students. I think there is a series of strategies building on what the resources are at the community level that can be used. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we are all very supportive of seeing an expansion in what is being offered to young people of the North for trades training. I would expect that if the department is going to expand what is available, they

are going to have to increase the resources that they are putting into this. Is the department actually adding any resources here, or are the divisional education councils expected to pick up the slack, for instance, when SNAP is instituted, say in Inuvik. Does the department provide extra funding for that program?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the present time, it is done by the funding provided to the district education councils and the DEAs. There may be an opportunity where we can identify funding requirements. We would have to address that as we go, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I would have to question the department's commitment to expanding the apprenticeship availability in the Northwest Territories if we are not going to put more into it. In fact, I think, Mr. Chairman, if you look at the detail that follows page 9-11, you will see on page 9-12 that there is actually \$411,000 less in the line for apprenticeship programs. I recognize this is the result of sunset training agreements and that is where it comes from, but I would argue that if there was a real commitment to expand what is being provided for apprenticeship training, we would have at least left the \$411,000 there so we could put it into expanding those services that Northerners can see.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The funding change, Mr. Chairman, was from sunset in the diamond training area. We are noticing an uptake of interest in the apprenticeship area and certainly that is an area, but that does not relate directly to the school area, Mr. Chairman. We have noticed in the career centres some reported increased activity for individuals interested in going into the trades and apprenticeships.

We are also using the expanded use of federal funding that comes to us through the labour market development agreement. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I would also like to speak to the issue of apprenticeships. In the Premier's comments in his address to the people of the NWT, he mentioned, as Mr. Ootes has just referenced, this concept of fast-tracking students into trades.

I would like to get some kind of definition from the Minister as to exactly what fast-tracking entails. I think there is a fear out there, especially among some parents, that this means that somehow we are going to water academics down to get students into trades more quickly. I think, as the Minister or the deputy indicated, we have a standard in the country, red seal certification, that allows for mobility. I think you need certain academic courses, as I understand it, to get the red seal and allow yourself this mobility. Certainly people do not really want to see us watering down academics at all. I think there is really a problem with this.

The Minister has indicated that there is increasing interest in this area, and I think that is great, because I think for a long time interest had been waning. I think parents had a lot to do

with this. Parents seemed to want their kids to go into what was perceived to be white-collar occupations, but clearly, especially in the Northwest Territories with the opportunities we have in the trades areas, not to mention when you go up to mine sites and other areas and see the kind of money that these jobs pay, it is critical that we are able to fill these jobs with Northerners.

Parents are starting to come around and realize that the trades are very important, and maybe urging their kids in this direction. I think that has a lot to do with the increasing interest.

I would like the Minister to reassure us that we are not talking about watering down academics. Could he explain what he means by fast-tracking? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member raises a good question that is important to address. By no means are we there to suggest that we are going to lower standards and to water down the academic programs nor the standards to get into apprenticeships and so forth. That is not the intent. The intent is to ensure students who wish to pursue a career in the trades and in the apprenticeships have the opportunity to do so.

It is becoming very well known throughout the Territories that we have opportunities for employment in that particular area. There is good income to be had from employment as a tradesperson and secure employment with the kind of activity that is taking place in the resource areas.

Certainly our intent is to uphold all of the standards that are in place. It is important from our perspective as well because on a national basis, we want to ensure our students -- those who do have occupational certification and trades certificates -- have the ability to be mobile throughout Canada. That is one of the criteria that, on a provincial and federal and territorial level, we are working towards. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I would like to touch on another area. In discussions with people in the field and also with my constituents, everybody seems to acknowledge that dollars are tight. We are talking about expanding trades-related programs. Clearly we do not have the money to start putting shops and these kinds of things into all the high schools in the North and piling a bunch of money into equipment so that students can train on this equipment.

It has also been suggested to me that instead of doing this, what we really need to do is to focus more on partnering with the private sector. Obviously, there are already shops and things around in the communities and in Yellowknife that students can train at. It has been indicated to me that partnerships with the private sector will be critical.

If a student is working part-time in a business, they understand what the working environment is going to be like. It is not training in a trade half-time from noon to 3:00, and when school is out you are gone. That may not give you an accurate picture of what it is like to work in the private sector, work hard and work long days.

I would like the Minister to speak specifically to partnerships with the private sector and talk about the direction he sees the

department going in. Also, whether or not this means putting a lot of money into equipment and machinery into schools, or if in fact we are talking about developing and fostering partnerships. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We do have some challenges in the whole area of accessing equipment. Equipment today is very expensive, and there is a requirement, if we are going to have our students enter into these areas, for modern equipment to be available for them to be trained on. Equipment today has a lot of technology associated with it.

It is our intention to look at partnerships. It is a mechanism by which we could look at accessing equipment. As a matter of fact, it is interesting that the Member should raise it. Just today, I met with the directors of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, who are interested in this whole area and seeing how they can play a role and participate in this area. They expressed their interest in ensuring that our facilities do have the appropriate equipment for students to train on. We discussed this at some length, of seeing how we could proceed and the kind of partnerships they could formulate with this.

We do have certain space availability in various locations, some of the central locations in the larger communities. The difficulty is that the equipment is out of date. That is what has to be upgraded if we are going to proceed with this. Our interest is there to work towards ensuring that we get that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I would like to urge the Minister and the department to continue in this direction. From my experience at university, it seemed that there were always advertisements for co-op programs. One of the selling points was when you looked at the statistics of students who graduated from university and their level of employment compared to students who graduated from university with an extra six months or a year of co-op involvement, it was night and day. Almost 98 percent of the co-op students had jobs when they left university. I think it was because it helps them overcome the hurdle of the situation that when you graduate from school, you have a piece of paper and an education, yet you have no experience.

I think this really helps solve that problem. I would like to urge the Minister to continue to work hard to develop partnerships with the private sector. I am glad to hear that he is going down this road. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. General comments. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question for the Minister under the advanced education and careers. It is in regard to the statement in the activity description that the branch also plays a major role in coordinating partnerships with other government and aboriginal organizations working in related areas and provide support for the regions, organizations and industry. Could the Minister indicate specifically what that means, preferably by a clear example? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, one example that is in place and that has been in place for some time, is the Beaufort Delta Training Group. That is an area that our superintendent is a key player in. The membership of that consists of some of the aboriginal government representatives as well as all the departments. I guess that is probably an illustration of the type of partnerships we deal with. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister indicate what is happening in the area of the LMDA money the territorial government receives and that the aboriginal governments receive as well? That is another big area where there was significant opportunity for the kind of partnership referred to in this activity description.

Is there any significant partnerships that have been worked out with the aboriginal governments in terms of fishing and effective use and coordinating program dollars so there is no duplication and overlap? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to address that question, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just building on the Minister's example of the Inuvik region, that particular training committee is focused on doing just the things the Member asked about. They in fact meet on a regular basis to identify what the priorities are, identify who has what funding available and then to agree on how the funding will be divided to support the needs.

We have also seen that approach in other regions. I would say that it is still an evolving process. Some regions are working better than others and there is still a ways to go in some areas. However, it has worked quite well in the Inuvik region.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister indicate if he and his officials are playing a more hands-on role in terms of encouraging this kind of evolution at a faster pace based on, say, the Inuvik model? If it is more formalized, it seems to work more effectively than in other regions where it may still be at a very ad hoc or piecemeal basis. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, there is no doubt that the Inuvik situation seems to have the interest of all the parties and is moving along very well. We are participating in that and are taking interest in that ourselves. We are moving along to ensure our interest extends to the

other regions where all of the activity is taking place as well, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In order to establish this particular budget process as it is based on, could the Minister, for a comparative basis for the next main estimates, indicate which regions have a formal process and which do not? As well, which regions have a fledgling process?

I would be very interested, since there is a significant amount, millions of dollars if not tens of millions of dollars, on the table here. I think it is an important area of cooperation. I would ask the Minister if he could provide that information. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we would be pleased to be able to give an update on that. I do not know whether the Member was asking for that with the next process or whether he is interested specifically now.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would appreciate that information as of this particular main estimate process. Then I would interested to see the progress when we do next year's main estimates. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we can supply that to the Member by a letter if he wishes.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of areas under the advanced education and careers section. Before I get into the specific question, it is good to hear the department, on a number of occasions now, talk about Inuvik, the regional training committee that is set up.

I must say I am impressed with their work as well. However, I must also say that it was under initiative from the community members who decided to get together and look at what they can do, in recognition that there was going to be a lot of pressure put on the different departments, government agencies, NGOs, to come up with some solutions to the training and coordination services. They have done a fairly good job and hopefully we can expand on that as a government.

The areas that I have questions about, Mr. Chairman, as we have heard a couple of areas have to do with the SNAP program or the apprenticeship program that has been talked about and how we want to expand and encourage that sector. Yesterday, I raised in my general comments issues around that when it comes to existing programming. Just for more detail in that area today, if the Minister can state what they actually will be doing in schools to improve on this program or the streams that are set up that students will go into that at the end of?

For example, I raised the specific stream of 16, 26 and 36 courses for senior high students. That in fact they would not, even upon successful completion of that courseload, be eligible to challenge the pre-trades exam. That does not say very much for our system.

Hopefully there are some changes going on in the system that happen, not the fact that you can still take this and, at the end of it, you have to take the 33 socials courseload to write and challenge that exam to get your diploma.

I think we need to go right to the core of it, not just to band-aid it. Hopefully, maybe the Minister can give some details as to what will be done and what it is, in the area of the Students North Apprenticeship Program, that will improve and we will see more students going into that area. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to acknowledge the reference to the Inuvik training group. The department is a participant there, but it certainly was stimulated by the community. That is when success comes about. It is because of the community.

On the issue of SNAP and apprenticeships and trades training and so forth in schools, the Member did reference the program of 16-26. That is a math program. It is one of a number of pathways students can choose. Because this is a technical area, perhaps I can ask Mr. Cleveland to address in more detail how this applies. I want to state that there is, and I said it earlier, no attempt here by us to allow the watering down of programs or the lowering standards of individuals to access and get into apprenticeship programs and trades.

We do have standards. We have to meet those according to national standards if there is going to be mobility for students. We also need individuals to be able to move into the workforce. It may not require certain levels, but we need to be able to give individuals an opportunity to get into the workforce.

Perhaps if I use an example. Through the Mine Training Committee, a mobile welding unit was developed with the cooperation of Aurora College. That mobile welding unit goes from community to community. It is a two-week course. Industry is picking up those individuals, and has done so for a number of communities already, to work for them. It gives the student who is taking that particular course an opportunity to enter into the workforce. They are by no means qualified trades people, but industry needs people who can do spot-welding. That is one example of one of the reasons we need some of these programs. Mr. Cleveland.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The math structure at the high school level has been, as the Minister pointed out, developed with four streams. Three of those streams are linked to post-secondary education and/or apprenticeships. They are the pure math, the applied math and the essentials in math. The one stream that is not articulated is the one the Member mentioned, the math 16-26. That particular math program is intended for students who are not likely to complete their high school program. So three of the

four are articulated with both post-secondary and the apprenticeship program.

That being said, Mr. Chairman, with the provinces and territories in western Canada, we are looking right now at how we might provide better bridging between math programs. We are also discussing the potential for the development of a specific math course, an additional math course, that is directly related to apprenticeship requirements.

In addition to that, Mr. Chairman, we are also working with our western Canadian partners on the sciences and looking at the development of additional course work in the sciences that would be more directly linked to apprenticeship activity. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a little further in this area of the School North Apprenticeship Program, and as well the different math streams that are there today, it gets a little confusing. You have four different streams for math now. You potentially have another one to tie in apprenticeships, is my understanding. I do not know if parents are aware of the decisions that their children are making or their children are being advised to take in some cases. Their marks from math in grades 7, 8 and 9, for example, will not allow them to go into the applied or the pure math.

There are a number of different terminologies out there. In my day, it was called matriculation. That could be dating myself a little bit, but it seemed a little simpler. When you went into a certain stream, you knew if you would have the credits and the ability to go to post-secondary education. I do not know if that is clearly laid out in this day and age.

Again, I use the example of the Inuvik high school. Twenty-two percent of our students are going into that math stream of 16-26. At the end of the day, they have to challenge a different level course in a different area to get their diploma. We are putting extra strain on the system and the students involved. Hopefully that will be taken into consideration when you develop this.

Working with the western consortium -- I believe that is the terminology used, Alberta, BC and others -- in our math and sciences is a good thing to do. They did similar things where these credit courses, five credits, for example, the 16-26 math courses, they dropped them to the three credit course level. However, at the end of this programming, they get a certificate.

I do not know if it is an integrated occupational program along those lines. I do not know if I have the exact name, but IOP is the acronym. The students, when they go through that system, come out with a work-readiness certificate that would show potential employers that they are work-ready and they are capable of doing those jobs. Maybe that is something we need to look at for those students who are going through that. It would give employers or potential employers satisfaction and at least some comfort that the people they were hiring would be eligible and able to start entry-level work in the workforce when they leave school. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. More general comments? Do you want to respond to that, Mr. Minister?

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will say a few words and then perhaps I can ask Mr. Cleveland to address it as well. There is certainly a need with the number of programs out there for schools to work closely with the parents and students to ensure that the streams that are available are clearly understood and what the implication to those are.

As well, Mr. Cleveland just mentioned that they are examining and looking at the IOP, which the Member made reference to. Perhaps I could ask Mr. Cleveland to expand on that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Minister indicated, we have a group of individuals involved in the education system looking right now at the high school programming and looking at a series of questions about how we might make it more relevant to the students in the programs. They are examining whether we should be adding additional courses. They are examining issues of how we increase the relevancy of programs that are offered. They are also looking at other alternative exit points from the high school, as the Member suggested. All of those certainly are being actively looked at at this point in time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. At this time, the Chair would like to recognize a couple of visitors in the gallery. Welcome to the Assembly. Mr. Dent.

-- Applause

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask some questions about the Income Support Program, particularly the part of the program relating to disabled people. I know that the Minister, in his opening comments, mentioned that the allowance for persons with a disability is being increased. I was wondering if the Minister could tell me how does this change make the Income Support Program compare to something like the Alberta program, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped? Is there a way to compare it in terms of total dollars that are provided to individuals who are supported?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I did receive some work by the department in that area. I must say that I find it difficult to make comparisons on this, Mr. Chairman, to relate directly what we offer versus what Alberta offers. We did survey the other jurisdictions as well.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the Minister's opening comments, he told us that he will increase the disability allowance from \$175 a month to \$225 a month. I know previously when I talked to people who have been disabled, they have made it sound like the difference between what they could receive living in the Northwest Territories and what they could receive if they were living in Alberta was much more than \$50.

What I am really asking is have we in effect caught up to what is being provided in Alberta? Or would the Minister characterize this more as moving as much as could be afforded within the budget?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: I had an opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to allocate some funding into this area. I felt that it was a priority area to address. We need to remember that we had a disability conference several weeks ago. As well, the Council for Disabled Persons in the Northwest Territories prepared a report. That particular report was discussed at the recent conference. Both Minister Groenewegen and I are awaiting some reports from the recent conference so we can address further areas, in terms of how we as a government can support in a further way the disabled persons of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister had advised the standing committee that they were looking at a potential savings of \$1 million in the Income Support Program this year, largely because of the improvement in the economy. I know the committee asked that the Minister, rather than just saving the money, reinvest this money back into the program. We are very pleased that the Minister agreed to do that by increasing the food allowance to the tune of \$500,000 and to supporting disabled people to the tune of an extra \$200,000.

However, I can tell you I would certainly like to see the balance of that saving reinvested in this program. I suspect we have not gone far enough, in particular on the side of those who have a disability.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. DENT: I would encourage the Minister to re-examine that issue. Take a look at how we compare with, in particular, the Alberta program, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, then just try and relate that to the northern cost of living. I think Northerners deserve at least the same level of support of what you can find in the province south of us.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member makes some good comments in what the government should be looking at. I should state that when we looked at our possible saving in the area of income support, we did reinvest the amounts that were referenced. There was a question at the time with regard to the \$300,000. I should state that we have two other programs that we were addressing, which in some ways affect the persons with disabilities area.

One is the Literacy Strategy, where we have invested money specifically for persons with disabilities. The other program was study grants for individuals that allows a \$5,000 grant for individuals who require assistance in terms of equipment or personal assistance.

We will certainly look at the area of other jurisdictions, such as Alberta for example, how and what level of support is provided there. We did already. It was difficult to make the comparison completely because of the differences in programs. We will certainly relook that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am certainly appreciative of the Minister and the department having put the

money that they have into this program and in the other areas of the program as well. However, I still think we need to make sure that we are supporting our disabled residents adequately. I think a comparison to Alberta would be worthwhile and we would hope that we would follow through after making that comparison.

In another area, Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask about student financial assistance. This relates to the committee's report. We expressed some concern about the grandfathering issue. I would just like to draw to the attention of the Members here if you look at page 9-13, which contains some of the detail from page 9-11, the top line under student grants, you will see that we have gone from main estimates of \$9.1 million for grants last year, to \$8.4 million in this main estimate. We did not spend all that we had expected we would spend in the current year. On page 9-12 under student financial assistance, there is a drop from the 2000-2001 revised estimates to the 2001-2002 main estimates of some \$219,000 for student financial assistance, most of which is going to loans officers' salaries. Due to the increased number of loans as opposed to grants, I understand that is one of the reasons we are seeing the change from \$9.1 million to \$8.4 million. It is a change from a majority of grants to more loans.

I would like to point out that we have taken program money here and turned it into salaries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. DENT: I know the department said that it would have cost \$300,000 to grandfather everyone. I think that I would point out that not everyone would have had to start paying back their loans immediately, so I doubt that the \$300,000 would have happened in the first year. It would have been something that maybe would have happened over a period of time. I would be surprised if this \$219,000 would not have pretty well covered the cost of grandfathering those students, who I do not think were treated very fairly in the change to the new program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DENT: I wanted to again express my disappointment that we did not look at how total spending has reduced from grants and loans and how much money is being expended and how much we are putting out in student financial assistance in terms of switching from program dollars to salaries. Just again to say how disappointed I was that the department and the Minister chose not to grandfather those students who were quite dramatically affected when the program changed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to recognize the Member's comments in that area. It was referenced in the report. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I wanted to ask a couple of questions about public service career training. The Minister has heard from the Members of this House to urge the government to consider the development of a Public Service Commission. It would be a small body that would report directly to this Assembly in the same manner that the Auditor General does. It would report on the kinds of things such as whether or not the

government was adhering to its own policies in the area of hiring. It would release employment data and statistics by department to help keep these departments accountable. It would discuss hiring practices. It would reference whether or not departments were spending their training dollars that they have been allotted or whether the government as a whole is spending its training money in the area of public service career training.

We think this is something that is very important, Mr. Chairman. I am wondering if the Minister can speak to the 1999-2000 actuals of \$216,000 expended in public service career training and tell us how much was budgeted to be spent and, in fact, how much was lapsed in this area? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Public Service Career Training Program, at one time, all of the costs for these positions were paid for out of this particular budget by education. It was changed after a number of years, so it became a 50/50 percent funding. It dropped off dramatically. The uptake on that dropped off dramatically after that. We have been working on that. Perhaps I could ask Mr. Cleveland to expand on my comments in that area.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Mr. Chairman, I believe the Public Service Career Training Program had quite a positive history within the Government of the Northwest Territories. What we found with the program the last two years, we decentralized it to the regions so regional superintendents could work with their colleagues to identify positions and then develop training programs in the region. We did, in the 1999-2000 year, the last fiscal year, have a significant lapse in that particular program. This year, we saw a much better uptake. We have held back a little bit, pending finalization of the array of programs that might be developed as it relates to maximizing northern employment. However, in my discussion with superintendents over the last couple of months, they have been much more aggressive in the use of this program this year. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad to hear that things are going better this year, but I would like to indicate that I remember from committee, we lapsed somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$400,000 in public service career training. To me, this seems to be an extremely high amount of money. Further to that, it is a situation where we really had to delve and know exactly what kinds of questions to ask in order to bring this to light. I think this illustrates the need for a body that reports to this House to keep this government accountable. This is one of these things that sort of slipped by almost undetected without a trace.

I think public service career training is critical. I am glad to hear it is going better this year, but when we can lapse \$400,000 and only spend \$200,000 in a program area that goes by without any indications from the department that this has been a problem until we know exactly what kinds of questions to ask, it concerns me.

I really think one of the roles a Public Service Commission could play is to report to this House and let us know how our

government is doing in training the people that it claims are its most valuable resources. I am glad to hear things are going better this year, but very disappointed about the lapsed funds in this area. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: I think also, Mr. Chairman, we have to recognize the times we were in as well. We went through division and there was tremendous downsizing prior to division in our government. So there were not a lot of opportunities for departments to add to their staffing. The concentration was on ensuring that division took place and downsizing took place, Mr. Chairman. That was another aspect. I think we are well over that area now, so we are able to get this all back on track. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for the Minister and I hope it is under this section. It is related to previous questions that Mr. Dent had posed. It has to do with supplementary income support for those persons with a disability. I believe there was a recommendation in the committee report by the Social Programs Committee that this government consider establishing guaranteed income for those persons with disabilities. I wonder if the Minister could update us on whether this has been replied to and what the department's position is. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is correct. There was a motion passed by the Members of the House addressing the issue of guaranteed income support for persons with disabilities. As I have said, we have made some movements in several programs. We also were working with the Council for Disabled Persons to receive their particular report. Their conference was held several weeks ago. We are awaiting their report before we can readdress that issue as the Social Envelope Committee, Mr. Chairman.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am aware of the conference the Minister is referring to. I am also looking forward to getting the report from them to see what some of the recommendations are.

Mr. Chairman, am I to understand that the Minister is still open to considering some sort of a guaranteed income support for persons with disabilities and that the issue is not closed? Some of the initiatives he has brought in to give extra money to persons with disabilities, such as the \$50 extra support -- which I am being advised is a great help for those in need -- are these incremental steps and the Minister will still visit the final question about the guaranteed income? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are examining the issue of support for persons with disabilities on an ongoing basis. As I mentioned, we have a process that we are following. One of the requirements we need right now is a report from the Council for Disabled Persons. As the Social Envelope Committee, we will address this. Specifically, it is

mostly an area of Housing, Health and Social Services and ourselves from the Department of Education, Mr. Chairman.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that I will have to agree with the Minister and await the report from the council and revisit it then. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, in the report from the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, we noted that the Standing Committee on Social Programs had recommended to our committee that the task "other expenses" be given more attention in budgets. I would just like to point out that here on page 9-11, we have other expenses totalling \$25,792,000. That one item is more than the budget of FMBS, I believe, yet we are not given any details at all about how that is being spent. I think the public should have some understanding of how the money is being spent.

For instance, the grants and contributions above that, \$34.2 million, that is broken out on page 9-13. The public can see how that money is being spent. However, in our budget books, there is absolutely no explanation for what is included in other expenses. I would like to ask the Minister if he could provide a breakdown at this time of what is included in other expenses, so the public has some understanding of just what this nearly \$25.8 million dollars is for?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we gave the details to the standing committee after they raised this concern with us. Any requests to include it in the budget would have to be addressed to the Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board, Mr. Chairman, who prepares the budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The information that is provided to committees by the government is information that is provided in confidence. I am not at liberty to table the information that has been provided by the Minister to the committee to explain what this \$25 million is. I think the public has a right to know. I am asking the Minister right now, will he publicly tell us what is included in this \$25,792,000?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think this is a question that does have to be answered by the Minister of Finance because it becomes a question of their part. I have no particular problems with it, but the Department of Finance and the Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board would have to answer the question as to how much detail we provide with particular budgets that are released publicly. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Mr. Chairman, this is a public document. These are public dollars. Surely the public has a right to know how we are spending them. The Minister surely cannot tell me that there

would be any restriction on his telling us what is included in other expenses.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not have a problem with providing the information. I can do so here. The point I am making is that with respect to the make-up of our financial budget books and what is contained in those particular books, that is a decision to be made by the Financial Management Board. As a department, we merely supply information as requested. If the Member wishes, I can provide some detail to this particular area of expenditure. We are certainly not here to hide that information. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe I heard the Minister offer now to give us a breakdown of what is in the other expenses category on page 9-11. I have my pen poised to write down as quickly as he can get the information out.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will highlight some of the larger areas, and we are more than willing to provide Members with details of the smaller areas as well, so that they can discuss it or ask questions in that particular area if they so wish. I will just refer to some of the larger items that make up this large sum of money.

In the area of apprenticeships, apprenticeship training, on-the-job subsidy contracts, we provide \$1,081,000; the youth at work program, the summer employment program, \$1 million; the seniors' supplementary benefit is \$1,953,000; income assistance benefits, \$13,310,000; remissions and write-off of loan recipients, student financial assistance, \$2,761,000. The rest of the figures are below \$1 million, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for the record, and this may not be directed only to this Minister but maybe to the Minister of Finance also, the Members would obviously have some surprise that a \$13 million item in the budget does not even rate a line on its own. I would expect that we should have breakdowns for budget items in our budget books for those items that are at least in the \$500,000 range and perhaps as low as \$250,000.

I would encourage the Financial Management Board to consider making the budget books more friendly to the public, so they can have a better understanding of what it is that we are talking about. This is an awful lot of money, \$25,792,000, and it has a lot of programs locked into it. The public has no way of knowing what is in there without the sort of question that I have just asked. I hope we will see some changes in the future to make these books a lot more friendly, Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister of Finance is here and I am sure he has made note of the comments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, on page 9-10, paragraph two states:

"In 2001-2002 the branch will be responding to the changing employment opportunities and education needs of the NWT population. The colleges and careers division will implement an updated labour force development plan with increased emphasis on jobs in the non-renewable resource sector including the mining and oil and gas industries, as well as the professional and service sectors."

The last paragraph, second sentence:

"This will include a coordinated approach to promoting long-term employment of Northerners in all sectors through involvement with RWED, Health and Social Services, the federal government and other agencies."

These are great initiatives undertaken by the department and I applaud them. I would like to bring out a gap that has not been recognized in this budget or any departmental documents I have seen to date. You can make all the opportunities available to them, but if people cannot take advantage of those opportunities, those opportunities are for naught.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear!

MR. NITAH: We have a very young population, very young people having babies. You can discourage this as much as possible, but I am sure the Finance Minister would disagree with that. We need more people so that we can get better transfer payments.

People are not taking advantage of employment. People are having problems with employment because there are no babysitters available in the communities. There are no facilities available in the communities. There are programs run by the department, such as the Aboriginal Head Start Program and Tinkering Tots, but those are programs designated for certain age groups. There are a lot of people who fall through the cracks and do not qualify for that.

I think the department, in looking into the future and developing programs and services to advance and prepare people for careers in all the different employment sectors of the Northwest Territories, has to be cognizant and work with communities to establish facilities and infrastructure that can be used as day cares. They have to work with other departments of this government and possibly the federal government to accomplish this.

You can have ten positions available in a community like Lutselk'e, but if there is nobody taking advantage because they cannot find babysitters, what is the point? They can say that they offered it but nobody was interested. I think that is an excuse that has been used by this government far too many times. I would just like to know what the Minister's thoughts are on that, and if he is planning to do anything about that particular problem? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The department is working with Health and Social Services on the Early Childhood Development Plan. There are some good programs already out in the public, Mr. Chairman.

The Aboriginal Head Start is a good program. Some of these programs are federally funded. We in the territorial government have a number of programs as well. I referred to them yesterday. We put approximately \$4 million into early childhood programs, which is for day care subsidies, start up, and operations and maintenance costs, as well as subsidy programs for individuals.

It is a challenge for us to ensure that we provide programs that are appropriately addressed throughout the Territories for young children. That has been the underlying thrust between our efforts of Health and Social Services and Education, to develop within the Early Childhood Development Action Plan, which will be brought forward within several months.

I appreciate the Member's concern in that area and he does have a legitimate concern. Individuals who do go to work need the opportunity to look at having appropriate day care systems in place. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: I think our microphone and our camera system has locked onto me, Mr. Chairman.

-- Laughter

I might be beamed somewhere else shortly.

-- Laughter

A five-minute break, Mr. Chairman?

-- Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): I will call the committee back to order. We are on page 9-11, advanced education and careers, operations expense, total operations expense, \$66,603,000. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Just going on a little further from my colleague, Mr. Dent, in this area of other expenses. When the Minister was stating some of the larger expenses included in other expenses, I was taking some note. When I looked over to page 9-12, program delivery details, some of the numbers given do not correspond with those that are lined up in program delivery details.

I know that there is some additional information that is included here but, for example, under income support, the Minister stated \$13,310,000. Under income assistance programs, it is \$18,465,000. Student financial assistance is \$11.1 million. So there are some differences there. When we try to reconcile the program delivery details of \$58 million with the total operations expense of advanced education and careers, \$66 million, we are still left with some dollars there.

Can we get an explanation of that? Is the \$58 million dedicated to regions and communities and the other dollars are dedicated to headquarters? Something of that nature, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Chairman, it relates to corporate and regional headquarters. However, I will ask Mr. Devitt to explain that in further detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister is correct. The figures on 9-12 exclude corporate costs, which are largely the salary and operating costs of headquarters and regional non-delivery personnel. So they would include the salaries of delivery personnel, grants and contribution and other operations and maintenance.

The other operations and maintenance figures that were quoted by the Minister were just some of the larger amounts. So in addition to the amounts, for example in income support, there would be costs such as the senior supplementary benefit, wood fuel subsidy, et cetera in there. We were just mentioning some of the larger amounts. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So in the earlier response the Minister gave to Mr. Dent under seniors, it was \$1,953,000, that is included in the \$18.4 million sort of thing?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes, that is correct, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to point out the concerns at times with approving numbers that are put before us, we are looking at \$66 million total for advanced education, culture and careers, which includes grants and contributions, compensation benefits, and other expenses.

Then when we look at program details, we are looking at \$58.6 million, and then when we look at grants and contributions, we are looking at another \$34 million. It is rather confusing to try to line those numbers up with what we are being asked to approve in the total operations and expense.

I heard the Minister earlier state that this is an area that we need to take up with the Minister responsible for Financial Management Board Secretariat. I think at some point, I do not know if it is by recommendation or by motion in committee of the whole regarding the whole budget document, because there are a number of areas that are like this that are inconsistent throughout the document, which is hard to balance. If you were not somebody who got the back-up details, residents of the Northwest Territories getting this information would not be able to reconcile that. It would be very difficult.

So I do not think that it would be appropriate just for one department, but I do not know if there is a process near the end of this. I will seek information from others as we go through this process, when this might be the appropriate time to take it up. It has been brought up a number of times before. I think we need to start to clarify that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. General comments, mostly. Did you want to respond to any of that, Mr. Ootes?

HON. JAKE OOTES: No thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe the Member was making a comment in that regard. We will address that later.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. I have Mr. McLeod, but I want to go back to Mr. Nitah. He was on the list when the system went down. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Getting back to the need for day care centres in the Northwest Territories. On our unscheduled break, we had an opportunity to listen to the news. One of the stories that was aired was the hospitalizations of people in Canada. In the South, a lot of them have to do with problems of the heart. In the Northwest Territories, the majority of people in the hospitals are there for giving birth.

There is a need. I acknowledge that the Minister has agreed with me, almost echoing what I said in answering the question that I posed to him.

What is the department doing in conjunction with other departments of this government and other governments of Canada in building infrastructure in the communities that could be used as day cares?

There is a Tinkering Tot program in Lutselk'e. It is in the community hall. It is very difficult to utilize the community hall because of Tinkering Tots. When there is something scheduled, the Tinkering Tots program suffers. I understand there are programs that the government has out there in early childhood development, but those programs are for educational purposes. What I am talking about is day cares for infancy all the way up to the age of ten or beyond. What is the department doing outside of the programs they are currently delivering to create infrastructure that could be utilized as day cares in northern communities? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Chairman, I think I have to point out, and I mentioned before, that the Minister of Health and Social Services and I are developing an early childhood development plan that has \$2 million identified in it. That plan will be forthcoming within several months. Certainly we will be sharing it with the Members as we finalize this and we can, at an appropriate time, share it with the Members once we have agreed to it Cabinet-wise. So that is the area that our effort is concentrated in, is to deal with issues such as Mr. Nitah has mentioned here.

The Early Childhood Development Action Plan has four priority areas. It deals with community supports; early childhood care and learning; pregnancies, births and infancy; parenting and family supports. Also included amongst those four headings is the issue of day cares. However, we are not in a position today to say we can do this or that beyond the programs that we already have. As I stated, we do have programs in place to support day care programs in terms of providing financial support for start-up operations and O and M operation costs, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to seeing the plans that the Minister is working with the Minister of Health and Social Services on, a \$2 million plan. He explained some of the parameters, but that \$2 million will just get lost in those programs he has identified.

I am talking about infrastructure in the communities. You could have a \$10 million O and M budget, but if there is no building to maintain, what is the point? We need infrastructure in the communities.

We need to develop a place with a roof and four walls and heat that could be utilized as day cares. We do not have those infrastructures in the communities. We are encouraging people to work in the non-renewable sectors. That means flying out of the community for a period of time, mostly two and two, some work three and one. During that time, the parent who is at home cannot get to work because there are no babysitters and there is no place for a facility to be used for babysitter services, for day care.

The Minister may not have a plan right now, but can he commit at the very least to looking at working with other departments for developing infrastructure in the communities? Even in Yellowknife, Mr. Chairman, I am currently a single parent myself. I am having great difficulty getting babysitters. I am making do, but it is not a healthy environment for my children. That is what I am forced to do. In the communities, it is even worse. Everybody is busy, so you miss work. All the training, all the investment dollars that are placed into these individuals is gone. They are back on the social envelope. They are back in line with income support. I am just wondering if the Minister would commit right now to working with other departments, with Housing, with Municipal and Community Affairs, to develop infrastructures into communities so that day cares could be utilized? Thank you Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am sure that as the Social Envelope Committee, it is a subject that we will take up as an issue to ensure appropriate work is done at this particular important area, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you. He has committed something, but I do not know exactly what he has committed. We are doing a lot of work in the area of preparing people for employment, but it is like in your rush to put a dog team together, you have your sled, you have your harness, but you forgot the dogs.

I want to address something else that is on page 9-10:

"The branch will also participate in the interdepartmental review of seniors programs with the intent of improving services, streamline administration and bringing about greater program transparency and fairness and accountability."

I asked in the House some questions on the seniors' fuel subsidy programs. Those subsidy programs are based on the 1997 economy. The 2001 economy is a lot different from 1997. The Minister had indicated that he will consider reviewing the bar that was used to determine if a senior qualifies for the

subsidies. When is the Minister planning on doing this? How is he planning on doing this? Thank you Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have to gather information on this to get the background to the circumstances under which this particular income level was established, the maximum amount. Mr. Chairman, I cannot get into saying that we will have this done next week. We need to have a bit of time here to appropriately look at it, to ensure we gather all the information and to put it into perspective in terms of how this was established and what the possibilities are from there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister provide a scope of work to the Members on how it is going to be done and when he decides to do it? Thank you Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the details are worked out on this program, we can certainly keep the committees informed and the Members informed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the Minister a question on the comments and description under the advanced education and careers. My comments are directed to the sentence here that refers to increase in emphasis on jobs in the non-renewable resource sector, more specifically, in the oil and gas industries.

We know that there are no new dollars dedicated to this. We see in the budget that there is only the half million dollars dedicated to training in oil and gas. I would like the Minister to explain how the department plans to increase the emphasis on jobs in that sector without new investment?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the potential areas is in the area of college programs that are delivered. We meet annually. They have a four-year plan that, as a matter of fact, is before me now, and that is an area we discussed to see where the emphasis should be placed in terms of delivery of programs. So that is one example of an area that we can have some influence.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: So I take it from the Minister's comments that there will be college programs designed and developed, I would imagine, by next September? Is that when he is targeting?

If there is anything in the meantime, would he confirm that there is going to be programs by next September and also confirm whether he is looking at any short-term programs in the meantime, between now and September?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some programs are in existence now. The college works with industry and sources funding from industry as well. So there will no doubt be, for example, in Inuvik, an opportunity to combine with industry to deliver more programs in that area.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Mr. Chairman, I am not familiar with any college programs. I was not aware that there are any college programs designed and developed that are being offered right now. Could he tell me the names of these programs? Are they only being offered in Inuvik?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have a range of programming. Perhaps Mr. Cleveland could expand upon that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to give a sense of the range of programs that are currently being utilized to support oil and gas activity, there certainly are the safety courses that are required by the industry. There are trades foundation courses to develop trade skills.

We have some specific programs. One called Bridging Employment Skills Training, which is focused on works skills development for individuals who are going to work in non-renewable resource training.

The college is also delivering camp cook and kitchen helper programs. There is also a computer in the workplace program, which is designed to build skills that can be used in the workplace.

There is also some programming that is indirectly linked to oil and gas. I would give some of the examples in this area. Such things as the introduction to the use of global positioning system equipment and navigation, some of the office skills and management skills requirements, first-aid, supervision, quite a range of different types of programming. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I take it from Mr. Cleveland's comments that he does not offer any specific oil and gas initiatives through the college program.

I would like to ask the Minister -- just to deviate from that questioning, I do not think I am getting anywhere with that -- are there any programs in the works that are going to be community-based? Is there anything that we as representatives of the smaller communities can look forward to being developed and being put into communities for community-based training?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A number of the programs that Mr. Cleveland referenced are community-based. Again, perhaps Mr. Cleveland might be able to expand upon that, just to make reference to some of the communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Just briefly, Mr. Chairman, a number of the courses have been delivered in communities such as Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Holman, certainly Inuvik, Tsiigehtchic, Tuktoyaktuk, Fort Liard, Kakisa, Hay River Reserve, just as examples. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I looked at the money that was allocated to the Deh Cho this year, the \$100,000 the Minister has referred to in the House several times, those dollars are only earmarked for safety courses and driver training. I am very concerned that we are going to miss the opportunity. I would like to ask the Minister if he would tell me, so I could pass it on to my constituents, what his plans are for this next coming fiscal year for the Deh Cho in the area of oil and gas?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, that is being developed right now in cooperation with industry. We would certainly welcome input into that, Mr. Chairman, from communities.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: I would like to ask the Minister if he could tell me who he refers to as "industry." When I talk about the Deh Cho, I am talking about the Deh Cho riding, not the Deh Cho region. I am not talking about Fort Liard.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The discussions are with individuals who work for the oil and gas industry. I cannot be specific with the exact riding, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: I do not know how to take that. I am sure that means we are not going to see anything in the oil and gas industry. However, I will shift my questioning to some problems we have been having or some problems that have been related to me from the seniors over the seniors' fuel subsidy. It seems we are having some problem with seniors who are going over their allocated allotment for seniors' heating fuel. I take it the program is geared towards providing so many litres of fuel monthly. I would like to ask if the Minister if he could confirm that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the amount of the support for the seniors' fuel subsidy is a fixed amount per year and it is correlated to either wood, oil or gas, propane. So it is the equivalent of any one of those. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. McLeod.

MR. MCLEOD: He did not answer my question. I would like to ask him again if he could confirm what the amounts are. If they are litres, how much is it? If it is dollars, how much is it?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The seniors qualifying for the subsidy are eligible to receive up to five cords of wood, 2,275 litres of fuel, 3,105 litres of propane, 6,020 kilowatts of electricity or 76,000 cubic feet of natural gas. There is no dollar figure attached to that, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask about the public service employee training, but I wanted first to touch on an answer to Mr. McLeod's question about who industry is and the department's designing and budgeting and allocating funds based on designs through discussions with industry.

As Mr. McLeod pointed out, the \$100,000 that is designated for the Deh Cho riding is just for safety and driver training. I just want to ask the Minister, is the industry dictating to the government the kind of employees they want to see from the Northwest Territories working in industry is at entry-level employment only? Is that the reason why they are designing and funding training at that level only? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to clarify that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The answer is no. We have sat down with the industry and looked at what the jobs are that will be available during this year and in subsequent years.

We defined the highest priority courses, and that is what has been delivered this year in terms of the maximum employment opportunity. We do expect, though, that training will change as time goes on and that the types of training programs will be altered in accordance with the needs of industry.

So we do not expect the same courses every year. We do expect them to change. Certainly the industry expression of interest to us is that they are looking for people in a number of areas, not simply the entry-level. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not want to spend too much time on this, but it has been my experience and the experience of the North that once industry moves in, the people start filling those positions, whether it is at the beginning of the construction period or during the operations. Once a person is in there, it is pretty hard to remove them.

Look at our Affirmative Action Policy. Why do you think we do not have a lot of aboriginal people or people who qualify under the Affirmative Action Policy within the public sector? Unions and rules and policies do not allow us to get rid of people from positions that we could fill with our own policy designates.

I strongly encourage the department to look a few years down the road and apply their resources and training programs so that people are able and qualified to fill upper-management and middle-management positions within industry starting today.

Let us not train them on how to use a chain saw or how to drive a truck. Let us look into the future a little bit and design a program around what we see in the future, not today.

Getting back to the public service training, I am just wondering if these training dollars are available for employees of non-governmental organizations or aboriginal governments who deliver programs and services on behalf of this government through contractual arrangements? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, this particular program is strictly limited to government employees. We have other programs, Mr. Chairman, that apply to other areas, such as training-on-the-job programs and our apprenticeship programs and so forth. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Assuming the problems we are facing in the communities is the lack of trained personnel working for the chief-in-councils or the Metis councils or the municipal councils in just general bookkeeping, et cetera, that makes it very difficult for the government structures to carry out the duties that they have. A lot of the duties they have are contractual arrangements to deliver programs and services on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Why are these programs and funding sources for the public service training not part of that contractual arrangement that the government has with municipalities and other aboriginal governments? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think this calls for some background of the purpose of the program and why it was established. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to provide some explanation in that area.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Public Service Career Training Program was established to provide training opportunities within the Government of the Northwest Territories for Northerners. It was one of a series of programs

that was used to support additional northern employment. It has been in place for a number of years now. As I mentioned before, it has been quite successful in providing opportunities for Northerners to develop the skills they need to move into the public service. It is certainly one of a range of programs that would be used in the area of maximizing employment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I would like to encourage the department and the Minister to look into the future a little bit. As a government, we have stated publicly that we have initiated processes that would see devolution, devolving more and more responsibilities to communities to deliver programs and services that the Government of the Northwest Territories currently delivers, so that the municipalities and organizations and communities can deliver programs and services on behalf of this government. As such, they should be entitled to any dollars and programs that current Government of the Northwest Territories employees have to upgrade their skills so they could do their jobs better or they could upgrade their skills so they could advance within their organizations or be able to a qualify and move within the Government of the Northwest Territories.

What I am hearing is it is just for Government of the Northwest Territories employees who are working for a department. I would say a lot of programs and services delivered for the people of the Northwest Territories are being delivered by people who are working for organizations outside of the Government of the Northwest Territories. That should be recognized.

The quick question is does the Minister recognize those individuals as important people in delivering the Government of the Northwest Territories programs and services? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, there are many people out there who are extremely important. Those who do provide services are extremely important to the government. This particular program is oriented to individuals, to bring individuals into the government into positions within the government, Mr. Chairman, and to give the departments and individuals an opportunity for training. That has been the primary purpose. That was the reason it was established. As I said earlier, there are other possibilities for training and so forth throughout other programs for those outside of the public service.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we are going through the process of devolution and devolving more responsibility for the delivery of programs and services to the communities, it seems that we are putting more money into bringing more people into the public service within departments of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

That seems contradictory to me, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister explain the other programs he is talking about a little bit more in detail so I could have a better understanding and so that the people out there listening can have a better

understanding of what programs and services or programs and dollars are available for people who are working for band councils, municipal councils to take advantage of for training? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you Mr. Chairman. There are a number of programs and services that are available for individuals to pursue. We have, for example, youth at work, training-on-the-job subsidy programs. Those are the kind of areas that we have apprenticeship training and job subsidy contracts. These are all available to various communities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is around the area of partnerships and working with organizations that are in place in a lot of communities and also how we are able to join forces with organizations who are presently administering federal dollars.

I am talking about organizations, such as the Gwich'in Tribal Council, which has an education and training program that they deliver different types of programs in regard to education training programs. They look at education training funds, scholarships, bursaries and also they offer a bunch of different type of services in regard to aboriginal human resource development strategy programs, labour market programs, child care funding, youth programs, and funding for disabled people. So they are doing a lot.

They have been able to do a lot in delivering different programs for the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Inuvialuit are doing similar things. I think it is important that we try to do more to coordinate what we are doing as a government and assist the different institutions that are out there.

One of the big problems that we have is just trying to attract people to administer or deliver programs today. I for one feel, especially with what is happening in the Beaufort Delta, we have a lot of training to do just to take advantage of the programs that are out there.

One of the biggest problems we seem to have is the whole area of not having enough money for students. It is usually first come, first served. Usually with the resources we do have, they are limited and a lot of times we are unable to assist as many students, through the programs. There are certain criteria that are set on how the scholarships or what not are going to be given out.

I would like to ask the Minister, especially in light of what is happening in the oil and gas industry and activity in the Mackenzie Delta, what is the department doing to coordinate core programs that we deliver through education and careers to work along with other funding sources that are out there, so we can coordinate our efforts and try to get the maximum benefit to the residents of the Northwest Territories? It does not matter who is delivering it. I would like to ask the Minister what steps have been taken to enhance that or assist these different agencies with carrying out similar responsibilities that we do in the area of department education?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We work with the Beaufort Delta training group. That is a very successful approach and we are finding a good response to our participation there. It is community-based, regionally-based and one that we are very supportive of and one that seems to be achieving some success in the Beaufort Delta. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Has the department looked at allowing institutions or organizations that are presently in place to deliver programs and services on behalf of this government?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we do look at that on an ongoing basis. Mr. Chairman, perhaps the best example in that area is the income support area where we contract with community organizations or groups to deliver that particular program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, with regard to the programs that are out there, a lot of funds are accessible to aboriginal organizations such as dollars within Indian Affairs, especially with regard to the non-renewable resource area. I feel that we have to try to attract as many dollars and resources as we can from other federal funding sources, especially when it comes to training and curriculum development and finding the institutions or the mechanism of delivering those programs.

Through the Arctic College program, we have programs in just about all of the communities in the Mackenzie Delta. One of the problems I see is we administer programs, but usually there are not enough resources to really attract qualified people to train or people to put on these courses. In order to attract good people, we have to pay good money.

Has the Minister looked at finding ways to coordinate with other organizations to either sponsor a program that we come up with so much money and another organization will come with so much money? So instead of having a third of a position, you are able to have a full position or a three-quarter position?

That is one of the problems I hear in communities. The money that we get is either not sufficient or we are not able to attract good people to fill those positions, but by partnering with groups to look at that...we have to start doing that a lot more. Have they considered looking at partnerships when it comes to hiring instructors to deliver programs?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we are doing that now. One of the examples of that is the training group. They look at areas of using money and how to share costs in various areas, so we maximize the ability to deliver the program. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, another area that I have a real problem with is when you start looking at statistics in the document that was just recently put out by your department, the post-secondary indicators report. When you start looking at the statistics between larger centres, Yellowknife, the regional centres and the small communities. In Yellowknife, the graduation rate is almost 30 percent. In the regional centres, it is at 20 percent. When you get down to the communities, you are a little less than ten percent. Just by that indicator, we can see from that that we are not getting the graduates that we should be getting out of the smaller communities. I feel it is critical that we get more students out.

You start looking at the statistics of students with less than a grade 9 education and in the smaller communities, it is almost 30 percent. In places like Yellowknife, it is not even three percent. I think because of those statistics, we can see that there is something definitely wrong with that picture.

So I would like to ask the Minister, exactly what are we doing to try to revamp or find out? We are not seeing a major shift, especially when students are graduating from high school.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is a need to ensure that community graduation rates are addressed. We intend to take that up as the discussion matter with the chairs of the DECs and the DEAs, whom we get together with semi-annually. I am doing that in another month with those chairs and the directors of the district education councils. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. We are on page 9-11, advanced education and careers. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The level of graduation rates in communities has a direct impact on the capabilities of people in those communities to do the job of governance and to deliver programs and services on behalf of this government.

I asked several questions relating to public service training dollars to the Minister and the possibility of those dollars being made available to those employees who are working for the bands, for the municipal governments, for the Metis councils, delivering programs and services on behalf of the government.

The Minister has indicated that there is on-the-job training, job shadowing, apprenticeship, et cetera. The one flaw in those kinds of programs is if there is nobody trained or able to do the job to begin with, how can you justify placing an individual to train under so that they can master that job?

The challenge here is to train or further educate those individuals working for the municipalities today. Can the Minister acknowledge that there is a challenge in that area? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is a challenge and we have a huge challenge to achieve some success here, Mr. Chairman. It extends very broadly across the Territory.

As we know, we have many people seeking work and many of those are at low grade levels. There is a challenge there in order to train them and in order to get them to be able to participate in the workforce. There is no doubt that extends to aboriginal governments and community organizations, Mr. Chairman.

Our efforts are being directed in areas that look at the possibilities of providing support for advancement of individuals throughout the Territories, through the Literacy Program, through our maximizing employment program that we still have to fully develop, and through our training programs, Mr. Chairman. So yes, we readily acknowledge that there is a need out there and we recognize that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you. Would the Minister then agree with me that it would be a good idea that these individuals working for the aboriginal governments, the municipal governments, who are delivering programs and services on behalf of this government, that they qualify and are able to participate in the Public Service Training Program and the budget associated with that? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Public Service Training Program is just that. It has been identified as a Public Service Training Program to allow departments to bring individuals within government. There was an area of concern with respect to expending the fund, but we do not anticipate that to continue in the future. There were some reasons why that occurred. I cannot make that commitment, Mr. Chairman, to ensure that the funding we have for a specific program is redirected to a different program. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not suggesting that a new program should be created or the budget that was lapsed last year -- and the department is quite confident it is not going to lapse anymore money -- be allocated to a new program. What I am advocating here is that the training and budget associated with the training be made available for those public service individuals who are not currently under the payroll of the Government of the Northwest Territories, but are indirectly being paid by the Government of the Northwest Territories through contractual arrangements with the delivering organizations.

I am just suggesting that the public service training should be expanded so that public servants working for aboriginal organizations or municipalities are qualified to participate in that training. That is what I am suggesting. That is what I am advocating, Mr. Chairman.

What is the point of devolving programs and services to be delivered by people who are not trained to do so? Or having problems with the mechanisms stipulated by the governments and the departments on how those programs and services should be delivered? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The program is there. I cannot tell you today. It may lapse some money this

year, but we anticipate with the thrust we are taking, it certainly is not going to lapse money next year. So it becomes a case of where do you direct the money then? It was specifically designed with the purpose of training for the Government of the Northwest Territories to bring employees in, to create efficiency in the system and to allow departments to train individuals and to bring them in. They are individuals from throughout the Northwest Territories. It is a mechanism by which we can ensure that individuals who are Northerners are brought into the system, Mr. Chairman.

I recognize the concern the Member is expressing. I believe that needs to be addressed in another fashion. We are trying to deal as much as we can with the maximizing employment program to identify areas of concern and areas of need.

I think it would be better addressed by another mechanism because the uptake of this could be quickly exhausted next year, Mr. Chairman. I have to ensure that it was set in place with that purpose. So it needs to be sustained with that in mind. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Exhausting the funds, is that what the Minister is referring to? What is the difference between this year's training plans and last year's training plans that he expects to exhaust the funds this year? What I am advocating for is efficiency in doing the job at the municipal and aboriginal government level. It is no different from what he desires for the Government of the Northwest Territories employees.

I am just saying if there is going to be a lapse in money and if this program works, let us make it available to other public servants outside of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Let us recognize them as public servants and let us make this training available to them as well.

As I have said before and I will say it again, if they are not doing the job right and delivering the programs and services of this government, then it is a problem for everybody and the programs and services they are charged to deliver suffer as well, which makes this government look bad.

For good governance, for efficiency and for effectiveness, I would strongly suggest and strongly urge that the Minister really look at making these training programs available to other public servants. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can certainly speak to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs about the areas of concern that the Member has expressed. I think there are a number of avenues to approach this and I will certainly be able to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Here we go again, going through another review process and designing a whole new program. If this program works, let us make it available for other public servants. That is what I am saying. Why create another process, coming up with a whole new budget that is going to take a few years?

We could solve this problem that has been experienced by community government employees right now. I am suggesting that the Minister take a good hard look at it without having to design a whole new program. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We can certainly have a look at it, but as I say, this is a program specifically designed with a purpose. If we are going to change any thrust here, I would have to do that with some background information on it before I can make a commitment to change this particular program, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is with regard to the oil and gas industrial training. I have been checking into exactly where we can probably get the most benefit from organizations or institutions that have done a lot of work in this area. Probably one of the best resource centres is out of Calgary with regard to the Canadian Petroleum Association.

There are also aboriginal institutions in southern Calgary who specialize in training and curriculum development around the oil and gas industry. Right now, there is a major study going on in Fort Nelson in northern B.C. by CPA to look at exactly how industry, the aboriginal communities and the people in the private sector could try to maximize the benefits from the oil and gas industry.

As a government, I know we are taking some steps, but I believe we have to start delivering curriculum at the regional colleges. The Fort Smith college used to have the heavy duty programs, mechanics, and we started to look at different apprenticeship programs. I think we have to start formulating our college system to take advantage of the economy that is around us. We have done a lot of work around the diamond industry, especially training people in the different fields when it comes to apprenticeships.

I would like to ask the Minister exactly what is the department doing to look at the oil and gas industry and start formulating different types of apprenticeship programs and certification programs, so that we could deliver these programs through Arctic College, say in Inuvik, and have them work alongside industry and work with people within the private sector to take on some of these training initiatives?

With some 1,600 job opportunities in the Mackenzie Delta, I feel that we do not have anything close to having that many people trained in the different areas that is going to be needed. We definitely have to take advantage of it. We have to have those people with those skills trained to be able to take that on. So I would like to ask the Minister exactly what are you are doing to look at the possibility of developing curriculum around the oil and gas industry?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The college has signed a memorandum of understanding with Petroleum Industry Training Services, which is the group out of Calgary. They provide a lot of oil and gas training programs. We are

also working with a number of other areas, looking to develop from them our own ability to deliver programs. Because of the fact that the revitalization of the oil and gas activity has come upon us fairly swiftly, it has meant that we have had to move fairly fast on addressing some areas of support. That is one of the reasons we looked at programs like PITS to support our systems.

It is certainly our desire and our intent to, down the road, try and deliver as many programs by Northerners through northern systems and through the college system as we can, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister touched on a touchy base with a company out of Calgary who specializes in that area. I would like to ask the Minister, will the department be delivering actual courses that can be delivered out of the college in Inuvik by delivering particular curriculum or, for all I know, are we going to adopt Alberta curriculum in the different areas? You have SAIT, you have NAIT, you have institutions that are out there. Is there a possibility that we can adopt these courses and have it certified under Alberta education standards, so people can receive the recognition? So when they complete those courses, they will be recognized within the Canadian education standard, so that they will be certified by taking these courses? Right now, I believe a lot of our programs and courses are delivered under the Alberta standards. Will we be delivering courses in the oil and gas area and also having them certified, so they will meet the standard?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to address that question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Member correctly points out, the importance of certification is very large. Most companies want to see people with certification if they are going to hire them. The PITS organization that the Minister referred to is actually an industry association organization, so industry certifies the courses.

What the college has done is that they have hired PITS on occasion to deliver courses in communities such as Inuvik. They are also looking to that organization to help train instructors so that we can have a permanent instructional work force in the North. I would say, Mr. Chairman, that the college is also looking to other organizations. They do have an affiliation with NAIT around some of their programming. So there is accreditation with other institutions.

Yes, the college is certainly concerned about the certification. They want to make sure the certification is accepted at other post-secondary institutions where appropriate and by industry. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister touched on that they have an agreement signed with the company. Have we looked at, similar to what we have done with BHP and what not, socio-economic agreements where we spell out obligations that the company will make and train, trying to meet certain goals and employment statistics, say that you are trying to meet 60 percent or what not? Is the government working towards that type of agreement with the oil and gas companies also, so we can have something written that shows that there is good will or obligation on behalf of the industry, along with this government, to work to establishing certain goals that we try to meet as the government responsible for the area of education and career development?

I for one feel that because the precedent has been set in the diamond industry, where we have managed to negotiate socio-economic agreements and we have set certain standards that are there now, if that is the trend that is going to be used by this government, is there a possibility that these types of agreements are being worked on by the department along with the people within the oil and gas industry?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have certainly had discussion with oil and gas companies with respect to employment areas and their interest in those particular areas, and our interest. The situation is somewhat different with oil and gas versus the mining companies. Perhaps Mr. Cleveland can expand upon that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: As the Minister points out, the regulatory structures are a little different in terms of requirements as it relates to socio-economic agreements.

The Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and the representatives of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment have been talking with some of the staff of the oil companies about long-term plans and intentions.

Certainly the initial discussions of the value, if you will, of socio-economic agreements have been discussed with the companies. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, I think the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has to take this seriously. I have a presentation that I received from Chevron Canada and the BP Amoco Burlington Resources, and these are just some statistics that they presented. This is the presentation they made to the Minister of Indian Affairs in Ottawa.

Just on the benefit to the North in regard to this activity, there is 31,190, up to 72,000 person-years of employment. That is a lot of people that need to be hired and a lot of opportunities that are there.

They estimate that it will go from \$6.2 billion to \$9 billion dollars of financial benefit to Canada with a total of \$2.1 to \$5.1 billion dollars of the gross domestic product to Canada and an estimated production revenue of \$2 billion per year. We are

talking about a major project here. I think that in order for us to take advantage of it, we have to start the training now. We have to start developing the curriculum to take on this major project.

We are looking at the possibility of another Tar Sands Project in regard to Fort McMurray. This is big.

I think in order for us, as a government, to look at it, it is just like the diamond industry. You might be looking at the diamond industry, where you are looking at 600 to 700 jobs. We are talking some 1,600 jobs.

I think just the massive requirement of having to try to fill that many positions with well-trained people so that they can have some people making those big wages in the North, we have to have the skills and the quality of people to fill those jobs. I think that is where we need to come in as a government since we are responsible for ensuring that the employment and the career training aspects because we are funded to do that.

I think that we have to take it very seriously. I would like to ask the Minister exactly how soon will you be coming forward with some sort of a strategy or a scenario on exactly the talks that you are having today? How are we going to look at developing curriculum and also look at how we can try to find ways to expand our program and service delivery, especially in the oil and gas area?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some areas have been put in place already. As I say, in the Beaufort Delta, it is a successful approach through the training group that is established there. From our side, we are looking at the maximizing northern employment approach to address employment in all areas, but more specifically in the non-renewable resource sector. We have developed our Human Resource Development Plan, which is before the federal government, Mr. Chairman. We are using parts of that to do the best we can to implement it according to the resources we have available. We have our planning fairly well in place, Mr. Chairman. It is a case of resourcing it and from there, to institute it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are on page 9-11, advanced education and careers, operations expense, total operations expense, \$66,603,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, we have heard a lot lately with regard to the \$240 million for the Aboriginal Economic Development Program that is administered out of DIAND. In there, there are a lot of dollars for development services and First Nations training and looking at the different type of career initiatives that could be funded through this program, like the Department of Transportation where we have accessed federal dollars by trying to fit ourselves into certain categories, such as the bridge project. Has the department met with Indian Affairs to see what the possibility is of accessing some of these dollars, perhaps working in conjunction with the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in, any other aboriginal organization that may be

requesting training and career development that this project offers?

There is a lot of money we could try to access knowing we do not have all the money we need right now just to run the programs we have. Have you looked at the possibility of how we can work in partnership with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to see how we can access some of these dollars through partnerships with different aboriginal organizations, the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Sahtu?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we have done that and we are continuing on that through the Mackenzie Valley Steering Committee, which includes the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, ourselves, DIAND and aboriginal groups. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Does the Minister have any idea when we could see something come out of these discussions that are going on between the department and Indian Affairs or the federal government?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is an ongoing process, Mr. Chairman. I do not have any detail as to dates and resolutions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, will we see the money from the federal government?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I say, there is ongoing work in that and we do not know when the resolution to that will come about.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: That is it, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question on 9-15, education and culture. Are we there?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): We are on page 9-11, advanced education and careers, operating expense, total operations expense, \$66,603,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Page 9-13, advanced education and careers, grants and contributions, grants, \$8,411,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Contributions, \$25,807,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Total grants and contributions, \$34,218,000. Page 9-15, education and culture, operations expense, total operations expense. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have some questions in this area. Constituents have been raising concerns with me for quite some time now about their children attending schools in the city and the schools, as far as they are concerned, are operating well over what appears to be physical capacity. Their kids are jammed into classrooms. Classrooms operating in rooms that basically are not much more than closets. They seem to be way under capacity at some of these schools. I wonder if the Minister can tell us what an acceptable utilization rate for a school is according to the department? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our planning is done by community and in Yellowknife, the current utilization is at 80 percent on the overall basis. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: That may be the case, and I have no reason not to believe the Minister, but clearly we have to look more than just at a community. We could have situations where we have a high school operating at 150 percent and an elementary school operating at 50 percent. We cannot simply take high school students and jam them into an elementary school. So is there an acceptable utilization rate for a school? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to address that, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we construct schools, we construct them for a certain number of students. The divisional education councils, in cases where there are multiple schools, or in the case of Yellowknife, the Yellowknife education authorities have the responsibility of identifying and dividing the grades between various facilities that they have available.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is kind of like pulling teeth. What I am trying to get is a number from the Minister. It is my understanding from talking to people on the boards and in the department that 85 percent capacity is considered to be what we are shooting for, to have no more than that at a school. Can the Minister confirm this?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to address that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I understand the Member's question correctly, it was at what point do we start planning for the construction of additional classroom space? When our schools were growing rapidly, we tended to start the planning at about 85 percent with the expectation that they would be at full occupancy by the time construction was completed. Our experience in terms of enrolment in the last few years has been that it has been only growing at a very small amount. As a result, we have not had to initiate some of the planning quite so early. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Mr. Chairman, God help us if it were growing at any more than a small amount because when I look at the numbers, St. Patrick's High School appears to be actual utilization at 136 percent, St. Joe's at 105 percent in the city.

There are other schools in the Territories. In Tuktoyaktuk, for example, I understand they are approaching maximum capacity. I think that we have to do some planning in this area, especially given the bright picture the Finance Minister paints for the Territory. If we are looking at growth, I think we have to start addressing this.

I would like to ask the Minister what he is planning to do, specifically about St. Joseph's and St. Patrick's High in Yellowknife. Is he looking at building new facilities?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We do monitor the situation and we do meet with the school boards on a regular basis. This issue would have to be addressed in conjunction with particular school boards, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Yes, I agree that it has to be addressed with the boards. I would like to ask the Minister if the department is not responsible to ensure that students are receiving education in an acceptable environment according to departmental standards. Clearly the department is responsible for setting the standards and the boards will follow their directions. Do they not have standards with regard to what an acceptable environment is? Classes in broom closets, I would think -- I do not have the standards in front of me -- is not acceptable. Can the Minister speak to this?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Chairman, I believe the Member is referring to an incident at a school which the school board was addressing and it is an issue that we keep on top of. We do work with the school boards in this whole area. When issues arise that do not meet our standards, then we bring it to their attention. It is the school boards that need to follow our rules and regulations. Mr. Chairman, it is our understanding that the school board in that particular case was addressing the issue.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: I will certainly discuss this issue further with the school board. I would like to switch gears a little bit here and ask about curriculum, specifically at the high school level. It is my understanding in our core subjects, math, sciences, English, social studies, we are delivering Alberta curriculum and have the same courses being taught throughout the Northwest Territories. So it does not matter if you are in Tsiigehtchic or in Yellowknife, you are still getting the same Math 30 course. Is this in fact the case?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the courses are part of the Western Protocol Agreement. The courses are similar and the same across the Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. It is also my understanding that we administer departmental exams that come from Alberta based on this protocol. I know that parents and children have just started receiving marks. I am wondering if the school board has the latest departmental exam marks written by students in January, that are now in, and looked at the data?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: We will certainly check this out. We are not aware of any delays in this area, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: I am not aware of any delays either. I just wanted to ask the Minister some questions on how the Northwest Territories seems to compare to Alberta. If we have the same curriculum, the same teaching methods, the same standards, I am trying to get a gauge as to whether or not the level of education our children receive in the Northwest Territories is the same as they would receive if they were in any community in Alberta -- High Level, pick any community. I wonder how we compare. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Bell. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to address that question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, Mr. Chairman, let me start with a quick and a bit of an apology. I do not have the details of how we would compare here. My experience in reviewing the marks in past years has been that our students do fairly well. The variation between courses -- the marks, for example, in social studies versus the marks in physics -- can be quite considerable depending on the particular calibre of students.

I would point out one other aspect though if I could, and that is that currently with the delivery of the on-line learning programs through Chinook College in Calgary, we do have a bit of an opportunity to measure and compare marking schemes. Our students, frankly, are doing quite well in that regard. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, under the education culture activity, yesterday I advised the Minister during my general comments that I would be looking for some detail in the area of the pupil-teacher ratio and some history. I would like to know if the Minister has that information available.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe the information that we have available for the one Territory, because before a certain time frame it was only available on the combined basis of Nunavut-Northwest Territories, the pupil-teacher ratio for 1997-98 on is available. I believe that prior to that, it was combined with the Nunavut figures. So it would be difficult to compare them.

That is the information that we have been able to garner to date. We did have a figure for 1968, and it is coincidental because it was Mr. Devitt's father at the time who was in Education, and the figure then was 17.9 to 1. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For 1997-1998, looking at the pupil-teacher ratio, would there be much of a difference, even though we might have some numbers that included Nunavut? Unless there was a real slant in some of the smaller communities, but you should be able to pull those out and maybe just go by community or something like that. Is there anything like that? You mentioned 17.9 to 1. Is that for 1968?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We did restate those for 1997-1998 and that was 18.2 to 1. It would take some time to restate them for the previous years, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for those two numbers alone, in 1968, 17.9 to 1 to 1997-1998, 30 years difference, there is a .3 difference.

To me, that just goes to show the arguments that we hear a lot. The pupil-teacher ratio has gone through the roof and that is why we need more funding, to lower the pupil-teacher ratio.

In 30 years, we have not seen it, but when we look at it, I can recall the days when I went through school and quite a number of things have changed. However, there was not the general areas. We had separation.

I know when I went to junior high and high school, there was, for example, in grade nine, you would have A, B, C and D level classes. That has changed because they say that is not a good thing to do. So you mix the classes and try to bring everyone along.

Maybe the one thing that we have seen as a fairly significant area is the area of special needs as impacting the ability for teachers to get the information and to teach the children in the classrooms. Judging from this information, there has not been a big difference in 30 years in the actual pupil-teacher ratio, but our graduation and "stay 9s", as they say.

For example, in the Beaufort Delta region, it has been a number of years now that there has been some testing going on to see what our children are achieving.

It has been quite a concern, as they have discussed with parents and had public meetings on that with parents, stating the actual results that are being shown. It is rather disappointing to see where our children are achieving compared to the national average in Canada.

Now there are a number of factors that would play with that, or that would end up being there, but it is still a concern and it is more, not to say that our children... the basic point being, are not achieving the national mark, but it is more of where is their system.

I have made comments in the 13th Assembly in committees. I made them in this Assembly when we go through budgets about the programming and having the proper programming is the way that I look at it.

I refer to social pass. There are arguments on both sides of the table. If you hold somebody back, you do more harm. I use the argument, if you are a young man or a young woman in grade nine, you go to challenge the test or write the test when it is mandatory in grade 10, and find out that you do not have anywhere near a grade 10 reading or math level, the real world kicks in in the school yards. We cannot soften that up. So that is a concern I have. Where are we going with this and are there changes being looked at?

Is there something in between the two that we can try to adapt and put into place? We talk about literacy and we talk about job training, but if our young men and women in grade 10, or year 10, cannot comprehend at that level, how can we then put them into job training?

That just shows that our programs, from start to finish, we have to make them connect and link up as we heard. It is great to say good things and we are doing stuff, however, it would really be nice to have some solid examples of where we are actually going to make the movement to improve on this system.

I can recall, and I think in Inuvik, when we had the Canadian Forces station operating in the community, they demanded a higher level for education, especially since they were in a remote section of Canada, as they saw it. Parents are starting to do that again. They are starting to say, "We want to see some results."

Numbers can be used in different ways. I think it is unfortunate that, you know, sometimes we can have parents using them to say that teachers are not doing it, while teachers can go say that parents should be doing more.

It is back and forth. However, we need to find some ground that we can actually see students achieving, not to measure parents and not to measure teachers, to have our children ready and able to take on the jobs that are out there once they

graduate. So is there any activity in this area to see some changes or some modification of the systems we have in place today? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will speak and then I will ask Mr. Cleveland to address it as well. On the resource side, that is an area and we are always concerned about that. It always deals with the actual delivery side as well, but on the resource side, we are attempting to improve that. We have heard loud and clear about the need out there, so we are addressing that particular area through the PTR and through the student needs survey.

The student needs survey certainly addressed and brought forward a number of clear identities of some of the areas that we need to put resources into. For example, it deals with classroom support in terms of areas such as support for parents and communities and the role the parents and communities play in the whole education system. It is a very broad area to be addressed. From that survey, we found it was not just one specific thing that needs to be addressed. It is a multitude of areas that need to be addressed. We are looking at that from our side, Mr. Chairman.

Areas such as the Beaufort Delta have taken a step in their particular region with regard to a homework policy. Those are the kinds of issues that assist bringing about improved school performance. Perhaps I could turn it over to Mr. Cleveland to see if he wishes to add on to that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just very briefly, I think the Member's point about communication between parents and teachers is a really important one. As well, the importance of making sure students understand accurately how they are doing in their programming is also very important. In this light, to speak to one of the Member's questions, we have been working directly with representatives of the education councils to look at development of a student assessment policy, so we find some consistency in our assessment tools, if you will, across the Territory. The communication between the schools and the parents occurs in a consistent manner. That is just one example, I think, Mr. Chairman, of a change.

The other point I would just make briefly is the Minister spoke earlier about looking at some of the programming changes that might be valuable at the high school level, as an example. I think certainly some of that work needs to address additional support or course changes, so that students who maybe do have weak language skills or math skills have the opportunity to build those skills up so they can successfully compete, because the Member is absolutely correct, you need those skills if you are going to get a job and live in the community. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Next on my list is Ms. Lee, Mr. Braden, Mr. Bell. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask a question that arises out of the situation at Sissons that we experienced last fall. I am not clear as to who is responsible for what I am trying to get at, but the overall thing that I learned from this -- and I may be wrong and could be corrected on this -

- was the funding for schools boards is determined by the enrolment rate from the previous year. So what happens in situations where, because of the configuration of the classes or because of the make-up of the children, is there anything in place to do an assessment as to what the configuration of classes is and maybe the possibility of getting extra help? Is that at all the responsibility of the department or do you totally leave it up to the school boards and the schools to make allocations within the budget that they have?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will get Mr. Cleveland to address that question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The deputy minister, Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is the education authority who makes the decisions about allocation of funding between various schools. They also make decisions about the composition about the individual classes. Obviously, they do that in consultation with professional staff within the education authority. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps then I should move away from the specific topic of Sissons. The policy in general, whether it be as a result of FAS/FAE or any kind of other conditions that result in students, whether they be disabilities or family situations or whatever that results in students who need special education or special assistance, I am wondering if there is any mechanism in place that you know of that addresses and assesses and evaluates the special needs of students every year? Is there a global territorial policy that looks after that, or is it totally within the mandate of the boards?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you Mr. Chairman. The education authorities generally organize the assessment of children. In some cases, those assessments are necessary annually, but in many cases, the assessment is not necessary with that type of frequency. They are provided with assistance from the ministry in terms of advice and referral on occasion. Generally, it is driven by the education authority itself.

To add to that -- and maybe I am misunderstanding the Member's question -- the education authority as well allocates the revenues, the monies they have to support the various student support services. Different authorities take different approaches in providing support, but that is part of the responsibility of the authority. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the answers. I think that I am getting somewhere here. I wonder if the extra funding that was approved under the Education Act that is coming in place now, were there any conditions attached there about how the budget for the special education or student support services or any of that? I appreciate that maybe it is just a block funding and it goes totally to the boards and it is up to the boards. Were there any strings attached to that in any way? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The allocation is done with the specific purpose of addressing the pupil-teacher ratio and the student needs. We do require the boards to report back to us on an annual basis on those expenditures, as we do with other expenditures as well. So there is an accountability area there for us to track on how that funding is spent, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Would the Minister advise me as to whether or not we have a training program in our Territory for special education teachers? We are trying to train the teachers, but is there a special program for classroom assistants who handle the kids with special needs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we do have a program for training special needs assistants. It is done out of Calgary, actually, and we broker it out of Calgary, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: I do not have figures on what the needs are for special education teachers for the Territories, but I wonder if the Minister would consider looking at the demands for these positions and whether he would be willing to look at the possibility of opening a program at Aurora College to train our territorial residents who may be interested in getting into that field. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister responsible for Education, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We do have elements of student needs and special needs in the teacher education program that we teach at Aurora College. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Is it possible to get more information in writing as to what this program is and what is taught there, and any other profile that the Minister could provide? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we can provide that to the Member in writing.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to conclude my point, am I to understand that we do not have a general comprehensive territorial policy that looks at the number of students in the Territories who need special education? Am I to understand that it is on a case-by-case basis, and when there is a need found, that special list will be sent in there to wherever the school is and they will be examined? Is there more of a proactive assessment procedure where a class or a school could be assessed at the beginning of the year and at

some set time to see what the condition of the needs are? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We did do the student needs survey which was very comprehensive, and we did release that to the Members. It indicated the needs that were identified. As well, some of the districts do their own surveys in this area. We are going to be providing the technical reports back to the particular boards and that will give the boards an opportunity to address some of the areas of concern that are out there, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that the special needs assessment report identified a number of needs for students, but that was a one-time, one-event kind of study. There is no ongoing periodic and systematic general kind of assessment territorial-wide at the beginning of the school year or something, just to get a clear picture of what we are dealing with in terms of students with special needs? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is correct. We do not have an ongoing program in that area. It is certainly something that I could discuss with the chairs of the district education councils to see if there is an opportunity to feed the information that they do -- because I know on a school board basis, quite often surveys are done on their particular part as well. Rather than duplicate, I think we could look at it in terms of dealing with the individual boards on this matter.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. With that, we will take a 15-minute break. I have Mr. Braden, Mr. Miltenberger and Mr. Bell on my list. We will break for 15 minutes.

-- Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): I will call the committee back to order. Next on my list is Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some questions in the area of education and culture. I am including pages nine through 18 in the information contained. The area that I take some interest in is the area of the arts and culture and the priority and the investment that the government makes in this area, which is very minimal.

Looking at the numbers that are presented here, Mr. Chairman, they have been very minimal and very consistent for the past three years. There are four areas I am looking at specifically. I look at cultural projects, northern performers on page 9-17, then on 9-18 is the Northwest Territories Arts Council and cultural organizations. Those activities probably fairly closely would delve into what I would call the arts.

Mr. Chairman, we are putting about half a million dollars a year into these areas. That is what we have been putting in for the last two years as well. I am not going to argue here tonight, Mr. Chairman, that we should be injecting a whole bunch of new money into this area in the coming budget.

What I do want to search out is the department's policy stand on developing the arts and just where can we go to give this a foundation, Mr. Chairman. We are really missing the boat on supporting a lot of people and a lot of areas with creativity, with aspects of quality of life and quality of living and things we can do to develop up here that really help tell a story and make this place a home. The arts are important. What are we doing in the area of policy? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is no doubt that the funding in the arts area has limitations and certainly they are not big amounts of money. I think it is an important area that needs to be addressed. Because of that, there has been a commitment to update the strategic plan to develop a community-oriented arts policy, Mr. Chairman. That is being done in conjunction with the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development as well as Canadian Heritage.

The purpose of updating that policy is to develop some history and to look at what our next steps can be in the whole of addressing arts in the Northwest Territories. As we know, we have a number of areas that we do fund. We fund some cultural organizations. We fund performing arts, as well through the Arts Council. We have a small budget there that the Arts Council funds. So we are interested in pursuing the arts policy itself and updating that for the Northwest Territories, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

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

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Chairman, for the investments we do make in cultural organizations, arts councils, performers, what kind of measurements or performance indicators does the department have to tell us how many people are getting involved? How many workshops are staged? What kind of business activities or venues do these things spin off? What kind of partnership investment might be attracted because of this investment? Again, I am looking for areas where we can set targets or have some benchmarks and then measure our success and the value that we are getting for the investment. What areas can the department tell me about there? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister of Education, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The amount of accountability at the moment is limited to financial reports and some activity reports. It is an area of concern to us and that is an area that we are addressing as a gap in the whole area of arts development in the Northwest Territories. It is one area of the arts policy that we want to address, along with looking at the opportunity of how to access funding from Canadian Heritage. Can we do that and how do we do that?

Just on the policy itself, the redrafting, we are looking at concluding that within this next fiscal year, not this fiscal, but the upcoming fiscal year. So that will start having more concentrated, effective arts programs in the Territory.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Good news. Also seeing that RWED is involved in there, I am assuming they will be participating and that there will and should be a business focus to that kind of thing. I have been a believer for a long time in festivals and events. That kind of thing can really be a source revenue as well as culture. Canadian Heritage is in there. In framing up this policy review, to what extent are you involving some of the arts community, the NGOs? Do you have a consultation list going? What process will there be for public input into this policy? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I mentioned, it is not anticipated that we will conclude it that quickly. It is in the next fiscal year that we look to concluding this.

It gives us the opportunity to develop some of the parameters of areas that we need to look at, some of the gaps and some of the history that has been there and some of the areas that we want to go to. Once we have a framework for that and some of the details to fit into that framework, we can go out to the various organizations. We have a multitude of them in the Territories.

We have some of the aboriginal cultural organizations like the Dene Cultural Institute, for example. In Yellowknife here, we have a group that is extremely interested in arts. They have developed a framework policy themselves to address some of the areas of concern for the arts. We want to take that into consideration and then develop them, then go out to the organizations and the public and lay before them an approach on how to proceed from there, and what some of the policies should be in the arts area. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the meantime then, can the Minister advise whether all the money that is going into these areas is being spent? Are there any lapsed dollars showing up here anywhere? I guess what I want to do is make sure that for the small investment that we do make into this, it is being used. Is it being spent? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister of Education, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Yes, the uptake on all of this funding is usually quite quick and early in the year. Let me deal, for example, with the cultural and organization contributions. That is normally expended for the organizations at the beginning of the year. Northern performers are another area. Yes, all of our funding in this is expended, Mr. Chairman. No doubt it is very popular and in demand.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions with regard to the funding for special needs and special needs assistants. We are putting more money into this particular area to lower the PTR, and as well increase support for special needs students.

Could the Minister indicate, further to my general comments yesterday when I was talking about the concerns I had heard from the school in Fort Smith, whether there has been any

change to how funds are allocated for special needs assistants and special needs children in the schools? Has there been any change to the formula from last year? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister responsible for Education, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to address that question. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There has been no appreciable change to the funding approach, the commitment within the legislation, at least our funding in this area from eight to ten percent for the current fiscal year. In meeting with the divisional education councils, there was a series of priorities identified for the current year, which we used to guide our allocations to the boards. Those were in training. In program funding, monies to support the delivery of student support funding and I believe some funding for special equipment and renovations, those were the primary areas that were identified by divisional education councils as being of a high priority.

The funding in the 2001-2002 budget is intended, as well, to go into this area in a fairly consistent manner with the past. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister, do you want to add?

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we should also point out that the allocation of the funding is also done upon recommendations to the Minister by work done by the school program and resource committee. That is a committee made up of district education council representatives, department representatives and health and social service representatives. A report is presented to the Minister in that regard to suggest the allocation of funding, especially in the special needs area. We get fairly in-depth input into the approach to this, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have not had the opportunity to check with the divisional board, so I will do that. Should I have any further questions on this particular issue, I will contact the Minister and his staff directly. I have no further questions on this activity. Thank you.

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

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I have been waiting patiently here. I do have questions further to my line of questioning about similar curriculum here and in Alberta, and our performance on departmental exams. Specifically, it has been brought to my attention that there seems to be concerns - and I do not know if it is just suspicion or rumour -- but often, final blended marks can drop from the marks going into departmental exams in the Northwest Territories, in some cases by as much as 15 percent, or at least the marks on the exams end up being 15 percent lower than the marks on the part of the year before the exam.

This does not seem to be the case in Alberta. So if we have the same curriculum and we have the same methods of teaching, I

am wondering if the Minister could speak to what the differences might be and why we seem to underperform compared with Alberta. I know the deputy did refer to a wide variance of performance depending on the subject, but I am wondering if the Minister could address that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will have to get Mr. Cleveland to answer that question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Generally when there is consistent difference between class marks and exam marks, it is a matter that is looked at by school administration in cooperation with the teacher. Clearly, our interest is in finding as much consistency as possible between the exam marks and the classroom marks. There may be any number of reasons. In any particular case, there might be a variation, either higher or lower, in the marks. However, if there is a consistent pattern, it is something that is followed up on. Thank you.

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

MR. BELL: Thank you. I do not have information for this year, but as I go through the past several years and the statistics, I am struggling as hard as I can to find a situation where our exam marks on departmentals are higher than the school-awarded marks or exam marks higher than the Alberta average. I do not want to get into specifics here because we could debate this all night, but consistently, subject by subject, we seem to not do quite as well in certain subjects.

If we are teaching the same curriculum, you should not see, unless we are not preparing our students for the exams, such a...I will give you an example. In 1997, the Northwest Territories average mark going into the departmental exam in Social Studies 30, the average school-awarded mark was 63 percent. We scored 51 percent on the exams. You can just go through this subject by subject, year by year, and that seems to be the case. I am wondering if we are maybe not doing a good enough job in preparing our students to take the departmentals, or else we are not teaching the same curriculum as Alberta is. I think people are concerned that we seem to be underperforming Alberta. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I will have to get Mr. Cleveland to address that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly the performance on exams is an important element of credit process and clearly, as I mentioned before, we want to see people score as close to the class marks as possible. I think that over time, you find differences in exam levels and it is something that, as I mentioned before, where there are variances, we need to pay attention to it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I do not know what kind of an answer I am expecting from the department. The deputy indicated that we are doing things to try to address

the distance learning opportunities for students in smaller communities. Hopefully, these things will build and help us to perform better on the departmentals. I think this is the one thing that people always point to.

It is one of those bellwether indicators. It is just a focal point. When we talk about the cost of living difference in Yellowknife compared to Calgary, that is something people can get a hold of and understand. I think we can all recognize when we talk about standardized testing, there may be things that put us culturally at a disadvantage in taking some of these tests because they may not relate as well, but certainly there should not be such a huge discrepancy.

I know the department will continue to look at this, but the one thing that has been suggested to me is we are now just starting to get a handle on the number of special need students that we have in our school system. FAS and FAE are certainly much higher in the North than anywhere else in the country. I think this is a reality that is starting to hit home. We are having kids go through the school system struggling to learn. Sometimes they are able to slide by, but it really shows up when we have them take these standardized tests.

I know we are committed to student support. We are putting more money into it than we have in the past. It has been a big issue since we have been elected. I think we are going to have to keep pushing and keep raising the bar in this area. Until we can come up to the level and perform as well as Alberta students do on exams, I think it is going to be an issue for Northerners.

I think it is also an issue when you talk to people considering relocating to the North. People working at the mines considering making the move from Edmonton to Yellowknife. Certainly there are cost issues, cost of living differentials, but parents want to be convinced that the education system is equal to the education system in the provinces.

This is one of the things we can point to and say, "Look, our exam marks are every bit as good as Alberta's, Saskatchewan's, whatever." Maybe this is not the best way to evaluate our school system here in the North, but in my view, it is the easiest and it is the one most people will point to when discussing the difference.

We may not like what it shows all of the time, but we do not have a choice. We have to deal with it. I hope the department will continue to push to look into trends that may be disturbing, that may not be good news stories, but I think sometimes a dose of reality is not always the worst thing for us. Maybe that is what it takes for us to rise up and meet the challenge. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Those are good comments the honourable Member is making. I think we are starting to realize that we do need to look at areas that in some ways we are already addressing. We need to keep vigilant in all of those areas like the PTR, like the students needs and like testing.

The Member is correct. They provide an indication on how we are doing. It is important for us to take that and he is right.

Maybe sometimes the news is not good. We try to do what we can. We feel that we are starting to make inroads in areas like infrastructure, like ensuring that we have a northern workforce. We are not there by any means.

However, we are making our efforts in that and we know that performance is an area that we always have to be cognizant of and aware of in order to ensure that our students meet the standards that are expected from parents out there, from the public out there. We will keep pushing, Mr. Chairman, and we will continue to pay attention to wherever we can to improve areas within our means. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you. I want to thank the Minister for that response. I think that it is important that we all work together to solve this. I am not interested in unduly criticizing the department or slinging mud or criticizing education in the North. I am a product of the system myself. I know the challenges. I think that we all need to work together to do whatever we can to make sure we are every bit as good and every bit as competitive as regions in the North.

I think that we take a lot of pride in our education system and the professionals that we have in the system. Dedicated folks who are doing this because they care about our kids. I think that it is important that we look into these things even if sometimes they are painful, as the Minister has indicated, and work to meet the challenges. I know that it is even tougher coming from the smaller communities than it would be in a large centre like Yellowknife that finds it much easier to recruit teachers than some of the smaller communities, but we have to keep working. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Again, the Member is correct. We need to keep working and we need to keep working together on it. It is a system that we feel we have tremendous foundations out there. We have some tremendous educators. I think that I am very proud from my end. Certainly I can state that we believe that our educators are excellent people. In certain areas, they need support because it is stressful out there from time to time, but I think that if we all work together, the program can achieve what we should be doing in comparison, perhaps, with other areas. In some cases, we do compare very well.

There are pockets of problems. The student needs survey certainly indicated some of the critical areas that are out there that are challenging for us. It illustrated for us some of the areas that we will continue to have some challenges in, but where we could concentrate on some of the problems. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are on education, culture, page 9-15, operation expenses, total operation expenses, \$11,933,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Education, culture, grants and contributions, grants, \$52,000, contributions, \$98,350,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Total grants and contributions, \$98,402,000. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We see a fairly large increase here of total dollars going out to the contributions and grants. I believe a lot of that is in the area of educational authority contributions. I believe that has been tied to the contract that was signed. Can the department inform us as to what the actual numbers we see increased?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Excuse me, could we have some order in the House? It is getting a little loud in here and we cannot hear the Member make his point. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question I had, the increase we see here, especially in the area of education authority contributions, can the department inform us as to how many new teachers that will bring to the Northwest Territories schools? Whether it be teachers, special needs assistants, in that area? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Yes, that is correct. It would be in the teacher and the needs assistant specialists. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Total grants and contributions, \$98,402,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Information item, active positions. Information item, student loan revolving fund.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Information item, detail, funding allocation, education authorities. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 9-23, college programs, information item. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): College funding allocation, information item. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Detail of work performed on behalf of others, total department, \$9,101,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Revenues, recoveries and transfer payments, information item. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Back to page 9-7, department summary, operation expense, total operation expense, \$183,354,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Capital acquisitions on page 13. Capital acquisition plan, advanced education careers, total advanced education careers, \$1,598,000. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for the Minister with regard to the college HEO program equipment replacement. I notice as I looked at this line, there is a two-year gap. They have \$200,000, \$485,000 next year. The concern I have, Mr. Chairman, is that for a number of years prior when we were going through the cost reductions and deficit reductions, the capital replacement for heavy equipment was sacrificed. Like many of the other capital items in the government, we are building up a tremendous deficit here. The need to replace heavy equipment is not being maintained and the cost of heavy equipment is very high. I would like to ask the Minister about the gap of two years in 2003-2004, 2004-2005, considering how far we are falling behind in trying to maintain an even remotely modern fleet of heavy equipment to train Northerners on. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the replacement of equipment at the Thebacha Campus of Aurora College is a particularly challenging one because of the tremendous cost of some of the equipment, Mr. Chairman. We are currently reviewing this particular area with the college. We do not have any ready answers to it yet, but because of the high cost of equipment, we looked at several possibilities.

One was to lease some of the equipment. That turned out to be extremely expensive and not an option we felt we could pursue. The other option is for us to start working with some of the large corporations to see if we can work out a methodology by which we can access equipment.

Firstly, we are working with the college to see how we can approach this particular area, because it is of concern to us. We know that the equipment is aging. In some cases it is out of date because of the modern equipment that is coming out. Mostly, the equipment today has technology attached to the operational style of equipment.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister indicate when he anticipates they will have a clearer plan of how they intend to address this? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the work has been ongoing for a number of months now, and we expect that by the spring, several months into the new fiscal year, in all likelihood is when we can report back on this, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. We are on the capital acquisition plan, total advanced education and careers, \$1,598,000. Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Page 14, education and culture, total education and culture, \$9,886,000. Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: I wanted to ask a question regarding the Princess Alexandra School renovations and addition. This

project has been underway for a while. There has been a lot of talk by the people in Hay River that the renovation is barely meeting the needs of Hay River in the education end of it.

They have been really struggling to try and get a second gym for Hay River to meet the needs of the students there. Hay River only has one full-sized gym. They have been really struggling trying to get this, even looking at raising their own funds to do it.

With the amount of extra money that has been put in education with this new budget coming into place, why would the department not have been able to find a few extra dollars to be able to allow Hay River to get in a second full-sized gym while the project was going on? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The Minister responsible for Education, Mr. Ootes.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our officials have been working with the DEA and town officials on the Princess Alexandra School project. That has been ongoing since last fall. There were some issues with regard to the school. Several weeks ago, our people, along with representatives from Public Works and Services, who are the project managers on this, attended a meeting to discuss some of the deficiencies as they were seen by the school officials and DEA officials. The meeting resulted in a discussion in those particular areas.

At that point, some discussion took place on the gymnasium. It turned out that the discussion resulted in the identification that in order to expand the present gymnasium, it would incur a cost of \$1.6 million. I had advised the DEA at a time when I met with the MLAs and the representatives from the DEA, as well as the mayor, that we did not have that funding allocated to increase the budget, Mr. Chairman. The challenge here is to try and find the extra money for an expanded gymnasium. We have identified the \$6,158,000 for the project. There is a challenge there of trying to find the extra money on this, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hay River seems to be have been singled out by the department as being watched very closely on this project to make sure they do not go over budget on it, as a lot of the projects have gone over budget in the past. Hay River is having a hard time trying to fit in their needs under the \$6 million. A second gym or a second full-size gym for Hay River would go a long way towards addressing the needs. Is there any chance that the department is looking at this within the near future of finding extra dollars that might allow Hay River to get a second full-size gym? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would just remind Members, could we have some order in the House? It is awfully hard to hear the person speaking. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The approach that we take to schools is similar in all communities with regard to design and allocation of funding and so forth. I should remind Members that I am not there to short-change Hay River, nor am I there to short-change any other community, Mr. Chairman.

The facts of the matter are that I am allocated a capital budget. I had to take the drastic steps last year of cancelling a school in Holman Island because it came in one million and some dollars over budget. I had the unfortunate task of going to the community and informing the community of that. It is just the reality we have to live within, Mr. Chairman. We do our best to accommodate, but I cannot draw money from areas that would sacrifice other areas. Thank you.

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

MR. DELOREY: Just to my question, is there any possibility that the department is going to be looking for extra money for Hay River in the near future, in the next year or so? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Chairman, I did advise the DEA that I do not have the funding to expand this particular project beyond the \$6.1 million. We did include more money last spring into the budget that was allocated to this particular project. I understand we did expand it based upon needs and so forth.

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

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, under capital of education and culture, there has been some discussion in the community now about the Sir Alexander Mackenzie School. It is coming up in this year's planning dollars of \$950,000. Samuel Hearne is down a number of years to start planning in 2004-2005. Then you tie that with the Aurora Campus facility, which falls under advanced education careers. There has been some discussions in the community with all three projects.

As they are outlined now, I would like to get a couple of bits of information, one being what class estimates are established, for the record, in the main estimates as we see them? I know the department has been involved in discussions in the community with community leaders and those above in education of discussions around capital projects. I just want for the record to have the department's position as to it mainly being in the hands of the community and seeing how they want to see this proceed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our officials did go to Inuvik to discuss the capital plan and we would like to have the community address any areas of concern that they may see and prioritize what they may see as their concerns. I would like to get feedback from the community on that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you Mr. Chairman. So as it sits right now as it is laid out in the main estimates, that is the way the projects will sit for now until the community decides what avenue it wants to pursue. For the record as well, the numbers that are indicated here for Samuel Hearne School, are they a class C estimate? What class estimate are they? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you Mr. Chairman. They are initial estimates, Mr. Chairman, and yes, I have to live within the budget allocations here. As I said, because of some concerns within the community about particular allocations, I am interested in having the community provide me with some input here. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess it is an affirmative on the fact that it is in the community's decision to see which project or how they want to work together on the different initiatives. I know that they have had a number of meetings and will continue to discuss these.

The other one is the class estimate. I do not know if it is a D or a C, it is an early stage one, but that is in planning. The point that concerns me is that the Minister says that he has to live within these numbers. If the estimate is rather early and there is no real definition to what might be required, then potentially it is not going to be the need of the community in a sense of classes or student population. It is going to be based on the figure identified here. Can I have that for the record, Mr. Chairman, if that is correct?

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

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am informed that there have been technical estimates done to come up with the figures that are being used. We are fairly confident that they do represent the figures that are required for this particular allocation, Mr. Chairman.

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

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am familiar with this process now, having been through a number of budgets and seeing what is estimated and then what the actual project cost can be. When we tend to go and do some work, it is fine and dandy in a sense to look at projections when you are looking at numbers on a page with some estimates and code requirements and so on. When you actually get into the work, sometimes it is much more than was planned or bargained for.

I have a concern with that aspect of it. Hopefully at the end of the day, if the student population in Inuvik grows at a very quick pace, that will play a significant role in the numbers that are shown.

On top of that, if there has already been technical evaluations done in that area, if those can be shared with myself and the community. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, when our officials met in Inuvik, they informed the committee that they had the information with them and that they would gladly share the information with them. So I can share that information as well with the Member.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With that, maybe something for the record here on the fact that if the population, the student population grows, that would impact on the final numbers that would be identified for renovation/replacement, if that were the case. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Growth could be a factor that would have to be taken into account, Mr. Chairman, if there is strong growth in the community.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Minister was unclear on that. Growth could be or has to be? Which one is it?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It depends on the growth, Mr. Chairman. If it is substantial, it has to be taken into account.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now I just need a definition for "substantial".

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will look at the level of enrolment at the time of design, Mr. Chairman, and then make decisions from there.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So that is the definition of "substantial", is at the time of design they will look at enrolment? Can you give some numbers as to what would cause an increase? There was some talk earlier, for example, in what it would need to get more resources for a school. That might mean teachers and so on. If you have a certain growth of eight percent, five percent of the student population? What size growth would then cause changes in the size and the teachers in a facility? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Roland. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to ask Mr. Devitt to answer that question. It is getting into an area that he is best to handle. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Devitt.

MR. DEVITT: Mr. Chairman, as the Minister stated, at the time of design, as we do annually, we will update the enrolments and also the enrolment projections. We would want the facility to be capable of handling the number of students for at least a five- to ten-year period.

Looking at Inuvik in particular, we would probably want to open a facility at no more than about 80 percent, so we would be doing projections so that when the facility opened, it would be opening up at about 80 percent utilization. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Devitt. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we have spent a bit of time today talking about the oil and gas opportunities that are out there and also the need for developing a well-trained, skilled workforce. There will probably be more demand on the Arctic College facility, especially in Inuvik. With regard to the impact that has taken place there now with the oil and gas sector, will the Minister consider expanding the project, rather than having to wait until 2003-2004, if we can show that there is a real need for this facility to be moved ahead sooner than later?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member is 13th on the Aurora Campus, Mr. Chairman. I am familiar with the campus situation in Inuvik, that it is an inadequate facility, especially if there is substantial growth in the Inuvik area. So we are and have dealt with the community to discuss this matter to see how the capital plan should be applied. Mr. Chairman, in that respect, we are awaiting some word back from the community as to how they wish to proceed. The options are there to discuss this whole area of the capital plan with respect to the two schools and the college. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under capital acquisitions, I would like to direct the Minister's attention to a request put in by the Lutselk'e school, DEA and the principal. First, I would like to take the Minister back on a road trip that we took to my constituency in the spring of 2000. We had a meeting and toured the school.

We also visited Fort Resolution and visited the Deninoo School. I would like to thank the Minister and his department, the Government of the Northwest Territories, for doing badly needed renovations to the Deninoo School. The people of Fort Resolution are very grateful to the government for that initiative.

Going back to the school in Lutselk'e, that school was built a number of years ago out of logs. The ventilation is poor and it is a health issue. I wonder if the Minister has looked into the request of the community, especially the health issue that they have with the ventilation. Also, the school population is getting up there. My last trip into the community, I hate to say it, but I saw many kids that I do not even know their names. That is how fast the population of the community is growing. Has the Minister looked at the request from the community of Lutselk'e with the health department and ascertained if it is a health issue? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the health issue, we will certainly track that down immediately if there are concerns with regard to health issues, ventilation and so forth, and we will ensure that we address that issue immediately. On

the utilization, Mr. Chairman, the school was constructed in 1985. The utilization figures are between 61 and 70 percent at the moment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What exactly does he mean by between 61 and 70 percent utilization? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is related to the school capacity and the number of students it can accommodate. I will ask Mr. Cleveland to address it in more detail. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The utilization rate, as the Minister indicated, is the total number of spaces available divided by the number of students actually there. We update those numbers annually, so we would be looking at the numbers that we currently have as we reach next fall as well. Generally speaking, as Mr. Devitt indicated, we look at construction or renovations when we are somewhere in the 85 to 90 percent utilization level. We are a little bit below that right now, but we will continue to monitor it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you. Was the determination of how many students can be placed in the class determined in 1985 when the school was built?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The calculation utilization is done based on our current standards. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So the current standards of the student-teacher ratio of 16 to one, is that the current standard they are using?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The standards are the capital standards that we have for all our school facilities. Most classrooms are constructed based on an expected class size of about 22 students per classroom. There are some smaller spaces in the school in our capital standards with about 11. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As part of the utilization, do they use projections? How many kids are being born in the community and how many kids will be entering the school system, et cetera?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Cleveland.

MR. CLEVELAND: Yes, Mr. Chairman. We look at actual births as well as projections. As I mentioned before, we also do that on an annual basis. We involve the divisional education council and the staff in the community to assist in that process. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Having 22 students per class, how many different grade levels are there per class? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That depends on the location and varies according to the school and the community. There could be a number of levels, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Mr. Chairman, I think we are talking about the school in Lutselk'e and not various locations. I was pretty specific as to which school I was referring to. It is the Lutselk'e school. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We do not have that particular detail here. We can get it for the Member, Mr. Chairman. We just do not know what the mix of classes is in Lutselk'e.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: I would appreciate that information, although I probably know it, but it is good to have it on hard copy, Mr. Chairman. I would suggest that there could be anywhere between three and four grade levels that are in the same class. Couple that with special needs students, et cetera, putting pressures on the teachers. I spoke about that today in my Member's statement.

We are looking at a low level of graduation from our high schools, especially from those communities such as Lutselk'e. These are some of the symptomatic problems that I believe are resulting in the low graduation levels, resulting in low education levels, resulting in low professional levels of our people working on our behalf in our community governments, et cetera. Still, we use the utilization number to defend that we cannot invest into badly needed renovations or expansions of our schools. We know the problems, yet we defend it.

I do not understand where the department is coming from. Can I get some kind of commitment from the Minister that he will look into this, maybe even commit to me that he will visit Lutselk'e and take a tour around the school and get to know the teachers and the students a little bit more and really listen to the requests of the DEA personally? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Mr. Minister.

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Member knows, we did visit the school several months ago. I

would be glad to return to the community again to visit the school. There are always opportunities for us to sit down and discuss matters. I would be quite willing to do that again. I do have to remind the Member that like all communities, there is a process that we have to follow in order to address deficiencies. If there are deficiencies in the school, I would be glad to go over those with the Member and have our officials work hand in hand with the DEA on addressing particular areas of concern, Mr. Chairman.

As the Member pointed out earlier, it seems there was some reference to the ventilation area. We will certainly expedite that as quickly as we can and get onto it. If we were informed of other deficiencies, we can certainly address those as quickly as we can, Mr. Chairman, to identify them and see how we can proceed on that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Page 14, education and culture. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to get back to this utilization of schools. I have a problem with a process that we know does not work and continue to support that process. If we are jam-packing students into one classroom with different grade levels, different age groups, that puts a strain on not only the teachers, but the students who are doing the work. That is a problem area. I think we better look at resolving that problem because if we do not resolve situations like this, we are not creating a better learning environment for our children and the problem of having low graduation levels, high unemployment, high dependency on our social envelopes will continue long into the future.

We all agree that education is the answer to a lot of our social problems here in the Northwest Territories, but if we identify core problems, then we certainly should attempt to do something about resolving that problem. We understand through surveys and research that FAS is a big problem.

Our justice system in the Northwest Territories has physically separated the Indians in the correctional centres who have been identified with FAS/FAE from the general population, or even having contact with security guards that are not trained in dealing with this. Yet we justify the utilization of schools and the number of kids we can put in one classroom, using that as an excuse not to create a better learning environment for our children.

If we do not start looking at resolving this problem, we will be sitting here in five or ten years discussing the same issue, Mr. Chairman. I sure would like to encourage the department and the Cabinet to resolve this very basic problem that we identify in our communities. With that, I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Nitah. General comments? We are on page 14, education and culture, total education and culture, \$9,886,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Total department, \$11,484,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Does the committee agree that consideration of the department's main estimates is concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): With that, I would like to thank the Minister and his witnesses for appearing before the committee. Madam Groenewegen.

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): The motion is in order. It is not debatable. To the motion. All those in favour? All those opposed. The motion is defeated. As we had previously agreed, we will go onto the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. Is the Minister prepared to make opening comments?

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present the main estimates for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. The department is responsible for promoting economic self-sufficiency and growth through the sustainable development of natural resources and enhancing the creation of new sustainable opportunities in the traditional and wage economies.

Mr. Chairman, the natural environment is critical to Northerners' cultural, social and economic identity. This is reflected in the department's goal to ensure that the naturally high quality of our land, air and waters is maintained through sound environmental and energy management. The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to renewable and non-renewable resource development that respects the overall health of our environment.

In meeting with the senior staff of the department, we discussed what I see as the department's top five priorities for the next fiscal year:

- tourism and the traditional economy;
- managing gas development in the Mackenzie Delta;
- developing an energy strategy;
- building regional capacity; and
- implementing Common Ground, the NWT Economic Strategy.

Tourism is one of the five priority areas. It is a growing industry worldwide, especially in the areas of adventure and cultural tourism. Tourism opportunities in the Northwest Territories contribute to economic diversification and are one of the few economic activities available to small northern communities. For example, anyone involved in the traditional economy has basic tourism outfitting skills. Tourism can also help to establish a stable market for arts and crafts products and to preserve our rich, northern heritage and cultural traditions. I have stressed that we must be able to measure the results of new investments in tourism. The department, working with partners and stakeholders, will finalize a Tourism Strategy and an action plan where new investment will focus on marketing the NWT as a prime tourism destination and developing quality, regional attractions.

We expect the non-renewable resource sector to be the major economic contributor to the Northwest Territories for the next

several decades. The second priority area for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development is ensuring that Northerners maximize the benefits from the development of our natural resources. That is why the Mackenzie Valley Development Project was established two years ago. It ensures Northerners participate and benefit from the development of our substantial natural gas reserves and provides a coordinated approach by aboriginal, federal and territorial governments to prepare for development. This remains a key initiative. The department will also continue to support the Aboriginal Pipeline Group, which is seeking a long-term revenue source for aboriginal governments through equity participation in a Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

Support for resource development also means addressing industry's concerns. One concern has been the regulatory regime in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report that regulatory agencies are working cooperatively to establish a process to coordinate regulatory requirements for the construction of a Mackenzie Valley pipeline. The department will continue to participate in these efforts to develop an efficient regulatory process that will avoid unnecessary duplication.

The third priority area is examining options to develop an energy strategy to guide future decisions and investment on separate, but related, energy and environmental issues. It will outline an overall vision of the NWT's future energy needs and requirements and set specific objectives to provide the context for more detailed decisions. These would relate to such issues as northern oil and gas development, energy subsidies, and the implementation of a Greenhouse Gas Strategy. Of particular interest is the use of hydroelectric power, which could reduce costs to generate electricity as well as environmental impacts. In the interim, the department will continue to work closely with the Arctic Energy Alliance to reduce costs and environmental impacts of energy and utility services.

Supporting our government's objective of building regional capacity is the fourth priority area for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development for this upcoming year. Working with other departments, partners and stakeholders, the department will assist in developing a qualified, resident workforce that can take advantage of the employment, training and business opportunities flowing from resource development. For example, the department has recently filled three regional oil and gas positions to assist communities to maximize involvement in development. More importantly, the department is working directly with aboriginal groups to increase their capacity to maximize benefits from resource development. More importantly, the department is working directly with aboriginal groups to increase their capacity to maximize benefits from resource development. For example, the department has:

- jointly funded the Information Clearing House for the Beaufort Delta;
- provide direct support for aboriginal-owned business;
- sponsored a series of human resource development programs and associated support services; and
- contracted aboriginal corporations to deliver forest inventory and silvicultural activities. This ensured

direct involvement of aboriginal people in managing forest resources on their traditional lands.

The department will also continue to assist in the assessment of community impacts and the collection of environmental base line information related to resource development.

The final priority area for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development is implementing the NWT Economic Strategy as contained in the Economic Strategy Panel's Common Ground report. Our government has described the actions we will take in the document, *Securing Our Future*. We intend to work in partnership with aboriginal governments, the federal government and the private sector to implement these actions and I will report annually on the results of our actions.

In addition to the five priority areas I have outlined, the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development will be undertaking work in other important areas.

The department's environmental protection division administers initiatives and programs on air quality, hazardous and solid waste management, and energy awareness and efficiency. Priorities for this fiscal year include designing a revenue neutral beverage container recovery program, implementing a northern strategy to control greenhouse gases and working with the federal government on the surface clean up of Giant Mine.

Other programs supporting initiatives to protect our northern ecosystems include the continued implementation of the Protected Areas Strategy by the territorial and federal governments. Communities continue to lead this process. Recently, Deline was advised that the federal government has agreed to interim protection for the Grizzly Bear Mountain Candidate Protected Area. As well, the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development is providing assistance to the Deh Cho First Nations' proposal to establish a protected area in the Mills Lake-Horn Plateau area.

The department continues to support the renewable resource sector at the community level. For example, we are working with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs to promote access to land for agricultural pursuits. Together, the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and the NWT Development Corporation will provide over \$2.4 million to support harvesters, fishermen, arts and crafts producers and wildlife management committees.

With the upswing in price and demand for wild fur, the department is reviewing the NWT Fur Marketing Strategy with the NWT Development Corporation and other stakeholders to assess its benefits and determine if a change in approach is warranted in the effort to enhance returns to producers.

The extensive wildlife provisions in land claim agreements require the direct involvement of aboriginal governments in developing the new Wildlife Act and species at risk legislation. The Wildlife Aboriginal Advisory Group was established this year to advise the department on aboriginal viewpoints and priorities. As well, the department will provide funding to aboriginal governments for consultation. A discussion paper to address issues identified through public consultation will be released in the new fiscal year.

The Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and the NWT Development Corporation play a

key role in encouraging the development of a healthy and vibrant northern business community. In addition to providing support to the traditional economy, the NWT Development Corporation has set goals to establish a new subsidiary and invest \$1 million in northern ventures.

Two other initiatives to improve support to the business sector and clients should be completed next year. The first is the report from the committee evaluating the delivery of business assistance programs offered by the NWT Development Corporation, the Business Credit Corporation, the Business Development Fund, and the Community Futures program. The second is the review of the existing Business Incentive Policy. Regional consultation to develop a revised policy is underway and I have been pleased with the interest shown by the private sector in finding solutions to the shortfalls of this policy.

The Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development continues its support for the value-added diamond industry. Our government's new certification and monitoring program will capitalize on the growing interest in our diamonds. Two northern diamond manufacturers are participating in the program. The department will develop, in partnership with northern manufacturers, a marketing strategy to complement the monitoring and certification program and to help position northern mined, cut and polished diamonds as a quality product in the competitive diamond marketplace.

Mr. Chairman, the activities proposed under the main estimates of the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development will help this Legislature achieve the vision set out in Towards a Better Tomorrow by:

- developing strong partnerships with aboriginal, federal, provincial and territorial governments;
- supporting resource development that balances economic benefits, social impacts and environmental protection;
- sharing northern benefits among governments, communities and regions; and
- ensuring a diversified economy, which encourages investment and growth in all sectors.

Both the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and the NWT Development Corporation have ambitious work plans for this year and your advice and comments are welcomed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Does the committee responsible for reviewing the department have any comments? Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development has the mandate to promote economic self-sufficiency through the sustainable development of natural resources and to enhance the creation of sustainable opportunities in the traditional and wage economies. It is also responsible for the promotion of sustainable development through the management and protection of the quality, diversity and abundance of natural resources and the integrity of the environment.

In order to fulfill its responsibilities, the department is organized into the following ongoing activities: corporate management, environmental protection, resource management and economic development, and forest management.

The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development met with the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and his staff on Thursday, January 18, 2001 to review the department's main estimates for 2001-2002. Committee members noted a \$1,312,000 increase in operations expense for the department from their 2001-2004 business plan. This arose from:

- a \$1,414,000 increase in compensation and benefits resulting from the recent UNW collective agreement;
- a \$18,000 upward adjustment in amortization estimates;
- a \$180,000 increase in Financial Management Board (FMB) approvals; and
- a \$300,000 reduction in other adjustments.

There were no changes in capital expenditures and in projected revenue levels from the department's 2001-2004 business plan.

During the review of the department's 2001-2004 business plan, the committee was concerned about the department's consultation process for the Wildlife Act. Committee members were apprehensive about the department conducting stakeholder consultations as this is done in standing committee when the proposed bill comes before the Legislative Assembly. The committee requested that an effective and timely consultation process must be developed as the life of the 14th Legislative Assembly is only another three years. The standing committee expects to receive a report that outlines the department's consultation process and projected timelines for the Wildlife Act once it is developed.

Wildlife and Environmental Protection Funding

The committee's examination of the department's fiscal allocations showed there is a need for more support for wildlife and environmental management and protection programs. These responsibilities deserve similar levels of funding that have been directed towards resource development. With the dramatic growth in resource development, including minerals and oil and gas, wildlife and environmental protection programs and services become even more important.

The Minister replied that he would consider any recommendations to support wildlife activities. The committee further added that since the department was amalgamated, there has been a continual decrease in programs and services in this area. Committee members advised that with major resource developments occurring, at the end of the day we need to know their effects upon our environment and wildlife. Due to reductions in programs, services and other resources in this area, our data may be limited. The committee suggested to the department that as a potential cost-effective alternative, consultation with aboriginal groups who are completing their own wildlife work may be considered as an additional information resource.

Committee members pointed out that many territorial government wildlife responsibilities are actually the domain of the federal government. If we continue to assume and complete some of the federal government's responsibilities, our already limited resources will be further depleted. The territorial government does not receive additional federal funding to complete their duties. Therefore, the committee encourages the territorial government and the department to ensure the federal government meets their own responsibilities.

Finally, the committee stated that in order to have effective programs and services, we need to ensure we retain and recruit "good people" and that they have the necessary resources to do their jobs.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development recommends that the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development pursue the federal government for additional resources and to ensure the federal government meets their wildlife management and protection obligations.

Hotel Room Tax and Tourism Strategy

The committee agreed with the department that tourism is a growth industry in the Northwest Territories. Tourism opportunities in the North must be maximized in concert with an effective and responsive tourism strategy.

The territorial government has proposed to fund their tourism strategy with a hotel room tax. Committee Members expressed concern about the hotel room tax and the potential consequences to our accommodations industry and its overall impact upon tourism.

Further, as part of the legislative process, the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development recently met with stakeholders and residents on the proposed hotel room tax legislation. The committee wishes to ensure that the view of all Northerners and tourism operators will be considered in its deliberations and the committee will be reporting on the hotel room tax in the very near future.

Mr. Chairman, at this time I request that the deputy chair of the committee, Ms. Lee, continue with the report.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Oil and Gas and Other Sectors

In the committee's review of the department's 2001-2004 business plan and 2001-2002 main estimates, committee members remained concerned that there are other economic sectors other than diamonds that require assistance and attention. Other sectors include agriculture, fur, forestry, tourism, arts and crafts, and oil and gas.

Again, the committee members were of the opinion that there may have been an initial requirement to support the secondary diamond industry, but other economic sectors also deserve at least similar levels of support. Committee members were especially concerned that current and proposed resources may

be inadequate to take full advantage of recent developments in the oil and gas sector.

Number of Strategies

The committee, after reviewing both the department's most recent business plan and draft main estimates, noted that too much money and resources are dedicated to the development of strategies rather than on implementing current ones. Committee members suggested that funding for most of the new strategies could be used for priority issues or for other essential department programs and services. The committee restated from their review of the department's 2001-2004 business plan that it is concerned about "what we can realistically do in the life of this government."

Giant Mine Clean-Up

The committee is of the opinion that the Giant Mine clean-up operation is a priority. The standing committee is concerned that the federal government is not living up to its obligations, and this government should not assume responsibilities that are within the domain of the federal government. Finally, the committee encourages the Minister to lobby the federal government to clean up the mine site in a safe and timely manner.

Arts and Crafts

Committee members maintained the position that the arts and crafts industry deserves increased levels of support. Further, the committee noted that this sector has the highest participation rate amongst the over-60 age group. Without a growing arts and crafts industry, many people in this age group will become solely dependent upon limited pensions and income support.

Furthermore, the committee observed that funding might have been disproportionately allocated elsewhere, especially to the secondary diamond industry. In many communities, arts and crafts represent a significant component of the local economy and some people may prefer to participate in the arts and crafts industry. Arts and crafts represent a viable employment choice for many people.

Harvesters' Program

The committee is of the opinion the current Harvesters' Program is not responsive to its clientele and, as a result, changes will have to be made to ensure harvesters are paid in a timely fashion. This slowness in payment may have contributed to a decline in the industry.

The committee pointed out that more support is needed for this sector. In many communities, harvesting is one of the few viable industries and many people may prefer to work in the harvesting industry. The Minister agreed to revisit and augment the program, and that the department will also review the Fur Marketing Strategy and Fur Pricing Model. The committee looks forward to examining the results of this review.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes our report. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Ms. Lee. With that, I would like to ask the Minister if he will be bringing in any witnesses.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, on my left is Mr. Bob McLeod, deputy minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. On my right is Mr. Jim Kennedy, director of corporate services for RWED. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome, witnesses. General comments. Mr. Miltenberger.

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will make this as brief as I can. It is good to see the reference to a broad energy strategy, that the Minister mentioned in his comments, and hydro potential. I am also interested at some point in the budget as we get to talk about secondary diamond development, hopefully outside Yellowknife. I am interested to see the progress on the consolidating of the lending agencies and support agencies for business and the work that is going on and, of course, the business incentive program.

At the appropriate time in the budget, I would like to discuss with the Minister what I think is a very carefully crafted letter about the regional funding transfers that lays out the money that was transferred from regions to headquarters to deal with the critical expenditures that were identified.

Mr. Chairman, as the Minister indicated, this is a very important department. The area of tourism in the constituency of Thebacha is one of growing interest and one that I would like to, regardless of the eventual fate of the hotel tax, work with the Minister and his department to try to move along.

I do not have a lot of big issues in this department. A lot of them are positive issues. I would just like clarification and some discussion. I think they have a lot of work before them, as the Minister said, and an ambitious agenda. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, I can either respond to each comment or else listen, make my notes and respond to everyone at the end of general comments. Whatever is the Members' wish.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): What is the wish of the committee?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have some general comments on programs that may not have a corresponding line item in detail. The first initiative I would like to comment on is the review of BIP. I think this incentive policy is certainly something that we need to work on. As I said before, I think we have a real chance here. The Minister has agreed to look at this. I am glad he has, because I think it needs retooling. I think we need to come up with a program that works for northern business.

I think to get back to the philosophy of what we are trying to do here is to level the playing field for real northern businesses. We want to level the playing field for them with southern businesses so they are able to take advantage of the economy as it heats up in the North.

I think it has had its failings. The department admits this. We have had people who have been able to side-step the intent of the BIP for whatever reason. There have been various ways it has been done. In effect, southern businesses with little more than a token operation in the North have been able to get status under the BIP and qualify for the incentives. We know that was never the intent. I am glad the Minister is looking at it.

I think there are several things in the paper that his department has put out that are very interesting. When favourable tax rates are analyzed versus tax credits, I tend to favour overall tax rates because this broad approach will look across all sectors at all sectors. I think the minute we try to get into trying to administer specific tax credits, I think we are talking about an administrative undertaking.

The other thing that might happen is when we look at small business, I think the small business threshold can be looked at, but certainly we need small business tax rates that are competitive with our southern neighbours. We have seen Ontario move to lower their small business tax rates. Alberta is proposing to do so. I believe BC's is 4.5 percent. There was a time when we seemed to be leading the parade in this area, but it is slipping away from us and we are no longer at a competitive advantage in this area. So I think we can move quickly.

The paper looks at the possibility of moving to, I believe it is currently six or five percent, but moving to zero percent for small business as a tax rate. I think it would only cost this government an estimated \$1.6 million. I think it gets back to this idea that we have very little capacity to raise our own revenues, especially in the area of small business taxation. So I would like to see us consider this as a worthwhile initiative.

Whatever we do, we have to move to make sure the BIP can provide an advantage for northern companies on more than just Government of the Northwest Territories contracting. We have acknowledged that the Government of the Northwest Territories' direct spending is now only seven percent of GDP if we take wages out. More and more, we see much of the work that is being done and money being spent is being spent by a lot of these big companies, the BHPs, the Diaviks. I think we have to make sure that northern businesses are competitive and can take advantage of these opportunities.

One of the ways we might look to do this is by providing subsidies for businesses that are northern in the form of employment. The Minister in discussing this previously has indicated that it is difficult for us to tell the private sector who to use when contracting. I would agree. I think we do not want to get into protectionist schemes. Those always seem to run us into trouble, but incentives certainly might be the way to go.

I think there is a real opportunity as well to link this very closely with maximizing northern employment, the strategy that Mr. Ootes is spearheading. I think part of the BIP should be about employing Northerners. The initial intent was to encourage entrepreneurship. I still agree with that as the thrust, but when we look at what we are trying to do, we are trying to stimulate

the economy and make sure that Northerners can be hired so that we have people paying taxes in the North, living here, contributing to the economy. If there are ways that we can do this, it certainly makes a lot of sense for us to try to address that. If BIP is the mechanism for that, then that is great. I would like to see us go down that road.

I will have more comments about the BIP as we look further at the development and as the Minister gets ready to consult and eventually unveil his new program. I think it is critical that we have a manufacturing directive in this initiative. Manufacturing is a sector that we really have a lot of room to stimulate. I think I have spoken before about the need to diversify our economy. We all have. We simply cannot put our hopes strictly in the non-renewable resource sector. We simply do not know what will happen to world commodity prices. I think it would be irresponsible for us to be too reliant in this area.

I would also like to speak to the committee that is reviewing the various lending arms and economic development agents of this government; the BDF, the BCC and Community Futures. I think this is another worthwhile initiative. I think we have to take a look at what we are doing and make sure that all of these lending agents are linked.

The Auditor General has indicated over the past few years, time and time again where we see situations where one arm of our government is not aware of what another is doing in terms of lending money to people. We cannot have situations where a business accesses BDF funding and gets a grant, turns around and uses that grant as the equity portion to leverage a loan for BCC. We cannot have 100 percent borrowing. There simply has to be some ownership. There has to be some investment from the businessperson or else there is not the level of commitment.

When all of the money is leveraged, there is also a tendency to overcapitalize, to turn around and say, "All right, if I can get this amount of money, I must need all new equipment, I must need all new capital." I also believe that what happens in these scenarios is if you do not have an ownership in this capital, you tend not to take very good care of it. I think this is something that we have to address.

I certainly think there needs to be clear linkages so we know. We cannot have situations where the BCC is lending money to someone and not understanding that the equity portion they have come up with was in fact BDF funding. I am not saying that this happens often, but I know in the past it has happened on occasion.

I am glad we are taking a look at these programs. I think we also have to take a look at what some of the charter banks are doing. The BCC requires and has quite tight restrictions for security on loans, and I think it is good that we are cautious. I think we have a pretty favourable rate of collecting on our loans, but we have to realize that we are not a charter bank. We are a lender of last resort. It is important that we get into economic development in the communities, especially in smaller communities where charter banks refuse to be in the business of lending money.

Part of the BCC's portfolio is going to entail high-risk loans. I think that is the nature of the BCC. I think we have to get away from the numbers game and be more interested in taking a good look at business proposals, making decisions on the

basis of sound business proposals and working with entrepreneurs who are interested in getting into business.

We certainly have some room for improvement here. I think we cannot continue to choke business by requiring security that is unreasonable. We ask people to put up homes and vehicles and all kinds of things to secure loans, when in fact if you look at the history and the record that this government has, very rarely ever do we foreclose on someone and go after someone, very rarely do we go and take homes, cars and these kinds of things. Why do we ask people to put them up in the first place? I think these are some of the questions we have to ask when we look at the mandate of the BCC and the mandate of all of our lending agents.

I will have more detailed questions, but these are a couple of the programs that did not have corresponding details, so I felt compelled to comment on them here, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much and I look forward to detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, if there are no further general comments, I would be pleased to respond to the two. Did we want to continue with general comments first, and I will respond after?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I am just wondering if you are going to remember all of this. It is getting pretty lengthy, so I am just wondering if it might be more...

-- Interjection

I do have a few people on the list, and it will be probably pretty lengthy, so I am just wondering at what point will you respond. Mr. Minister.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: No. Go ahead.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I have Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will keep my comments short. I just wanted to touch on a few things. I was kind of surprised to see, with all the activities that are going on in the North and all the big plans that we have for development, that tourism was the top priority out of the five priorities for this department for next year. I know it was a priority for the department, but I was surprised to see it at the top of the list.

I have the same problem with the tourism industry that I have with a lot of our other initiatives that we are taking to develop our North and open it up. If we have to fund it on the backs of our businesses and our residents, it gives me reason for concern. I think that we have to start raising money or getting more money from Ottawa to be able to spend large amounts of money in these areas. I think there is only so much that we will be able to do if we have to do it through taxes and raising money on the backs of our residents.

One of the big areas that the department is looking at is in the energy field. I see at the top of the list that the department will be examining options to develop an energy strategy, so we are still in the strategy business. I am hoping that we see some positive results coming out of that.

I have to mention my favourite that is in here -- the Arctic Energy Alliance to reduce costs and the environmental impact, energy and utility services.

-- Applause

One of the problems I have in this whole area is that we study greenhouse gases and one of the members of Arctic Energy Alliance, I think, is the Department of Public Works, as we talk about reducing greenhouse gases and cleaner sources of energy.

In Hay River, there is money being spent right now to convert buildings that are on propane, all hooked up for natural gas. They are piping and spending money on putting them back on diesel fuel. I just do not think that goes anywhere towards looking after greenhouse gases and getting us ready for the future and cleaner energy systems. Why that is, I am not really sure. I do not know if the Arctic Energy Alliance has anything to do with that.

With regard to the oil and gas sector, I see in the comments that the department has established three regional oil and gas positions to assist communities maximizing involvement in development. I am not sure where those positions are, but I would be interested in reconfirming where those three positions are in the oil and gas sector.

I would also like to get some information on one of the department's initiatives. They sponsored a series of human resource development programs and associated support services, contracts to aboriginal corporations to deliver forest inventory, several cultural activities. I know that the forest industry is kind of tied up. I do not know exactly what this means. I would like to get a bit more information on whether this is a whole new management body to look after the forest industry or NWT forests.

I do not have a problem if we do not want to do anything with the forest industry and just tie the whole thing up and wait until we are ready to do something with it. I do have a problem with the department when they help set up a business that needs forest products to succeed and lend the business money to get started up, and then shut them down by not giving them licences to cut trees and actually they go broke. I do not think that is a very good way for the department to operate. I know that in Hay River there are a couple of businesses that are going through some very hard times.

With regard to the NWT Business Development, the \$1 million fund, I would be interested in finding out where that money is going to be administered from, if it is going to be administered at headquarters or if it is going out to regions. Those are just some of the areas I have some questions in out of the Minister's opening remarks. I will have more questions as we go through the department. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Minister, do you want to respond to those now or do you want to continue on?

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, it is really up to the Members. If they want me to respond as we go through, I will do that. If they want me to wait, I will wait until the end. I am taking notes. I am at your pleasure. Mr. Bell had indicated before he did not need a response right now.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): It is up to the Minister if he wants to reply, but you do get a lot more than ten minutes. I will allow you that. Next on the list is Mr. McLeod.

MR. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to make a few quick comments. Some of the issues I want to raise are not in detail, so I thought I would bring them up in general comments.

First of all, I wanted to say that it really concerns me when I see overall that his department over the last couple of years has shifted focus from what used to be community-focused to more industry specific and more so to diamonds. A lot of things have changed. It looked like a bright future in the communities where the Development Corporation and the private companies are now looking pretty grim. The opportunities are very limited.

However, we are at the threshold of development in the Deh Cho. There is an agreement that has been signed and we probably will see the formal signing in the spring of this year. Yet we are seeing cutbacks, a number of cutbacks.

The biggest one is to the Business Development Fund. This is a fund that our communities depend on. It has taken a major cut in the last few years. From my estimation, it is about an \$800,000 reduction. This means that a lot of companies in the smaller communities are going to have a harder time to access funds when there are less funds. I have been told that the funds for the Business Development Fund, in the South Slave region anyway, only last until early June or July. It is going to get even tougher to access the dollars. That is a real concern.

The second thing is a lot of communities in my riding are depending on the interim resource management agreement that has been there for a number of years to assist them to deal with different resource pressures and participate in land discussions. That has been cut completely now. I am hoping that there is going to be some indication from the federal government that we will see this returned at some point.

One of the biggest issues that I wanted to raise tonight is the situation that is happening with the Kakisa commercial fishermen. I was happy to see the Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development Minister was down in that community and discussed this issue with them. It might be premature to expect a response from him, but we experienced a real downturn in the number of available fish in the fish catch over the last couple of years. What used to be a daily catch of three or four or five tubs is now something they are catching on a biweekly basis, I believe. There have been some studies done by Fisheries and Oceans. However, I think there is going to be a real need for some type of assistance for the commercial fishermen there.

I am not sure what the results are of the study. I have not seen it yet. However, I am sure it is going to mean that we are going to have to request that some of these fishermen quit fishing maybe for a year or so or however long it takes. It may be because the quotas were set too high, but I cannot say for sure yet. They are going to need some assistance because that is their livelihood. It is something they depend on and have depended on all their lives. Commercial fishing has been in existence since the 1950s in Kakisa. That is something we are going to have to be very aware of and monitor very closely over the next while.

There are other issues that I wanted to raise, but they are in detail. I will just mention them quickly. I am very concerned that the Wildlife Advisory Group has no representation from the Deh Cho. I do not know why that is. Maybe we could get an explanation at some point. In his statements, he mentioned that there are three oil and gas positions. I am not aware of any that have been located in the Deh Cho. The focus seems to be all in the Inuvik area and there is little attention being paid in this area that I represent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame.

MR. MICHAEL MCLEOD: So I will reserve the rest of my comments for detail. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I too have some concerns with regard to the resources that are presently within the department, especially for people who want to get involved in the oil and gas sector. In the Delta, I have been working along with the tribal council and other companies within the Delta trying to excise dollars out of the department. Yet they are strapped for cash. They do not have any money to do a simple feasibility study.

You have to wait until the new fiscal year. If that is how we are going to get our people involved in business, I think it is the wrong way to go. We spend a lot of money within the diamond sector. We have done a lot of studies. We have done a lot of strategies and we have spent a lot of money developing nice, fancy reports, but at the end of it all, we do not have money to put proposals together to access dollars from other agencies, the federal government and what not.

We have to put more emphasis on providing the people within the private sector with the resources so they can get started in the industry by partnering with different people and getting proposals to access federal dollars or even seed money to get a business started. We have to do more there.

Yes, it will be great if we have an economic development agreement, but at the present time, we do not. I feel the federal government is taking a lot of resources and revenue out of the North yet we, who call those resources our resources, are not getting any resources back to call our own. We have to do more to promote the private sector, communities, regional organizations so they are able to access dollars and take advantage of those opportunities, especially in the oil and gas industry.

We have to start looking at developing strategies and start seeing how we can take advantage of the economic situation. A lot of people are putting a lot of eggs in the pipeline basket. My view is if you can come up with \$5 billion to build a pipeline, the more power to you. A lot of aboriginal groups do not have that type of funding. I think they are better off concentrating on the service sector of business and that industry so you have these long-term jobs, not strictly by owning a piece of infrastructure or a utility system.

We have to find ways to look at the long-term job that is going to come with this development, so that we have people there who are going to be able to benefit in the long term and not just go for short-term gain where we have the boom/bust scenario. Once it is gone, the non-renewable resources have been taken

out, they are not going to be able to be put back into the ground.

I think it is important that we also do a lot more to protect our environment. One of the things I have a lot of concern about, and I have not heard much of in the news, is we hear a lot about oil and gas development. However, one of the most sensitive spawning areas for fish that come from the Beaufort Sea into the Mackenzie River system comes from a lot of the creeks and rivers and lakes that run into the Beaufort Sea and the Mackenzie Delta.

I for one feel that with all of the seismic activity and what not, we could see a very major decline in that fish population. The same thing applies to the marine environment in the Beaufort Sea.

The other area that everyone knows I have a concern with is the whole aspect of the Porcupine Caribou, the calving grounds and what we see happening in Alaska. It is a renewable resource that will sustain people's lives long after a pipeline is built and long after the oil and gas is gone. If we do not do anything to protect that renewable resource and we have major impacts on those species, then we, as a people who depend on and live off of the land, depending on that food source, will be like any other country in the world where you see people have decimated their renewable resources for the sake of development.

I think there has to be a balance between the renewable resource sector and the non-renewable resource sector. As a government, I think we have to do more to look at improving our legislative processes and also finding ways to find a balance between them.

The other area that I feel we have to do more in is looking at our responsibilities on enforcement. We are cutting back, especially with our renewable resource officers. We have cut back in regard to people within our organization because of the cuts that have happened within the last five years. We have lost a lot of good people.

In order to keep people within government and keep people interested in the different sectors in regard to the renewable resource officers or people like our economic development officers, we do have to ensure that we continue the same strong human resource requirement in the North and making sure that we have people there.

One thing I feel that we do not really seem to hear much of, especially from this government, is the overall social and economic impacts of these developments on these small communities. Growing up in the Mackenzie Delta and being involved in the oil and gas industry for almost eight years, I have seen the impacts that come from oil and gas development where we say, the motto was, "two weeks to make her, and two weeks to spend her". That is practically what it was.

There was a lot of money wasted because of not having an inhibition that this industry was going to be around...it was there forever. You had a job for 20 or 30 years. When it crashed, it crashed big time. I think for us as a government, realizing that some of the problems we see now with FAE/FAS, social problems we see in our communities in regard to alcohol abuse, suicides, and what not, you can directly associate all of that to development back in the 60's and 70's.

I think as a government, we sort of lose track of the social side of our government or ourselves as people. The mighty dollar drives everything nowadays, especially in this country. As a government, we seem to be focusing too much energy in that area. A lot of that energy that we are using up, at the end of it all, we are not getting anything back. The federal government is the benefactor to all of these initiatives that we are taking on.

I think we as a government have to start looking at how we can improve not only the economics, but the social conditions and the systems that we have in place. Look at the statistics, look at the social statistics. Look at the money we spend on health, education, other areas and we are not seeing results. We continue to put more and more money into it, but at the end of it all, we as a government are continuing to try to find ways of nickel and diming and balancing that budget, but not realizing that we have to do better planning. We have to realize that we have to find a balance, a way to generate revenues, but also improve the lives of the people in the North who are going to be here, who were born and raised here and will eventually die here.

The development comes and goes. When you put too much emphasis in that arena, I think you have to realize, like anything else, look at the east coast fisheries. We are no different than the fishing industry. They are like the harvesters in the North. We are seeing it on the west coast. When you become too dependant on a particular sector of our economy, when it crashes, it affects everything. We have to balance out the opportunities and the resources we have. We have to have a diverse economic community from tourism to oil and gas to forestry and take advantage of all of the resources we have out there.

That is the short of it. I will ask if the Minister might be able to respond to a couple of those. Have at her.

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

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Most of my comments will come during the detailed consideration, but I do have a couple of comments that I would like to make about the Minister's opening comments and a question to ask about one section in the opening comments.

One thing that I would like to note that I am quite happy to see is the importance that is placed in the Minister's opening comments on the natural environment. I must say that I have had constituents mention to me that they were somewhat concerned that in our vision statement, Towards a Better Tomorrow, they did not see very much of an emphasis on environmental issues. I listened to the Premier's speech on January 17th and I listened to the Minister's budget speech on February 15th. In neither of those two documents did I hear much reflection of the importance of the natural environment, so I am pleased to see that the Minister has, in his opening comments this evening, put the natural environment high on the list of areas of importance.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear.

MR. DENT: As I said, I will have a number of questions for the Minister as we go through the detail of the budget, so I will save the rest of my comments for that. I do have one question from his opening comments and that is on page 5, the bottom paragraph, the final sentence:

"In addition to providing support to the traditional economy, the Northwest Territories Development Corporation has set goals to establish a new subsidiary and invest \$1 million in northern ventures."

I was wondering if I could get some detail about what exactly that means. Have they already decided what this one new subsidiary will be and it is going to take \$1 million in investment, or is this that they will have a number of different investments and they will total \$1 million? Because it is in the opening comments and I did not understand what it meant, Mr. Chairman. I thought I should ask for that comment now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Dent. Did you have more after this question, Mr. Dent, or was that the end of your general comments?

MR. DENT: That was it for my comments before I got to my question, so that is it after the question. Hopefully it will be answered.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Okay, I am sure the Minister has that down. We will go to Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too will have some more specific questions as we get into the detail. One broad area that I wanted to bring some highlight to and perhaps leave a question with Mr. Handley when he answers us in a omnibus answer, and it relates to the Non-Renewable Resource Strategy. The package is valued at about \$230 million, a package of potentials and strategies and ideas that was done largely to satisfy -- I believe there was a request from our friends in Ottawa to say, "Okay, what is it that your new government needs and sees as priorities? Where do you need the assistance?"

That document has just recently been finalized, but it has been in circulation with us and with Ottawa for some months. I would stand to be corrected, Mr. Chairman, but so far in terms of real cash and real investment from Ottawa, the only thing I am aware of that may have resulted is the \$3.7 million that Ottawa has invested as a partner in the winter road projects in the Sahtu region. Those are excellent investments, but they pale in comparison to what we felt was a good plan.

About the most I have heard in terms of follow-through with that is that if there is going to be a further response from Ottawa on that proposal, it is not going to be in the fashion of a basket of EDA projects as the North has known EDA projects over the last couple of decades. My understanding is that it is going to be more individual sector-specific agreements, which I am led to believe will also require the negotiation and involvement with a number of other sister departments in Ottawa. It seems that there will be greater separation between things, they will be more independent.

I wonder, Mr. Chair, just how much more diverse and difficult is it going to be to manage these things as we get involved in different layers of accountability, have to train, if you will, new Ottawa or federal people about how things work up here, get them on side. It just sounds like it is going to be a much more cumbersome process. I will look forward to some explanation from the Minister of just where we are going in terms of that

larger, longer-term investment strategy that we hope Ottawa is going to come onside with.

That is basically the opening comment and larger big-brush issue that I would like to explore, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Braden. With that, it looks like you are up to bat, Mr. Minister.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will try to be brief, but hopefully not miss too many main ones, and hope that anything I miss we can pick up as we go through detail. I will try to go through them as the Members raised the issues, and I realize there is some duplication because people spoke to the same thing. I appreciate the words of support that I have heard from a number of people.

With regard to Mr. Miltenberger's comments on the energy strategy, yes, we have a lot of initiatives underway. It is at your recommendation, your cajoling, your urging, that we were undertaking to get one comprehensive strategy to integrate all of these pieces.

On the diamond industry, we leave it largely to the companies to decide where they will locate, but with new mines opening, hopefully there are new opportunities there.

We are doing a review of business programs as we go along now, and the results of that study, of BCC,BDF, Community Futures and some of our own programs, will be hopefully completed by the end of March. The BIP is out for review. I think we have received a lot of interest from the industry, particularly the transportation and construction industries, on this one. I think from the retail side as well. People are working on giving us a joint response or joint recommendation to our discussion paper that has gone out. The regional transfer paper -- we put it together, I do not think we carefully crafted it, as you worded -- we want to be accurate on that one.

On tourism, again I appreciate all the support. We have to find a way of putting more investment into the tourism industry. It is too important.

-- Applause

Mr. Bell talked about the BIP as well. I really do look forward to the results. I do not know that BIP can do all the things that Mr. Bell hopes it does. It is certainly a piece of it, but it will not be the answer to all our employment problems and so on, but I think it is an important piece. It is a task that other people did not want to take on in past governments. I chose to take it on. We will probably take some flack before it is finished, and I am sure we will never get everybody agreeing on an end result, but if we can make headway on it, then I am willing to do that.

Tax rates are part of the proposal in the BIP to lower small business corporate taxes. I would like to do that. I agree that we have to stay competitive. Having a manufacturing directive as part of it -- maybe not as an addendum to it as it is now, but as an integrated piece of the BIP policy -- I agree is important, because our manufacturing sector is one way of diversifying our economy.

With Mr. Delorey, while tourism is the first one, those are basically our five priorities. I do not want to say that this is first, second and third. These are five priority areas for the

department. I do not want to say that tourism is more important than environment or oil and gas, and so on.

Federal dollars are always a problem for us. We just do not get the federal support that we need. I have already mentioned the energy strategy and why we are doing it. We are working with Arctic Energy Alliance. I do not know about the buildings in Fort Smith being converted to heating oil from propane. I will find out about that, but I do not believe that has anything to do with the Arctic Energy Alliance at all. We will check into that one.

The oil and gas sector is important. The position for the Deh Cho area is currently located in Hay River. We are waiting for the Deh Cho to tell us how they want to do this with us. It is temporarily being held by Mike Mageean in Hay River.

The forest inventory -- it is true that forestry is at almost a standstill right now because of the Deh Cho process. We will continue to do inventory and silviculture to a limited extent. A lot of that will be done through private companies, not through the department itself. We want to encourage that happening that way.

The company that you referred to that was helped with money and then was shut down, we did not really shut it down. It was through the Mackenzie Valley environmental regulatory process that the company ran into a lot of frustration. I understand what happened there and do not like it any more than do you or others.

The Development Corporation is planning on investing some money back into a number of ventures. Basically, the Development Corporation is looking at spending a million dollars; \$200,000 goes into the arts and crafts industry to get a strategy going, and they are working with Education and other departments on that; \$100,000 to start the Aklavik and Tuktoyaktuk fur shops; \$105,000 goes to Acho Dene subsidiary, there is some basket making, birch bark basket project that has been going on for a number of years now; \$200,000 to restart the Dene Fur Clouds in Fort Providence, which is a fur knitting project that has a lot of hope; and there is \$350,000 that goes toward the purchasing of arts and crafts products. That makes up roughly the million dollars that they refer to.

Mr. McLeod talked about the emphasis of moving away from community to industry. I hope that is not a big trend, but we have to pay attention to the big industry. However, we do have to realize that the communities are important. We are putting \$2.4 million into basically the traditional economy and I continue to view that as important. I think that tourism can also be an important piece.

The BDF funds are down, that is correct. They are down by something like \$800,000. That is because we are limiting BDF contributions to \$25,000. We are proposing to do that, rather than these big BDF contributions. I think this is a more business-like approach to working with communities, with corporations and so on.

With the IRMA funding, that is a federal program. The federal government has not indicated that they want to continue it. If they do want to continue it, then we are ready to cost-share it. However, until they indicate that they are going to have another IRMA at the end of March, then we really cannot do much.

The Kakisa fishery, there is a study being done. That is the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We are participating, but we are not the lead on it. It is not our responsibility.

In terms of the Wildlife Advisory Group and the lack of Deh Cho representation, that is the Deh Cho's decision. We have a space for them. They are welcome to be there. They have chosen not to. They are busy with their Deh Cho process, but any time the Deh Cho want to have a representative there, then we are more than happy to include them. There is a place for them.

Mr. Krutko talked about the oil and gas sector, the importance of it. I agree. We have to work with the private sector, with regional organizations and so on. We do have money, not necessarily in Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, but in the Government of the Northwest Territories to deal with this. There is \$5 million and maximizing employment is one example, and we have been working hard to lever money from the federal government and from aboriginal organizations, to do things jointly. I think we have had some success in the last year.

Whether the aboriginal groups put their dollars into the pipeline or into the service sector, it is up to them. We will support the direction they take, but we will not tell them which way to spend their money.

Environmental protection is important, whether it is the rivers or the land, the marine or the ANWR. We take a position against development on ANWR which supports the federal government's position. I know the Premier has raised it with the Prime Minister.

I agree enforcement is important. Socio-economic impacts are probably the most important thing. If we do not get the benefits out of it, then why are we doing it? If it is just going to cost us money and it is going to disrupt a bunch of people's lives, make families dysfunctional and so on, then let us not do it. We have to have that support there too. I hope, as we look at the whole budget for the government, we can deal with a lot of that. We cannot have it, as you say, they become the main benefactors.

I appreciate Mr. Dent's comments on a natural environment. That is important. I personally view it as important and our government views it as important. It does not get the attention as often as it should because it does not mean big dollars that we need to run our other programs.

In terms of the subsidiary, I think I already mentioned that one. That is basically the Dene Fur Cloud project in Fort Providence.

Mr. Braden has made reference to the Non-Renewable Resource Strategy. That is a \$330 million strategy; \$100 million from us, \$230 million from the federal government. We intend to keep working on it. I am meeting with, as I mentioned before in the House, Minister Martin on Sunday. It is still on the agenda. The federal government continues to quote it and use pieces out of it. Aboriginal groups are supporting it and I think it is a good strategy. As far as I am concerned, it is still the core strategy for a lot of our non-renewable resources development.

You are right, we have only received \$3.7 million for the bridges. That is the only real cash that we have seen. We do not have an EDA or a northern economic development agreement. We have not given up on that one either. We need

one. We have not had one since 1996, and it is certainly crippling our department because we just do not have the money in Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development to do the job we have to do, given the wide mandate we have.

With the federal money, the frustration to us is if the money comes to us in bits and pieces and there is no strategy to it and we never know when, we are almost beggars getting a few pieces of loose change every now and again. That is not useful to us in terms of our overall direction because we cannot plan anything. I really hope we are able to gain some success out of the Non-Renewable Resource Strategy. A lot is banking on that strategy being successful.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I think that is a quick summary of the questions and comments I heard.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Chairman, I move we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): We have a motion on the floor. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is defeated. What is the wish of the committee? Is the committee prepared to go on to detail? What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Krutko, I will give you one shot at general comments.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are saying the federal government has a lot of responsibilities and jurisdiction. We hear the federal government is basically stocking up their shelves with people. They are moving people into the oil and gas sector, yet as this government, we are talking about devolution eventually trying to take things over. The federal government is expanding in that area. I think that as a government, we have an obligation to ensure that any of those jobs that the federal government are developing or putting in place, we should work out an agreement with the federal government that those positions they are putting into the oil and gas sector will eventually either transfer to ourselves as a government, knowing we have heard out loud from Minister Nault that devolution is his priority and he wants us to move on it.

As a government, we are not really moving as fast as I would like to see on that envelope with regard to the Northern Accord. I feel that if we do not do anything within the next six months, we are going to miss the window of opportunity to get it through in the 14th Assembly. It has to pass through federal legislation. We have to develop our own regulations with regard to the Northwest Territories oil and gas act or whatever act we are going to put in place. It is going to take a while to develop. For the federal Parliament to pass it through, from our experience of land claims being implemented through the federal system, you are talking a long, long process, especially having groups such as the Reform Party and other opposition groups there, which could drag this out for some years.

I feel as a government we have to eventually call the Northern Accord process and put time lines or establish a negotiating table so we will negotiate a Northern Accord made in the North by Northerners. We cannot continue to fund organizations or agencies to have meetings to talk about it. We have been talking about a Northern Accord since 1988. That is when the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Mulroney, signed it over when

the Dene/Metis claim was signed, which was part and parcel of the Dene/Metis claim process. A lot of our land claim groups in the North are waiting reluctantly to get that in place. The Gwich'in claim is a good example.

We have oil and gas companies on our doorstep, but under our subsurface resources section of our land claim agreement, it is pretty vague. That is where we are supposed to negotiate benefit agreements, access agreements, participation agreements on all aspects from training to environmental protection to alcohol policies, whatever you want to call them. However, we are not moving anywhere on it.

It is causing a grave problem with the Gwich'in, especially the benefit agreement they have with the company working there now. They are getting hijacked because there is nothing in regulations or policies where the Minister of Indian Affairs signs off an oil and gas lease, basically with no agreements attached to it. This government has an obligation where we are signatories to that Northern Accord agreement and those land claim agreements.

As a government, we do have an obligation to the residents of the Northwest Territories to move on this. I think we do have to start developing the different regulations and acts that are going to be needed to take over the oil and gas and mineral responsibilities in the North. We should be doing it now so we can show the federal government that we are serious, we are moving on it, we are going to have our own legislation.

We can start looking at what is happening in the east coast with regard to Nova Scotia or Newfoundland, but the perfect scenario would be the Alberta Natural Resources Agreement, which was signed because it is one of the best agreements in Canada. If push comes to shove, maybe we should give the Alberta government the authority to move their jurisdiction all the way to the Beaufort Sea. Then we will just enact the Alberta Oil and Gas Act, so we will get a larger portion of the revenues instead of having it all flow to Ottawa.

We as a government have to move on this. I still have four minutes. That is it.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mr. Minister, did you want to respond to any of those comments?

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, I will respond very quickly. I did not really hear a question there. I think it was a statement, several statements. With regard to the positions, we are still holding firmly in our argument that those should be in the North.

With devolution, yes, we want to move. I think the issue of how does this government move forward on the broad issue of devolution is one that is certainly bigger than RWED. I think it is something that we all have to take a look at. I agree that if we do not make some progress in the short term, in the next six months as Mr. Krutko says, then we are probably going to have a pretty steep hill to climb from here on in this Assembly.

Yes, we are a signatory on the land claims agreements, but there is not really a lot that we can do unless the federal government comes onside. We are just one party that has signed along only really on the areas we have responsibility. The overall agreement is more between the aboriginal beneficiaries and the federal government.

In terms of doing regulations now, I think our plan has been to wait until we have a signal, some basic principals in place, some time frame and then get on with regulations on oil and gas to show that we are serious. I really hope we can get an Alberta-type agreement, but every signal I am getting from Ottawa is that there will never be another Alberta agreement. Whatever it is, it is going to be much less than what Alberta has received.

The advice of moving the Alberta boundary north, that could be ground for a lot of debate. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Detail.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): On page 11-9, Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, corporate management, operations expense, total operations expense, \$12,543,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Delorey): There is a motion on the floor. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. We shall rise and report progress. Thank you, Mr. Minister, and your witnesses for appearing before the committee.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will come back to order. Item 20, report of the committee of the whole. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 19, Appropriation Act 2001-2002, and Committee Reports 6-14(3) and 7-14(3) 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. Delorey. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Weledeh. The motion is in order. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Item 21, third reading of bills. Item 22, orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Speaker, meetings for 9:00 a.m. tomorrow of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, and at 12:00 p.m. for the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures.

Orders of the day for Thursday, March 1, 2001:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions

