



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

4th Session

Day 10

14th Assembly

HANSARD

Tuesday, July 24, 2001

Pages 315 – 336

The Honourable Tony Whitford, Speaker

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**TUESDAY, JULY 24, 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, 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. Allen. Good afternoon, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Justice, Mr. Antoine.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 29-14(4): Federal Court of Appeal Ruling**

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the federal Court of Appeal made a ruling that clarifies the constitutional status of the Northwest Territories. The appeal court ruled that the NWT is legally separate from the federal government. This is the clearest ruling on this point made so far by the courts.

The Court of Appeal ruling concerns a lawsuit brought against the territorial government by the Federation Franco-TéNOise. This group argued that the territorial government was an agent of the federal Crown and, therefore, the case should be heard in the federal court. I am gratified to see that the appeal court has agreed with our position that this case should be heard in a northern court.

Mr. Speaker, this may be the most important development this government has seen since 1986. That was the year that the Premier and Cabinet took over full executive powers from the Commissioner.

For years, there have been questions about the constitutional status of the Territories. Various groups and individuals have argued that the Territories are, in fact, a branch of the federal government. The appeal court's decision confirms our view that the territorial government has authority over its own affairs and the power to make its own decisions. While we do not enjoy all the powers that a province has, we are responsible for ourselves and are not just an agent of the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, in 1975 the people of the NWT chose their very first fully elected government. Eleven years later we achieved responsible government with decisions being made by the elected representatives of the people, not by an appointed Commissioner. Our Territory continues to evolve, Mr. Speaker, and this court decision is an important step in that evolution. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Mr. Antoine. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Member's Statement on Cuff Report on the NWT Health and Social Services System**

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Social Programs Committee, I will soon get a chance to go through the Cuff report in detail and have a chance to analyze many of the recommendations and comment back to the Minister, but I wanted to take this opportunity, as I may not get another before the August 15th deadline for responses, to discuss some of the problems I see with the Cuff report at just a cursory level.

Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a lot of data and a lot of information on problems within our existing health care system in the Territories but not enough, as usual, on how we might address these problems. There is also no evidence that a new organizational structure, as proposed by Cuff, will improve the present situation.

Boards as well, Mr. Speaker, are really singled out in the report as being problematic. There seem to be too many of them. They do not understand their roles. They do not understand their responsibilities. They are not accountable. They lack training.

There has not been much talk about the extent to which outside factors have probably influenced a lot of this, Mr. Speaker. What about the inability to recruit health care professionals? What about the difficulty in providing service in remote areas?

Mr. Speaker, I cannot imagine that additional board training at the Stanton Regional Hospital would have had any impact on how quickly we were able to recruit professionals with the recent nursing shortage and closure of the surgery ward.

Mr. Speaker, the most significant shortcoming that I can see, just at first view of this report, is there does not seem to be a real look at self-government, Mr. Speaker, and its present and future impact on governance and service delivery.

The development of some of our boards was seen as an intermediate step to self-government. I think of the Dogrib Community Services Board, for example, Mr. Speaker. Can we really have talked about partnerships and capacity building for the last ten years and then turn around and recentralize all of the service delivery?

One more point, Mr. Speaker. When asked about consultation, the report writer and the Minister always insisted 300 people were consulted in the process. Mr. Speaker, I think when they were consulted they were asked to comment on the current state of health care service delivery in the Northwest Territories. They were not posed with the idea that sweeping change was imminent and, "How do you feel about that?" I think it is one thing to ask them in crafting the report for comment and another now to shop this around in the communities and at the regional government level. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Services for Special Needs Students

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to touch on the issue of special needs, an issue that touches many families in the Northwest Territories. It touches every school and every DEA and DEC.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency there is concern and evidence that, in fact, services for special needs seem to be diminishing. I have had issues raised with me by constituents of parents and grandparents having to pull together their hard-earned money, trying to help pay for special needs assistants for special needs children.

I know that as a government we have committed millions of dollars to speak to the issue of student support and special needs. However, Mr. Speaker, somewhere between here, the schools and the families, the funds do not seem to be getting through.

Mr. Speaker, every year this issue comes up. I do not think we are making the inroads we should be in terms of providing support. It is not just my constituency that I am aware of that is dealing with this problem and what seems to be the lack of resources for special needs children in the classroom.

This is a very fundamental issue that affects the special needs children, the special needs family, but it also affects the effectiveness and ability of teachers to do their jobs in the classroom when they may have a whole range of special needs children as well as children who are operating at the appropriate grade level.

Mr. Speaker, later today during question period I will be asking the Minister of Finance some questions about how we can better deal with special needs in the communities and why it seems to be, to me at least, that the number of concerns and complaints I am receiving from families about the lack of resources are increasing, or at the very least, not diminishing in spite of the millions of dollars that this Legislature has appropriated specifically to deal with special needs issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement on Privatization of Petroleum Products

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for several years now I have been working with the communities of Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson to consider the possibility of privatizing petroleum products in that community. Several proposals have been submitted to the Minister over the years, yet to date, there has been no movement on the proposals.

Mr. Speaker, what alarms me the most is that I just received a letter from the chief of Fort McPherson, Mr. Abe Wilson, regarding the department clearly stating that the GNWT has recognized that its current agenda is too busy to address the issue at this time. Consequently, it will defer the decision and that no commercialization of petroleum products revolving funds will be considered prior to April 1, 2003.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, two years ago privatization of petroleum products took place in Tuktoyaktuk with no problems. They met the requirements. Two years later, this proposal has gone back and forth. A lot of time, effort and money has been spent to develop these proposals to put forth to this government. The Tetlit Gwich'in Co-op in Fort McPherson and the Tetlit Gwich'in Band Council have been working together to find a way to provide petroleum services in Fort McPherson, and the same with regard to the band in Tsiigehtchic.

I find it awfully alarming, Mr. Speaker, that all this work and effort has been put together and now the arguments are that because of the review of the Power Corporation everything is in jeopardy, because part of that review calls for the Power Corporation to consider taking over petroleum products in all of our communities.

I find it awfully alarming when we talk about working along with communities, trying to develop economic opportunities, giving them the opportunity to do things for themselves, and getting government out of the lives of the people in the communities. This is an opportune time to do that. Yet, Mr. Speaker, from this letter, received July 11th, and for myself to have it faxed to me just today, it is alarming as a Member of this House who is not aware that this is a decision made by this department without telling any Members of this House that there has been a delay in a process where everyone else had an opportunity. I will have questions for the Minister on this matter later. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Child Missing From the Edmonton Bosco Treatment Ranch

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this moment, there is a very serious crisis involving a missing 14-year-old boy, Bosco Homes in Alberta and our Department of Health and Social Services. The crisis also extends to the boy's family here in Yellowknife and sadly, to the almost total lack of compassion and information our government is able to give to the boy's mother.

Mr. Speaker, Bobby's case, and of course that is not his real name, goes back to last fall when he was apprehended and

taken over as a ward of this government under the Child Welfare Act. He was referred to Bosco Homes for assessment and has been kept there since for treatment.

Two days ago, Bobby was reported missing from the Bosco Treatment Ranch outside of Edmonton. His mother got a phone call from Bosco simply telling her Bobby was missing and that the investigation was in the hands of the RCMP.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, she has received only one other phone call -- this morning, in fact -- from our child welfare office, asking if she had any other information. I have contacted the Minister's office, Mr. Speaker, and insisted that somebody directly involved with the search contact Bobby's mother and at least tell her what they know and what they are doing about it. However, as of this moment, after more than two days, even that simple gesture has not been acted on.

Mr. Speaker, most of us in this Assembly are parents. I would ask what would be going through our minds now if we knew that our teenager was missing a thousand miles away and nobody was telling us what was going on. I have talked to the boy's mother several times today and yesterday. She is distraught. She is desperate. She feels totally abandoned and helpless.

Mr. Speaker, this boy is a ward of this government. He is in our care. Why have we not involved the parent and the family in this distressing event? What are we doing to make sure that every available resource is put to work to find him? Beyond this, Mr. Speaker, just what is the level of care and treatment Bobby is involved with in the Bosco Ranch? Even this information has not been made available to the parent. Why not?

Mr. Speaker, this disappearance follows other allegations over the past month of physical abuse and mistreatment while in the care of the Bosco Home. These allegations are already under investigation by the Department of Health and Social Services. Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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. I would ask, do we have other kids under care at Bosco Homes outside of the Northwest Territories? If so, I must call into question how they are being treated. In light of Bobby's situation, I must call into question whether we should be bringing all of them home to the NWT.

This is a disturbing case. It involves people in our society who have so little and do not have the resources to help themselves. I will be asking the Minister of Health and Social Services later today for help in getting answers for the family. Thank you.

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

Member's Statement on Fort Providence Land Leases and Taxes

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about land leases, land taxes and the confusion and unfairness surrounding this issue in the community of Fort Providence. Mr. Speaker, this has been an ongoing issue for many years now and is resulting in a considerable burden of outstanding arrears to the land division. Many of these people are low-income earners and do not have the ability to pay.

I have constituents, Mr. Speaker, who live in houses built by Indian Affairs 30 or 40 years ago. These people have lived in the same house, on the same piece of land all these years without having to pay leases or taxes, and lately they have been told that they are living on Commissioner's land and they have to pay for living on these lands.

Mr. Speaker, the situation is very stressful for my constituents, especially when the territorial and federal governments seem to be confused on this issue. They cannot tell us when the lands in question were transferred from Indian Affairs to the GNWT. The GNWT claims that they are trying to straighten out their files and they cannot find the records of transfer yet. The federal government tells us that their records are in a mess and they want time to sort it out. In the meantime, the people in my riding have to live with the possibility of eviction from property they thought belonged to them.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, as everyone is well aware, the lands in the Deh Cho are currently the subject of negotiations between the Deh Cho First Nations and the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories. The lands in question could very well be part of lands that are selected by the Deh Cho First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge this government to put a moratorium on charging First Nation residents of Fort Providence taxes or lease payments until this matter is sorted out. This, I think, would show respect for the people of Fort Providence in the bargaining process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Special Needs Services at Range Lake North School

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to speak about a concern that one of my constituents has with respect to the support being provided for her child, who is in need of special needs assistance at Range Lake North School.

Mr. Speaker, last fall I spoke about my experience of job shadowing a special needs assistant at the Range Lake North School, her name being Hayley Morris, who has done an amazing job in giving support to two children with autism at the school. I thought that, and I said so at the time, the reason why these children have shown so much progress, and Kelton specifically was able to get a great deal of benefit out of the inclusionary policy, was that the teacher was very dedicated and their relationships were so strong.

It was for this reason that I was absolutely shocked when I found out that the Yellowknife #1 District has had to move this teacher to another school, and this was not known until five days before the end of the school year. I have tried all I can, along with the parents and the teachers involved, the administration and the Minister to see if this decision could be revisited, without any success at all. I am told that part of this has to do with lack of funding in this area and the budgetary problems that the board had experienced, as well as the fact that there are just not enough trained personnel within the district.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know what else to do other than to say that we have to acknowledge that we have failed miserably in this process. My question is, when we have approved additional funding for special needs, why do I have to experience this over and over again?

I just got a letter saying that the district is reviewing the whole policy, when I would think they should have that in place before they had the money. I would like to urge the Minister to work with the board to address this very serious issue being experienced in all of the Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement on Traditional Summer Activities in the Inuvik Region

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak on activities that are happening during the summer months, especially in the community I represent. Mr. Speaker, it has been an event that happens every year ever since I was born and I can recall that during the summer months many of the people of Inuvik and the Delta would travel out to their summer camps and to their whaling camps. A lot of families partake in that and take in some hunting to supply their needs over the winter.

I would like to wish them all the luck and wish them safe boating and hunting as they partake in their cultural activities. I miss the fact that I have not been able to get out on the land myself so far this summer, but I wish them all the best in their hunting and being able to survive and continue to promote their cultural activities with their children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we continue to do these activities that take us and slow us down, I would say to a certain degree, from our community jobs and the events that take place throughout the year. As well, I would like to encourage those who are new to the community and the Territories as well, to enjoy what this great land has to offer, and to join in with new friends and family to see what we can do to encourage and promote and cultural activities that go on traditionally.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to wish my family, my mom and dad who are out at the whaling camp, the very best and safe hunting.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Wishes for a Safe and Enjoyable Summer

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today being probably our last day in the session for the summer, I would like to go back a year and recognize a date that the people of the Akaitcho territory celebrated the 100th year centenary of their treaty with great celebrations in the community of Tulita. With that, I would like to say hi to the people of Tulita, Fort Resolution, and hope that they enjoy their summer.

I would also like to recognize the annual pilgrimage that the people of Lutselk'e take annually to Desnedhe Ché, just outside of Fort Reliance to visit the Our Lady of the Falls and seek spiritual assistance and direction. I would like to wish them a safe and productive trip, and I would like to wish all the people of the Northwest Territories the best that summer has to offer them and safe travel to everyone. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Mr. Nitah. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Member's Statement on Family Violence Legislation

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in March I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services if she would make herself aware of family violence legislation in other jurisdictions. She agreed that she would and would consider bringing forward similar legislation if it proved worthwhile in those other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and Alberta have such legislation, and others like Ontario are moving to bring it in. Over the past four or five months I hope that the Minister has looked at this legislation in these jurisdictions and will soon tell the House that she is planning to bring similar legislation forward here.

Mr. Speaker, what is the big difference between what we currently have and what you will find in places like Alberta, where they have the Protection Against Family Violence Act? I think the biggest difference is that these acts tend to focus on protection rather than on punishment. I am speaking specifically about Alberta. The purpose of the act there is to provide effective and accessible protection for victims of family violence, while at the same time responding to concerns raised about due process and the need to guard against frivolous or vexatious applications.

A few features of this legislation in Alberta provide police officers with the option of a civil response to family violence calls rather than a criminal code response. The Alberta legislation provides three types of protection under the act -- emergency protection orders, Queen's Bench protection orders and warrants permitting entry. Mr. Speaker, police officers in Alberta can request by phone emergency protection orders from presiding Justices of the Peace on a 24-hour basis.

This Alberta legislation is seen as effective because it allows for more options for police officers and an immediate response to family violence. Victims often do not want to go to court but want out of the situation, so the emergency protection order is perceived as a very useful tool because it does not require a criminal charge. Mr. Speaker, the EPOs can also provide for

the arrest of the perpetrator if the orders are breached, and this is what provides the effective force in a situation.

Again, I hope the Minister will agree that she is going to move forward with the lead that we have seen in these other jurisdictions like Alberta and I will be asking her later today during question period if we can expect to see such legislation soon. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

Member's Statement on Funding for Tourism Facilities

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time of year it is hard not to think about tourism and people enjoying this time of year out in their campers, enjoying the summer. People, as we know, from around here and the travelling public have favourite places that they like to go to camp.

During the last session I brought up the issue of Escarpment Creek campground being closed to the public. This campground has been closed for two-and-a-half years now. Residents of Hay River have been complaining of not having access to that campground. In checking with the tourist information booth at the border, I have been informed that the numbers of tourists coming to the Northwest Territories via the highway is roughly the same this year as it has been over the past couple of years. For the month of June, Mr. Speaker, the numbers were down by about 100, but they figure that in total it will be close to what it had been the past year.

It is nice to see, Mr. Speaker, that the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development is putting more money into tourism, but one wonders about first impressions when it comes to tourism. The very first campground encountered when coming to the Territories and the first information booth is located right at the border. The staff at the border have been asking for years for money to be spent to fix up that campground and make it look presentable for tourists coming in, but funds are very slow in coming across. I think that is important for the travelling public to have a good first impression of our campgrounds.

One of the questions, Mr. Speaker, that is being asked at the information booth is, is Escarpment Creek open yet to the public and to the tourism industry? Of course, the answer is no. One of the reasons that is being given for the campground to be closed is that there are no washrooms there. This coming from the same department that found it necessary to instruct the staff at the border to close the washrooms, lock them up at 8:30 in the evening until 8:30 in the morning, so I do not see that as being a big issue as far as washrooms are concerned.

I have also been told, Mr. Speaker, that Hay River is not an impacted community and has no input into what happens at that campground. I think, Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, that is a territorial campground and tax dollars are being expended in that campground. I know that Hay River, being a tax-based community, does have to pay taxes and is therefore an impacted community.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Delorey, your time for your Member's statement is over.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

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

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking on behalf of residents of Hay River and the travelling tourists, again I ask the department to look at opening the gate at Escarpment Creek and allowing the people to enjoy that campground. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Antoine.

Member's Statement on Adherence to Treaty Commitments

HON. JIM ANTOINE: (Translation starts) Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find it difficult sometimes to speak my mind in the Assembly because there is no one that really speaks my language. In 1921, Treaty 11 happened. I want to speak on that.

This summer I travelled to Fort Norman with the Dene Nation and it has been 40 years. We spoke of the treaty and the elders remember when the treaty was signed and they told us about it. We also heard the English version. The elders do not believe that what was written on the treaty agreement really happened -- what was written on the treaty agreement never happened. It has been 80 years since that happened and a lot of people talk about the event.

I spoke on that too -- Treaty 11, two of my great-grandfathers, Battieste and Nakekon, both of them, one is my paternal great-grandfather and one is my maternal great-grandfather. When I was growing up my parents told me about these people and about what occurred on the treaty.

Many years have passed since the treaties happened. I would like to speak longer on this issue. And they told me about what occurred on the treaty. So many years have passed since the treaties happened. I would like to speak longer on this issue. May I have unanimous consent to conclude my statement? (Translation ends)

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

HON. JIM ANTOINE: (Translation starts) Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. It has been 80 years since the treaty was issued, up to now. The aboriginal people have come a long ways. In those days people were not educated school-wise but today there are a lot of educated people. Many of them work with the government and the land claims. Many of them have their own businesses. We are also speaking of the pipeline now. The elders tell us that the land, the air and the water is very important and there are many resources on our land. They talk about the water and the fish and everything is important on our land. The water, the

air -- they want us to pursue protection of all these resources and the fish too.

In 1921 when what was said with the treaties, they want us to maintain that and to keep the word on what was said in the treaties. The elders really talked to us about maintaining all the agreement that was made in the treaty. We live on this land, we will continue to live on this land, we have no place else to go.

We think of our children, our grandchildren and we want things to be in place for them in the future so we have to maintain everything that was mentioned in the treaties. Thank you very much. (Translation ends)

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister responsible for Transportation, Mr. Steen.

ITEM 4: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Return to Question 42-14(4): Impact of Proposed Highway Truck Toll

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question asked by the Member for Yellowknife South on June 8, 2001. The Member asked me some questions about the detailed costs of the permit fees proposed under the Commercial Vehicle Trip Permit Act. I was unable to give him specific examples at the time and took the question as notice.

The following week, on June 14, 2001, I tabled an information package on the Highway Strategy and the Commercial Vehicle Trip Permit Act that included a map of the proposed public highway permit zones, the truck axle configurations and the zone to zone permit fees by truck type. The information package allows a person to work out the amount of the highway permit fee for any kind of truck carrying a load between any two points on the territorial public highway system.

Since the information package was tabled, I hope the Member has found it helpful in showing how the permitting system is intended to work and the amount of the permit fees applicable to the different communities in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Return to Question 83-14(4): Privatization of Laundry Services at Stanton Hospital

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to an Oral Question asked by Mr. Dent on Thursday, June 14, 2001, regarding the privatization of laundry services at Stanton Regional Hospital.

Representatives of the Stanton Regional Health Board met with representatives of the Union of Northern Workers on January 30, 2001. Consistent with section 38.02 of the collective agreement, the Union of Northern Workers was given notice by

the Stanton Regional Health Board that they were considering plans to contract out laundry services.

With respect to the rationale provided, the Union of Northern Workers was informed that for the fiscal year ending March 2000, the Stanton Regional Health Board had a deficit of approximately \$1.6 million. In an attempt to address this situation, the board had developed a proposed deficit recovery plan which outlined several initiatives aimed at decreasing operating costs without affecting service delivery to residents. One of those initiatives was the privatization of laundry services. The privatization of these services involved the elimination of four positions at the hospital.

Stanton did not receive any feedback from the UNW following the January 30, 2001 meeting. In an effort to ensure that the UNW has every opportunity to be part of this process, Stanton provided written notice of the intent to contract out laundry services on June 20, 2001.

Since that time, human resources staff at Stanton have been working with affected employees to ensure they are aware of and able to access all the options available to them under the staff retention policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the staff in my office, Stephen Dunbar, who is a summer student attending university but who is serving as my full-time constituency assistant. I would also like to recognize Ryan Chenkie, who is a grade 9 student at Sir John Franklin High School. They are both constituents of mine, and they are proving to be excellent staff in my office. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Welcome to the Assembly. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 105-14(4): Search for Missing Youth

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, in my statement I relayed the information I know of a missing boy at the Bosco Treatment Facility in Alberta. My question is for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services. What information can the Minister provide us now about the search for the missing boy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 105-14(4): Search for Missing Youth

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Member has already stated, he is aware that information regarding specific child welfare cases is strictly confidential so it would not be appropriate to respond to the

particulars of this case. However, it might be helpful to talk about the situation in somewhat more general terms.

Mr. Speaker, we concur that it is very worrisome when children run away from a treatment facility, and there is a process that is followed when something like this occurs. When children are admitted to southern treatment facilities they usually are displaying fairly serious behaviours. They are in the south because they need treatment that we do not have available here in the North.

We do have, as a department, contractual arrangements with three licensed provincial facilities and these facilities do specialize in more severe emotional and psychological problems. At any given time I can tell you that there are about 30 children who are in the south for various reasons, and in cases where children do run away from the facility, the RCMP, social worker and the family are informed as well as the legal guardian. That is the process that is followed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary to Question 105-14(4): Search for Missing Youth

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer and the information which the Minister can provide and I understand that there are some limitations. I would like the Minister to explain why the department and the family has not been involved any further with information and updates about the search.

I will grant that notice was, as I understand at least, given to the mother, but in the two days, no further information has been provided. This does not seem appropriate. Again, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain why the department and the family has not been involved with information about the search?

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

Further Return to Question 105-14(4): Search for Missing Youth

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is the standard practice that the department would be advised if there is a child who has run away from a facility, and they would also be regularly updated on the status of the attempts to return the child to the facility.

This is done both through the caseworker and the facility itself, in this case the Bosco facility. The caseworker would be involved in also informing the family of the status. Certainly, I have asked officials in my department to speak with the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board and the caseworker to be as accommodating to the parent as possible. If this has failed to occur, that is of concern to me and I want to assure the Member that we will ensure that the superintendent of child welfare follows up on this. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 105-14(4): Search for Missing Youth

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask in more general terms, what are the conditions of service that our government has with Bosco Homes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. It may require a long answer, but just bear in mind what I said yesterday, that long answers cut into the time allocated for question period. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Further Return to Question 105-14(4): Search for Missing Youth

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department currently has a contract with Alberta Bosco Homes for access to up to ten beds. There are assessment beds and also treatment beds. I would be pleased to provide the Member with an additional package of information on this resource which we use. I also want to assure the Member that the contract is reviewed and monitored regularly, including individual case audits and general site visits by both boards and staff from the department. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Final supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary to Question 105-14(4): Search for Missing Youth

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will look forward to receiving further information. In my final question, I would like to ask, in light of the distressing way that this case has been handled in terms of the information flowing back and forth, will the government be reviewing that contract with Bosco and taking steps to have these children removed and returned to the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 105-14(4): Search for Missing Youth

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since Member Braden has brought this concern to our attention, people within the department have agreed to undertake to check into the circumstances around some of the concerns that have been raised to determine the details so that we can be satisfied that this in fact is an appropriate placement. Thank you.

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

Question 106-14(4): Response to the Cuff Report Deadline

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, dealing with the Cuff report. The Cuff report is a very extensive document recommending sweeping changes to the health system of the Northwest Territories, recommending

taking away a certain amount of control from boards that are community and regionally based.

I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, has the deadline for responding to the Cuff report been changed to accommodate the time that has been required for individuals and organizations to go through it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 106-14(4): Response to the Cuff Report Deadline

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the deadline for responses to the Cuff recommendations has been extended. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 106-14(4): Response to the Cuff Report Deadline

MR. NITAH: Thank you. It is good to know that the deadline has been extended. I would like to know, when is the deadline now? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 106-14(4): Response to the Cuff Report Deadline

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the deadline is now August 15th. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 106-14(4): Response to the Cuff Report Deadline

MR. NITAH: Thank you. A very generous extension of two weeks, Mr. Speaker. Understanding that there are regional gatherings, national gatherings, territorial gatherings, whether they be political or cultural, I just explained that Lutsel'k'e First Nations are going on their spiritual gathering which is happening right now. There are other regional government organizations. Why is the deadline so stringent in these very busy times for people who are affected by this report? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 106-14(4): Response to the Cuff Report Deadline

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we felt that the consultation that took place prior to the recommendations being put forward by Mr. Cuff and associates was fairly extensive. We had also asked this firm to consider the fairly expansive amount of material which had

been previously collected through public consultation, through the Minister's Forum on Health and through the Med-Emerg report, so that they would not be starting from ground zero.

In addition to the 300 people who were interviewed by Mr. Cuff and his associates for this particular report, a lot of prior work in consultation was taken into consideration. Certainly we do not want to restrict people from having input. I believe we have heard back from at least four of the assemblies that have been scheduled over the summer that have already taken place, through motions and responses from them.

Other regions have contracted people to put together comprehensive responses for them. We have met with and heard from board chairs and CEOs. I think that the quality of feedback -- there have been community visits. I am planning to visit Fort Smith, I believe, on August 1st to meet with their board and community leaders. I think the quality and extent of post-report release has been fairly extensive. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 106-14(4): Response to the Cuff Report Deadline

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand that the consultation papers were just finalized as of Friday, from which two weeks is given to respond to that as well. Having 300 people consulted, as the Minister explained, were asking questions pertaining to the report, not the recommendations of the report. Three hundred people do not represent the 40,000 people living in the Northwest Territories.

I would suggest that more time is needed to respond to this. Will the Minister look at again extending the time that is required to submit people's response to this report? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 106-14(4): Response to the Cuff Report Deadline

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the report is entitled It's Time to Act, and I believe that, as I have already stated and I do not want to be repetitive, but there has been quite an extensive amount of consultation. Many of the 300 people who were consulted were representative of other larger groups. I would say that their comments would be representative of people that they would either be elected or appointed to speak on behalf of.

For example, Mr. Nitah raises the issue of MLAs. MLAs were interviewed by Mr. Cuff and his associates. I think it would be safe to say that MLAs would have a good understanding of health and social services issues in their regions. It actually was fairly good quality input. Thank you.

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

Question 107-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for Minister Steen, the Minister of Transportation, about tolls, taxes, those kinds of things. Specifically, the proposed highway truck toll and his response today. He indicated that the information package that he had developed would allow a person to work out the amount of the highway permit fee for any kind of truck carrying a load between any two points in the territorial public highway system.

This may in fact be the case, but I think what residents are interested in is a manner that they might be able to figure out what a certain pound of goods is going to cost them coming from the south and arriving at a certain destination, for instance, building materials coming from Edmonton and landing in Yellowknife. Unfortunately, the Minister could not tell us that because it entirely depends on what kind of truck they might arrive on.

Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the Minister can give us some sort of response as to why there is not some sort of ability to figure out, on a per pound basis, what kind of impact the toll will have. Thank you.

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

Return to Question 107-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Member indicated, there are different options that would be used and different types of configuration of a truck that could be used to bring in this pound of freight. So therefore, it would depend on what type of truck, what the actual configuration is. Based on that, then we would know what it would be per pound. I have no way of saying this unless there is a specific example given as to what type of truck is bringing in this pound of freight. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 107-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister not admit that is going to be a problem for a small business trying to estimate the impact of the toll on freight that they might be transporting? It really will depend on axle configuration and all these other kinds of things. When you are trying to make projections at the beginning of the year to determine what kind of impact this will have on your budget, this is a bit of a hurdle. Will the Minister acknowledge that? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 107-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from the start, the department has agreed that there are going to be some problems with the way people would attempt to figure what it would cost them to bring in the material. As the Member indicated, yes, there is going to be a hurdle for some people to try and estimate what it exactly is that they are

paying. However, we are assuming that because the trucking industry is going to be trying to maintain as much of a full load as possible, it would then stand to reason that they would go with the type of truck that would suit the load that they have.

I expect -- the department expects -- that there is going to be some amount of confusion, you might say, from the public's perspective of what exactly it is they are able to be. I think that we have already received concerns of that nature from the trucking industry by letter, and we are in the process of trying to respond to them and indicate to them as clearly as possible how the configuration affects the rate that the end user would be paying. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Bell.

Supplementary to Question 107-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did preface my question today by indicating that I wanted to discuss tolls and taxes with the Minister, so I hope you will allow me a little latitude. I am aware of a federal committee that has looked at gasoline taxes and specifically allocating these taxes to public transport and highways. I am wondering if our Minister has ever lobbied his Cabinet colleagues to do similarly, to try to get gasoline taxes put towards our road infrastructure, instead of opposing a commercial toll like this. Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 107-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no, since my term as Minister we have not used this approach. However, the Member might be interested to know that just recently we received the report from the Canadian Transport Review Committee and they basically have come forward with recommendations that toll systems be put in place. Based on similar things that we are doing now, such as distant kilometre and configuration of axles, rather than going with any other system, this is what they have come out with as a recommendation.

There are also recommendations, Mr. Speaker, that there be some system set up whereby the federal government would allow for expenditures of revenue collected under the fuel tax be directed to transportation facilities and infrastructure. In short, in my time we have not approached anyone with this but it has been done in the past.

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

Supplementary to Question 107-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of this commission's recommendations, I am wondering if the Minister will talk to his colleagues and specifically the Finance Minister to see if some manner of diverting gasoline taxes out of general revenues and specifically into highway infrastructure is something he will now look at going forward. Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 107-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the report and the recommendations suggest that the taxes generated by your portion of the highway would be directed back into your portion of the highway. We would not receive very much money, much revenue, based on that type of a taxation. There is the possibility that we would receive back whatever the portion was that was generated by the traffic on our highways, but in general it would be nowhere close to what we need or are obtaining in this manner. That is why, I believe, the Transport Review Board also suggested that there be a toll system put in place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for the Deh Cho, Mr. McLeod.

Question 108-14(4): Community Forest Fire Protection Plans

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise a question to the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development regarding an issue I have raised in the House before on the community fire protection plans. From the information I am getting, many communities are struggling as to what the process is and being able to put these plans in place and securing funds.

I would like to ask the Minister, since the funds were put in place for this program, I believe it was five or six years ago, how many communities have completed fire protection plans in the North? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 108-14(4): Community Forest Fire Protection Plans

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have to take that question as notice. I do not know how many have completed fire protection plans offhand. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The Minister has taken that question as notice. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Question 109-14(4): Special Needs Support and PTR Funding

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are addressed to the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment to follow up on my Member's statement on the case of special needs support in the schools.

I have been receiving numerous complaints and concerns brought to me by constituents that in fact it seems schools are being forced to cut back because of insufficient funds in the budget to deal with this very critical issue that affects all of our constituents, all of our communities, and all of our schools.

I would like to ask the Minister, is he confident and satisfied that the money that has been allocated, the \$4.5 million per year to address student needs and class size, is that in fact getting to where it is most needed? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 109-14(4): Special Needs Support and PTR Funding

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in hearing Mr. Miltenberger's comments. Naturally I am concerned when there are issues with regard to student needs. Early in our mandate, with the support and certainly the strong recommendations of Members, we increased the funding for support for the school system and we allocated for the PTR and student needs. We are tracking the PTR very, very closely because we can get instant figures on that.

In the area of student needs, which I think the Member is specifically concerned about, there were a number of recommendations made where the funding could be supported, and that was in trained classroom support staff, counsellors in the schools and direct support for students. There were a number of areas, about eight.

Our methodology, of course, is to provide funding, as the Member well knows, to the DEC's and in turn to the DEAs. I think I am quite satisfied, Mr. Speaker, with the fact that the DEC's are allocating according to those priorities. There may be specific instances perhaps where there needs to be some attention paid, but I think I am confident with the DEC's and the reports they get back to us that indicate some success, certainly in lowering the PTR and addressing some of the issues. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 109-14(4): Special Needs Support and PTR Funding

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I have is while the money that they are getting may be allocated properly, are they in fact getting enough money? My colleague, Mr. Bell, brought up in the prior sitting the fact that \$2.8 million of the \$4.5 million was not expended last year. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that all of the money that is necessary and is there, is not getting through to the classroom, to the teachers and to ensure that there is adequate special needs assistance.

Can the Minister assure me in this House that in fact every dime of that money is going to make its way into the classrooms where it can do the most good? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 109-14(4): Special Needs Support and PTR Funding

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are, on an ongoing basis, year by year, increasing the funding, as the

Member knows. We ensure that this money is directed to the PTR and special needs. We get budget reports in return from the school districts. I have my department now, as I am just receiving the budgets from all the DECs, ensuring that allocations are being done in the area that we set out. So from that perspective I say to the Member, yes, I am confident that it is going into those areas on my level to the DEC level. Then we need to ensure, of course, through accountability reports back to us that it is going into the classrooms. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 109-14(4): Special Needs Support and PTR Funding

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the second part of the question I would like to rephrase. Could the Minister also assure this House that, in fact, all the money that has been appropriated by this Legislature for schools, for special needs and class size, will in fact be expended in the classrooms and in the schools to the end that it was voted for in this House? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 109-14(4): Special Needs Support and PTR Funding

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have just received the budget reports from the DECs and that was the intent, and that is my desire that that money go into that area, Mr. Speaker. From the reports I get we will ensure that that is where it is going. That was the original intent and that is where it should be going. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 109-14(4): Special Needs Support and PTR Funding

MR. MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think there is a bit of a misunderstanding between the Minister and I, and maybe I am not being clear enough. My concern is, in fact, that the Minister and the department in Yellowknife have not allocated the money. The money that lapsed was not because the schools did not spend it, it was because the department never gave it to the schools to spend. I just want to ensure that there is full expenditure of all the funds that have been appropriated and voted on by this Assembly for special needs, for student support and for class size. Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 109-14(4): Special Needs Support and PTR Funding

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was my recollection that in the first year we allocated approximately \$4.3 million, which would include the PTR, students needs and forced growth. That money was expended. We did hand that out. Additionally, this year, we added on to

that. There was incremental funding, and the way it works was to ensure that we bring down the PTR from 18:1 to 16:1, and to increase the funding for special needs, student needs, from eight percent to 15 percent. That is taking place, so I am confident that the money that we intended to set out for this purpose is being allocated. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Colleagues, before we proceed on to the next question, I would like to use the Speaker's prerogative and recognize in the gallery a former elected Member of the Legislative Assembly representing the constituency of the Central Arctic at the time, Mr. Bill Lyall, and his wife, Jessie.

-- Applause

Welcome Mr. Lyall, Mrs. Lyall. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Question 110-14(4): Protection Against Family Violence

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services and follows up on my statement today on the need for the Northwest Territories to have an act similar to the Alberta Protection Against Family Violence Act.

Mr. Speaker, since making the commitment in March, has the Minister made herself aware of family violence legislation across Canada, particularly that found in Alberta?

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

Return to Question 110-14(4): Protection Against Family Violence

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have gathered the legislation from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Yukon, Manitoba and Ontario. We are right now in the process of reviewing this legislation to see how we might be able to draft something that would be suitable to the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 110-14(4): Protection Against Family Violence

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From that response, can I take it that the Minister does agree that the Northwest Territories should have similar legislation and that what they are doing now is deciding what is the best way to introduce it? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 110-14(4): Protection Against Family Violence

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I believe the Northwest Territories should have family violence legislation, and that is the purpose of our reviewing other

provinces and jurisdictions to see what might best be gained from the work that they have done, that we could in turn use in legislation. I also want to note that Lois Moorcroft, the former Cabinet Minister from the Yukon, did speak at the Social Agenda Conference, which was very informative, on ways to address family violence including options for legislation. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 110-14(4): Protection Against Family Violence

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very encouraged by the Minister's responses. Has the Minister, although it sounds like it is in the early days now, at least a tentative timetable for when she might be bringing this sort of legislation forward? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 110-14(4): Protection Against Family Violence

HON. JANE GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to seek to get such a timetable as to how quickly we could move on something like this from the department. I do not have that before me right now, but I will undertake to get it for the Member. Thank you.

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

Question 111-14(4): Gambling in Licensed Premises

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today goes to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with the review that the Minister is undertaking regarding gambling on licensed premises. Mr. Speaker, this issue had some public profile a couple of months ago because some of the licensed premises around town were barred from allowing raffle tickets to be sold at their premises. The Minister indicated in his letter to us that he had instructed his officials to review what options there might be to address this concern. My question to the Minister is, what exactly was the instruction that he gave to his officials with regard to this matter? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 111-14(4): Gambling in Licensed Premises

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a discrepancy between the lotteries regulations and the Liquor Act. The direction I have given to my department is to work with both Municipal and Community Affairs and the Department of Justice to give me some options on how we can resolve this discrepancy. The direction has been fairly general, but I have asked them to come forward with options for me. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 111-14(4): Gambling in Licensed Premises

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the information that he gave to the Members would suggest that he is looking for decision items by the fall because he is saying that he would like to consider the possibility of bringing forward a draft legislative proposal. The fall is not that far away, only a couple of months, and he has a busy agenda. I would think that he would have to have given them more specific instructions. May I ask the Minister whether or not the review process would involve any wider scope of consultation, including the businesses that are affected by this issue? 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 111-14(4): Gambling in Licensed Premises

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I expect that there will be consultation, particularly with the businesses who are affected by this, and any of the options that we choose to bring forward as legislative changes as quickly as we can. In my view, it is important that the premise operators have a say in this. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 111-14(4): Gambling in Licensed Premises

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's willingness to open the consultation process. Mr. Speaker, one of the options that he has stated in his communication with us is that the department will consider enforcing the provisions of the act, which I would think would have a detrimental impact on the premises all around the Territories, who need to do these raffle ticket sales to raise money. Would the Minister not agree that enforcing the provisions as they exist is not an option that he should consider? 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 111-14(4): Gambling in Licensed Premises

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, enforcing legislation is a responsibility I have as the Minister responsible for the Liquor Act. I am not going to eagerly pursue this, though, unless there are a large number of complaints about it or unless it appears to be getting out of hand.

My sense right now is that there are many premises that are offering meat raffles or various other ways of gambling, but that it is not a major issue in the Territories at this point. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 111-14(4): Gambling in Licensed Premises

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I think that raises serious legal and constitutional questions if a Minister of this government in any way chooses not to enforce a law on the books. I think it has to be clear that the laws have to be enforced. If there is something wrong with the law, then the law has to be changed. Would the Minister not agree that the law that exists, as enforced, is not in the interest of the public and that he should look into amending those laws? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Finance, Mr. Handley. I do not think it was an opinion she was asking, but it bordered pretty close to that. You may answer if you wish.

Further Return to Question 111-14(4): Gambling in Licensed Premises

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I think that is what I said. That is what I meant to say. Definitely, I have a responsibility to enforce legislation, but what I said is that I am not going to pursue that enforcement aggressively. At the same time, I have also directed the staff to come back to me with options on how we can overcome the discrepancies between the two pieces of legislation, the lotteries regulation and the legislation of the Liquor Act. We are pursuing both of those as quickly as we can, trying to do it in a responsible way, recognizing the needs of the premise operators and trying to deal with this responsibly and in a collaborative way with those who are affected. Thank you.

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

Question 112-14(4): Responsibility for Homeless People

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. Yesterday I asked him questions around the area of homelessness. Although the Premier identified Mr. Allen as the Minister responsible, there are indications that Education, Culture and Employment may in fact be ultimately responsible. I was wondering if the Minister could inform me and the House as to what the relationship is between victims of homelessness and Education, Culture and Employment and their responsibility? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 112-14(4): Responsibility for Homeless People

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the issue of the homeless individuals in Hay River, our department administers the income support side of the program, but we do not enter into the provision of housing. That is a responsibility of the Housing Corporation. They provide social housing. In the event that no housing is available, we provide income support for individuals to look for housing. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 112-14(4): Responsibility for Homeless People

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on the income support end of it, individuals who are evicted from public housing get income support in the form of \$32 a month. Could the Minister tell me what this \$32 a month is supposed to represent? What is that supposed to accomplish? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 112-14(4): Responsibility for Homeless People

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the \$32, I am not sure what it refers to because I am not familiar with this specific case. I suspect what that is, is the rent payable on social housing. These individuals no doubt would be qualified for income support. I am not sure what the reasons are that they are not on income support. There are no doubt some circumstances here as to why they are not on income support which, at this particular point, I do not know about. Normally, they would be provided with income support and housing allowance. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 112-14(4): Responsibility for Homeless People

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that these individuals, once evicted from public housing, are entitled to \$32 a month. That is all they get. I fail to see what that can accomplish. However, these residents have been evicted now for close to six months. I am wondering, at what point do these individuals become eligible for fair market value equivalency, as far as addressing shelter? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Speaker, I missed the last part of the question. I wonder if the Member could repeat the last part of the question. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Mr. Delorey, for the record, the last part of your question.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am referring to the program. I am under the understanding that after a certain period of time, individuals evicted from public housing become eligible for fair market value to address the homeless situation. I am wondering when that becomes effective. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 112-14(4): Responsibility for Homeless People

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not familiar with this specific case the Member is referring to, but normally, I believe that after two or three months, an individual would become eligible again for income support, providing that there were no outstanding debts. That is usually, in my experience, sometimes a difficulty, that individuals cannot come back on to income support because of debts owing, either to ourselves or to another government department. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 112-14(4): Responsibility for Homeless People

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the program for social assistance, social housing, income support through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, are the programs administered the same throughout the Territory, or are there different programs for different areas in the Territory? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 112-14(4): Responsibility for Homeless People

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, it is consistent, to the best of my understanding, throughout the Territory. The rules and regulations are applied in the same fashion throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

Question 113-14(4): Privatization of Petroleum Products Division

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Public Works and Services, regarding the petroleum revolving fund and the proposal that has been in place for some time to consider commercializing petroleum products. The bands in Fort McPherson, the Tetlit Gwich'in Band and the Tetlit Gwich'in Co-op have been working on a proposal for some time. They put that proposal to the government quite some months ago, in looking at the privatization of petroleum products in Fort McPherson, to sell, deliver and distribute fuel products in Fort McPherson. Tsiighehtchic has also considered it.

There has been a lot of time and effort put into developing these proposals, crunching their numbers and getting their proposals in to the department so they could have a fair chance of the possibility coming to light of delivering products in that community.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, through a letter I just received, it clearly states that the whole ambition of privatization, considering proposals from agencies within our communities to deliver fuel

products, has been put on the shelf until April 1, 2003. As a Member of this House, this is the first I have heard of it.

I would like to ask the Minister, exactly what is the chance of these organizations and groups who have submitted proposals seeing the light of day of having their proposals become reality and have the opportunity to take over petroleum products in our communities?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Public Works and Service, Mr. Steen.

Return to Question 113-14(4): Privatization of Petroleum Products Division

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was a decision of the government that we suspend any discussions on privatization with interested parties until 2003. This was based on the fact that there was some confusion as to how long the process would be going on before we could actually deal with the proposals. The department was still under a limit from FMB and Cabinet that we could not accept any of these proposals until the power review was over and done with, because there was a suggestion that power and fuel would be combined. We could not deal with any other proposals until that was decided. So everything was on hold, in a way.

Although we could accept proposals, we could not deal with them. To remove this cloud and allow people in the department some assurance that the system is going to remain as the status quo, including our employees, we decided to suspend any negotiations with proposals.

Now, in this particular one with Fort McPherson, Mr. Speaker, we did not see it as a problem with the Fort McPherson Band, because although they were in my office some time in March and did indicate that they had an agreement with the co-op to take on the fuel oil services in McPherson, they followed with a letter to us in April saying that negotiations with the co-op had broken off, so therefore there was no longer a proposal. We did not see it as interfering with anything that was ongoing at the time. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 113-14(4): Privatization of Petroleum Products Division

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the whole idea of privatization and the policies of this government are still there. Just because an initiative comes along we change our minds and say "Well, the rules do not apply." Rules that are already on the books and exist regarding the submission of proposals to look at privatization and negotiated contracts. It seems like this government changes the rules every time you have a report come out.

I would like to ask the Minister exactly when will the final decision be made on the consideration of the power review to see if the possibility of privatization of fuel products to the private sector is on, or is it totally in the whim of the Power Corporation to now take over all fuel delivery and power

distribution in our communities? Has that decision been made, and when will it be made?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Public Works and Service, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 113-14(4): Privatization of Petroleum Products Division

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the letter that the Member is referring to indicates, it states, "it was the further decision and no commercialization of the Petroleum Product Revolving Fund will be considered prior to April 1, 2003." Mr. Speaker, my department does not deal with the power review. What we have done in responding to wishes of Cabinet and FMB is that we have suspended any discussions on privatization from this point on until April 1, 2003.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 113-14(4): Privatization of Petroleum Products Division

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, a lot of corporations and companies in the small communities who depend on these types of opportunities have put a lot of work and effort into developing their proposals and getting them in as part of their business plans. A lot of them depend on this type of business to maintain their business.

We are now competing against the private sector in a lot of small communities. Again, I would like to ask the Minister, what are you doing to ensure that these companies that are now hanging out there as to where they are going to go with their businesses and find themselves having to declare bankruptcy because of some decision that this government made without even consulting them or even myself as Member? This is the first I have heard of it, yet it is something I have been working on since the 13th Assembly.

I would like to ask the Minister again, exactly what are you doing to compensate or assist those people who have made the effort to put these proposals in, the time and effort that has been spent putting a lot of dollars into developing these proposals? Will you consider compensating those people who have submitted proposals?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Public Works and Service, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 113-14(4): Privatization of Petroleum Products Division

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department did refer in the letter that we are fully aware of the costs associated with developing these proposals. We also have indications from some of the groups that they would not go any further towards developing proposals unless there was some assurance that NTPC was out of the picture. We could not give them that assurance.

Therefore, we assumed that we were not going to get any more proposals from these people, so there were no more

associated costs. However, at the same time we are aware that we received a number of different proposals, for instance from McPherson. At one point Gruben's Transport put a proposal to supply POL to Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic. This was supported by the groups. The next thing we know, the support is withdrawn.

These types of changes have been going on and on. At one point the band itself was going to take it on and support was withdrawn for that as well. So there have been so many changes that we had nothing to do with. It was simply local politics that decided it. I am in no position to guarantee any way of refunding these people for the costs associated with their proposals. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Final supplementary, Mr. Krutko.

Supplementary to Question 113-14(4): Privatization of Petroleum Products Division

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister state outright in plain English, are there no more negotiations for privatization of POL to the private sector at this time?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Public Works and Service, Mr. Steen.

Further Return to Question 113-14(4): Privatization of Petroleum Products Division

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is what the letter indicated. Thank you.

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

Question 114-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question to the Minister of Transportation, and it follows up on the question asked by Mr. Bell earlier today. I believe in one of the responses to Mr. Bell I heard the Minister say that he believed that industry would go with the truck that would best suit the load.

Mr. Speaker, that seems to assume that trucking firms have trucks of all sorts sitting around. I can assure the Minister that at \$160,000 a crack, that is not the case. I have been assured of that by members of the trucking industry. I think it is very important that members of the public know what it is going to cost to transport goods to their community.

I would like to then ask the Minister, why can we not use weight to determine the amount of toll that is paid on a vehicle? Why, rather than axles, do we not just weigh the vehicles at the weigh scales when they come into the Territories and calculate the tolls based on the weight of the vehicles? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 114-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my department advised me that originally we did consider weight as a way of measurement. It was based roughly on five cents per kilometre per tonne. It still is based on that, but we arrive at it in a different manner. In order to administer this fee, the cheapest way to do it is through the configuration of the axles on the trailers. I am not suggesting that -- and I suppose it could be interpreted -- when I say truck, I mean the whole vehicle. In fact, we are just referring to the trailer, the configuration of the axles on the trailer. It is left up to the trucking firm to decide what type of trailer would best suit the load.

I realize there is a suggestion that we could have used weigh scales and we did put that to the test. We did discuss that. I believe the department went out and obtained information that this was not the best way to do it. The most practical way to do it is by configuration of the axles.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. Supplementary, Mr. Dent.

Supplementary to Question 114-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have heard from representatives of the trucking industry who say that they have trailers with triple axles because many of the loads they are required to carry require that configuration. They often ship those trailers up north with far less than what the maximum load in that trailer would be, simply because it is way cheaper to maintain one trailer than to have two different types of trailers to pull behind the same rig.

He still has not answered the question. Can the Minister tell us how much extra would it cost in administration to weigh each truck and use the actual weight for the tolls?

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

Further Return to Question 114-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question the Member has and I do not have the information at hand to compare one versus the other. I will assure the Member I will get that information to him.

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

Supplementary to Question 114-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's offer to get that. One other problem that we have is that during many times of the year we have reduced weight limits because of ice crossings. We are often, again, faced with situations where trucks are coming up only partly full because of those weight restrictions.

Will the Minister tell me how he would plan to address that problem with trucking firms, which we may have for two or three months that the reduced weight limits are on?

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

Further Return to Question 114-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not think the department, at this time, has the final plan in place as to exactly how we are going to do this. What we do is we put out this information package to the trucking companies, to the general public, and we are open to suggestions and changes to the initial plan, if you may, that would best suit the public and obtain what we are trying to accomplish here.

There is room for change if, in fact, there is going to have to be some formal way of recognizing the reduced weights at certain times of the year. We are going to have to take that into consideration. That is the type of stuff we are open to suggestions on.

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

Supplementary to Question 114-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know the trucking industry is also concerned about the minimum loads. They feel we should not be encouraging numerous smaller trucks to get on the highway to compete with them. Is that another area that the Minister will consider in this period of consultation? Will he consider saying that all commercial loads will pay a toll on our highways?

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

Further Return to Question 114-14(4): Highway Toll Calculations

HON. VINCE STEEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the department will consider all proposals and all suggestions. Thank you.

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

Question 115-14(4): Recent Increases to Income Support

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. It relates to the announcement that was made on June 18, just after our last session, regarding increases to income assistance benefits, some \$1.2 million in new benefits. That is certainly welcome news, Mr. Speaker.

The question I have for the Minister is, will the Minister table the details of that most recent review, which was announced on June 18th? 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 115-14(4): Recent Increases to Income Support

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that was an internal review, but I would be most pleased to table that particular report.

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

Supplementary to Question 115-14(4): Recent Increases to Income Support

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much for that reply. I was wondering, in the review process, is there some regular review mechanism which will be undertaken to look at costs and allowances as they change, so that changes can be implemented as market conditions prevail? 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 115-14(4): Recent Increases to Income Support

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is correct. We did put in some significant money again in this particular program to ensure that we improve the ability of those on income support to sustain themselves. I believe it was a good move on our part to do that at this particular time. I have also previously indicated that we are moving more towards an annual review of this situation. I am not sure that we are going to have an intensive documented review as much as a review to look at the food scales in the communities and so forth, because that was the area we increased.

I recently met with the NGOs here in Yellowknife who expressed some concern to me about areas that they felt could be looked at, and we formed an informal committee, I suppose, to ensure that we are informed as a department on the specific issues that are popping up from time to time, so that we get some feedback. That particular informal committee will continue to meet on a consistent basis. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 115-14(4): Recent Increases to Income Support

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is welcome news that the department and organizations representing these clients and these people are working more and better together. My final question is the rather troublesome area of clawbacks. I wanted to ask the Minister what the status is today of clawbacks of GST rebates and of impact and benefit payments that are made to First Nations recipients? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. It sounded like there was more than one question but, Mr. Ootes, you may answer that.

Further Return to Question 115-14(4): Recent Increases to Income Support

HON. JAKE OOTES: Mr. Speaker, can I choose which one I wish to answer? I will answer both. Mr. Speaker, the issue of impact benefit agreements, as we all know, was previously raised. I have met with representatives with the Dogrib First Nation to discuss this matter and we are in ongoing discussions on this matter.

With regard to the GST rebate, Mr. Speaker, we are not clawing that back.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes, and that was the final answer. 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 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS**Tabled Document 36-14(4): Report of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner in the Matter of Allegations Against the Member for Hay River South**

In accordance with section 102 of part III of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wish to table the Report of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner in the Matter of Allegations Against the Member for Hay River South, filed by Jack Rowe under section 100 of the act.

Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Antoine.

Tabled Document 37-14(4): Federal Court of Appeal Ruling

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Federal Court of Appeal Ruling. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to proceed with Motion 9-14(4), on extended adjournment, that I gave notice of yesterday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with Motion 9-14(4). Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may proceed, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 16: MOTIONS**Motion 9-14(4): Extended Adjournment of the House to October 23, 2001**

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that notwithstanding Rule 4, that when this House adjourns on

Wednesday, July 25, 2001, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, October 23, 2001;

AND FURTHER, that at any time prior to October 23, 2001, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and there upon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned to that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that the motion be amended by replacing the date of Wednesday, July 25, 2001, with Tuesday, July 24, 2001.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion to amend. Question has been called. All those in favour? Thank you. All those opposed? The motion is carried. To the motion as amended. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? The motion, as amended, has been carried. Item 16, motions. 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: Ministers' Statements 1, 3, 4 and Bill 2, with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Welcome to the committee of the whole. We have several items to deal with: Minister's Statement 1-14(4), Minister's Statement 3-14(4), Minister's Statement 4-14(4), and Bill 2. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Mr. Chairman, I would like to propose that we consider Bill 2.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Agreed, so with that we will take a short break and resume with Bill 2.

-- Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would like to call the committee back to order. We are in committee of the whole, dealing with Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. At this time, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for introducing the bill if he has any opening comments.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill 2 is an Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. It proposes to increase the NWT cost of living tax credit from its current levels, effective the 2001 tax year.

The cost of living tax credit was introduced as part of the NWT Personal Income Tax System in 1993. The credit is based on individual net income and the maximum refundable credit available is \$645.

Bill 2 would increase the credit at all income levels, with the maximum credit rising to \$822. On average, the credit will increase by about 27 percent. We estimate this change will reduce NWT residents' income taxes by \$2.7 million in 2001.

This bill will provide NWT residents with some relief from rising costs. As I noted in the House last month, inflation here has been slightly lower than the national rate over the last few years. According to Statistics Canada, since 1992, the consumer price index increased 13.5 percent in Canada, compared to 11.2 percent in Yellowknife, the only NWT community where Statistics Canada measures price changes.

However, we know that the cost of many services and commodities are increasing. We also know that there will be further pressure on costs from initiatives, such as the proposed commercial vehicle permit fee. Members have expressed a number of concerns about the bill, asking, for example, how many residents would not have access to the credit because they do not file tax returns?

As we advised the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development, in 1999, the number of NWT tax filers and dependant spouses over 18 years of age actually exceed the estimated population over 18. This somewhat puzzling statistic results from the fact that the two numbers are based on different definitions of resident. Nonetheless, this provides compelling evidence that the vast majority of NWT residents file income tax returns?

Members have also expressed concern about the impact of the bill on low-income residents. The revised credit is based on the structure of the current credit, which is tied to income levels. However, the credit is based on a sliding scale, which means that lower income filers are eligible for a larger credit as a proportion of income than are higher income filers.

We should also recognize that this credit is by no means the only vehicle this government has in place to assist low-income families and individuals. The Government of the Northwest Territories provides social housing programs, income support, day care subsidies, fuel subsidies, and the NWT child benefit, to name just a few.

In fact, last month, the Honourable Jake Ootes, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, announced that income assistance benefits would increase by \$1.2 million this year. On average, the amount of money available to income support recipients for food will increase by 7.8 percent.

I fully support Members' concerns that we should be addressing the needs of low-income residents. However, there are many avenues for doing this. Furthermore, this credit is only one part of the NWT income tax system. This bill represents an effort by this government to implement, in a quick and administratively straightforward manner, a measure that will address some cost of living issues for NWT residents.

Broader issues must be addressed through a more thorough review of the income tax system, one that looks at rates and brackets as well as tax credits.

I will be bringing forward proposals for change once I have had an opportunity to review the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Personal Income Taxation. I have also committed to reviewing these recommendations with Members before developing proposals for change.

If Bill 2 is passed by the end of July, NWT residents will see this tax relief reflected in the 2001 income tax returns they file next spring. As Members are aware, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, which administers the NWT personal income tax on our behalf, requires final notice of any tax change affecting the 2001 tax year by August at the latest.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer questions from committee members. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Handley. At this time, I would like to ask the chair of the standing committee that reviewed this bill if he has any opening comments. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development conducted a public review of Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, on July 13, 2001. The committee would like to thank the Minister of Finance and his officials for presenting the bill. The bill would amend subsection 4.1(2) by increasing the cost of living tax credit from:

- 1.25 percent to 1.60 percent of an individual's net income, if the individual's net income does not exceed \$12,000;
- \$150 plus one percent to \$192 plus 1.25 percent of the amount by which the individual's net income exceeds \$12,000, if the individual's net income exceeds \$12,000 but does not exceed \$48,000;
- \$510 plus 0.75 percent to \$642 plus one percent of the amount by which the individual's net income exceeds \$48,000, if the individual's net income exceeds \$48,000, but does not exceed \$66,000; and
- \$645 to \$822 where the individual's net income exceeds \$66,000.

These proposed amendments would be effective for the 2001 and subsequent tax years.

The committee noted that the benefit to individuals in all three income levels varies only slightly between 26 percent and 28 percent. Under the current and proposed cost of living tax credit systems, it initially appears that no one group benefits significantly better or worse than persons of a different group on a percentage basis. Members were concerned that the proposed amendments would continue to favour high income earners as, in dollar terms, higher income earners will be entitled to receive a larger cost of living tax credit, albeit at a diminishing rate. The committee noted that this inequity is especially apparent when one considers that increased costs for a basic basket of essential goods affects lower income earners more as it requires a greater percentage of their income than higher income earners.

In addition, families receive no additional benefit under the current or proposed cost of living tax credit systems. The cost of living tax credit is determined solely on an individual's net income.

Furthermore, there is no additional credit for a married couple with one income earner, or a married couple with children with one income earner. Members found that families with two income earners will receive a combined cost of living tax credit which is the same as a family with one income earner, assuming the same level of net income for both families, provided that the combined net income of each family does not exceed the high income threshold of \$66,000.

The committee was also concerned that the proposed amendments would continue to favour dual-income families. Committee members discovered that an anomaly occurs when the combined net income of the family does exceed \$66,000. It is then possible that the two-income family could receive a larger combined cost of living tax credit than the one-income earner family, who would be capped once income reached \$66,000.

After initial discussions with the Minister and his staff, the committee invited input from the public. Ms. Barbara Hood, speaking as a private individual, who also serves as the executive director of the Northwest Territories Seniors' Society, agreed with a suggestion that a \$20,000 lower income threshold be established and requested that an additional one-time payment of \$250 be given to the people in that bracket. This would more equitably assist pensioners, the unemployed and other low-income earners.

However, the Minister replied that there is not enough time to consider the changes for the 2001 tax year as the proposal by the Northwest Territories Seniors' Society and the committee would have to be:

- considered by the Financial Management Board,
- redrafted by the Department of Justice, and
- meet the August deadline established by the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency for changes for the 2001 tax year.

The Minister further stated that the proposed change would entail additional costs for the government and added that he would submit this suggestion to the government's Advisory Committee on Personal Income Taxation for further consideration.

A member responded that "... this government snapped its fingers and in less than a week passed a \$57,000,000 supplementary appropriation, so you cannot tell me there is no money within the budget, or you are not able to do this ... if this government is serious about improving the lives of the people of the Northwest Territories, this is our opportunity to do it."

The committee gave notice that when consideration of the bill proceeds in the committee of the whole, it will introduce a motion requesting the Minister to explore fiscal options to improve the standard of living for fixed: low-income or no-income individuals and families.

Mr. Chairman, after extensive deliberation and in recognition of the short time left to incorporate this tax credit for the 2001 tax year, a motion was carried by a majority of members to report Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, to the Assembly as ready for the committee of the whole. Additional comments or questions by Members may be posed as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Roland. At this time I would like to ask the Minister if he will be bringing in any witnesses.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes I will, Mr. Chairman.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Sergeant-at-Arms, can you escort the witnesses in.

Mr. Minister, please introduce your witnesses for the record.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, with me are Margaret Melhorn, deputy minister of Finance and John Munroe, director of fiscal policy for the Department of Finance. Thank you,

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome witnesses. General comments on the bill. Mr. Nitah.

Committee Motion 19-14(4): To Provide Options and Recommendations That Address the Impacts of the High Cost of Living on Low-Income Northerners

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman,

I MOVE that this committee recommends that the Minister of Finance address the impact of the cost of living upon seniors, the disabled and other Northerners in the fixed-low and no-income brackets.

AND FURTHER, that the Minister of Finance provide a list of options and recommendations to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight on how this tax credit and other fiscal programs can be better used to improve the living standards of Northerners.

AND FURTHERMORE, this committee requests that the Minister of Finance consider implementing the appropriate measures that could be undertaken to improve living standards for Northerners in the 2002 and subsequent tax years. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah, are you making a motion?

MR. NITAH: Yes I am, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Mr. Nitah, your motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to speak in favour of this motion. I commend the committee for bringing this forward. I know that I was somewhat concerned when I first heard about this bill because I did not see enough of an impact on the low-income wage earners. I certainly do want to see an improvement in that for future years. It is only on the expectation that we will see that, that I can support this bill moving forward.

I think just to illustrate the reason for my concern, in looking at a chart that was prepared by an accounting firm to assess the additional benefit that we would see with the implementation of this over what the existing cost of living tax credit would be, someone with a taxable income of \$40,000 for instance, would

see in the area of \$112 per year. Whereas someone with a taxable income of \$66,000 would see an extra \$177 per year.

My concern, Mr. Chairman, and the Minister has mentioned things like the highway tolls in his opening comments, not only have we seen the cost of living go up -- it may not have been significant since we brought in the cost of living tax credit, but what this government has instituted in this year -- the increased cost of landing fees at airports, what we are talking about with highway tolls and so on. The highway tolls alone will, I understand, cost the average family in the area of \$150 to \$200 per year, that is the expectation.

Well, my concern is if you have someone who is a single wage earner earning \$50,000 per year and has a family of three or four, they are only going to see that \$112, so they are only going to get back just a portion of what this government has driven up the cost in this year alone. If you have a two income family, there may be the same number of people in the family, their costs for essentials are going to be driven up, whether it is by air transport or the highway tolls, by the same amount, and yet they are not going to get a similar amount back. That is the problem I see with tying this to income.

A family of three, for instance, now with two wage earners both earning incomes greater than \$66,000 per year will see an extra \$354 per year in credit. That single-wage earner, with the same size family, would only get \$112. That, I think, is inequitable. I am hoping the Minister will find a way to respond to this motion and come forward with something that will bring more equity to our system of tax credits. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Dent. To the motion. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too will speak in favour of the motion. I think, as Mr. Dent stated, there needs to be more done for those in the lower income brackets. In fact, one-third of those who filed income tax, it has been shown they fall under the \$20,000 mark. So one-third of those who filed their tax forms receive less than \$20,000 income.

Mr. Chairman, with this motion I can see this proceeding, because otherwise, initially when looking at this I did speak to Minister Handley on the issue of doing a possible amendment to this bill as it came forward in the area of trying to deal with those in the low-income brackets.

As we have heard, we know someone on low income versus someone with a higher income, buying your basic goods uses all available dollars. You do not have extra dollars to buy some of the luxuries available to us. Seeing that this motion is a go and the Minister will hopefully act on it and come forward with something for the 2002 taxation year, then we can see some more substantive changes as the Minister stated to the committee in the public hearing, that he would be willing to work with Members of this Assembly to look at some changes and incorporate the tax advisory committee.

I think that is important that we do this. In fact, by doing this, we can have something we can measure by some movement by and commitment on what has been stated. I look forward to seeing something come further of this, and look forward to working with the Minister as he has committed to doing. With that, Mr. Chairman, I would support this motion, on the basis

that we will have some more substantive change in further tax years. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Roland. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those against? The motion is carried. Are there any further general comments? Detail? We are on tab 2, page 1, clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 2.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 3.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Bill as a whole?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that Bill 2 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Bill 2 is now ready for third reading. I would like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. On the order paper, we have three Minister's statements, Minister's Statement 1-14(4), Minister's Statement 3-14(4), Minister's Statement 4-14(4). What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Mr. Chairman, I move we report progress.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those against? The motion is carried. I will rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will now come back to order. Item 20, report of the committee of the whole. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

ITEM 20: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, and would like to report progress with one motion being adopted. Bill 2 is ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move the report of the committee of the whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Hay River South seconds the motion. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Item 21, third reading of bills. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to proceed with third reading of Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member is seeking consent to proceed with third reading of Bill 2. Are there any nays? There are no nays, Mr. Handley, you may proceed.

ITEM 21: THIRD READING OF BILLS

Bill 2: An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Bill 2 has had third reading. Item 21, third reading of bills.

Before we go to orders of the day, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our pages, who have taken the summer off here to come and serve, and serve well they did. We have: Carolyn Crouch, Corey Paquin, Louise Tumchewics, Chris Fournier, Jamie Jacobs, Adam Follett, Jamie Imrie and Duncan Hamre. I would like to say on behalf of the Members, thank you very much for the service to us.

-- Applause

We will not see each other for a little while, so all of you have the best of the remaining summer and have a safe summer. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

ITEM 22: ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Speaker, meetings for tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, and at 10:00 a.m. of the Special Committee on Official Languages.

Orders of the day for Tuesday, October 23, 2001:

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

11. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 14, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2001-2002
18. Second Reading of Bills
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 1-14(4): Sessional Statement
 - Minister's Statement 3-14(4): Fiscal and Economic Update
 - Minister's Statement 4-14(4): Update on the Social Agenda
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, October 23, 2001, at 1:30 p.m.

-- ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:19 p.m.