



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

5th Session

Day 36

14th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, October 30, 2002

Pages 1275 – 1322

The Honourable Tony Whitford, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, October 30, 2002****Members Present**

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

ITEM 1: PRAYER

-- Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Whitford): Thank you, Mr. Ootes. We have a full day ahead of us. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS**Minister's Statement 84-14(5): Establishment of an Executive Director Position Beaufort-Delta Region**

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is a committed partner along with the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in and Canada in the creation of a new regional government in the Beaufort-Delta. In partnership with Canada and the people of the Beaufort-Delta, we are making steady and measurable progress towards finalizing an Agreement-in-Principle, which we expect to be signed later this year.

For some time, the Beaufort-Delta Interim Regional Council, a body consisting of all regional and community governments in that region, have requested the establishment of a senior level position within the region that will coordinate and focus the GNWT's work in the region and in planning and preparation for the implementation of self-government. Similar requests have also been received directly from the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and one of the MLAs from the region.

Last winter, while attending the Beaufort-Delta Interim Regional Council meeting in Inuvik, I made a commitment that the GNWT would consider a request for such a position after a review of its present operational structure in the region. The Interim Regional Council subsequently passed a resolution at that meeting formally requesting such a position and their involvement in the establishment and recruitment processes.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that I have met twice with GNWT senior managers in Inuvik to seek their advice and suggestions on the establishment of a senior GNWT official in Inuvik, responsible for coordinating and planning at the regional level.

Over the course of the summer, GNWT regional managers and officials from the Beaufort-Delta Interim Regional Council office met to discuss this issue. Both groups supported the creation of such a position, which they saw to be an important bridge in continuing the dialogue and building trust amongst all governments in the region.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories intends to establish an executive director position in the Beaufort-Delta, as a pilot project for a one-year term. At the

end of the pilot period, we will undertake an evaluation of the position. Based on the results of that evaluation, we will consider establishing similar positions in other regions of the territory.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with our commitment to work in partnerships with governments in the Beaufort-Delta region, officials from our government will work with the Beaufort-Delta Interim Regional Office on all aspects of the hiring process for this position, including a joint interview and selection process. The executive director position will be a senior management position within the Department of the Executive and will report directly to the secretary to Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I expect the executive director position to be a valuable resource to both the GNWT and the Beaufort-Delta to carry out the government and the region's priorities and direction and in the planning and preparation for new governance structures in that region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Ootes.

Minister's Statement 85-14(5): Income Assistance Program

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here in the NWT, we continue to work hard to ensure that our Income Assistance Program meets the needs of low-income NWT residents. Through regular program reviews, we demonstrate our willingness and commitment to ensure that we have the best program in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as evidence of this commitment, we have raised benefit levels on several occasions over the past several years to address public concerns about the effects of inflation on benefit levels and the adequacy of the support that we provide. We have made strategic investments in our food, clothing, shelter and utility benefits. And we have done so for persons with disabilities, for seniors and for families. Through these investments and the program's focus on helping people make productive choices in their lives, we demonstrate our willingness and desire to help people move from a life of dependence to one of self-reliance.

Over the next several months, Mr. Speaker, the department is once again planning to assess the food benefit that it provides, which includes a personal care allowance for program participants. We are also working closely with Members of this House on changing the way in which we treat the various types of income that our clients receive.

Mr. Speaker, while we have made great strides in terms of benefit levels and on the appropriate treatment of income, one of the greatest challenges that we continue to face is in

ensuring that low-income families receive services in a coordinated manner from this government.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, staff from the departments of Education, Culture and Employment, Health and Social Services, Justice and the NWT Housing Corporation have been working on ways to improve the service that they provide to their mutual clients. The department continues to work cooperatively on initiatives with other government departments. These initiatives involve improving the ways in which we provide programs and services to our seniors, to persons with disabilities and to the homeless.

Mr. Speaker, because of our willingness and commitment to improve the benefits and service that we provide, we have developed a program that has had considerable success in helping people move from a life of dependence to one of self-reliance. The number of people requiring income assistance has fallen by almost 40 percent in recent years, and our employment rate has risen to over 73 percent. Our unemployment rate stands at 6.2 percent -- the best in the country.

Mr. Speaker, despite this success, I recognize that much still needs to be done, especially in our smaller communities. We need to provide better support and work more closely with the community organizations that provide an invaluable service to our people. We need to continue our efforts on helping people move toward a life of independence.

Our program clients, our advocacy organizations, our community partners, and Members of this House share in the success I speak about here today. It is through their input and yours that we have, and will continue to have, the best Income Assistance Program in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Minister's Statement 86-14(5): GNWT Response to the Social Agenda Report

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in June of this year, we had the pleasure of advising this House that the Social Agenda Working Group had completed its report entitled Social Agenda: A Draft for the People of the NWT. Minister Miltenberger, who leads the implementation of the Social Agenda for the government, informed the House that the GNWT would be developing a detailed response to the report of the Social Agenda Working Group.

I am pleased today to advise the Members of the Legislative Assembly that the GNWT has completed this response, entitled Doing our Part: The GNWT's Response to the Social Agenda, which will be tabled later today by the Minister of Health and Social Services. In leading the government-wide initiative to implement the GNWT's response to the social agenda, Minister Miltenberger will be working with all Cabinet Ministers in co-operation with our partner agencies and organizations.

Mr. Speaker, when members of the Social Agenda Working Group held their conference in Hay River in June, 2001, we

formed a partnership and committed to work together to improve the social conditions in which Northerners live. Members of the working group, which includes the GNWT, represent a broad cross-section of aboriginal, public government, and non-government agencies working to meet the needs of those people in our communities who are most in need of support. Improving the lives of Northerners is a cornerstone of this Legislative Assembly's agenda, and so this government continues to strongly support the efforts of the Social Agenda Working Group.

There are some common themes running through the ten recommendations contained in the report of the Social Agenda Working Group. These range from recognizing that governments, social agencies and organizations must fundamentally change the way in which we work together, to trusting community leaders to know best how to affect change in their own home communities.

We all have a personal responsibility to make healthy lifestyle choices. Government can contribute by removing barriers so that communities can better plan and set their own priorities. We understand that doing our part requires system wide changes and, in that vein, we have identified a series of actions -- concrete things that this government can do, within a number of departments, to make changes in areas that fall under our jurisdiction.

Our response is, therefore, aimed at identifying the steps that this government will take in response to the recommendations directed towards us in the social agenda report, to contribute to positive social change for the benefit of all residents of the Northwest Territories.

While we cannot do it all, nor cannot do it alone, we are prepared to make meaningful change in the way the GNWT does business. The Government of the Northwest Territories has a responsibility to work, in cooperation with our social agenda partners, so that we can overcome barriers and make improvements to the system recommended by those who know it best.

The Social Agenda Working Group came together out of a recognition that we can achieve a far greater impact on improving social conditions by working collectively than we can by working in isolation of one another. The response to the social agenda that we are presenting today signals the GNWT's commitment to continue the partnership started in Hay River. Mahsi cho.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement on Attendance at Kyoto Protocol Meetings

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to my absence from the House on Monday and Tuesday of this week, especially to the outcome of the non-confidence vote based on the committee recommendations of the Premier, Mr. Speaker.

Late Friday afternoon I received a call from Minister Antoine, requesting my assistance. That he knew my position on the committee recommendation and he had his own position of support. We agreed that the Kyoto agreement is a very important issue to Canada and the people of the Northwest Territories.

In the spirit of consensus government and responsible government, I agreed to accompany Mr. Antoine to attend the Energy and Environment Ministers on the Kyoto Accord in Halifax, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I sent out a press release supporting the committee recommendation and reiterating that my confidence in the Premier was shaken to the core and I stand by that position today. The outcome of the vote gives me concern on how this government looks to the people of the Northwest Territories and Canada. That position has not changed, Mr. Speaker. If I was here, Mr. Speaker, the vote would have been 11 to six and the Minister would not have participated in the Kyoto Conference and our position would not have been represented in Halifax towards the finalization of the Kyoto accord, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to listen to some of the debate. It gives me great concern that Cabinet would vote as a bloc on such an important issue. Members on this side of the House voted...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Nitah, I am going to have to stop you here and caution you with a Member's statement dealing with an issue that has already been dealt with in the House here. You are bordering on debate, which you would have had if you were here at that time, which you were not.

If you wish to continue your Member's statement, perhaps explaining as you began to your constituents, where you were and what you were doing. Mr. Nitah, you may continue if you wish, but only on that topic.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the House. Mr. Speaker, our participation at the Kyoto conference was well-received by our provincial colleagues and by Minister Dhaliwal and Minister Anderson. It has given me an opportunity to see how our government represents the interests of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Antoine was received with dignity and respect and genuine friendship.

Therefore I would argue that our participation at the national level is well-represented by Minister Antoine. We have got assurances from the Minister of the Environment and Minister Dhaliwal that the Kyoto accord would not adversely affect our work towards building a pipeline down the Mackenzie, which was a very good reassurance.

However, Mr. Speaker, I did not get any comfort in how Kyoto would affect individuals who gas up at the pump and so on. I imagine, Mr. Speaker, we will be debating...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Your time is up for your Member's statement. Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: 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. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I understand we will debate our position on the Kyoto Accord tomorrow and I will elaborate further on that. I understand that we will be debating a motion later on tonight and today I will be speaking on my other issues at that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement on Tribute to Wilma Finlayson

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand in celebration and remembrance of a great citizen of Yellowknife, Wilma Finlayson. A familiar, hard working and rock solid member of this city's business community left us on September 13th, Mr. Speaker, after a brief but final bout of illness due to cancer.

In remembering Wilma, I think the word pioneer comes to mind. She and her husband Doug came to Yellowknife in 1951, migrating north from that other far flung northern outpost at the time, Fort McMurray. They came with their two-year-old daughter Susan to take up the opportunity to buy into the then fledgling Sutherland Drug Store. A few short months later their son arrived.

In the years that followed the Finlaysons established the (inaudible) and their business as a reliable, welcoming and caring part of this community. Friends will recall Wilma's ready smile, sincere laughter and her sense of giving. The business could always be relied on, Mr. Speaker, to have your fundraising raffles, your dance tickets, or donation jar always at their counter.

If you go into that store today, the thank you notes on their bulletin board will be a testimony to the groups and individuals that they have helped.

With the sudden death of Doug in 1975, Wilma carried on with new business partners, and that included the operation of one of the first sport fishing lodges on Great Slave Lake, still running today. We know that as Trophy Lodge, Mr. Speaker. Friends say that this is where Wilma really shone. She was a natural hostess with a rare gift for making you feel welcome and for making you feel like you were the most important person in her life, whatever your story or your situation.

She was a prairie girl, one of 15 children on a farm near **Sully**, Saskatchewan, and those prairie values stayed with her, especially her passion for curling and the success of her beloved football team, the Saskatchewan Rough Riders.

Of course her good humour and inner strength helped her with her first battle with cancer in 1999. She remained active and involved in the community until she succumbed last month in British Columbia. Friends and relatives gathered there a few weeks ago, and yesterday here in Yellowknife, in celebration and remembrance of a friend and a fellow Northerner.

Her legacy lives on in her family and that familiar business we still know as Sutherland Drugs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Member's Statement on Student Financial Assistance for Students with Disabilities

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of this House, and in particular that Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, on the plight of the Northwest Territories post-secondary students with disability. As the Minister is well aware, Mr. Speaker, I along with a number of others concerned have been working on behalf of a young man with disability in Yellowknife who was denied access to student financial assistance for post-secondary education.

This, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the fact that he was admitted to a reputable vocational college in Alberta that would go a long way to ensure that he would be free from relying on the government for livelihood, and most important have a chance at becoming the best he can be.

I am happy to advise you, Mr. Speaker, that with the help of his family and supporters, he was successful in having his denial reversed. The student financial assistance appeal board determined that, "Based on the evidence, the transitional vocational program is a post-secondary school education for the purpose of the regulation."

Mr. Speaker, I believe strongly that this is a just and honourable decision and one that is in accordance with the spirit and intent of the act and the regulation. Unfortunately, I am not sure if the Minister and the department are in full agreement with this decision, Mr. Speaker. I say this because I have received communication from the Minister's office and the department that appears to question the validity of this decision or, at the very least, attempts are being made to limit the scope of the appeal board's decision in its application.

Mr. Speaker, everyone involved in this specific case is concerned about the amount of time and effort that has to go into applying and appealing for the benefits under this program that should be available to them by the just application of the law. We are acutely aware in this House that this -- well, the group is aware -- that one success will be in vein if other students in similar circumstances have to fight each time to get to the same decision, Mr. Speaker.

We are well aware, Mr. Speaker, not every student with disability going through this process has the level of support and determination as the ones in this case. The important point is that this should not be necessary. The law is already in place by the act, the regulation and the appeal board's decision. It is the Minister's job to make sure that the decision applies to everyone under similar circumstances, no matter...

MR. SPEAKER: Ms. Lee, the time for your Member's statement has ended. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, may I have unanimous consent to conclude my statement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude her statement. Are

there any nays? There are no nays, Ms. Lee. You may continue.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, honourable colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I urge the Minister to show his leadership in deference to the work of the appeal board once and for all, and take steps to direct the department to uphold the appeal board's decision. It is a duty and obligation of the Minister and the department to do this just thing, so that no one else under similar circumstances has to go through this process to have access to the program that they are entitled to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Protection of the Horn Plateau

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in times when we are facing issues that are controversial, it is important to focus on those issues that have a positive impact on people and land as well. Mr. Speaker, as many people may be aware, the Horn Plateau, or E'dehzhie, as it is also known, is an area of great cultural and ecological significance to the people in the Deh Cho. It has received protection under the Protected Area Strategy. Protection of the Horn Plateau is an example of positive impact and recognition and protection placed on it has a special meaning to the aboriginal people who gather there.

What this protection means is that over the next five years, no development will take place in that area. During that five-year period, the area will undergo extensive study and assessment to determine if it should be protected indefinitely.

Mr. Speaker, this important decision was not done in isolation, but was a combined effort undertaken by the people from the Deh Cho, the North Slave, the Government of the Northwest Territories, the federal government, and an organization called the World Wildlife Fund, Canada. It was a people's vision combined with a belief and effort that saw a need to protect a piece of land that was abundant, not only in wildlife, but also with the history of the people who have used it over centuries.

Mr. Speaker, this important decision reminds us what our priorities as a government should be -- that is, to ensure the best interest and integrity of our land and our people are protected at all levels. When something as positive as protection of an area so pristine, so filled with history and life, and so great occurs, it is important to recognize and acknowledge those people who have spent many hundreds of hours working to make the important event come to life.

For this, I wish to thank those who have worked so hard in protecting our lands for future generations. Without their foresight and efforts, our lands and our way of life would fully disappear. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Shortage of Skilled Tradespeople

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to draw attention to an issue that affects a great number of businesses in the Northwest Territories -- that being the lack of skilled labour, Mr. Speaker. Labour shortages continue to plague small- and medium-sized business owners. Small businesses continue to create jobs at an increasing rate. However, the shortage of qualified tradespeople may actually worsen as our economy grows stronger.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend Karen Cooper, manager of the Hay River Career Development Centre, and her excellent staff for playing host to the 2002 apprenticeship forum held in Hay River on October 2nd. The apprenticeship forum was attended by a variety of stakeholders, Mr. Speaker. There were employers, young apprentice, GNWT representatives, post-secondary representatives, and educators, to name a few. The forum was a wonderful venue for stakeholders to share ideas and discuss solutions to our labour shortages.

Mr. Speaker, I was quite appalled to hear shop teachers saying that their yearly budget is \$4,000 with 30 kids in their classes. One teacher mentioned that his budget is \$16 per student for the entire year. This does not include anything for resource materials. It is only for materials, not for any capital items. This is as a result of our formula funding arrangements for schools.

Mr. Speaker, in Hay River, our high school was built in the 1970s and our shop area has never been upgraded. How are you to teach kids about the trades and develop their interest in the trades if these educators are dealing with such antiquated equipment? I give these teachers credit, Mr. Speaker, for working under these conditions and continually trying to motivate kids.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business surveyed their NWT members only a year ago, and 83 percent of the respondents say that their highest priority is the shortage of qualified labour. That really says something, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at the apprenticeship forum, it was stressed to delegates that they need to talk to their MLAs about this situation and really make them listen. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have heard them and I hope that the Minister responsible and this government is listening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Attendance at World Diamond Congress

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to thank the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Antoine, for offering me the opportunity to travel with Mr. Antoine to the World Diamond Conference in Antwerp, Belgium, October 7th and 8th.

Mr. Speaker, our diamond industry, although young, has placed us on the world map in regard to the diamond industry in the Northwest Territories. For myself, Mr. Speaker, the highlight of the trip was meeting the former vice-president of

the United States, Mr. Al Gore, and having an opportunity to speak to Mr. Gore on issues that affect the Northwest Territories, especially the Arctic.

In our discussions, which were about 15 minutes, I had an opportunity to talk to Mr. Gore about the Arctic National Refuge and what his position was on the matter. He fully supports not opening up the refuge to oil and gas development.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I was amazed at Mr. Gore's information and knowledge about the Arctic and the effect with regard to global warming, and how it is affecting the Arctic, the people of the Arctic, and the world as we know it.

Mr. Speaker, in our discussions between myself and Mr. Gore, we spoke about the effects that we are seeing in the Arctic with regard to what the people in the Arctic are seeing in regard to the weather patterns and the effects on our ability to move, hunt, trap, fish. Yet, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that ourselves as government, that we take the time to reach out to world leaders and make them aware of the effects other countries have on ourselves here in the Northwest Territories.

In our discussions with Mr. Gore, I made an attempt to access more information in regard to global warming from video tapes that were developed from the people in Sachs Harbour to what we are seeing in regard to our wildlife boards, our wildlife patterns that are out there. Mr. Speaker, most importantly, is the intelligence and the opportunity that we take when we travel to different places around the world.

For myself, Mr. Speaker, this is the opportunity of a lifetime and I am glad the Minister is giving me the opportunity to travel with him on this trip. I do look forward to corresponding with Mr. Gore in regard to global warming and the effect on the Arctic and the people of the Arctic. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Business Incentive Policy Review

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the Business Incentive Policy review. Mr. Speaker, the government has claimed that the revisions they propose to the Business Incentive Policy are in the best interest of northern business. Yet I keep hearing from the northern business community that they have serious concerns regarding these proposed changes to the policy.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, that there are several fundamental problems with the proposed policy. I think that the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development must take another look at it based on the comments made by Members and northern business before Cabinet moves to adopt the policy.

The Minister has said that this government's procurement practices are intended to maximize benefits for residents of the Northwest Territories. However, we have heard concerns raised by northern business that the proposed new policy will not assist them as much as the current policy.

Business people I have talked to were surprised to hear about the proposal to impose caps, especially when the department says that business proposed that cap.

They failed to see why it would be in their best interests also to allow a Minister to decide arbitrarily whether a particular bid may be ineligible in determining Northwest Territories content.

Mr. Speaker, a lack of enforcement of the current policy has always been a concern of northern business. The new policy contains no real new commitment by the government to monitor the method in which it implements the policy.

So this proposed policy will provide incentives for businesses that employ northerners and file taxes in the Northwest Territories. This represents a significant change in the basic philosophy of the program. The existing program is set up to encourage the establishment and development of northern-owned business. The new program would be silent on business ownership. This change in the underlying philosophy should have first been discussed by Members of this Assembly, but it was not.

Mr. Speaker, before considering whether to maintain the current BIP or to change it, we should also know what the costs and benefits of the current policy are, but we do not. In the June sitting of this House, I asked the Minister of Public Works what the cost of BIP was to this government. He pulled a figure of \$33 million out of the air. Then, he later wrote to me to indicate that the cost to his department was more accurately only \$43,000. I am somewhat disturbed, Mr. Speaker, that the very public way misinformation was presented and then no offer was made to publicly retract it. That is a matter for another day.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that we do not have good, baseline information on which to make decisions. The new policy is not ready for implementation without serious change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Media Reports on Recent House Activities

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I found it of some concern that it is being reported to our residents and to southern media that as a result of the concern and the issue raised in this House over the last week about accountability that we were having problems with our style or structure of government, that being consensus, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for the record and for the constituents of the Northwest Territories, it is unfortunate that when maybe two Members of this House have referenced to some degree structure or concerns with the structure of government that we are now being told, or it is being told, that we are debating the structure and the style of government of this Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, there has been no debate as far as I have been aware about consensus government and if it

needs to be changed here in the Northwest Territories. If that debate is occurring, it is occurring among the very few.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, I think we must once again for the record state that the issue at hand was not one of the structure of government and if that structure is causing us some concern with how we get our work done here in the Northwest Territories. I say, Mr. Speaker, that it was through the consensus style that Members of this House were able to get information that they could bring the government to bear on the aspect of accountability.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, let it stand that we are not debating consensus government here. The debate that took place was around accountability, and let's not deflect from that. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Condolences to the Families of Joseph Rabesca and Loretta Smith

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to send my condolences to the people of the North Slave. In particular I would like to acknowledge the Rabesca and Smith families who both lost family members this week. Joseph Suzie Rabesca passed away on Sunday at the age of 95. The name Rabesca is well known throughout the North and Joseph was the head of this family.

He was born in 1907 and worked all his life, primarily as a trapper. He was a traditional man who was well respected. He raised two families, and before the highway was built to Yellowknife, many people stopped by the Rabesca camp en route to the city, to see him.

Mr. Speaker, he was active right up until his passing. In September he was caribou hunting in the Barrenlands and he was even in church on Sunday. He suffered a stroke that afternoon and passed away on Monday, October 28th. There is no doubt that the spirit of Joseph will live on through his many children and many grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, Loretta Smith also passed away this week. This young lady spent much of her life in and out of the Stanton Regional Hospital because of her health. She was able to rise above her own discomfort and was often helpful and concerned for the welfare of others.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge these people and their passing and send my condolences to the people of the North Slave region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The condolences of the House do go to the Rabesca and the Smith families, the passing of a pioneer, as Mr. Rabesca was. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Member's Statement on NWT Arctic Tourism

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Arctic Tourism organization is an industry-driven

organization responsible to over 200 tourism operator members and to the government of the Northwest Territories. The NWTAT is responsible for pan-territorial tourism marketing, industry education and the development and marketing of aboriginal cultural tourism of the Northwest Territories locally, nationally and internationally.

Their vision statement is to develop a dynamic partnership between industry and government in support of our vital, viable and sustainable industry by marketing tourism and providing support to tourism operations to communities in the Northwest Territories.

This weekend, Northwest Territories Arctic Tourism will be hosting their AGM conference which will take place in Yellowknife. The keynote speaker will be Senator Nick Sibbeston. This will be the second annual tourism conference to be held in the North and I understand that the registrations have so far outnumbered their first conference.

The theme of this year's session will be "Let Your Spirit Soar." Once recent initiative of Arctic Tourism was a trip to Germany. As most of you know, I had the opportunity to represent the Northwest Territories when Minister Antoine was unavailable to go with the group at that time. Northern tour operators and representatives from organizations like Blachford Lake Lodge, Nahanni River Adventures, the Norweta, Simpson Air, Arctic Nature Tours, Canadian North and Kellet Communications and Mack Travel were part of the delegation that went to Germany. We made presentations in Munich, Dusseldorf and Frankfurt.

Mr. Speaker, German people are fascinated with the northern culture, the outdoors, the beautiful scenery and the wildlife. The northern tour division is focusing on packaging a fly and drive program which would see tourist fly into the North and renting vehicles or motor homes to travel.

The mission was a success and was a very good value. I am sure we will experience the value to the Northwest Territories in the years to come. To enter a marketplace you must understand the needs and what the people are looking for. Many key contacts were made and I believe that having the operators share their products and services personally was very effective and certainly even for myself as a long-time Northerner, it made me want to see and experience more of the North.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the very good work of Northwest Territories Arctic Tourism. Mr. Speaker, just on a personal note, this was the first time I have ever had a stamp in my passport. Flying is not one of my strong points so I would also just like to thank God that He gave me the opportunity and the safety on this trip. It was very difficult for me to board a plane for ten hours. I would be remiss in not saying that I was very thankful I was able to do that. It was a great experience. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Support for Traditional Lifestyles

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have tabled a document in this Assembly that reflects a number of people

in my riding of Inuvik Twin Lakes who still retain the basic land skills and continue to use hunting and trapping to supplement their lifestyles, diets and economies. This also applies to those who come North to live amongst us. They have learned to appreciate our vast land and the abundance of wild game, fish, and fur.

For many of us as Members of the Legislative Assembly, as Members from small ridings, we may have grown up in such a setting. Many of us were not only taught the way to survive on the land, but developed skills that we took out of formal education schooling, in a log house somewhere out in the bush.

Mr. Speaker, our traditional times are going to the wayside, simply because it is no longer affordable to trap for a living. Mr. Speaker, with a new trapping season ready to begin, I would like to let the trappers in my riding and others across the Northwest Territories know that I am in support of this lifestyle. I stand in this House today to applaud you.

With that in mind today, I want to showcase my vest made from local sealskins harvested offshore of Sachs Harbour on Banks Island. The lady who made this vest for me is Ms. Edna Elias who is not only a seamstress but entrepreneur, former school principal and interpreter. Her partner Sydney and her spend a good part of the summer harvesting these seals to make these vests, so I can promote it.

The embroidery also signifies the artwork that symbolizes the town that we have in the North. The renowned artists, some of them down from Fort Smith, carved the pendant of the eagle I am wearing today. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, I am wearing two important pieces of art, one which is made in the most southern part of our Territory, the other from the most northern part.

Mr. Speaker, the promotion is intended to display what fine products can be made from wild fur at a very affordable price. It also shows that smaller companies can still be developed in the most remote communities of our Territory, using locally harvested products. Mr. Speaker, today I ask my colleagues in this House to work with their constituents to promote our finest furs and to encourage people to continue to trap and support an industry that needs revival. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

-- Applause

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

Member's Statement on Remarks on the Community of Trout Lake

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly nice to be back home here in the Northwest Territories. I just wanted to continue on what I started during this session in talking about the different communities that I represent and every chance I have, I speak on behalf of the people who put me here.

Today I would like to say a few words about Sambaa K'e, which is Trout Lake in my language. Trout Lake is a small community in my riding along a very big lake that has very fresh water, a lot of different kind of fish, plenty of game out on the land. This is a very traditional community.

I just wanted to maybe say that every fall what they do is they do the right thing. They shut everything down and they all go hunting for about two weeks. They go moose hunting. For two weeks they shut down the schools and that way the teachers and all the students and the community members go out there on the land and set up their tents and their camps around the different lakes. They stay out there for about two weeks.

I am told by the elder from Trout Lake, Joe Punch, that this year they got about 18 moose in this community hunt. There was a lot of dry meat and there was a lot of moose hide that has been traditionally tanned in Trout Lake. I would like to commend the community to keep on their tradition. I just wanted to recognize the leadership of the community under chief and council. The chief is Dennis Deneron, the counsellors are Victor Jumbo, David Jumbo, Tom Kotchea, Tony Jumbo. They had their election last spring and their band manager is Ruby Jumbo.

I just wanted to commend the community for doing what they do. Like I say, they are a small, traditional community but they are very innovative and they get into a lot of different, interesting ventures that the community decides on, guided by their elders. I would like to continue to encourage them to continue working with our government to provide them with the different programs and services that we have and that they continue to practice their way of life the way they chose. Mahsi.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Ootes.

ITEM 5: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce a number of people who contribute a great deal to our education systems in the Northwest Territories, Mr. Speaker, and that is the chairs of the district education councils and the chairs of the district education authorities here in Yellowknife.

I would like to introduce them by name, Mr. Speaker and the divisional education they are from.

First we have Alex Illasiak of the Beaufort-Delta; Jean-Francois Pitre, of the Commission Scolaire Francophone Division; Martina Norwegian from the Deh Cho Divisional Education Council; Karen Balanuik of the Sahtu Divisional Education Council; Anne Pischinger of the South Slave Divisional Education Council; and Mildred Wilke of the Yellowknife District Education Council; and Larry Purcka of the Yellowknife Public Denominational District Education Authority.

-- Applause

Not with us today, Mr. Speaker, are Violet Camsell-Blondin of the Dogrib Divisional Education Council and Earl Jacobson of the college. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ootes. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Delorey.

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is not very often that I get to recognize a constituent of mine, but today I would like to welcome a very special lady in the gallery, a true Northerner who has been around for a long time and a member of a very big family in the North, Ms. Bertha McBryan. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize a constituent of mine from Aklavik, Mr. Alex Illasiak. Alex has been involved with community activities, involved with the church, local boards and agencies such as the education board and involvement with the Inuvialuit organizations. Also, Alex has put in many, many years of public service to assist the people of Aklavik and the Mackenzie Delta. At this time I would like to thank you personally for all the hard work you have been doing. Keep it up.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Antoine.

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize a number of people from my riding, mainly Fort Simpson. The mayor and the council of the Village of Fort Simpson were in town the last few days meeting with some of the Ministers and MLAs on the issues that are of concern to our community. I would like to recognize the mayor, Tom Wilson; councillor Duncan Carvin, Kirby Groat, Sean Whelly, and the SAO is Bernie Swanson. I would like to welcome them to the Legislative Assembly.

-- Applause

I also want to recognize Martina Norwegian as well. She is a very busy lady. She works with Noah Enterprises for the band. She is representing the education board here as well as she does a lot of work with the church. Welcome, Martina. Mahsi.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Antoine. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Ann Pischinger. She is a constituent, a friend, a next-door neighbour. While she looks after education, she works for public health for the Fort Smith boards as well -- a very busy lady. I would like to recognize her and thank her for being here.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Although she is not my constituent, I would like to recognize Susan Marie today in the gallery. I would like to thank her for all the hard work that she does on the preservation of northern arts and crafts and information on traditional garments. I recently had occasion to buy one of those beautifully tanned hides that Mr. Antoine spoke about from Trout Lake. I am looking forward to talking to someone like Susan about traditional garments. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member from Hay River South stole my thunder, but I too would like to recognize Susan Marie, a very creative and remarkable artist and social activist, and a women leader -- a woman I admire. Thank you.

-- Applause

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

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to recognize a constituent, Cindy Gilday. Ms. Gilday is the senior advisor for community relations at Diavik Diamond Mines. She is accompanied by a visitor from Australia, Ms. Cara Peek, an exchange student. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Any further recognition of visitors in the gallery? I would just like to take this opportunity to thank all the persons who have come to watch the Legislative Assembly today and certainly to welcome Mrs. McBryan, a true pioneer in the North. Further, to extend a special welcome to our Australian student who is here to observe some of the aboriginal activities that are taking place within the industry, I believe it is. A young lady, a law student -- an aborigine law student from Australia. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

ITEM 6: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 437-14(5): Dunvegan Hydro Project in Alberta

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for RWED. Mr. Speaker, in 1991, a \$12 million northern river basin study was launched. There has been the Mackenzie River Basin Water Master Agreement signed between the Government of the Northwest Territories, Alberta and Canada regarding northern rivers.

Mr. Speaker, a short while ago, some constituents in Fort Resolution were at a meeting in northern Alberta regarding the proposed glacier power limited Dunvegan Hydroelectric Dam Project. Mr. Speaker, we know there is going to be a decision by the Alberta Utilities Board regarding this project. We do have a trans-boundary water agreement with the Alberta Government and Canada. I would like to ask the Minister what this government's position is on that project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 437-14(5): Dunvegan Hydro Project in Alberta

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was a meeting held in Fairview, Alberta, on October 16th. It was a public hearing on the Alberta regulatory process. This is a regulatory process in Alberta, similar to our Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, an Alberta version of it. Specifically, they were there to talk about the proposed run of the river hydro dam for the Peace River. The main item of discussion at the meeting was about fish passage. This is an ongoing process that has been in place for at least two years. While there was no NWT representation at this meeting, we have been...the Mackenzie River Basin Board, which we are a part of, has been involved over the years at these previous meetings. As the Government of the Northwest Territories, we are not directly involved in this application at this point in time. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 437-14(5): Dunvegan Hydro Project in Alberta

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was noted by my constituents that there was a lack of representation by the Government of the Northwest Territories at this meeting. However, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that the Slave River Basin constitutes 70 percent of the water that goes down the Mackenzie Valley, I would like to know, what are the potential effects of the proposed Dunvegan hydroelectric facility on our river systems and our water basins within the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 437-14(5): Dunvegan Hydro Project in Alberta

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mr. Speaker, the effects of this project on the Northwest Territories...there is going to be some effect. We are working with the Mackenzie River Basin Board out of...we have representation from Fort Smith on this board, and we are working with them to try to develop a trans-boundary agreement with Alberta.

Part of the Mackenzie River Basin Board arrangement is that we make these type of trans-boundary agreements with the other jurisdiction. We have one that we have signed with the Yukon to date. We still do not have one with Alberta. Once this mechanism is in place, we will be able to have an agreement with Alberta on how these sort of effects are going to have.

Right now, we are told that the effects are going to be minimal, but we do not know. This is a long process and we still need to have more input. It is a long process. It is the beginning of a long process. We want to get more involved in it. One way of doing it is by having the Mackenzie Valley Environment Impact Review Board to represent us. For example, at the request of

us as a government, or through a local government, but this has not happened yet. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 437-14(5): Dunvegan Hydro Project in Alberta

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, water is important to the people of the Northwest Territories and to the people of the world. Mr. Speaker, I believe the government should be looking at it in the full context. What does it mean if you put it in combination with the effects from the Bennett Dam in British Columbia, and the Dunvegan Dam and the new project that they are talking about? What is the potential impact on our delta system within the South Slave region? I know the Minister said that the Mackenzie Valley Management board may be interested, but I know my constituents in Fort Resolution do not recognize that board. Is this government prepared to intervene, if necessary?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. The Chair heard a couple of questions there, but the Minister responsible for RWED can choose which one he would like to answer. Mr. Antoine.

Further Return to Question 437-14(5): Dunvegan Hydro Project in Alberta

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Mr. Speaker, this is an upstream effect. We know what happened to us in the Northwest Territories because of the Bennett Dam in B.C. There were allegations made that they have huge downstream effects right on the Slave River into the Great Slave down the Mackenzie as a result of this dam. However, we are better equipped today with that information that has happened in the past. We are looking forward for more information. We understand this is a run-of-the-river hydro dam which diverts the river and generates -- it is not blocking the whole river, so it is different than the Bennett Dam. So we need to know more about it.

As the Government of the Northwest Territories, we are not directly involved in this particular project. We have not been participating in the specific project reviews in Alberta. However, the opportunity is there for individual parties if they want to participate, and as well as the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Review Board. They have not decided to participate because the preliminary information we got from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and from Indian and Northern Affairs it says there would not be significant effects on the GNWT. To date, there has not been any direct involvement by our government as to this process. If any community or any groups want to participate, then we will review it, favourably. I think, because it is going to effect all of us. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 437-14(5): Dunvegan Hydro Project in Alberta

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister kind of pre-empted my final question, but I will ask it anyhow. Mr. Speaker, when the livelihoods of hunters, trappers and fishermen in the Slave River area and on the ecosystem of the

Delta, I am afraid that the communities I represent would not feel very good about relying our dependence on another government, as the Alberta government that the Minister is relying on. I would like to ask, if the community wants to intervene, we do have only 90 days left, less than 90 days, will this government help the community with financial resources so the community could intervene so that this kind of information can be sought out, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 437-14(5): Dunvegan Hydro Project in Alberta

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the Mackenzie River Basin Board over the years at previous meetings and have provided input into that process. We are awaiting a report of the October 16th meeting from the Mackenzie River Basin Board.

As for continuing to participate in this regulatory process in Alberta, as a government, we are not directly involved in the application. Again, under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board could choose to make a submission on our behalf. For example, at our request as a government, or on the request of a local government, but this has not happened. The honourable Member is indicating that his communities and his region, the Akaitcho First Nation, do not recognize the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. The request for direct funding from us, like I said, we will look at it favourably. We may find a way to look at it. If that is a request of our citizens, then we should participate because this river flows into the North, and we need to know what kind of impact it is going to have on us all in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Mr. Antoine. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Question 438-14(5): Potential Impacts of Federal Surplus

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Finance. Earlier today, the Honourable John Manley presented an economic fiscal update to the Standing Committee on Finance in the House of Commons. In that, he announced that Canada had achieved an \$8.9 billion surplus in the last fiscal year, and was projecting a \$3.5 billion surplus this year. What can residents of the Northwest Territories expect the impact of those surpluses to be directly on the finances of this government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 438-14(5): Potential Impacts of Federal Surplus

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance announced that the surplus for last year was \$8.9 million, that he anticipated a surplus for 2002 of \$1 billion, but that included a \$3 billion contingency fund, and that for next year, it would be up as high as \$3.1 billion. In the same

statement, he also was clear that any of the surpluses would be used to pay down the national debt. Although he talked in the paper about northern...developing Canada as a northern tiger, he did not make any commitments at this time that would directly benefit the North. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 438-14(5): Potential Impacts of Federal Surplus

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Minister Manley noted that this was the fifth annual surplus that Canada had achieved. He talked about the importance of reducing debt and balancing the books because, as he said, keeping the budget balanced and reducing debt are crucial to achieve a better standard of living and quality of life for Canadians.

I cannot help but contrast that with recent comments from the Minister of Finance for the Northwest Territories. When does the Minister expect that we will be returning our books to a balanced budget?

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

Further Return to Question 438-14(5): Potential Impacts of Federal Surplus

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, given the priorities of our government, which are primarily to support the economic development and the opportunities we have, and to continue to meet the social development needs of our people, then I expect that we will continue to see demands on our resources outstripping our revenues. Now, we want to turn that around as quickly as we can, but we are not going to be able to do it within a year or two. It is probably going to take us several years to see us move to a positive budget. The formula we have with the federal government, the financing formula, ends in 2004. We are in the beginning stages of negotiating that. I do not expect that we are going to see a turnaround until we have a better financing arrangement with Canada. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 438-14(5): Potential Impacts of Federal Surplus

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Minister Manley said in spite of the plan to put the surpluses to bring down the debt, that would not stop new government spending. What they would do is review the effectiveness and efficiency of existing policies and programs and ensure they are cost effective. As he said, governments of all levels must constantly reinvent themselves and strive to find new ways to meet the needs of Canadians in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

What is this government doing to re-examine the programs and policies that it has to ensure that they are cost effective and still meeting the needs of Northerners?

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

Further Return to Question 438-14(5): Potential Impacts of Federal Surplus

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, we have a deputy minister who is responsible for looking at all of our expenditures and at some potential revenues for our government. There are a number of areas he and a team of deputy ministers are working on, both looking at making our government more efficient and cutting down on the cost of delivering the services that we have.

Mr. Speaker, that has been an exercise that has been going on for several months and will continue. I think we will be pleased to provide regular updates as the efforts progress. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 438-14(5): Potential Impacts of Federal Surplus

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is this review a desk sort of review, or is there going to be a meaningful cost benefit analysis of some of the programs and services that the government has been providing over the years to ensure that they really are still cost-effective and meeting the needs of Northerners.

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

Further Return to Question 438-14(5): Potential Impacts of Federal Surplus

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I think where there appears to be a need for a good, thorough cost-benefit analysis, then that will be done. This is not just simply a desktop review, but I think one that is seriously aimed at finding more efficiencies in government. Thank you.

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

Question 439-14(5): Accommodation for Aklavik Family

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger, regarding an issue I raised in this House about a young gentlemen, about six months old, Mr. Donovan Arey Junior. He was diagnosed with a serious heart disease back in August. He has been in Edmonton for some time, and then the family returned home to Aklavik. The direction that was given by the doctors in Edmonton is that the family has to relocate to Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, the challenge that they are having is trying to find accommodation for the family. The family encompasses six people; four children and the mother and father.

I have been working with the Premier, the Minister of Finance, and also the Minister of Health and Social Services in trying to get some movement on this. I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services exactly what is the status of the emergency request by the family to relocate them to Aklavik.

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

Return to Question 439-14(5): Accommodation for Aklavik Family

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very reluctant to stand in this House and discuss specific issues. There was general concern raised while we were talking about specific families and their children and medical situations. I would like to ask the Member that he is aware of the work we are trying to do but I am not in a position to discuss it in this House. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 439-14(5): Accommodation for Aklavik Family

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, this is a medical emergency. All I am asking of the Minister is, what is he doing to ensure that this medical emergency is being dealt with? How soon can this emergency be enacted by finding accommodations for the family to be able to move to Yellowknife and have access to the hospital here in Yellowknife?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Before I get to the response, Mr. Minister, if you will just permit me, the Chair is very concerned with the angle of the camera that is in the gallery. I would ask the camera to be removed from the House. The camera was looking down straight onto the Minister. Thank you. The House will resume again here. The honourable Minister responsible for Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return to Question 439-14(5): Accommodation for Aklavik Family

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this particular situation has been given immediate attention as we speak. The department, the authority are working with the family, myself and the deputy minister on this particular issue, to try to make sure that it gets resolved in a timely way.

We are looking at the steps that are necessary, at least on an interim basis to make sure that the folks are close to the required medical attention. We are also going to be searching for a longer term solution. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 439-14(5): Accommodation for Aklavik Family

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister give us an idea of the timeline? What are we talking about here? A couple days, a couple weeks? It is an emergency, how soon can we deal with this matter?

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

Further Return to Question 439-14(5): Accommodation for Aklavik Family

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would hope that we would be nailing down and concluding interim arrangements so that by early next week we would be able to take the steps to have the patient close to the necessary medical facilities. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 439-14(5): Accommodation for Aklavik Family

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe the seriousness of this matter... The family went back to Aklavik on October 16th. It is going on well over two weeks. Supposedly he was going to be there for a week. The doctor only allowed them to be there for a week. Mr. Speaker, it looks like we may be going onto three weeks.

I would like to ask the Minister, can you move any faster than having to wait to next week?

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

Further Return to Question 439-14(5): Accommodation for Aklavik Family

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are working with the family, the family has indicated that they will not move unless there is full accommodation for the whole family so we are in a tight market situation in Yellowknife trying to come up with a way that we can make sure we can get the family out here and the patient in question close to the necessary medical facilities as soon as we possibly can.

This issue was brought to my attention a couple days ago. We have been working on it since then at the highest levels trying to make sure that we get this resolved. Thank you.

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

Question 440-14(5): Support for Catholic Schools Trade Centre

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I read with interest a story in the September 25th edition of the Yellowknifer that stated that Yellowknife Catholic schools are planning to start construction as early as next year on a \$1.45 million trade centre. The building to be used for the trade centre is the old driver training centre and there are negotiations to have this building turned over to them from our government.

The article stated that they will be sourcing dollars from a number of other partners, one being our very own Department of Education. Would the Minister please state what level of funding his department will be providing for this centre for the Yellowknife students? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 440-14(5): Support for Catholic Schools Trade Centre

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to my understanding there has been no commitment for a level of funding that has been approved as of yet by us. I am not sure that there is any request in the works. Our position I think will be to look at the program, but normally how we do this is to suggest that the various DECs, DEAs that are looking to expand programs have to take those out of existing funding, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 440-14(5): Support for Catholic Schools Trade Centre

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister then please indicate exactly what his department is doing to promote the trades to our young people in the Hay River area and the surrounding communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 440-14(5): Support for Catholic Schools Trade Centre

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The statement by the Member today was I think welcomed. There is no question in my mind that we have a tremendous opportunity for our students to enter into trades and occupations and be employed in those areas in our Territory, considering the outlook in our Territory for the activity that is taking place and that will take place in the future.

It has been my desire, Mr. Speaker, to start concentrating on the usage of facilities that have shops and home economic rooms, that we get back into that whole area. It is interesting to have this discussion today when we have our members from the district education authorities present today, and the DEAs. It is an area we should be looking at and I would support, certainly the whole discussion on this and an expression of interest by various areas.

I am trying to help wherever I can, Mr. Speaker. We have several communities where facilities were in place before and I think we should... If I had the funding I would certainly concentrate on it. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 440-14(5): Support for Catholic Schools Trade Centre

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my Member's statement, skilled labour shortages continue to plague business owners throughout the North and Canada. I hear so much about this government's investment in

our youth. I was appalled to learn that the shop teachers' yearly budget was approximately \$4,000.

Would the Minister please advise the House if he is aware that shop teachers in the South Slave are having to promote our students in trade areas on such a limited budget? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Delorey. The honourable Minister responsible for Education, Mr. Ootes.

Further Return to Question 440-14(5): Support for Catholic Schools Trade Centre

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not unaware of the fact that there is very little money directed towards this area. We do give the funding discretion to the district education authorities and so forth to set some priorities and we work that out in conjunction with each other. It is of interest, as I stated, that we concentrate on the area of ensuring we move towards the possibility of utilization of classrooms that were available once, and equipment that was available once, and in communities where we can get the support for trades and occupations to look at that and vocational training. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Supplementary to Question 440-14(5): Support for Catholic Schools Trade Centre

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister for his answers and the interest in this subject. I know that it is one thing that he talks about employing Northerners. Will the Minister commit to reviewing the budget allocations in our schools, particularly in the South Slave region with the view of allocating more dollars to the industrial arts programs in order to properly train our youth for careers in trades? 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 440-14(5): Support for Catholic Schools Trade Centre

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will be meeting with the chair and chairs this evening. I think we will have a discussion on this whole area this evening, no doubt, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased that the Member is bringing this up because it has been a subject I have discussed and I am trying to move forward on this whole area. I should state as well, Mr. Speaker, that we are looking at the third pathway in our school system, we are making investment from internal funding in order to do that. It addresses the area of occupations and trades that we need to do in addition to apprenticeship, Mr. Speaker. That is not, Mr. Speaker, to ever diminish the need for excellence in our academic programs or to diminish these programs as well. We have a tremendous opportunity in the Territory to move forward on this for our young people. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Yes, I saw them taking notes on that. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

Question 441-14(5): Underage Income Support Applicants

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Honourable Minister Jake Ootes, the Minister representing Education, Culture and Employment.

A number of days ago I spoke with the Minister. I asked him about an 18-year-old girl who did not qualify for income support because of her age. She had to be 19 to qualify. This young girl has two children. She falls through the cracks because of her age.

I would like to ask the Minister, what has he done on this issue or if he has looked at the regulations, if there are possible changes? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 441-14(5): Underage Income Support Applicants

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is an area that has been of concern. We have had situations before, be they 18 or 17 year olds. It is what we call the age of majority, which our department now takes care of those 19 years and over through our income assistance programs.

The issue is really one of if you are dealing with a 17-year-old or an 18-year-old it becomes the responsibility of Health and Social Services. Under 16 it becomes the responsibility of the parents, as well under 18 because of the age of majority, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 441-14(5): Underage Income Support Applicants

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This young lady was kicked out of her home. She has two children and no one to go to. She was at an age where she could not be under the Social Services. This person had nowhere to go. You have to recognize that those two children need help. They were under the age of 16. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 441-14(5): Underage Income Support Applicants

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a concern when we have young people with children, it creates a tremendous hardship. We do need to ensure that we take care of them. I am familiar with the case, at least my department tells me they are familiar with the situation and I will have them speak with Health and Social Services so that we can address this particular hardship, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 441-14(5): Underage Income Support Applicants

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand where the Minister is going but I would like to ask him, why were the two children not given support, because they needed the support, whether the young girl did not qualify either way. Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 441-14(5): Underage Income Support Applicants

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure of the details, Mr. Lafferty, but if I can sit with you after I will get more details from you on this. I did have some and I believe it was last week that we had this situation. I asked my department to ensure they look into it. I will do so again, Mr. Speaker. We do have to work, because of the rule of the age of majority, the responsibility lies with Health and Social Services under the age of 19. As I say, it is of concern so we have to address it. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 441-14(5): Underage Income Support Applicants

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister if he can give direction to his department to at least support the two children until they can deal with the parent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 441-14(5): Underage Income Support Applicants

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have to deal with Health and Social Services on this, Mr. Speaker, because of the process we normally use. I will keep Mr. Lafferty informed the moment I have some information on what the resolution to this is. Thank you.

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

Question 442-14(5): Big Game Hunting Licence

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. I was at the Deh Cho First Nations leadership meeting yesterday and there was some discussion revolving around big game hunting licenses. There were some questions raised there and I wanted to put those on the floor today.

I wanted to ask the Minister if he could tell me who makes the decisions when the applications are made to the department for big game hunting licenses?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I will direct the question to the honourable Premier, Mr. Kakfwi.

Return to Question 442-14(5): Big Game Hunting Licence

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will take the question as notice. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The question has been taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell.

Question 443-14(5): Fiscal Update to the Legislature

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance. I have been going through the Minister's statements for this session and I see that Mr. Handley has talked about some good issues, drinking and driving, and he also announced a payroll deduction program for the United Way. Both very good news stories.

My question though is, what is suspicious by its absence is a fiscal update. We had been assured that there would be one and Members have been trying to get at this issue but it has been like pulling teeth. I am wondering why the Minister has not provided this House with a fiscal update. Thank you.

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

Return to Question 443-14(5): Fiscal Update to the Legislature

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple. I offered to brief AOC on some of the measures we are taking with regard to our fiscal situation. I am waiting for that meeting and I understand that meeting is tomorrow morning. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 443-14(5): Fiscal Update to the Legislature

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, we have been getting the same briefing for what seems like the last year; we have been talking about the kinds of things we should no longer be doing and our little deputy minister task force and these kinds of things, Mr. Speaker. I am not expecting that the Minister of Finance will have the problem solved, but I am wondering why it is taking so long to come clean with the public about what our real situation is. Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 443-14(5): Fiscal Update to the Legislature

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I will have the problem solved either tomorrow. I think the problems we face on the fiscal side are huge, given the challenges we have, the priorities we have, the spending demands we have and the limited opportunities for revenues.

Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting for AOC, the Accountability and Oversight Committee. They have asked that I provide them with a briefing first and out of courtesy to the committee I have waited for the opportunity to brief them first. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 443-14(5): Fiscal Update to the Legislature

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I think AOC, and I am not speaking for AOC, but I think AOC has said and has been interested in learning about any program cuts the Minister might be proposing to make and we want to be privy to that and discuss that before we roll that out in public, but not the fiscal situation. Why can we not get the facts, Mr. Speaker?

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

Further Return to Question 443-14(5): Fiscal Update to the Legislature

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have given some of the basic facts, but I think our fiscal update is one that deals with our fiscal situation as it is today, our projections of what will be happening in the future and some of the mitigating measures that we are considering. I have offered to make that available to the standing committee. As soon as I do that, then I have my fiscal update ready. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 443-14(5): Fiscal Update to the Legislature

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess my concern is that the Minister has waited sufficiently long enough to now make sure that certainly, these kinds of things will not be something that we have an adequate chance to discuss in this House. I do not think that is fair. We have to wait until the next time we are in session to talk with the Minister. As I have said, we are not expecting that the Minister will have all of the answers, but I have no understanding why he will not come out with the facts and talk about what got us to this point. Will he not do that? Thank you.

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

Further Return to Question 443-14(5): Fiscal Update to the Legislature

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I offered to make it available to the...talk to the committee first. If Members ask me specific questions in the House, then I will do my best to answer the questions without getting myself in hot water with the standing committee. If people want to know specific facts, I will provide those as best I can right now. Thank you.

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

Question 444-14(5): Income Support Food Allowance Increase Needed

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Minister for Education, Culture and Employment, and I would like to refer to some of the points that were made in his Minister's statement earlier today. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think we should congratulate Mr. Ootes. He has told us that the NWT has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada and we should all be pleased with that. We have all put a lot of effort into it.

On the other hand, I have to express some sympathy for the Minister, because as we see, it has been emphasized in a headline in today's Yellowknifer, Mr. Speaker, we have a scandalous situation with a 46.5 percentage of children using food banks. That is the second highest in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, given the scandalous increase in children in the NWT using food banks, will the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment consider an immediate boost to the food allowance for income support clients? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 444-14(5): Income Support Food Allowance Increase Needed

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a year ago, we increased the food allowance and I believe the year before that as well, with an additional \$1 million overall in total. We had committed at that time, in consideration of other improvements to the program as well, so that we have a concerted approach to it, and one that looks at all the issues of income support. We directed some funding for those individuals who have disabilities, persons with disabilities, and so forth. The commitment we had made, Mr. Speaker, a year ago, was to ensure that we, on an annual basis, review the food program. We did when we increased the funding for the food area. We included personal items in that. We are in the process of analyzing the survey that has been done. The analysis is underway of the program. I believe the survey has been completed, Mr. Speaker, but analysis has to be done yet so that we can look at changes in the program. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 444-14(5): Income Support Food Allowance Increase Needed

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, in the statement that Mr. Ootes made this afternoon, he said, and I quote: "Over the next several months, the department is once again planning to assess the food benefit it provides..." et cetera. These assessments seem to take a long time to roll out. One of the deficiencies in the last...

MR. SPEAKER: May I interrupt you for a moment, Mr. Braden? I would like to ask the members in the gallery to not lean on the glass and not look over at the honourable Members, or I shall ask them to leave the gallery. Those are the rules and please observe those rules or else I shall clear the gallery from that.

You are prohibited from doing that. Thank you. Mr. Braden, you may continue. I am sorry for the interruption.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question I would like to pose in regard to assessing the food benefits, one of the deficiencies of the most recent survey was, and I believe front line working groups were not really fully consulted. I would like to ask the Minister, in this next round of assessments, will the Minister be consulting with front line workers, especially those of the Women's Centre, the YWCA, and the Salvation Army, regarding the reviews of food benefits and clawbacks? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 444-14(5): Income Support Food Allowance Increase Needed

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it goes beyond just the groups here in Yellowknife. There are three groups that are very interested in this, of course. The consultation process, we can certainly have a look at, but I think the object of this is to try to implement any changes. We have done the analysis, we have committed to raise the food rates according to the increase in cost of living, so we have a fairly straightforward process by which we were dealing with any changes in the system.

I believe that we have to take this in concert with other areas of the program that we provide support in, and the design of the program, Mr. Speaker. We do allow, for example, an earning for a family of \$400 per month that can be contributed, et cetera. There are other factors leading to money that could be used for the food allowance. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 444-14(5): Income Support Food Allowance Increase Needed

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, those are good programs. They certainly have my support. We have made advances, but I would like to draw the Minister's attention again to what really, as well put, is a scandalous rate of children using our food banks. What can the Minister do today to help those families? 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 444-14(5): Income Support Food Allowance Increase Needed

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is of concern with the kind of situation that we have. We understand that. We have our program. As I mentioned today, the program really, Mr. Speaker, is the best in the country. I am more supportive of our officials touching base with the food bank individuals to see how we can possibly help out and perhaps do some analysis in this whole area, to see what is it that is contributing to this, and how can we help out, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 444-14(5): Income Support Food Allowance Increase Needed

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the kind of answer I am looking for. It is a start. It tells me that the department is prepared to talk to front line people. In his statement, Mr. Speaker, the Minister also gave us some tantalizing hints at the suggestion that four different departments in our social envelope are working on ways to improve the service they provide to their mutual clients -- exactly the kind of initiative that I have been pressing for. I am wondering if the Minister could provide any more details today on where this initiative will lead us. 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 444-14(5): Income Support Food Allowance Increase Needed

HON. JAKE OOTES: Our reference there, Mr. Speaker, is to programs such as the working group on seniors, the working group on persons with disabilities, or harmonization and so forth. Those are the areas, Mr. Speaker, that we make reference to there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 445-14(5): Need for WCB Office in Hay River

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for Minister Handley, in his responsibility for the Workers' Compensation Board. I recently had occasion to write to Mr. Handley in late August and ask him if they would consider opening an office for the Workers' Compensation Board in Hay River because of the South Slave region's needs for various services provided by the WCB have been increasing because of the increase in the level of economic activity in the South Slave, particularly in the oil and gas and construction sectors. Mr. Handley kindly responded to my request and has passed this on to the WCB.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if Mr. Handley can tell us what kinds of considerations the WCB would be making in considering a regional office in Hay River? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 445-14(5): Need for WCB Office in Hay River

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, following the receipt of the letter, the WCB I believe have done an assessment of the workload. I have not seen the results of it from the Hay River/South Slave area, and they are meeting this week. I am not 100 percent sure it is on their agenda, but all of these requests they would look at seriously.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary to Question 445-14(5): Need for WCB Office in Hay River

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister could give me any assurance that, when considering the number of trips that WCB officers have to make into the South Slave region, if he would be considering a level of activity in the expenditure of time and resources there for all the communities in the South Slave, not just Hay River in considering a satellite office in Hay River? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 445-14(5): Need for WCB Office in Hay River

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, certainly we will look at all of the communities that are within the South Slave area and nearer to Hay River than other communities, but WCB is looking at this right now. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary to Question 445-14(5): Need for WCB Office in Hay River

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in Mr. Handley's letter, he indicates that in 2001, there was an office established in Inuvik with a single safety officer position, so this would provide more effective safety inspections in that area. Is this a regional office as well, serving outlying communities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 445-14(5): Need for WCB Office in Hay River

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, yes it is.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Final supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary to Question 445-14(5): Need for WCB Office in Hay River

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an office in Hay River for a single officer may not seem like a lot, but in terms of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, I think that the WCB would find this very effective. I would just ask the Minister if he would support Hay River as a location for a regional office. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 445-14(5): Need for WCB Office in Hay River

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will support the Hay River, or any other centre, if it makes good economic sense for the WCB to have a safety officer or other staff located in that community. Thank you.

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

Question 446-14(5): Education Board Decision

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question goes to the Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment. It is in regard to the Member's statement that I made earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that he is aware of what I am talking about. The concern that I am raising with this Member's statement is that before and after this decision, I received communication from the Minister, not only in a letter but in a reply to a question in this House as well as a copy of a letter that he sent to another person, which seems to suggest that this board decision is not something that is permanent or that is applicable in all similar cases. I want to confirm with the Minister that in fact this is the law that they will follow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 446-14(5): Education Board Decision

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The board, I believe, overturned the decision not to fund, if I am correct in that. Pardon me, they overturned that decision, correct. The policy of the department needs to be looked at in light of that decision, Mr. Speaker, because the process of funding for programs that are not at colleges or universities for student financial assistance has generally been to only recognize those that are recognized. We get that from other jurisdictions across the country. There is a consistency of approach there. So the policy is what needs to be looked at, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 446-14(5): Education Board Decision

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I took it for granted that he was aware of the details of this case. What he is saying is quite contrary, Mr. Speaker, to what the board decision entails. The board decision did not speak to the policy. In fact, it was interpreting the act and regulation under which the students could get assistance.

May I ask the Minister to review this decision and review this case and get back to me as to what he intends to do about that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 446-14(5): Education Board Decision

HON. JAKE OOTES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think under the circumstances, it is best that I do so with Ms. Lee, if she could provide me with the information. We no doubt at the department have the information as well. I may need more information on this. Thank you.

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

Question 447-14(5): Access Road Funding Criteria

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest yesterday to Mr. Krutko's comments regarding the budget for Highways No. 3 and No. 4. Today, I want to ask the Minister of Transportation if he could tell me what the formula is when deciding on an allocation of funds to the different access roads in the North, what is the methodology that they use? Thank you.

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

Return to Question 447-14(5): Access Road Funding Criteria

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the main criteria used in determining how to allocate our transportation roads budget, of course, is the condition of the roads and the traffic. In some situations, we have funding that comes from the federal government that is earmarked for specific purposes, for example, the national highway system, so we have to use it on those roads in those cases. Generally, it is condition and traffic.

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

Supplementary to Question 447-14(5): Access Road Funding Criteria

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year I did some research and I got information from the Department of Transportation regarding traffic volumes, accidents. When I got the information on the traffic volumes, there was a disclaimer on it stating that we could not hold the information as very accurate because the counters do not always work.

I am curious to know. I have several communities that have access roads. One of them that is in dire need of funding is the Hay River Reserve. I would like to know where it is in terms of priority when it comes to access road funding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 447-14(5): Access Road Funding Criteria

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, starting in this current fiscal year, the Department of Transportation has made a special allocation for access roads into smaller communities,

even though the traffic counts may not be that high, there may not be a history of a lot of accidents and so on, but a feeling and a belief that the communities need good access as well.

The allocation of money to various access roads or highways will be determined in time for the main estimates for next year, and we will follow through on the regular budgeting process. Thank you.

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

-- Technical Difficulties

MR. SPEAKER: ...wait a couple of seconds here. Okay, we seem to be back on. Mr. McLeod, repeat your question. We had a bit of a problem there.

Supplementary to Question 447-14(5): Access Road Funding Criteria

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the House, the comment was made that there are no dollars for expenditures on highways outside of three and four. I would like to ask the Minister if he could confirm that there will be dollars for the access roads to the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Further Return to Question 447-14(5): Access Road Funding Criteria

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, as we prepare the main estimates then we will look at the allocation of all money for all departments. I cannot say with 100 percent certainty, but I can say with practically 100 percent that there is going to be money for roads that are in need and this includes access roads. I cannot say -- how much of each road, or where it is going to be spent, that is a decision that has to be made as we prepare the main estimates. Thank you.

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

Question 448-14(5): Licencing for Cameron Hills Development

MR. DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked some questions about Paramount Resources and the questions were directed to Mr. Antoine. I would like to direct my questions today to the Minister for Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development.

They deal with the work going on at Cameron Hills with Paramount Resources. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Hay River is benefiting somewhat from the work that goes on there with Paramount. I was wondering if the Minister could inform the House if he is aware of the level of work that Paramount is looking at this winter and where they are in their permitting and licencing for this winter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Return to Question 448-14(5): Licencing for Cameron Hills Development

HON. JIM ANTOINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will have to take this question as notice. I do not have the information in front of me so I will get back to the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The question has been taken as notice. Item 6, oral questions. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Question 449-14(5): Appointment of Board of Directors

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we had a long debate in this House in regard to the removal of the board of directors of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation. Mr. Speaker, it has been almost two weeks since that decision was made. I would just like to ask the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, on the interim board that has been appointed, I would like to know how soon we can see a permanent board established for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Handley.

Return to Question 449-14(5): Appointment of Board of Directors

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I allowed until November 1st for nominations, that is the end of this week. As soon as I have all of the nominations we will review them. I will be making a recommendation to Cabinet as soon as possible, I expect by mid-November to the third week of November, somewhere in there, we should have a new board in place. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 449-14(5): Appointment of Board of Directors

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regard to the decision to withdraw the previous board, another one of the concerns we raised in our discussion was the whole idea of appointing and removing boards. Is that something that is also going to be coming forth? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, my apologies but I missed the last of that question and the end of the question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns that was raised in the whole idea in the removal of the previous board is the whole idea of who was responsible for appointing or removing the board of directors and that was something the

Minister said they were going to look at and bring that back to the House.

I would like to ask the Minister, is that also going to be put in place prior to the new board being established?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 449-14(5): Appointment of Board of Directors

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for appointment of a board is the responsibility of the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, so that rests with me at this time.

Mr. Speaker, the commitment I did make for now is to do that in consultation with Cabinet and I intend to do that and bring it back to notifying all of the Members. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 449-14(5): Appointment of Board of Directors

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regard to the appointment, presently it does fall under the Northwest Territories Power Corporation Act in regard to the board appointments, the term of the board and also the size of the board.

Right now the Minister is stating it is under his directive and he will be taking that to Cabinet. I would like to ask the Minister, will you also be reviewing the directive that is in place under the Northwest Territories Power Corporation Act to ensure that it is clear in the responsibility of the board of directors and also the ability of this government to remove the board at any one time?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 449-14(5): Appointment of Board of Directors

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, the first priority I have is to get a new, permanent board in place. Then I will meet with the new board to explain to them the provisions in the Power Corporation Act and will also be reviewing the act with Cabinet and determining whether or not there is a need for any changes to that piece of legislation. Thank you.

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

Supplementary to Question 449-14(5): Appointment of Board of Directors

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regard to the responsibilities that the board of directors carry out under the mandate they receive under the Northwest Territories Power Corporation Act is pretty clear, but I would like to ask the Minister, what are we doing to ensure there is not political interference so they can carry out those responsibilities to the T. Either have them removed for not

doing what they are supposed to do or what you would like them to do. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The honourable Minister responsible for the Power Corporation, Mr. Handley.

Further Return to Question 449-14(5): Appointment of Board of Directors

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will be discussing this further with Cabinet. I would like to see all of the direction that goes to the board be done with a formal directive so that it is clear. I think that as we look at the act there may be other ways of ensuring that the authority of the board is respected and that they also know that they have to operate within the strategic direction that is provided by government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The time allocated for question period has ended. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to the opening address. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to return to item 6.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 6, oral questions. Are there any nays? We have a nay. Item 9, replies to the opening address. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like unanimous consent to go back to item 6.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 6, oral questions. Are there any nays? We have a nay. Item 9, replies to the opening address. Item 10, petitions.

May I have some order in the House please? The Chair is asking if there are any petitions. Are there any petitions? Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to go back to item 9, replies to opening address.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to go back to item 9, replies to the opening address. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Krutko, the Chair has been informed that you have already replied to the opening address. Good bookkeeping. Item 9, replies to the opening address. Item 10, petitions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to go back to item 9, replies to opening address.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to return to item 9, which is replies to the opening address. Are there any nays? There are no nays, I will just check the record to see if you have already made your reply. Item 9, replies to the opening address. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, your reply to the opening address. Mr. Nitah.

ITEM 9: REPLIES TO THE OPENING ADDRESS**Reply 2-14(5)**

MR. NITAH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about what seems to be becoming a common occurrence in this House, which is reflective on processes like party politics that we see in other jurisdictions. Mr. Speaker, when Members from this side of the House start naying requests to ask questions in the House because they are afraid we might go down a road that might jeopardize, or we do not want to go down that road again, you have to start wondering what kind of message are we sending to the people of the Northwest Territories.

My reason for asking to go back to item 6 was to ask the Minister about the looming deficit we are about to face. Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the deficit we are about to face is that it is similar to that faced by the 13th Assembly. We all know what the 13th Assembly had to do to address those budget shortcomings.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if the projects and processes, programs and services, dollars that are identified in our business plans today would survive the mitigating consideration that the Cabinet will be looking at.

Mr. Speaker, we work long and hard to put our issues and the needs of our constituents in the business plans. I would like assurances from Cabinet and the Minister of Finance that what is in the business plans will continue on to fruition, because those things that are in the business plans are out there in our communities. People expect that. That is what a responsible government should be doing, not being evasive of how much money this government is in the hole on. That just speaks to the type of government that we seem to be having today.

Lack of confidence in our government is felt everywhere in the Territories. When we start getting restricted from this side of the House to address that lack of confidence felt by our constituents we should ask the question why, and what do we have to do to fix that?

Mr. Speaker, on Monday there was a vote of confidence in the Premier. I was not here. Everybody in this House knows why. I felt like I had a responsibility under the consensus government style of government to assist my colleague Mr. Antoine in giving certainty that his vote would not matter when I have to take my vote to address an issue that is of great concern to the people of the Northwest Territories, which is the Kyoto Agreement.

We do not need to be doing that kind of stuff, Mr. Speaker. We should not have to cancel each other's votes out to address the work that is required of this government. We will be voting on a motion later and I am pretty sure the vote is going to be similar. With Mr. Antoine and myself back, it will be 11 to 7 with Mr. Lafferty in his regular chair. If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, that is not responsible government. People say that politics is numbers, but accountability should be a number one priority. The people in the Northwest Territories should feel comfortable that their elected leaders, especially those in Cabinet, have the confidence of the people that they represent.

We will be voting on that, but the main reason I wanted to go back to this item was to address that issue of how we do business in here. I never asked to go back to an item before,

and when I did I have been nayed because there are some worries there. Tomorrow is our last day in the House. I hope the Minister would answer my question on how...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Nitah, I am sorry, I have to interrupt you for a moment here. There has been a point of privilege brought to the attention of the Chair. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee, your point of privilege.

Point of Privilege

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. As far as I understand that when Members ask to go back to an item there is a reason why we seek unanimous consent. We have our privilege to deny that. I feel that it is not proper for the Members to impute motive as to why I did that. He has no idea. That is not proper. He should respect the rules of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. We have a point of privilege raised. The Chair is not at liberty to make a decision at this point in time. I just have to review what was said so I will take that under advisement. For the time being it does not appear to the Chair that the privilege of the Member is being harmed in any way. The Member is making a reply and a reply can be on any subject that the honourable Member chooses in the reply. I will take it under advisement, Ms. Lee, and get back to you at the proper time. Mr. Nitah, you have the floor to continue your reply.

Oh, I think we have another hand raised there. Ms. Lee.

Point of Order

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry, I want to apologize. I always get point of privilege and point of order mixed up. I had a point of order and it is under the Rules of the Legislative Assembly and it is the section where it refers to any occasion when a Member is imputing motive. What I am trying to make a point of is that it is just simply a practice of this House that we seek unanimous consent to do things. Sometimes we get them, sometimes we do not. The Member from Tu Nedhe has stated in at least two occasions that somehow I have a motive as to why I did not give that consent.

It is not proper in this House to impute motive on what Members do and say. I was raising a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and not a point of privilege and I apologize for the confusion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The Chair is of the understanding that you are withdrawing your point of privilege and you are rising now on a point of order, saying that the Member has made improper remarks, that the Member may have felt was imputing motive. If the House wishes to debate this, we can do so at this point in time. Are there any Members that want to speak on that?

The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, and then Tu Nedhe. Mr. Krutko, to the point of order.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the point of order, I believe a person's name has to be mentioned in the context of who you are speaking about. I do not believe I heard any names mentioned. There is a process in place, I have been nayed, and I have nayed other Members of this House.

I think the object of it is that we do not offend other Members by using Members' names. I think that for me, it is pretty clear that we do not use titles or names of individuals in the context of a point of privilege. I did not hear any names being mentioned. Yes, there have been times when people have asked for unanimous consent and may not have gotten it. Myself, for one, have asked numerous times for unanimous consent and I have also nayed people who have asked for unanimous consent.

I feel that unless you promote motive by mentioning individuals, there is no point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. To the point of order. Any further debate? If there is no further debate on it, it is the Chair's prerogative and I will say to the honourable Member that is making his reply to the opening address to perhaps exercise a little caution in how you direct certain things, so that other Members do not take offense to it. The Chair will rule that there is no point of order. Mr. Nitah, continue your reply to the opening address.

MR. NITAH: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your advice and I will take that to heart. Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have to represent and represent with confidence -- represent with the confidence of our constituents. I believe that confidence is waning. I believe the people who work for government and who have to follow through with the direction of this government have to have the confidence in the government that they work for. I believe, Mr. Speaker, 90 percent, at least that is the number I believe is out there, do not have the confidence in the government that they work for.

Therefore, I ask myself, would they be working as hard as they can to implement the direction that we give to our bureaucracy if they do not believe in the government that they work for? I would have to say no, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we do have a looming deficit. We do know about that deficit. It is unfortunate the public does not know what the number is and what the government plans to do to mitigate that problem.

We know what happened in the 13th Assembly and the drastic measures that government had to take to address their looming deficit. I believe that we have to inform our constituents through this House, before we stop for session. We know today is the last day of the 5th session. We will be proroguing, if we follow our agenda, and we will be opening a new session, the 6th session, tomorrow, for a day, which does not give us time to address and question and debate how government is going to mitigate the problems of our financial situation.

We have been taking up too much of the Legislature's time dealing with issues that should not have been dealt with to begin with, Mr. Speaker. The issue of confidence in our Premier, that is twice in one year that we have to deal with that issue. It is unfortunate that the honourable Member was not honourable in dealing with us when he should have stepped down and gained confidence in the people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I heard in the House that maybe it is the system of governance that we have, where the consensus government is in question for the actions of a few. I do not think it is a consensus style of government. I think we have to follow our

own rules and procedures. If we do that, then there will not be any problems. We could use the valuable time that we have in here to address the issues that are faced by the people of the Northwest Territories, not the issues by the people in here.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on about this issue. We will be debating a motion that may help us address the confidence issue of this government, but I would like to have assurances that what we have worked towards, that is in our business plans, will stay in our business plans because that is what we told our constituents will happen for them in their communities, whether they live on the east side of the Great Slave Lake or up in Holman Island, and in parts in between. That is what the people expect of us. I hope that Cabinet and the Minister of Finance would not alter the business plans to address the issues of finances.

I will be asking that question in the House for the Minister's response tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Item 9, replies to opening address. The honourable Member for Yellowknife South, Mr. Bell. I just want to remind Members that if they have already made a reply to the opening address, they cannot do it twice. If you have not, Mr. Bell, you can respond.

Reply 3-14(5)

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do not want to steer you astray. I do not believe that I have made a reply to the opening address, and I am getting a no, so I think I am okay.

I will try not to stray all over the place, Mr. Speaker. I will not take too much of the House's time, but I have been concerned, and Mr. Nitah has raised this issue, so I felt that I should weigh in on it, but I have certainly been concerned about the fact that I have not seen a willingness on the part of this government to be forthright about our financial situation, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion.

I think that this is a perfect example, when people point to our consensus system and talk about its failing and its problems, I do not necessarily think that it is in the system, Mr. Speaker. I think more to the point, it is in the way that we are running our system.

Now, we have heard from the Minister of Finance that he is prepared to come to the Ordinary Members committee and talk about our, a couple of weeks ago, \$60 million deficit, now \$100 million deficit, and we have talked about this in the House, so I believe I am safe in speaking to those numbers now, and talk to Members and get their support for certain mitigation measures.

Mr. Speaker, I think what is very clear in my opinion is that this is consensus when it is convenient. I say that because we have had numerous occasions in the past year where FMB, the seven of them, have sat around a little table and decided to vote yes to spend an additional \$8 million, \$20 million...I do not know how many million dollars on the correction facility, just as an example, and certainly Regular Members were not consulted.

I can tell you, had this side of the House been consulted, we would have said build the building with the money we have given you, but we were never asked, Mr. Speaker. That is just

a specific example. So we have overspending problems that have simply arisen because FMB has decided to wield their power without coming to the other Members of this House and truly adhering to our consensus style and consensus system.

Mr. Speaker, almost two weeks I think we have been in session and no discussion from the Finance Minister about this deficit. We all know about it because we have been briefed continually, Mr. Speaker, but it has been very frustrating to have our constituents talk to us about the rosy future, the outlook that we have that we seem to put a nice brave face on when we are talking about our future.

Mr. Speaker, the Members on this side of the House know that is not reality. There are some good prospects, but you know, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to bail the ship with no buckets. We are sitting here with our hands scooping water madly as fast as we can and trying to put on a brave face. I have no idea why this government and this Finance Minister will not talk about it, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we have gotten some of this information out, but it has taken us asking pointed questions. Mr. Dent here today, myself last week and again today, and that is certainly, Mr. Speaker, I do not think is transparent and forthright.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know why this is the case. It almost seems to me as if the government had sat down and decided that it is like we are on safari, and someone has suggested them to keep all their fingers and toes inside the vehicle so that the public and the Members on this side of the House do not get even more irate at the conduct that has been going on, and start to bite them off. Mr. Speaker, it is a bunker mentality. They dug in and now they are prepared to just wait until the storm is over, wait until session is out and then carry on and hope that they can weather that storm, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Lee spoke of our government spending like drunken sailors, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that is when she was of the impression that we had a \$60 million deficit. Mr. Speaker, if we were a little tipsy at \$60 million, certainly we are bombed now, and this Minister has yet to stand up and talk to the public about the severity of this issue. I recognize that he is prepared to come before AOC and get us to all buy in and support all of the tough decisions that need to be made, but all I can say for consensus government is that when it was time to break out the chequebook and start spending like mad, nobody asked the Members on this side of the House. That, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the true failing of consensus government. It is not in the system, it is in how the actors are playing. Thank you.

-- Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 9, replies to the opening address. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

Reply 4-14(5)

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have not replied to the opening address yet, I can assure you. I would like to talk on the same topic that Mr. Nitah and Mr. Bell have referred to. I think it is an important one, and that is how our government functions.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that last week the Regular Members were joking about we treat them like mushrooms, we

keep them in the dark, we announce things in the House without going back to the committee and sharing the information with them first.

Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of weeks we have purposely changed and let's be more open with the committees. We will take things to the committees. I want to work that way, I want to share it with the committee so they are not surprised when things are brought to the House. We do not want Members to be mushrooms, we do not want them either to be thistles in our side. At the same time, we want to work with the Members and work with committees.

I made a commitment to the chairs of the standing committees that I am open to sharing information with them, I want to share information with them. I have shared as much as I have at this point and want to continue with that.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot have it both ways. Either we will work together as Cabinet and FMB and the committee structure and then bring things to the House or we will work it some other way. We cannot on the one hand criticize the government for not taking things to the committee and surprising you here, and then at the same time stand in here and criticize the government for not bringing things here but waiting to take it to the committee. Which way do we want it?

It is one or the other. It cannot be both or we will always be criticizing each other. I am very prepared, Mr. Speaker, to bring all the information I can bring forward on our fiscal situation. It is not as doom and gloom as some Members would think it is. I do not think there is any plot of going back to some of the efforts from the 13th Assembly. Nothing like that has to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about the need for us to respect the budgeting process. We have a budgeting process that deals with the development of the main estimates and taking those through this Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, it is not my place as the Minister of Finance to start leaking all kinds of information, to begin to make commitments here and to talk about next year's budget. There is a process for that.

We have been through the business planning process, we have heard from the Regular Members and from the committees. We have an opportunity to review the main estimates. We will hear more advice at that time in the committees and then we have the opportunity to debate the budget estimates, the main estimates, in the House here. That is our final opportunity with our main estimates for next year.

Mr. Speaker, any information on what will be in the budget for next year or what will not be in the budget for next year is something that will be determined through that process. It certainly is not my place, I repeat, for me to stand as Minister of Finance and begin to arbitrarily make decisions without consulting with all of the Members. I do respect that process. I think if all of us respected it then we could have a consensus system that works very well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I have a lot of confidence in the system we have. I think if everyone has a willingness to work together then this can be an excellent form of government for our small Territory with a very small population. Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not feel that the system of government here has completely fallen apart at all. I think by working together we can achieve a lot for the people in the Northwest Territories,

whether we are talking about social programs or economic programs or whatever it may be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 9, replies to the opening address. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

Reply 5-14(5)

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have an interesting system of government here in the Northwest Territories. It is very interesting today that we seem to have dueling replies to the opening address, which lends to the uniqueness of our government.

It goes to say that even when you have a Finance Minister who can reply to an opening address, which is again very unique, that is something we should accept and every Member in this House has the opportunity to speak to the government's plans. It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the democracy side of our institution here in the Northwest Territories that when, as we heard Mr. Bell say, "consensus when it is convenient" because when it comes to critical votes, we seem to have a locking of positions, right or wrong on this issue, we are going to do this way, and we are going to convince a couple of other Members to do that and we will happily roll along.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard information from this side of the House from Regular Members more times than not through the media. I believe coming down here for this session, hearing something about a \$60 million deficit. So again, Mr. Speaker, when the Power Corporation board was removed, it was through the media that many of us Members found out.

I just so happened to be reading my e-mail on the computer and reading the transcripts of the previous nights news and I get a phone call from a reporter saying, "What do you think about the removal of the Power Corporation?" or the direction to withdraw. I am sitting in Inuvik thinking, what are you talking about? I am not sure of this, I am just reading some news now and I have some concerns with the stepping in of Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we do seem to have a theme here that is of concern to a lot of Members. It is of concern to Cabinet I am sure when we seem to be going all over the place and nobody is paddling in the same direction.

Mr. Speaker, I have said in this House before that I would gladly pat the back of the Premier and others if at times they told me what we were up to and I might be able to help paddle the boat in the same direction. It is not until we are heading down Niagara Falls, it seems, that all of a sudden the cry out for help comes out. Paddle the other way! We are going the wrong way! Stroke!

Mr. Speaker, this is a concern to me as a Member that has come from the 13th Assembly to see what we have been through, and in this Assembly to see what we are going through now. We have been through a number of these and unfortunately it seems, I do not know if ourselves have taken lightly the environment that we operate under. If in fact what we are doing here is for the better good of the people of the Northwest Territories. Is it truly the situation that we are doing that?

There are times when things get heated that we become quite animated here in pursuing a particular situation and I am as guilty as everyone else when it comes to those situations. There are times when emotions get the best of me and even though I want to paddle in the same direction we are going in a circle. It might mirror again the floor of this House. Even when we seem to be working together, some of us end up back in the same place wondering how come we are back in the same place, we have not made any further distance.

Mr. Speaker, there have been many things that I have grown concerned about in this Assembly, whether it is housing concerns, programs for seniors, whether it is income support for single parents or whether it is government accountability. We do have a system. A system in place that is recognized as unique across Canada. We have only one other jurisdiction that has followed our system and that is in Nunavut. They have just started out. They have not had a call for non-confidence yet, not that I have paid particular attention to that, but unfortunately, we have had, and seem to continue to run into that problem here.

Again, the unique part of this, Mr. Speaker, is the ability that we have as Members of this House to be able to raise specific constituency issues without having to run it through a party whip to say this is my concern. Can I address it today? Can I have one of the ten questions that we will have today to address this issue for my constituency? That is not necessary in our form. We are recognized and we are all given the opportunity to be able to address those concerns from our constituency.

I am one that is very happy. When I travelled to other jurisdictions and met with other parliamentarians and we discuss the systems we are in, I have a lot of other parliamentarians from across Canada saying "You know, that is a pretty good system. We should have something like that" because they feel they do not have the ability to address the party that is holding office, because it is clearly a majority position and if they do not like what is happening, they will just move on and get on with business and all that is left for the official opposition, so to speak, in provinces is to make a lot of noise and be very aggressive.

I have watched our colleagues from the Yukon and their system. A small Assembly and a small territory. I must say, I am very glad we do not operate like that. We have a good system of government.

Yes, sometimes that brings to bear difficulties, because we, as Regular Members, when we have a feeling on this side of the House that something is not right, we can address it with our government, and we can push them to be accountable. When they do not want to give all the information, we, as long as we have the majority of Members of this House, we can put a motion out and we can have the issue addressed, as we have just had with the special audit done by the Auditor General.

Again, that goes to show that we, as Members of this Assembly, can hold ourselves accountable. That is the beauty of the system, to a certain degree, and it is also almost a curse on itself is that we are to hold ourselves accountable.

If we, as the Members of this Assembly have taken an oath to the people of the Northwest Territories, cannot follow our own rules or will not stand up and recognize the fact that our rules

were broken and take the next step, then we have a problem. Then the system starts to fall in on itself. But, if we are people who can manage to speak well in this House, we can deflect quite well as well. We can change the subject. We can move to another issue and not deal with the fundamental issue.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I have concerns that in some places, not only in the Northwest Territories but in Canada now, there are reports of the consensus style of government is being debated. Well, I guess we are now, to a certain degree. I must say, as I first listened to the broadcast, I was thinking I have to say something about this, and I backed off and said no, because if I do, that might just increase the discussion that is taking place. But I do not hear anybody in this House saying change our style of government, not clearly.

I have heard people say review what we are doing. The ultimate review happens, Mr. Speaker, when we all go back for election. If the people of the Northwest Territories do not like the system we are in, then it can be an issue. It can be an issue from their constituencies. It was raised to a certain degree during the election of this Assembly, but it was not a concern for the rest of the Northwest Territories. That is why we are still in this system.

I would have great fear, Mr. Speaker, if we fall into a political system, we will definitely be have's and have not's in certain areas in the Northwest Territories, because the party that can run the best campaign will put most people in, and where will that be located? Well, it is just natural that it fit in the larger centres in the Northwest Territories, because the ability to convince voters en masse takes place when you can get to their doors, in their TVs, on the radios, and knock on their doors.

Mr. Speaker, that is something that we must look at and hold unique in the Northwest Territories. We have to hold this style of government and continue to work with it. And yes, there will be times when government credibility will be called on. Yes, there will be times when we will have heated debate with one another as to the merits of our concern raised for the day. And yes, we will be told to get off of it and get on another issue because this is personal and petty.

Well, I think you will find that in the party form of government, as I have watched our federal government on TV and see how they go about things. It looks like that is all it is, about personalities, as to who can get the biggest bite and who can make the biggest noise.

I think we have accomplished things here around this table, and it is not without difficulty, without a bit of pain. But it is important that we recognize in this style of government that we are independents here. We can vote based on our independence of those people who put us here. That is why it is also a concern to me, Mr. Speaker, that when we come to certain decisions in this House, we also operate by what we hear as convention, and again, that is similar to a partisan system, but here in the Northwest Territories, we work by convention on a certain number of issues. One of the things is when a committee makes a report, a recommendation to government, convention usually says that the Cabinet will sit on their hands and let the Regular Members decide. Judging from that, they will decide if they in fact want to move on the recommendation or if they just feel that it is not important

enough, they can put it aside. That is their prerogative, and we accept that on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, it is of concern to me that when it is convenient, they say no, this time it is an important matter. We are going to vote this way. The optics changes quite a bit.

It has already been reported that a previous motion, a committee recommendation, let's put it clearly, a committee recommendation was defeated on the calling for the Premier's resignation, and yes, it was done so. But I almost point out to people that this time around, the numbers have grown and the concern remains.

So while we discuss what we are doing here in the Northwest Territories, where we want to go, potentially, there is another year in our term. Let's see where Members go, but Members will have an opportunity to speak to where they want to go in a few minutes.

I look forward to hearing what some of the Members will say, unless they have been given the word to say mum and nothing else. I would encourage Members to speak about the motion that will come up later. I think it is critical of us as a government to hold things in a way that would be credible to the Northwest Territories and the people of the Northwest Territories, that they would get all sides of the story, that they would see what has been done and they would understand that when you come to this table, we are not just going to the coffee shop to discuss a few issues and we can change our mind automatically. There has to be some discussion and debate about how government flows and where it moves.

I heard the other day a reference to the Javaroma Tribal Council. Is that what we are becoming here in the Northwest Territories, that level? Well, maybe to a certain degree, we do and we will have to wear that.

Mr. Speaker, it is times like this when we look at ourselves, we look at the work we are getting done, and we have to decide, are we making progress? I recall the first days of this government. When we got into office, we were concerned about the debt wall, something I really stood up and questioned much about in this House. We were very fortunate that we got one-time investments, as we were told.

I heard the other day in the House the Finance Minister talked about our good investment practices. Mr. Speaker, when we started to begin with, I believe the Finance Minister started out as well saying that we started out, we were looking at a debt wall that was months away, so obviously we had no money to invest. It came to us. Not because of good planning but because of luck, as we have heard.

Now, if the Finance Minister has that ability to turn luck around and steer it directly towards us, let's hope that he is got one more thing in his bag of miracles, I guess we could say, because we are all of a sudden being told once again we are facing a serious situation. We have one more year in our mandate. The answers that echoed in this forum a couple of years back, well, we have a few months we think the federal government will be able to come to us and they will give us some dollars, they will provide us the necessary funds to be able to continue offering programs and services.

I believe the first discussion, it was a matter of months. Then as the next session came around I asked the question again about

where are we now with our fiscal situation. What was I told? Well, it is no longer a number of months, it could be six months, maybe a year off.

Well the last answer when asking the question about where is the money for our proposals that were out there, I think the last response we had was, not in the life of this Assembly.

The NRRD Strategy it was called, Non-Renewable Resource Development Strategy. \$230 million, we were working hard to have the federal government recognize the need for that and we could move ahead. What happened to that? Well, it is collecting dust someplace, somebody using it as a door stop or a fan or something, because we have not got it. You got one downpayment as we were told in this Assembly.

Now we went back and we started working on another proposal to the federal government because we were told by the federal government, here is another plan that we are working on, we can get this. We can get this money and we can make a difference, but put your proposal in and we will see what we can do. Maybe this one, I do not know, the trend has been going zero down, no payments for a year. Maybe that is the plan we are working on.

We do not have any more dollars from that as far as I am aware. That might be it. I just heard a colleague tell me maybe the plan fits under the "no payments until 2004." That could be it. Maybe we have fallen into that category.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have something we can show the people of the Territories for all the effort we have been told about going to the federal government. So when I hear Members in this House say, "Hang on people, do not overreact here, do not throw the baby out with the bath water so to speak," there is some hope yet. We are doing so much work with the federal government that we can make a difference. Well, the proof is in the pudding, and we have no pudding. I am afraid we are running out of time and somebody is going to come take the pot we had to cook in it.

Yet we can stand up and say, hang on, we can make this work. It can happen. Mr. Speaker, I can probably find ways of continuing this song and try to break a record or something in this House. I will save that. I think this has just got me warmed up for my next job that I have here today, which is seeing where Members of this Assembly stand on credibility as the Government of the Northwest Territories. Are we willing to put people first or are we going to stand here and stand for ourselves because we are worried about 12 months of pay or a pension? Opportunity knocks and that is what we have here. We have an opportunity to restore credibility to the Government of the Northwest Territories. With that I will close. Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 9, replies to the opening address. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

Reply 6-14(5)

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess as the Government House Leader said we are into dueling replies on consensus government. Right off the bat, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say I much prefer consensus government over the alternative. I know it can be frustrating at times and I think we have heard some of that here today. I think that that frustration

grows largely because communications is not consistent between government and Regular Members. Regular Members really do want to be involved, but they want to know that what they say is being heard.

We want to feel that we can debate meaningful issues. In this system, in the consensus system, Members are given a big role in budgets compared to what is found in other jurisdictions. Nowhere else in Canada do you find Regular Members able to influence what a final budget looks like because they were given six months in advance of seeing it the business plan where they can review it, make suggestions and effect change within how that budget is brought forward. That is a very important part of what a Regular Member's role is, so we need to know that the government is always going to be listening to our comments.

One of the basic tenants that makes that system work is that we are given the information in confidence in our committees. That is also something that does not happen in other jurisdictions. When you have a party system and you have members of other parties and committees, you cannot be given a lot of the information that the government would normally hold close to its chest.

Because we have that information, we can become meaningful partners in the decision-making process. We have more of the information provided to us. When things do not move along quickly enough, we are only given part of the picture, when we only get it some of the time, frustrations can build.

That is what I think I heard today with much of what seems to have gotten us going here was when Mr. Bell made his comments. It was not some time ago that Members in committee heard that the government deficit had grown from what we were presented in the budget speech this year, that it was now approaching \$60 million. All the Members on this side kept that in confidence. The Minister and the government were given time to work out a plan of action so that they could come back to the committee. That information was not leaked by this side of the House to the press.

I was surprised, Mr. Speaker, to receive a phone call about three or four weeks ago from a member of the press saying that Mr. Handley had told him now that that is what had happened. So there was no big public talk, but somehow the Minister favoured one member of the press and gave that information out. Then we started getting phone calls on this side of the House.

Either we have to respect that confidence, all of us, or do not expect the rest of us to give the time that the government has to work with that confidence.

Right now we have heard that the deficit has grown again. As I have pointed out, Mr. Speaker, the government has had an opportunity to develop some plans, because the committee heard quite some time ago now that the deficit was effecting to be quite a bit higher than had been projected.

We have not heard that. We are told that tomorrow, the last day scheduled for sitting, is when we are going to get it. That does not give us enough time to take what the government's position is going to be, what they are going to recommend as a possible course of action, and then have a meaningful debate that the public can hear and understand in this House.

It is frustrating for us because we did not get to it sooner. I think that it is important too that one of the undercurrents that I thought I heard from Minister Handley when he was speaking in his reply was that the government wants to work with the committee and wants to make sure that it has gone through things with the committee before going to the public.

It is important to remember that the government still has to take the lead on a lot of these issues. They have to provide the committee with, what are the options they are looking at? Why? None of us on this side of the House have the resources that they can call on. I cannot go to a department and ask them to prepare the options or different courses of action. I, like most of the Members here, have only a part-time assistant. We cannot be expected to develop the papers that say, here are what some of the possibilities are and here are the implications. We need that sort of leadership to come from the government and it has to come in a timely basis.

A couple of days ago when we were debating the committee report, the Government House Leader said that we should be talking about more important things. He mentioned that kids were sleeping in the cold and other pressing social conditions. Mr. Speaker, it is only today that we are going to have the GNWT response to the social agenda report tabled. Why did we not get that tabled early in the session so we could talk about it? Why did we not get the recruitment and retention plan tabled early in the session, so we could talk about how we are going to deal with our shortage of health care people and personnel in the Northwest Territories? Why did we not get something tabled so we could talk about education and the shortfalls that we have there, the important needs of kids with special needs that we are not dealing with adequately?

The government has to make sure that they can bring those things forward for us to discuss. It is their role as the leaders in this system to present to committee the options for us to get on the table so that we can have these meaningful discussions. The Members on this side do not have the resources or the ability to prepare the discussion papers that could be tabled for us to talk about in committee of the whole. We cannot prepare different positions, or the legislation that we might need to get on. That is where some of this frustration is coming from. The consensus system can work but communication has to be two-way.

Members on this side of the House have to be heard. Members on the government side have to be willing to listen to the advice that we give, and they have to be willing to bring forward the important issues that all of the people in the North want to hear us talking about, because it is up to them to put the discussion papers forward for us to discuss. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 9, replies to opening address. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Reply 7-14(5)

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had originally planned on doing a reply to opening address, but I decided not to do it because I wanted us to get on with our agenda today, but now that we are in this, I really do want to comment and add to the debate that is going on in this House. I will try to make my comments relatively short.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe what we are talking about here is very relevant. It is in fact a reply to the opening address that Minister Antoine stated in this House back in February 19th. In the sessional statement, he stated that our constituents also ask that we give them an open and accountable government, so it is very relevant that we are talking about how, in fact, accountable we are.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that, given what has been happening in this House for a little while, and actually in the collective three years that I have been here, I have given a lot of thought about exactly what sort of government system we have and whether or not it is working as best as it should, and whether or not there is any room for us to improve.

I must be honest, Mr. Speaker, I have not figured that one out and I think if I did, I would be elsewhere writing a book or something. What I do know, Mr. Speaker, is that whatever we have here is not working. I have no doubt in my mind that we have to review this and try to find a way to improve it.

Mr. Speaker, I must also say that I do not really know exactly what consensus government is, but having heard from those who want to speak about it, how I understand the consensus government is that you have a group of people, leaders, they gather around with a common purpose, a mutual objective with the public interest in mind, that discuss important issues of the day on behalf of the people that they serve or they represent.

At the end of the discussions, there has to be a consensus as to where that group should be heading to. Mr. Speaker, if that is the definition of a consensus, or if that is a functional purpose of a consensus government, I can tell you that is not happening in this House.

Mr. Speaker, in the last three years, I do not know of any important issue or anything that we have agreed on. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if 19 of us could agree that this room is round, or if the sky out there is dark today.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is high time that we get out of this collective denial that this consensus government is the be all and end all, and that it is serving the people of the Northwest Territories.

I do not want to be seen as somebody who is an advocate of party politics either. I want to make that very clear. I think that I cannot imagine what worse life than a backbencher in a party system, or a junior member in an opposition party, with all due respect to all the parliamentarians around the world who possess that kind of office, because I know that I serve better some of the issues that my constituents bring to me and that on occasion, I have been able to address their personal issues and personal situations because I am an independent Member in a consensus government.

That does not say that our system that we have here, this consensus system, is a model for all and that it is serving and that it should be maintained at all costs. I further say, Mr. Speaker, that as far as I can see, what we have here is a 19 party system, so we already have a party system, in my opinion. We have 19 party leaders here. We all represent our own platform. We ran on it and we got elected on it. I do not know what...each one of us had a platform when we ran. So we came in here as 19 parties, and we form a coalition -- a very loose coalition -- in this House.

Mr. Speaker, what I see is we have a coalition of Cabinet versus non-Cabinet. Maybe we have a coalition of Yellowknife and the rest, although Yellowknife Members never, I do not think, got together to talk about moving as a Yellowknife Cabinet, or Yellowknife coalition. I also see that by virtue of so many issues we discuss, we have a loose coalition of rural and urban, or some sort of a group...I do not know.

Cabinet Members, the coalition of seven party leaders, obviously need three more party leaders to pass anything. So once in a while, they grab three from the rest of us and then they can pass things. That is the reality of what is going on here.

We do not have a consensus government and we do not have a consent on anything. The biggest question, the most important question we have to ask is how are we serving the public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I would argue that anybody who thinks that there is anything wrong with the system when we have gone through two leadership questions in one year, they have to rethink that answer.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I have given a consent to any budget. Well, I do not think there was a consensus reached about our spending priorities or our social priorities. I do not remember that. To say that is a complete and utter denial. All I have ever been able to do is okay, maybe a small consent.

Let's look at how we are serving the public interest. What are the big issues we have had to deal with in this House that perhaps we could have done better if we had a government that had a mandate and they had enough power to move on this agenda. The energy policy, it has taken us three years. We still do not have it. We have the future of health care which, if we ever discussed it, it boils into a rural or urban issue. We have a Kyoto agreement that we have not had a discussion on, and we are on the verge of doing but we still do not have. We have the biggest disaster, environmental disaster sitting right underneath Yellowknife. I mean, it is like top ten in the world agenda as the contaminated sites. Have we had a discussion on that? Of course not, because that is, like, a Yellowknife issue.

Mr. Speaker, a transportation strategy, we have not had an agreement on where we build the road. We have not had an agreement on do we go where the traffic is? Do we go where there should be more jobs created? Should we build the road first? Should we go to the diamond mines? We have never had that discussion here.

If we have a consensus government, where is the discussion on how we are spending the money? What are the priorities? The best we can show to the people is that the Cabinet coalition goes in there, they have their little try at consensus building. I am sure they have seven party leaders proposing their seven party platforms, and we come down to the lowest common denominator, or whatever they can agree on. Then we have 11 party leaders get into a coalition on the other side and we talk about that, about what we think, and of course, 11 of us come from all different places with our own platform and we are our own respective leaders of our own party, so the only

way we can get anything pushed is if we can get a coalition together as a party leader.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, on and on about the issues we have not been able to agree on. Tourism issues -- we could not agree on that. Addictions facilities, can we agree on where the facility should go, or whether there should be a little treatment centre in every community or it should be in Yellowknife? Education...anyway, I do not want to say that this is the fault of Cabinet. I think that Cabinet or this Assembly as a whole has tried, and God knows every one of us here has worked really hard to push those.

But to say that these 19 people come in here with the best intentions and they are making judgments on the basis of their personal beliefs, personal judgment, their local issues, whatever...the best thing we bring to the floor, to say that 19 of us could actually sit here or sit in another room or at a retreat or wherever, and that we could actually discuss in a substantive way, and discuss it long enough and hard enough to come up with a decision that leads to the needs of the general, mutual and public interest, is a complete denial. That is not happening here and I do not see it. The only loser in this game is the public. That is how I see it, Mr. Speaker.

For me, the accountability question comes to, on what basis do we, each 19 of us have, each one of us make our decisions about these important issues? I have a position on the energy policy, transportation, whatever. As hard as I try, it is not, and you know, I am working like a party leader here, but I do not have a party leadership convention. I do not have a policy convention. All I could do is call different people. I try to read everything I can, but I am only one person. So where is the link between each 19 of us say and to extend on and to vote on and what the people out there are thinking? I am not knocking the job that each Member here is trying to do. We are trying to represent our constituents in the best way that we can, but I do believe we have to find a system where the views of the people that we serve can be better reflected in the way we stand on issues. That is really, really important, because otherwise, we are just an isolated vessel in here, talking in the best way we know how, but it may be totally out of touch with what the people out there are thinking.

I have been asked a lot, because I said on other occasions that we have a very, well, I do not know if we have a completely dysfunctional system, but I do know, without any doubt, that whatever we have here is not a consensus government. What I think is we are part of a party politics of 19 members, except that we have sometimes the worst part of each system. In consensus government, if you cannot agree on something that is of public interest, then you get to agree on the least contentious basis.

In party politics, God knows that there are a lot of problems with party politics. But one thing that is good about party politics that we do not have here is that whoever gets into a party, they can govern. They can govern for the period of time that they have. Then they are held accountable at the end of their mandate, whenever that may be, whether it is set or it is by the Premier. In parliamentary systems, Premiers or Prime Ministers could call an election. In the system in the U.S., they know that they are going to go into an election every four years. Another good thing about party politics that is not here is that before the government is formed, people out there know what the government stands for. Even if, you know, they do not

live up to those expectations, at least any respectable party will have a publication out there that tells the people where they stand as a government, not as an individual member.

What we have here, we do not know that. We form a consensus government on the basis of a coalition of seven party leaders. They get together. They work out an agenda after six months. They try to explain to the other 11 of them. I tell you, I know that some Members here think that we do not get consulted enough. We would like to be a part of the thing. Sometimes I think I am just consulted too much. Like, Cabinet Members cannot move anywhere because they have to ask 11 of us all the time. But then, I do not have a say on... I cannot delete an item in the budget. I cannot say no, I do not think Kyoto is the first thing. I want more money for Stanton. I mean, I cannot do that. I cannot say, as a party leader, that is what I will fight for in the next election and I cannot ask that this party to be accountable on that.

I think I have made... I do not even know how long I have talked. I am sorry. I think that it is irresponsible for politicians, or members of any group such as this which is a Legislature, to say let's just bury our heads in the sand and say this is consensus. This is consensus and this is the way to be, and we are unique, and look at the party politics. It is horrible. Let's just move on with it and let's just pretend that this works, and let's just keep on going with our collective denial that this is what is working. I think for those who think that this is the best system that the NWT deserves, then let them stand up and defend it. If anybody else who does not agree with that, then we should, I think we deserve it, I think the people deserve it to have a really serious discussion about how we could improve the system, not necessarily to lead to the party politics, but maybe we could be totally creative and ingenious and come up with some kind of hybrid that would combine the consensus system and party politics that would minimize some of the down side of both systems and make the system that we have better.

Another thing I did not mention is the fact that the double-edged sword of individual power, the power of an individual Member in consensus government, can be put to such a good use and I have days here where I go wow, I made a difference, this one person.

I know that my power and my ability to do the job is only as great or as limited as my own beliefs, my own backgrounds, my own shortcomings and my own positives. I think that at some point, people have to ask, is that good enough? I think that is a very relevant question that should be asked.

I am going to close there and I do hope that we will discuss this again sometime soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 9, replies to opening address. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Reply 8-14(5)

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first time in the life of this Assembly that I have used this opportunity. I had not anticipated doing it today, but on the topic of this significance and with so many of my colleagues, who have taken advantage of it or seen the need to talk about it, I thought I should get up too, and at least I would not be conspicuous by my absence.

Mr. Speaker, this was indeed one of the compelling reasons for me to run as a candidate. I would like to think it is one of the reasons that I got elected, because I believe that the consensus government was not working well, that it needed reform, and that it needed to be changed. It was not, Mr. Speaker, a rejection of the consensus system.

It has been easy for some of my colleagues here to label me a party politics guy. I am not. I am probably going to have to keep saying that over and over and over and I hope it catches. I do believe that the system that we have, at least the system that we envision, Mr. Speaker, is indeed the right one for the Northwest Territories.

I lived in the Yukon from 1976 to 1986, Mr. Speaker, and those were the years in which partisan politics were introduced in our sister territory to the west. I did not like what had happened in the time that I lived there. I found it, Mr. Speaker, to be a divisive and a polarizing influence on what was already quite a small and I will use the word fragile, multi-layered northern society. It is not unlike the one here in the Northwest Territories.

I think we must take some steps, Mr. Speaker, to avoid going down that path. The way that I would like to see consensus government returning to, Mr. Speaker, because I have been told by Members who had experience in the previous Assembly here, but going back three and four assemblies, perhaps they had it right then. They had mechanisms, they had ways between the various committees and mechanisms of the Assembly of the day to get together and work out their issues, hammer out their differences and be able to come forward and move issues and make progress on things.

I said it a couple days ago and I would like to follow through. I think over the past three Assemblies, Mr. Speaker, we have engineered out, we have organized and chartered that kind of capacity, that collaborative kind of capacity is gone now. What is missing is something that I think I would like to go further than some of my colleagues who have said that they would like to be -- who said that consensus government can work through the committee system. We have to go even further than that. I would like to be involved, Mr. Speaker, in the exploration stage of issues where we can actually work together on designing the solutions, defining the issues, and bringing many more voices into this kind of thing than really what we have today, which is essentially the departments, the Ministers and Cabinet. A committee system today is really restricted to but one, I think, essential power, Mr. Speaker, and that is the power of veto. We do not like something, we will tell the Minister. We will tell Cabinet and it is probably gone, but in the stages leading up to that, we really do not have a consistent and I think a meaningful way of making a difference and helping to move issues along. We have become much like any other parliament or Legislature in the rest of Canada, where there is government elected with a mandate for the people, which I think is kind of a handy thing, and an opposition. There are big gaps and big secrets between them.

We do not need to do that, Mr. Speaker. It is interesting to reflect here that this whole notion, this whole dark, ugly notion of party politics may have crept up upon us, and if we are not careful, it just may overtake. Let's do the math. Let's look at the numbers. We are seven people in our Executive Council or Cabinet. How many people have indicated, Mr. Speaker, that they voted for or would vote for a motion to remove the

Premier, and really, Mr. Speaker, it is a move of confidence against the government. There are seven on this side. Four of us, myself included, have said we believe the stability and the institution of continuing our government. We have an interesting dynamic here, Mr. Speaker, seven, seven, and four. Are we going to allow this to overtake, at least the next year of this Assembly? Are we going to allow it to set the tone, to become the model for future Assemblies? I sure hope not.

I am a proponent of reform, of consensus, Mr. Speaker, not its rejection. I will say it again and again and again, I am not for party politics. I do have some plans about how I believe we could improve the system of consensus government and how, Mr. Speaker, we could give the vote a much more direct say in the leadership and the mandate of a government.

I would much prefer though, Mr. Speaker, to pick myself the time and place and venue in which I will release those plans, those ideas, those proposals, and I would only ask that you stay tuned.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, to conclude my reply to the opening address, I would like to say to my constituents that they can count on me to continue the promise and the pledge that I made to them when they accepted me as their MLA, and that is that I am going to continue to represent their best interests to the very best of my ability, issue by issue, to try to make the right decisions on behalf of the constituents of Great Slave. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 9, replies to opening address. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to make a second reply to opening address.

-- Laughter

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member is seeking...do you wish to refer to a specific rule to do that, Mr. Krutko?

MR. KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I am asking unanimous consent of the House to be able to make another reply to the opening address. I know I have already done so, but if the support is there, I would like to be able to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Would that perhaps be Rule 41(1), Mr. Krutko?

-- Laughter

MR. KRUTKO: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 41(1), and make a second reply to the opening address. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Krutko.

Reply 9-14(5)

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regard to statements that have been made so far today in regard to replies to the opening address, I for one believe that the consensus style of government is unique and it does work for the geographical makeup of the Northwest Territories, with

our small population, our vast area, the distance between communities, from north to south, east to west, and also to ensure that we have a system that basically allows us to have the flexibility or the ability to develop agendas and issues that affect each one of us every day, day in and day out, and be able to establish an agenda of issues and items that we, all 19 Members, are able to have a say on how we are going to govern ourselves, and also how we are able to bring matters to the floor in regard to not having to worry if the issues you are bringing forth are based on a party system, in which one party may agree or disagree, but also allowing ourselves to work for the betterment of the people we serve, and the uniqueness of a party system, which does not allow you to really do that, because in most cases, you have to stick to party solidarity and stick to the party platform, which in most cases, once it is set it is set and there is no swaying away from that.

I think one thing that we have to realize as a government that makes us unique is also that we do have a system in place for accountability. We have a system that we establish through rules, regulations and policies and the way the decisions should be made through a system of checks and balances.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, what we see in most cases is that we are not following the rules that we set for ourselves and also the process that we allow ourselves through a decision-making process that allows input from our Members, allows us to have dialogue with the Cabinet Ministers through a planning process, a budgetary process and ensuring that we do have a system that really works.

Mr. Speaker, from what we have seen in the 14th Assembly is that we are not following our rules and following policies and regulations that we put in place to ensure that accountability is there.

One thing which I see which is troubling to myself is the amount of power that we put into the hands of the few by way of deputy ministers. Now we have a system in place dealing with how capital is going to be allocated. We have a deputy minister's committee which basically sets the capital priorities based on a room full of deputy ministers.

Before that we had a system in place which was a five-year capital planning process which allowed communities and governments and the MLAs to sit down and say, what does the community need through its capital planning process and go in there every year to update that plan. We for some reason have short-circuited that system to allow for deputy ministers to have the ability to sit in their room and say "Okay, what do you want, what do you want, what do I need?" but not allowing ourselves as Members of the Legislature to say, "Look, here guys. The capital expenditures you are making affects every one of us in the Northwest Territories by way of all communities we represent, the ridings we represent, and to be fair to the 19 Members in this House.

What I have seen coming from the 13th Assembly into the 14th Assembly is that we have had allegations made to certain Members in regard to calling for reviews by way of conflict complaints and at the end of it all we find out that there are all these recommendations made by way of setting rules and regulations so that this thing does not happen again.

The first thing we do going in from the 13th Assembly into this Assembly is we sort of chucked out the rules and said, "Well

sorry guys, we will give all the power to a group of deputy ministers to tell us how we are going to do things, how we are going to expend capital dollars and you guys sit in the room with a bunch of cards and play poker amongst yourselves and say, "Hey, who is going to win once, who has got the biggest hand and who has got the better hand? We will win those capital projects." The Department of Justice seems to be doing a great job.

Now they are able to get a capital expense of some \$50 million yet we are having problems in the area of health, social services, programs and services in our governments.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, consensus government works when we abide by the rules, not change the rules for the sake of changing the rules, but set the rules, give it the teeth and the ability to really mean something; to really have the ability to avoid these things from happening again.

I for one feel that we as a government have to ensure that we have a system that is open. That we do not have a room of deputy ministers sitting there by themselves allocating capital that has an effect on everyone in this House, and everyone in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I was totally amazed to go through a process where there was zero dollars. The highways in my ridings, Highway No. 8, that is the first time I have ever seen a zero relating to that capital infrastructure. Yet we find out that there has been million-dollar contracts signed to the tune of some \$12 million to do work in regard to Highway No. 3. Twelve million dollars. Yet there is zero for Highway No. 8.

I think as a government we have to be accountable. We have to show we are not there strictly for the sake of excuses that it is based on a formula, it is based on numbers, it is based on need or greed. I am not too sure which one of those it fits into.

I think as a government we have to be able to have a system that for the little guy that is having a problem with accessing housing or someone having problems because they are not able to access social benefits, or someone who is not having access to our health and social services system because of the system being overrun by the bureaucracy and too much red tape.

I think as a government we have to do more to realistically say to ourselves, who elected us? Who are the people that put us here? Who are the people who, at the end of the day, put their trust and faith in us by voting for us, to give us the support that we need to be here representing them? Not the other way around, that once we get here we say, well I have a title now, I am a little bit higher up the ladder so basically you people down below there, if we have any crumbs left over we will sort of shove them aside, and if you get some of them, well you get to keep those.

Yet we are hearing about clawbacks, benefit agreements.. People have waited for years to finally get some real benefit from resource development in the Northwest Territories and what do we do? Claw back those benefits. There is something wrong with a system when the power of a department or the power of a particular bureaucrat is so fast that we have no real system of saying, well look here, what rule did you follow? What was the accountability process? What were the checks and balances to ensure there was a thorough review of those decisions, or a thorough review to ensure that there is a paper

trail that you can say, that decision was based on these checks. Not a decision made that after the fact you find out there was no real accountability process, there was no real evaluation of what the cost benefit was or what the evaluation, what the loss of that program is to the residents of the Northwest Territories.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we do have to ensure that accountability is key. Consensus government works when the accountability is in place and we follow their rules that are established. What we are finding is that those rules are being breached and broken day in and day out by a system of government which needs to be made more accountable. If that means establishing more rules, then I guess we will have to do that.

What frustrates me, coming from the 13th Assembly into the 14th Assembly, is we never learned what happened in the 13th Assembly. Basically all we are doing is saying, "Well, that is their problem, we are sort of going to reinvent our own rules, regulations, our own agenda and we will move on whatever we feel like. If we feel good on a particular day, a particular issue, we will move on it, not really realizing what the implications to the whole society in the Northwest Territories will be from the small communities to the large communities to the programs and services, from health care to justice to ensuring that we have the dollars to run our programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, I for one feel that it comes back to a question of trust, honesty, accountability and also being able to work together.

I use the last word "work together" in the context of listening from all sides, hearing what people are saying, good, bad or indifference, but at least at the end of the day we walk out of the room with a consensus where we all can agree that the decision we made is a decision we can all live by.

Without that consensus, where we know that we are fractured to a point where we cannot agree, well, at least let's, at the end of the day, agree to disagree and move on and leave that matter to someone else.

I for one feel that, as a system of government, we cannot afford the luxury of party politics where big dollars and people who have power by way of affiliation of a specific party, the Liberal Party, the PC Party, the NDP. You can buy an election strictly by affiliation.

You can basically, at the end of the day, establish policies, procedures, which are strictly established for special interest groups, not the interest of the people but the interest of special interest groups who want their agenda driven through a particular party.

In regard to party politics, but yet in a consensus government, we can talk about the social issues. We can talk about the education problems. We can talk about programs and services that are either lacking in one area where we need a major cash influx in another.

I think that as a government, we have to pull back some of these powers and responsibilities that we have been devolving to deputy ministers, to bureaucrats in this government who, in my view, have too much power. They have the power to do whatever they feel they would like to do, knowing there is no accountability at the end of the day, where if it comes down to

a vote in the House, or comes down to a decision through a supplementary appropriation, there is very little that we can do from this side of the House. As we found out, you can try to pass a motion or make a suggestion of cutting a specific dollar amount. At the end of the day, you do not really have that much power, being a Member on this side of the House.

The only power we have is through the dialogue we have through the capital planning process, and ensuring that the system of developing a budget, which we have a say in, but yet the direction comes from a department. The key is to get to the department before they make that decision, so when they come down to sit down with us with a budget, we had input, not after the fact a committee of deputy ministers stand around in a room and decided what the priority is based on their formula. There has to be a better system in place that allows ourselves as Members of the Legislative Assembly and Members who represent constituents, people in our ridings and people in the Northwest Territories, to develop a plan, a business plan, a budget, that we bring forth to this House which we know that we have covered all the bases. We have allowed for a fair distribution of the resources, so that it is distributed across the board fairly, not strictly sitting aside, allowing a committee of deputy ministers to make that decision for us, because that is where the problem lies in this government. We have too much power in the hands of a few. I for one feel that we have to develop a better accountability system.

You hear it from the Cabinet Ministers. They say that they have gone to the department demanding certain thing. They have stressed that they wanted the department to change, but yet at the end of the day, the department says "Sorry, folks, we are responsible for the department. All you are is a Minister." So if they have that much power, what does that tell us? That we have lost control of this government where the bureaucracy runs what goes on in this Legislative Assembly, what goes in our budgets, what is going to be allocated to any particular riding or community? That for me is where the bottleneck is. We have to re-look at this whole area of accountability, accessibility, ensuring that the public dollars are being spent and are being accounted for through a system that gives us that accountability.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for giving me another shot at this. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Mr. Krutko. Item 9, replies to opening address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. I will just take a bit of a pause here. Before we get into the next item, colleagues, I would just like to welcome to the visitors' gallery the presence of Major Hoef, from the Salvation Army Mission here in Yellowknife.

-- Applause

Thank you. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 11: REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development Report on the Review of Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act. In the interest of time, Mr. Speaker, I

seek unanimous consent to have Committee Report 13-14(5) deemed read and printed into Hansard. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to deem Committee Report 13-14(5) read. Are there any nays? There are no nays. The report is deemed to be read and printed into Hansard. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

Committee Report 13-14(5): Report on the Review of Bill 14: An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act

Introduction

Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act is ironically a straightforward and simple piece of legislation. The amendment establishes the Lot Development Revolving Fund (LDRF) and sets the amount available to the fund at \$4 million.

The Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development had no concerns with the amendment itself. Committee concerns centered on the details of how the Lot Development Revolving Fund would work.

Background

The Members of the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development first heard of the proposed Lot Development Revolving Fund in the February 20th, 2002 Budget Address as part of a four part program aimed at encouraging the private sector to develop affordable rental accommodations in non-tax based communities.

On April 24th, 2002 the government provided the standing committee with a legislative proposal on amending the Revolving Funds Act. Also included with the legislative proposal was an attachment dated January 25th, 2002. The attachment provided a very brief outline of how the government envisioned the Lot Development Revolving Fund working.

On May 10th, 2002, the Standing Committee on Government and Economic Development met to consider the legislative proposal and program details contained in the attachment.

Members of the standing committee assumed the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs had time to develop further program details over what was contained in the January 25th attachment.

Consequently, in the committee letter of May 27th, 2002 the committee provided general support for the legislative proposal and directed the Government House Leader to proceed with the drafting of the legislation. Also included in the letter were a set of questions addressing committee concerns with program delivery.

These concerns included:

- How the program would operate in communities that only had Indian Affairs Branch lands available for development;
- Whether the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development had been consulted;
- How the LDRF would be reimbursed once lots have been developed on Indian Affairs Branch land;

- How the program impacts on land claim or self-government negotiations;
- Concern was expressed that the LDRF would replace existing lot development initiatives offered through the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. Members wanted assurances this was not the case;
- How the LDRF would work for lots developed on Commissioner's Lands;
- For any revolving fund to work properly the product or service must turn over on a regular basis to replenish the fund so that more lot development can occur. Members requested further information on interested communities and on which communities would see lots being developed in the summer of 2002;
- How the companion Subsidy Bridging Program would work;
- Whether territorial and federal boards, agencies and departments could access the LDRF;
- How the government would lessen the potential for land speculation on lots developed under the program;
- What stakeholder consultation had taken place or was underway;
- Five year forecast for lot development in the communities;
- Details on financial controls and audit procedures.

The government responded to the committee's letter on June 11th, 2002 the same day on which the government introduced Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act. Bill 14 was referred to the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development for review on the same day.

The committee considered the June 11th response from the government to the concerns raised by the standing committee at its June 13th, 2002 meeting.

It became apparent to committee members that the development of the actual program details had yet to be undertaken. Essentially, by recommending passage of Bill 14, the committee would be giving the department carte blanche to develop the program.

In light of the amount of money involved in the LDRF and the lack of community consultation, committee members were reluctant to give this approval in the absence of definitive program detail.

In a June 13th, 2002 letter, the standing committee conveyed their concerns to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and requested further information from the department. Members wanted to determine whether public hearings were needed, or, depending on the Department's response, whether the committee would proceed with the clause-by-clause review of Bill 14 and refer it to committee of the whole for consideration during the June session.

Neither the Government House Leader nor the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs responded to the committee's letter until August 26th, 2002. Obviously this was too late for the committee to consider the bill during the June session or to hold public hearings outside of the capital city over the summer months.

On August 27th, 2002 the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development held a public hearing on Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act in Yellowknife. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs provided the committee with a briefing on how they saw the Lot Development Revolving Fund and its companion programs working. Members were concerned as it seemed the existing way of financing lot development through MACA was being changed without any community consultation. Other Members were concerned by the impacts the program would have on tax-based communities that were in close proximity to eligible communities.

Once again, the further information provided by the department gave rise to more questions on the part of committee and meant that Members were not prepared to do a review of Bill 14 and report it to the Assembly.

On August 30th, 2002 the Standing Committee sent a letter to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs outlining the committee's concerns. The letter also requested the department provide the committee with a technical resource person conversant with the details of the Lot Development Revolving Fund and its companion programs so that the committee could hold public hearings in some affected communities.

On September 16th, 2002 the Government House Leader responded to the committee in a letter stating that the government planned to take some time to review the proposed approach and consider the issues raised by the committee.

The committee wrote the Government House Leader on October 8th, 2002 to ask whether the committee could expect a response to its August 30th letter and whether the government even wanted Bill 14 to be dealt with during the fall sitting.

The Government House Leader responded on October 16th, 2002 by requesting a meeting with himself and the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to discuss the committee's outstanding concerns with Bill 14.

At the committee meeting on October 21st, 2002, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs informed Members the government would not be funding any new initiatives because of fiscal restraint measures put in place by Cabinet. These restraint measures meant that companion programs designed to ensure the success of the Lot Development Revolving Fund would not be funded. This caused the department to reconsider whether the lot development program could be successful if implemented in isolation.

Conclusion

It appears that the government will not be proceeding with the lot development scheme proposed in Bill 14. The committee, for obvious reasons, concurs that the bill should not be proceeded with at this time.

The reason the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development has chosen to deliver a report on Bill 14 is to educate the public on the processes that impeded passage of this bill.

The members of the standing committee were asked to approve a \$4 million revolving fund without any definitive details on how the program would work. The committee has a responsibility to ensure that the government spends its money prudently and that government programs are equitable and fair to all Northwest Territories communities.

It was apparent to the committee that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs was developing details of the program on the fly. The committee does not fault the work of the department and must admit real progress was being made. However, in light of fiscal realities it is clear the department has to re-examine how it will fund lot development in the non-tax-based communities.

Committee members noted that new funding in the amount of \$300,000 for a Subdivision Subsidy Program was included in Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 1, 2002-2003. These funds were approved during the June sitting. It is strongly recommended that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs use that funding to advance the development of lots and subdivisions in non-tax-based communities. The committee will be seeking clarification on how this money is expended.

In closing, the committee looks forward to reviewing a new plan for lot development in the near future.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Committee Report 13-14(5) be received and adopted. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. We have a motion. 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. Item 11, reports of standing and special committees. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. The honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 12: REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON THE REVIEW OF BILLS

Bill 28: An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has reviewed Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2, and wishes to report that Bill 28 is now ready for consideration in committee of the whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Frame Lake, Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4) and have Bill 28 considered in committee of the whole today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 93(4). Are there any nays? Thank you. Mr. Dent, I have just received notice that it was the wrong number. Would you take the floor again, Mr. Dent?

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand it is actually Rule 70(5) that I wish to ask for unanimous consent to have waived, so that Bill 28 may be considered in committee of the whole today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 70(5), moving Bill 28 into committee of the whole for today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You have consent, Mr. Dent. Bill 28 has been moved for consideration in committee of the whole for today. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, tabling of documents.

ITEM 13: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 73-14(5): Keeping Our Minds Strong: A Discussion Paper on Revitalizing Aboriginal Languages in the NWT

Colleagues, I wish to table a discussion paper on revitalizing aboriginal languages in the NWT entitled Keeping our Minds Strong, and it is prepared by the Office of the Languages Commissioner. This document is in English and in French.

Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabled Document 74-14(5): Doing Our Part: The GNWT Response to the Social Agenda

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled Doing Our Part: The GNWT Response to the Social Agenda. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

Tabled Document 75-14(5): List of Interactivity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 for the Period April 1, 2002 to September 30, 2002

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as required by section 32.1, subsection 2 of the Financial Administration Act, I wish to table the following document entitled List of Interactivity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 for the Period April 1, 2002 to September 30, 2002. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 13, tabling of documents. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

Tabled Document 76-14(5): Response to Oral Question 342-14(5): Chronology of Activities Regarding the NWT Power Corporation

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a response to a question I asked in the House,

Question 342-14(5), regarding the chronology of events in relation to the NWT Power Corporation.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 13, tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, motions. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

ITEM 16: MOTIONS

Motion 16-14(5): Dissolution of the 14th Legislative Assembly (Defeated)

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS section 1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees rights and freedoms set out in subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society;

AND WHEREAS section 3 of the Charter provides every citizen of Canada with the right to vote in an election of Members of the House of Commons or of a Legislative Assembly and to be qualified for membership therein;

AND WHEREAS the 14th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories was elected on December 6th, 1999;

AND WHEREAS all Members of the 14th Assembly took an oath of office to solemnly and sincerely promise and swear that they will duly and faithfully and to the best of their skill and knowledge, execute the powers and trust reposed in them as Members of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the term of the 14th Assembly expires on January 5, 2004;

AND WHEREAS under section 9(3) of the Northwest Territories Act, the Governor in council, after consultation, may dissolve the Legislative Assembly, thus causing a new Legislature to be elected;

AND WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly is of the view that the electorate of the Northwest Territories must continue to hold the Legislative Assembly accountable for its actions;

AND WHEREAS by exercising their democratic right to vote, the citizens of the Northwest Territories are permitted through the ballot box to express their views;

AND WHEREAS the Members of the Legislative Assembly must continue to hold the confidence of the electorate;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that the 14th Legislative Assembly request the Governor and Council to dissolve the 14th Legislative Assembly by January 31, 2003, to permit the issuance of writs for a general election for the 15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHER, that the Speaker transmit this resolution to the Governor in Council.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. We have a motion. The motion is in order. To the motion. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have talked a number of times around this issue and I will not use the whole allotment that would be given to me as mover of the motion.

I would, Mr. Speaker, like to reference why I feel this is necessary for us as the 14th Assembly to move to a general election. To clear some of the concerns raised out there, there has been some talk that if we do go to an election, that will cost us more money. Well, Mr. Speaker, all we do is move up the election year from the next year up to the upcoming election, if this motion is adopted, which would be mid-February, I believe, would be the time that they could put this into place and possibly have a new government in place by mid-March.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us, as we read through the motion, that we maintain the confidence of those who put us here. Mr. Speaker, it is not an easy job to try to set up your private life and business life to match and equal what is expected of us, but it is required of us to do just that. Mr. Speaker, I have mentioned this a couple of times, but to get to the point, I will just read a couple of things to try to draw attention to that.

Under the Conflict of Interest Act, obligations of Members, section 75(a):

Each Member shall perform his or her duties of office and arrange his or her private affairs in such a manner as to maintain public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of the Member.

Further in that, under 75(d):

Each Member shall make all reasonable efforts to resolve any conflict of interest that may arise in favour of the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, under section 77(3):

Where the Premier has a conflict of interest in any matter relating to the performance of his or her duties as Premier, he or she shall:

- (a) Disclose the general nature of the conflict of interest to the Executive Council;
- (b) Delegate to a Minister designated by the Deputy Premier the responsibility to perform his or her duties in respect of the matter; and
- (c) Refrain at all times from attempting to influence any decision in respect of the matter.

Mr. Speaker, even though we have heard some Members say that this is something they wanted time to consider, because it may be deemed as new from the Auditor General's report, unfortunately, it has been an ongoing item. And that is why the

committee recommended to this House the recommendations it did.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the actions of our government, and again, for the record, it was unanimously accepted by this House that the Auditor General's report be accepted as it was written. There was no disputing the facts, but the House decided that there was no need to go any further, that the resignation of the Premier was not required. And that, in fact, in speaking to the committee recommendation, there was some discussion about the possibility -- would it really fix things to remove one Member, the Premier? Maybe we should look at a general election or go out and get a new mandate. Those comments were made around this House, were made in the media as well, and I think this gives opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to restore that credibility back to this institution, to go back to the people of the Northwest Territories and tell them, or see what they tell us, if this is acceptable behaviour, if we can in fact look at our rules and say, "Well, for this instance, we have decided to step back and just continue on."

I heard Members in this House talk about concerns of impacts of this government's policies that cost them an extra \$20 when they need to get something changed, a document of this government, but, on the other hand, we will let go an added benefit of \$250,000. That is not including the pension that person would get because of the way the termination is set up. In fact, while we are here continuing to work, and if we continued our mandate, that person would still be eligible for a pay and all the benefits of a GNWT employee, even though we would be out on the election trail, so to speak.

Mr. Speaker, it has been ongoing, and I laid it out already, in this House, when we have been told one thing and now told another. It is not acceptable. It is not acceptable that we have laws that we can bend for our own purposes, but yet expect our residents to follow the rules.

It is not acceptable that we can tell someone who has applied for income support that they do not meet the policy and they have to be excluded for another month or two, or they just do not qualify, period, because the policy is firm. But in our own instance, when it comes to taking care of business in a sense of ruling on our own behaviour or our own actions as government, we seem to fall short.

Well, here is an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, that we can all put that trust back into the system. We can all go out and seek a new mandate. We can all do our best to restore, to the best of our ability, the confidence that the people of the Northwest Territories would hold in this office, and they expect us to hold while we are in this office.

Now, I am not asking anybody here to suggest that anybody wanting to come back should walk on water. It cannot be done unless you are walking on a frozen river or lake.

Mr. Speaker, it is a matter of following the rules we set before us and accepting those consequences, accepting what we have done. As Members of this Assembly have accepted the report and what has happened, and not accepted that we should impose a penalty on the fact that actions were taken that did not fit our policies and guidelines as a government.

Here is an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, that all Members, as independents not held down by any rule that you have to vote

with a party or anything like that, but as independents, to represent the people who put you here, to step up to the plate.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that Members will do the honourable thing and restore, accept this motion and restore credibility back to the institution that we are in. At the appropriate time, I will be seeking that we have a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. To the motion. The seconder of the motion, Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also will not take a lot of time to speak to this motion. I think we have been round and round this issue now for some time, and I know that we have important House business that we need to get to. The clock is ticking and I do not imagine for one minute, Mr. Speaker, that anything I say here today is going to cause some Members who have already made up their mind to have a crisis of conscience, as it were, and switch their votes, so let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that I think the Auditor General's report we know, clearly very critical, suggested that the spending in the matter of these severance packages was irresponsible. I think very few of us would doubt or try to refute that now. One of my colleagues has suggested that this is absolutely not defensible, this conduct, and I would have to agree with her, Mr. Speaker.

At times, the government's justification has been certainly something that I have taken objection to. I do not think the explanation from this government that you had to be there at the time to understand the political circumstances washes with me. I am certain it probably does not wash with the public. There are not two sets of rules, Mr. Speaker. There is not a set of rules to be used when it is politically expedient, and when we are on...(inaudible)...footing, and there are mitigating circumstances, there simply is not, Mr. Speaker. We have one set of rules that must be followed.

Mr. Speaker, it is the nature of the job of Premier, and it may not be fair, but it is the nature of that job, the nature of other top jobs, that there is a very, very small margin of error, Mr. Speaker, at the top. It is a very unforgiving position. We have seen recent examples of staff, a former principal secretary who was forced to leave this government because they made a mistake. Did we ask the Members of this House, or were the Members of this House convinced that this man could no longer add value to this government? No, Mr. Speaker, very few of us doubt that. Simply, Mr. Speaker, somebody had to be accountable.

We know, despite what may be interesting reading, Mr. Speaker, that this is not about personalities. It is not about feuds. It is not about alternate agendas. It is about accountability.

Mr. Speaker, if all of the guards at the local prison had fallen asleep and there was a breakout and the town was in a melee and it was ransacked, we would be going to the Minister of Justice and demanding his job -- not because he was responsible, not because he let people out of prison, but because he is the man at the top who must be answerable.

Mr. Speaker, very small margin for error. So quite simply, we are asking who signed this contract? We are not trying to figure out what the motivation was. We are not trying to suggest that

there was some sneaky plot on the part of the Premier here. We do not even need to get into motive, Mr. Speaker. It does not concern us. All we need to know was that the man who signed the contract is the one who has to be accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot turn a blind eye to what we have seen and to what the Auditor General has said. As Mr. Roland has indicated, it seems this government is willing to chase people to all corners of the earth, Heaven forbid they manage to claim some income when they are filing for income support, but on the other hand, we are willing to say that \$250,000 is okay, Mr. Speaker. I cannot say that. I cannot turn a blind eye. I am not here to try to somehow determine what the motivation was, whether there was motivation, because I think it is irrelevant. I will say this, Mr. Speaker, we know that the motion to ask the Premier to resign was defeated in this House, and I respect the will of this House. But Mr. Speaker, the reason we are pushing for an election is because we think it is an important enough issue to take to the public and to ask them their feelings, and to ask them to return the people who they think have acted properly, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly when we talk about an election, there certainly has to be some critical look given to Cabinet's role in this issue. Now, whether it was the Premier, the staff, or whoever that briefed Cabinet about the size of these contracts and the fact that the money was over and above what the contract spoke to, and whoever briefed Cabinet about the fact that maximum...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Bell, I am going to interrupt you here and ask you to direct your comments to the body of the motion, which is the dissolution of the 14th Assembly and not deal with items that have already been discussed. Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am just trying to give some clarification as to why I think it is justified to dissolve this Assembly, and I think it certainly stems from the conduct of Cabinet, in my opinion, because something as critical and significant as this cannot be done lightly...

MR. SPEAKER: To the motion, please.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly support going to election on this matter. I think we have to ask the public whether or not they approve of this government's conduct. I am prepared to do that on this issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. To the motion. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Krutko.

MR. KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion, because I feel, as a Member of this Legislative Assembly, that the mandate I was given by the people of the Mackenzie Delta, has been undermined, not once but twice. Mr. Speaker, when my ability to do the job is in question, I would like to know what does my constituency want from me and should I go out and get another mandate?

For myself, I believe I have been undermined through the underhanded tactics of certain politicians and certain people, that I for one feel that it has affected my ability to do my job as an elected Member of the 14th Assembly, on the basis of not having the freedom or the ability to knowingly that I have done the best job I can for the people I represent, and having the ability to know that the issues I discuss or the way I vote, I can do it freely without knowing that I will be threatened or

undermining my ability to do the best job for the people of the Mackenzie Delta.

I for one feel that what has happened here is about as low as you can get in regard to the relationship between our community leaders, our politicians, and the people that we serve, which people have used that avenue to divide people in our communities, and divide the leaders of our communities by taking sides on issues at the end of the day that only benefit a few.

For myself, I have always put the faith in the people that I serve. The faith in our elders, the faith in our youth, and the faith in our community leaders, but when that question is asked, and when your ability is undermined, you have to go back out to get another mandate, to see where you stand in the eyes of the electorate, in the people who put us here, not hide behind each other because you think that there is a threat looming out there, that the sky is falling. At the end of the day, we as elected Members of this Legislative Assembly have to get the respect of the people we are here to serve. My view is we have lost that.

We, as 19 Members, should do the honourable thing and go back out, put our names in regard to the ballot, and let the people in our communities say who they want to represent us. I am willing to do that, because I feel threatened by what has happened here, not once, but twice.

I have built a career in regard to politics by way of community politics, aboriginal politics, and now here, in the Legislative Assembly. My name is all I have to show for it. If I do not feel comfortable looking at myself in the mirror, knowing that I know I did the right thing, but was pressured to do something else...I think we should do the right thing.

I will be supporting this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. To the motion. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am tired of talking about this issue. I think it is important for people to realize that this is not a new issue, nor is it an issue that is a one-time deal.

This issue has been around for the past several years. There have been a number of controversial moves made by either the Premier or his staff. Some of these include their questionable involvement in the federal election. The Premier, his staff and various supporters actively campaigned for the Liberal Party. As Members of the Legislative Assembly, we were not elected to support one party over another. We were elected to represent Northerners.

The conflict of interest taping has created turmoil within this Assembly for well over a year. What is happening today is the result of the secret taping of conversations with the Conflict Commissioner by the Premier's staff. On October 29th of last year, I was personally assured by the Premier that his staff would resign and be gone by January, 2002. As we found out in the Auditor's report, although she resigned, she will remain an employee of this government until 2004, which is well into the next Assembly.

Recently, there has been the firing of the complete Power Corporation board, which stemmed from poor communication

and direction by the Premier. Also, during this Assembly, we have seen special warrants being used like blank cheques by Cabinet to fund...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Lafferty, I would like to direct your attention to the motion. Stick to the motion, please.

MR. LAFFERTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to warrant why I support the motion. I am using issues.

As a leader of this government, the Premier is responsible for the Minister's expenditures. These are not the only issues that concern me. What is of greater concern is the lack of inclusion of the Dogrib region in government plans and strategies, despite verbal assurances to the contrary. A couple of examples include the energy strategy and the Corridors for Canada document, which completely overlooked the North Slave. Because of this, I have come to the conclusion that things are not changing and will not change unless there is a change in this government.

Although the vote on Monday was recorded as a ten to five vote in favour of the Premier retaining his office, these numbers need further examination. I had to chair the proceedings, and was therefore ineligible to vote. Another Member was out of town, and therefore missed a vote. He had and continues to have doubts about the Premier's leadership. The people of the North need to know that there were in actuality seven Members who have lost confidence in the Premier. Because Cabinet voted as a bloc on this issue, it could be considered as one vote. Four Regular Members supported Cabinet, making the total in favour of the Premier just five votes.

According to our numbers in the House, if we had all voted, the actual vote for the Premier's continuation would have been 11 for, seven against. If we were to count the bloc vote as one vote, it would have been seven for and five against the Premier continuing in his office.

The conventions around Cabinet solidarity prevented Ministers from voting as they would wish. I have to say that this convention restricts them from representing their own ridings.

The main reason that I support an early election, Mr. Speaker, is that there were only two letters of support sent that asked the Premier to continue in his office.

Last year, when this question arose, there were 23 letters sent in. Mr. Speaker, this speaks for itself, that the people out there no longer have confidence in his office.

Mr. Speaker, I am in full support of dissolving this Assembly because I think it has lost all credibility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. To the motion. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nitah.

MR. NITAH: Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I support this motion. Mr. Speaker, there was a wrong. It is wrong when you give an individual more than that individual deserved. It is wrong when you circumvent existing processes and employment contracts and negotiate a new contract that gives more than that individual deserves.

One of the federal institutions that help us govern ourselves made a report that says the government did not act with

justification or prudence. To address that issue, Mr. Speaker, we started a process. That process was to ask the Premier to step down in a voting scenario. That was defeated. This is the other option that is available to us.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier today, I believe 90 percent of the people who work for the GNWT do not have faith in the government that they work for. With that kind of dissension, how can I expect the people who work for us to follow the direction that we give them? How can I expect our constituents to have faith in us when we try to lead them, and tell them, you know, because of the decisions we make, we cannot help you out because we do not have the money. We do not have the money because we made poor choices. We do not have the money because, hey, does it matter?

The people need to believe in the government that leads them, not only in the Northwest Territories but we have to have credibility outside of the territorial boundaries. We have to have credibility in Ottawa when we go to the Minister of DIAND saying we need more resources, when we go to the Minister of the Environment and say hey, we need to participate in your process, but we need more resources.

We need to have credibility of the Minister of Natural Resources when we say transfer the responsibility to us, as is being discussed right now. We need to have credibility in this office, in this institution when we go on behalf of our constituents and negotiate with the aboriginal governments and the federal government on devolution. By acting like a banana republic, circumventing existing policies, rules and laws, and giving more than what is required, and negotiating a clause within a termination agreement that gives more, that puts government in harm's way. I never saw that before, where a clause is negotiated to the agreement that says if you do not get the money, come and sue us we will pay your lawyer bills. That is not in the best interest of this government. That is not in the best interest of the people of the Northwest Territories.

We have to deliver programs and services that are badly needed. We need housing -- major, major housing. We need to reform our education system so that our students can participate in the labour market that is available today.

We have long line-ups in Health and Social Services. We cannot address those issues with a poor, unaccountable government. We know what we contribute to Canada. We could be a have society, but it is going to be that much more difficult to be a have society if society within Canada does not trust us to make the right judgments.

Mr. Speaker, we have a fairly good idea on this side of the House how the vote is going to turn out. We speak on this and we put this motion forward based on principle -- the principle of accountability and good governance.

We have to have the perception that we are representing our constituents. There is a silent majority out there that is disgusted with how these things have played out. Unfortunately, because of time and other commitments, we cannot go out and poll everybody. We cannot go find out from every individual citizen in the Northwest Territories that will give us some idea of how they feel. I know my constituents want to see responsible and accountable government. They want to see a Premier who is able to make good judgment on their behalf. They want to be able to make sound decisions based

on timely information that is provided to me through the Cabinet, but I have been misled in this House, I believe, on more than one occasion. I cannot make sound decisions based on misinformation, Mr. Speaker.

We all hear all the time that if you get elected to the Legislative Assembly, or any other government that has a four-year mandate, that the last year is pretty much a year that you cannot get anything done, because that is a campaign year. Why do we not take the last year and cut it in half and cut it by three quarters and let's go to the elections. We do have some issues we have to deal with. We have the Human Rights Bill in front of us. I am Chair of the special committee that is reviewing the Official Languages Act. We plan to submit a report during the next session of the Assembly. It is going to require some commitment and hard work by this government to implement. But, with a looming deficit, Mr. Speaker, can we expect that to happen?

We have another special committee that is looking at the relationship between the small, non-tax-based communities with the government, and they have great needs that we have to address. Can they trust us to do that if our government is not accountable and if our bureaucracy is not following through with our direction because of a lack of respect and certainty? I say no, Mr. Speaker. So why not? What is the big difference between November of 2003 and February, 2003? A few months. I say we do not waste that time. I say let's go to the polls. Let's get a new government, a new mandate and achieve what we said we were going to do on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories with a clear conscience and with the support of our bureaucracy and the people we represent, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I will support this motion. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nitah. Before I go to the next person on my list, I wish to draw the House's attention to the clock and that we are approaching 6:00 p.m., the hour of daily adjournment. I seek the House's direction. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 6(1) and have the House sit past the hour of daily adjournment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The honourable Member for Range Lake is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 6(1) and to have the House sit past the hour of daily adjournment. Are there any nays? There are no nays. The House will continue to sit past its regular hours until the orders of the day are completed. Next on my list I have the honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against this motion. I have read the motion. I have some questions on the whereas clauses of this motion.

Mr. Speaker, as the motion states, we were elected into this House in December of 1999. I believe that we were given a mandate by the people who voted us in here. At least, I know that I was given a mandate by the constituents of Range Lake, to do the best job I can to represent them in this House for the duration of time that they elected me into this honourable House. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that there is anyone in this House with power to take that mandate away from me.

Mr. Speaker, as I think about this motion, and I have thought about this and other things that have been happening in this House, it has saddened me greatly to see what has transpired and some of the verbal exchanges that have happened. In all honesty, and in the deepest of my heart, I am not sure if, even if we had the power to do so and even if we were to deny the mandate that the people have given us, that it will serve the best interest of the people in dissolving this House.

Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of a phrase, you know, this is not our sandbox. This is a very serious place that we have been elected to be in to serve the people. This is an honourable House. This is where we were sent by the people to make important decisions. I think it is highly irresponsible for us to say okay, that some of us or all of us even disagree with something so badly that we are just going to pick up our toys and go home and we are going to ask somebody to send us back to the sandbox so that we could come back and play some more.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the issues the Members are raising. It is obvious to me that we have a lot of work to do, so where is the accountability on the part of the Members to say how can we make this work? There is no question in my mind that there is a lot of mending to do.

Mr. Speaker, for me, another reason that I cannot agree with this motion is that I simply have a lot of work to do. I went back and read my election platform, which is on my website, and there are a lot of things that I set out to work for on behalf of the people who elected me.

One of the things is a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for health care professionals. We are on the verge of getting that, if I was to believe the promises made by the Minister of Health. I believe that I owe it to the people in my riding to see that happens, or at least do my best until the very last day to see that.

There are so many things in my platform that I had promised and I am not going to give up at this point and nobody here is going to take that mandate given to me by my people, the people who have elected me in this House. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to go into details of my platform, that is something that I share with my constituents.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker, I take a great offence to anybody here that suggests that somehow I have breached the oath I have sworn at the beginning of this Assembly. That is such a serious allegation. That cannot be made in the heat of the moment, in reaction to something or because we simply do not like the decisions that were made in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I more than any other person here have shown my temper. I have disliked many choices that were made here. I felt that I was violated at times, that my right to speak was breached. There were many occasions where I stayed up all night trying to think about what the best thing to do was. Never once did I think that I had the power to take the mandate of each Member of this House, which was given to them by the people they represent, by the people they were elected to come here for. I take great offence at anybody in this House that suggests that they have the power to take that away from the constituents of my riding.

Mr. Speaker, in one of the clauses it says that the Legislature is of the view that the electorate of the Northwest Territories must

continue to hold the Legislative Assembly accountable for its actions. We speak often about the notion of accountability in this House, and under the system that we have, the only people I am accountable to are the people in Range Lake who have elected me into this House.

Going by the hits I am getting on my website, I have no doubt that this has been a hot issue. Mr. Speaker, I have gotten about 1,000 hits on my website on average this month, and I have seen a graph of it, and the highest graph height is on October 16th, October 25th and October 28th. On my website, there is, word for word, what I have said in this House. I know that in a small way I am being accountable to what I am saying in this House and I have been on the phone talking to people and I have found that when I talked to them and explained to them what is going on and why I am doing what I am doing or say the things I do or the positions I am taking or the votes I am doing, they understand.

They may not all agree, but they understand. I do not need anybody in this House telling me that I am not being accountable to the people who voted me in. In fact, I intend to take the time in the next days and weeks to go out there and explain more about what is going on in this House because as everyone here knows, when we are embroiled in the issues in this House we have very little time to be out there and to talk to the people. I need to do that.

I take offence to anybody who says that I am not being accountable in my job or that I have in any way breached my oath.

I am very puzzled about this clause in the motion that suggests that we are somehow violating the people's right to vote. That is just a point I want to make. I am not going to go there.

Mr. Speaker, on a final point I have said many times in this House that I believe this issue is a lot more than what is going on here. I think that if we had a heart and we really believed in the public interest of this Assembly and the people we serve that we owe it to ourselves to step back and look at why we are where we are and how we got to where we got to, and can we really say, can everyone of us really say that we are blameless?

I think there is enough indignation, righteousness, sanctimoniousness going around for everybody to share here. Equally, there is enough blame to go around for what has happened. As I walk around the hall of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and I have said that to a reporter, last week was not a good week for this Assembly. We had this Auditor General report that said things had to be changed and then we had a court decision that told us the same.

So we are walking around with two black eyes and I do not understand why the Members of this House are so much in a hurry to rush out there and show the world that we have two big black eyes that we have gotten from the authorities much higher and maybe wiser than we are, because we are so embroiled in the issues here that we cannot see from the top to the bottom.

I think we owe it to the people, we owe it to the issues we are dealing with here to deal with those two black eyes, to see how we can improve the situation and spend the rest of the time hopefully concentrating on the many, many issues that I cannot

even go through and move on. For that reason, I will not be supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the motion. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this House was asked to rule and provide direction on two issues stemming from the Auditor General's report. The House did that, clearly. The first recommendation, we agreed with the Auditor General's report. The House also did not agree with the second recommendation in regard to the resignation of the Premier. The decision has been made. We are now faced with another motion saying that because of those decisions the majority should be asked to dissolve and go to an early election.

This has been a long process, a heated debate. During the process, many of us have been vilified and pilloried. The issue of honour and integrity has been brought into question. I would like to clearly point out to all Members in this House that not one of us has a corner on honour and integrity. It is something that we all strive for. As you will find out, none of us are perfect. I stand here today to make that point.

We have been accused of things like misleading the House and other very, very serious accusations. I know there is a heated debate here. I would not trade this type of governance for any other type, but there have been some very strong things said in this House, and I can tell you right now that I as well am ready to go to election.

I answer to my constituents every day. As Minister I try to answer to the people of the Northwest Territories every day. Mr. Speaker, I will answer not only for this particular issue but I will answer for all the work and all the decisions that I have made during my term in the 14th Assembly.

Mr. Nitah said, what is the difference between three months and now? For me, that is one of the issues. We are talking a matter of months. We are in the last year of our term. I as Minister have a very aggressive agenda of things I am trying to accomplish with the departments and the health authorities. As the Member for Thebacha, I have a long list of issues on the go that I do not want to jeopardize in the last year because we have made a hasty decision.

So yes, Mr. Speaker, I am ready to answer to the people and I will answer to the people and I will answer on the date that this Assembly decided on when we were in Ti'oondih, which was November 24th. I will not be supporting this motion and I think we should concentrate on concluding the business of the 14th Assembly and the agenda we had for a better tomorrow.

Let's move on this. Mr. Speaker, I have been here for two Assemblies now and we have been, in one way or another, mired down for about five years in issues related to conflict and ethics and integrity and I think there is a tremendous sense of fatigue across the land with the issue.

I for one, if I can use Mr. Krutko's phrase, I for one would like to see us move ahead, vote on this motion, and let the will of the House be heard, and once it is heard, let's continue to move forward, because I as well have done my poll, and fully expect that we will be concluding our full term in the 14th Assembly, and we have to do it the best we can, through conciliation to do

it together and to try to achieve all the issues for all the constituents in all constituencies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. To the motion. If there are no further speakers, then I will allow Mr. Roland, the mover of the motion, to conclude the debate. Mr. Roland.

MR. ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have heard from a number of Members around the table with their concerns and speaking to the issue, and nobody here denies anybody's right to speak on or vote a certain way. That is the reason we have this style of government. We can all speak and vote as we feel our constituents would want us to.

Let me make it very clear, Mr. Speaker. The reason for this motion was not one of personalities. It is one of integrity, as I see it, and I agree with Minister Miltenberger. I sure do not have the corner on that. I am only just a man, but a man who has decided to live his life different from others, I guess, to try to be better than I was the day before.

Yes, there are, probably every day I have shortcomings and what I set out to do the morning I wake up. Mr. Speaker, every morning for the last number of months, I phone my wife before coming down...when I am down in Yellowknife, to a committee or to session, and we join together in a prayer to help us guide us in our day, to give us strength and to do the things that are right for our family and for this government.

Mr. Speaker, we have all fallen short at one time or another. This is not about where you fall short as a person. You fall short on your education. You fall short on your ability to speak out in this forum. It is about the rules that we have to follow and are set out before us, Mr. Speaker. Take the names away from the issue. Remove the personalities and look specifically at the issue. Would the outcome be the same?

I am not sure what the answer would be on that, but it is the issue here, is a question. As I said in speaking to this the other day, if it were a one-time incident, if it were an isolated incident, then this House, yes, clearly accepted what was put forward, but there is a trail here, Mr. Speaker, that the poorest tracker can find with the incidents involved that come to this.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, once we are done here, that Members will hopefully reflect on this, either as we go to the polls or as we continue to sit in this House and try to hold our seats as honourable Members of the 14th Legislative Assembly.

There will still be more heated debates in this arena, so that the people of the Northwest Territories know their interests are being addressed. I take my commitment seriously to my constituents. I do not know if we know any politician who can say that when they ran for election, that when they were done, the day they were done, the last day of the fourth year, that they can say I have accomplished everything that I set out to do. There is always some unfinished business, and there will always be some unfinished business. Sometimes that unfinished business, the torch has to be handed to the next person that would come along and take an honourable seat in this House.

A number of us Members here are just putting that forward. Let's restore integrity. Let's show the people of the Northwest Territories we are willing to follow our own rules.

There is a song, Mr. Speaker, that says the rich man makes the rules that the poor man must follow. We are not all rich around here, and I know when I am done this career, if it does turn into that, that my pension will not be one that I can ride off into the sunset with, but I have to dust my tools off and get back to work. Mr. Speaker, my time here, I want to remember it as serving at the best of my ability with the public confidence and trust that I will make decisions in the best interest of the public, not for a couple of individuals.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. The debate on the motion is concluded. Is the House ready for a question? A recorded vote has been requested. All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mr. Roland, Mr. Dent, Mr. Bell, Mr. Nitah, Mr. Krutko, Mr. Delorey, Mr. Lafferty.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. All those opposed to the motion, please stand.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Braden, Mr. Steen, Mr. Miltenberger, Mr. Antoine, Mr. Kakfwi, Mr. Handley, Mr. Allen, Mr. Ootes, Ms. Lee.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. All those abstaining from voting, please stand. Thank you. The results of the vote: those in favour, 7; those opposed, 11. There were no abstentions. The motion is defeated. Item 16, motions. Item 17, first reading of bills. Item 18, second reading of bills. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen.

ITEM 18: SECOND READING OF BILLS

Bill 29: An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 29, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to delete provisions that would automatically repeal, at the dissolution of the 14th Legislative Assembly, the electoral districts that return Members to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Steen. We have a motion. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Bill 29 has had second reading. The Chair recognizes the honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Steen.

HON. VINCE STEEN: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2) and have Bill 29, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 2, moved into committee of the whole for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 69(2).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We have a nay. You do not have unanimous consent. Therefore, Bill 29 is referred to a committee. Item 18, second reading of bills. Item 19, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters; Tabled Document 35-14(5), Bills 22, 23, 24 and 28 with Mr. Krutko in the chair.

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

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I call committee of the whole to order. We have several items to deal with. Tabled Document 35-14(5), Bills 22, 23, 24 and 28. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to recommend that committee consider Bill 22 followed by Bill 23 then Bill 24 and Bill 28. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We will start with Bill 22 after a short break.

-- Break

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I will call committee of the whole back to order. When we adjourned we agreed to begin with Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act. At this time I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he will be bringing in any witnesses.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does 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. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, with me are Mr. Dave Murray, the deputy minister of Health and Social Services and Rebecca Veinott, legislative counsel for the Department of Justice.

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

Yesterday before we left off we went clause by clause and the last clause we had to deal with was the amendment to clause 7 of Bill 22. At this time I would like to recognize Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as I have pointed out in our discussions yesterday, I had been approached by people who pointed out the issue that emotional treatment that is set out in clause 7 is not defined in the act and there was a real concern, not only about that but about the phrase "may be in danger." The concern that leaves things fairly wide open.

The recommendation that I was given was that we should probably stick to the wording that was probably found in the act before in terms of not opening the door to uncertainty or to leaving the whole issue around reporting when a child is in need of protection, not making it quite so uncertain as what it would be under this new act.

Looking at it, I could see the concern. Therefore, I would like to move a motion.

Committee Motion 61-14(5): To Amend Clause 7 of Bill 22

I MOVE, Mr. Chairman, that clause 7 of Bill 22 be amended by deleting proposed subsection (8)(1) and by substituting the following:

(8)(1) A person who has information of the need of protection of a child shall, without delay, report the matter:

- (a) to a child protection worker; or
- (b) if a child protection worker is not available to a peace officer or an authorized person.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour. All those against. The motion is carried. Clause 7, as amended.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Bill as a whole, as amended.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree that Bill 22 is ready for third reading, as amended?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Bill 22 is now ready for third reading as amended. I would like to thank the Minister and his witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, can you escort the witnesses out?

The next item we agreed to deal with was Bill 23, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2002. At this time I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he had any comments. Mr. Allen.

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do. The purpose of Bill 23, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2002, is to amend various statutes of the Northwest Territories for which minor changes are proposed or in which errors or inconsistencies have been identified and brought to the attention of the Department of Justice by other departments and by Department of Justice staff.

Departments responsible for the administration of the various statutes being amended by Bill 23 have each reviewed and approved the changes to the statutes under their authority.

Most changes proposed in Bill 23 are minor in nature and many consist of technical corrections to either the English or French version of a statute.

Other changes have the effect of repealing certain provisions of the statutes that have expired, lapsed or otherwise ceased to exist.

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

In order for an amendment to be included in the bill, it had to meet the following criteria:

- (a) it must not be controversial;
- (b) it must not involve the spending of public funds;
- (c) it must not prejudicially affect the rights of persons; and
- (d) it must not create a new offence or subject a new class of persons to an existing offence.

Mr. Chairman, in our view the amendments proposed in Bill 23 meet those criteria. I will be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Allen. At this time I would like to ask the committee responsible for reviewing the bill if they have any comments. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight met on Monday, October 28, 2002 to review Bill 23, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act. As the Minister has noted this act makes minor amendments to a number of statutes.

Committee members asked for clarification of the intent of clause 11 which amends the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Act and the Minister's staff advised that this clause is intended to make the act consistent so that it is clear that the president of the Housing Corporation is a member of the public service.

Committee members also asked for the intent of clarification in clause 14 which amends the Young Offenders Act. The Minister's staff advised that this amendment will make the act consistent with the federal Young Offenders Act and will allow the Minister to continue to make appointments to youth justice committees in terms that are in keeping with the wishes of communities.

During review of the bill with the Minister the committee and the Minister agreed to an amendment to the bill. This amendment will amend the Marriage Act to allow the fees for marriage licenses to be set in regulations rather than in the act itself.

Mr. Chairman, individual committee members may have questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Yes, I will.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

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

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to introduce Mr. Mark Aitken, director of legislation, Department of Justice.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome witness. General comments on Bill 23. Detail. Clause by clause. 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): Clause 4.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 5.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 7.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 8.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 9.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 10.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 12.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 13.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 14.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does committee agree that Bill 23 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Bill 23 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, witness. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witness out.

The next bill we agreed to deal with is Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act. At this time I would like to ask the Minister responsible for introducing the bill if he has any opening comments. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act. The bill proposes to increase that year's maximum insurable remuneration, known as YMIR, from \$63,350 to \$64,500 effective January 1, 2003. This amount would apply for both benefit and assessment purposes.

The year's maximum insurable remuneration is a fundamental element of workers' compensation. It is used to determine benefits payable to an injured worker, as well as the amount of payroll for which an employer will be assessed in the year. The YMIR is currently set at \$63,350.

When a worker becomes entitled to workers' compensation in the Northwest Territories, he or she is paid 90 percent of net earnings for as long as the disability continues. If a worker's earnings exceed the YMIR, this calculation is based on the maximum YMIR of \$63,350.

Employers, meanwhile, are assessed according to their payroll. When a worker receives a salary greater than YMIR, the employer is only assessed on payroll up to the maximum YMIR of \$63,350.

Section 52 of the Workers' Compensation Act states that the Workers' Compensation Board must review the YMIR every year. This review is completed according to board policy and a recommendation is forward to my office.

Bill 24 will allow the WCB to provide full replacement compensation to 70 percent to 80 percent of the Northwest Territories workforce. This means that 70 to 80 percent of full-time workers will be fully compensated in the event of injury under the new YMIR.

The YMIR was last amended by this House in the year 2000. With the proposed change the Northwest Territories will have the third highest YMIR in Canada. In closing, I look forward to hearing any comments on Bill 24 and I am happy to answer any questions from the committee. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this time I would like to ask the committee responsible for reviewing the bill if they have any comments. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight held public hearings on Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act on Monday, October 28, 2002. This bill

proposes to increase the year's maximum insurable remuneration, or YMIR, from its current \$63,350 to \$64,500 effective January 1, 2003.

YMIR is used to calculate the maximum benefits payable to injured workers as well as the amount of payroll an employer will be assessed on the upcoming year. The consequence of increasing the benefit payable to workers is a corresponding increase to the amount of payroll that an employer has to pay WCB assessment on.

The Workers' Compensation Board has a yearly statutory requirement to review the YMIR. The committee was told that in reviewing the YMIR the board determines whether the rate in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut covers 70 to 80 percent of workers in replacing their total income.

Mr. Chairman, in addition we also understand that the board considers whether the YMIR is in the top three in Canada and whether the board has one of the three lowest assessment rates in the country.

According to information provided by the WCB, the YMIR increase proposed in Bill 24 accomplishes this. This completes the committee's review of Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act. Individual members of the committee may have questions and comments for the Minister as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): At this time I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he will be bringing in any witnesses. Mr. Handley.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, with me are Penny Ballantyne, president of the Workers' Compensation Board; Diane Buckland, legislative counsel with the Department of Justice and Andy Wong, chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): General comments with regard to Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act. Detail. Clause by clause. 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 committee agree that Bill 24 is ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Bill 24 is now ready for third reading. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out.

The next bill we agreed to deal with is Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2. At this time I would like to ask the Minister responsible for introducing the bill if he has any opening comments. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2. The bill proposes to give the Workers' Compensation Board the ability to purchase or construct real property. The Workers' Compensation Act does not permit this at present. Without the ability to acquire and dispose of real property, WCB must lease space for its operational requirements and is unable to take advantage of opportunities that might arise from ownership of property.

The bill before you requires the Workers' Compensation Board to seek the approval of the Commissioner in Executive Council to purchase real property that has a value exceeding \$100,000; to construct or alter a building where the estimated value of the construction or alteration exceeds \$100,000; or sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any of its real property that has a value exceeding \$100,000.

This provides Cabinet with the ability to ensure that the Workers' Compensation Board is acting in the best interests of its stakeholders and in protecting the accident fund. Six of the nine Workers' Compensation Boards which have the authority to purchase and dispose of real property require approval from their jurisdiction's Lieutenant Governor in Council for property transactions or for property transactions above a certain value.

In closing, I look forward to hearing any comments and questions from the committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): At this time I would like to ask the committee responsible for reviewing the bill if they have any general comments. Mr. Dent.

MR. DENT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight has completed its review of Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2. This act will give the Workers' Compensation Board that authority to acquire and dispose of real property. Individual committee members may have questions or comments as we proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): At this time I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the bill if he will be bringing in any witnesses. Mr. Handley.

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, with me are: Penny Ballantyne, president of the Workers' Compensation Board;

Diane Buckland, legal counsel, Department of Justice; and Andy Wong, chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): I would like to welcome the witnesses back. We are dealing with Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2. General comments. Detail?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Clause 2. Mr. Handley.

Committee Motion 62-14(5): To Amend Clause 2 of Bill 28 (Carried)

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion; that clause 2 of Bill 28 be amended by striking out "lease or" in proposed paragraph 60.1(2)(a).

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): We will just wait for the motion to be handed out. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour? All those against? The motion is carried. Clause 2, as amended.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Does the committee agree that Bill 28 is ready for third reading as amended?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Krutko): Bill 28 is now ready for third reading as amended. I would like to thank the witnesses, thank the Minister. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you escort the witnesses out. At this time, I would like to ask, what is the wish of the committee? Those were the items we agreed to deal with. 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 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 22, Bill 23, Bill 24, and Bill 28, and would like to report progress with two motions being adopted, and that Bills 23 and 24 are ready for third reading, and that Bills 22 and 28 are ready for third reading as amended. Mr. Speaker, I move that 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 Inuvik Boot Lake, seconds the motion. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed, please signify. Thank you. The motion is carried. Item 21, third reading of bills. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

ITEM 21: THIRD READING OF BILLS

Bill 1: Human Rights Act

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Bill 1, Human Rights Act, be read for the third time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Allen. We have a motion. The motion is in order. Question has been called. All those in favour? Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Bill 1 has had third reading.

-- Applause

Item 21, third reading of bills. The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

Bill 26: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2002-2003

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 26, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2002-2003, be read for the third time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Bill 26 has had third reading. Item 21, third reading of bills. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to proceed with third reading of Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The honourable Member is seeking consent to proceed with his motion. Are there any nays? There are no nays, Mr. Miltenberger. You may proceed with your bill.

Bill 22: An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act, be read for the third time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. The House is ready for the question. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Bill 22 has had third reading. 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 24, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking consent to proceed with Bill 24. Are there any nays? There are no nays, Mr. Minister. You may continue.

Bill 24: An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation 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 24 has had third reading. Item 21, third reading of bills. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. Allen.

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to proceed with third reading of Bill 23, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2002.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking consent to proceed with third reading of Bill 23. Are there any nays? There are no nays, Mr. Allen. You may continue.

Bill 23: Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2002

HON. ROGER ALLEN: Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Bill 23, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2002, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We have a motion. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. All those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried. Bill 23 has had third reading. 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 28, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member is seeking consent to proceed with third reading of Bill 28. There are no nays, Mr. Minister, you may continue.

Bill 28: An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker,

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre that Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2, be read for the third time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We have a motion. The motion is in order. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour, please signify. All those opposed. Thank you. The motion is carried. Bill 28 has had third reading. Item 20, third reading of bills.

Colleagues, I understand that her honour, the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories is prepared to enter the Chamber and give assent to bills and to prorogue this session of the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Clerk, would you attend to and escort the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories into the Chamber.

ASSENT TO BILLS

COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (Hon. Glenna Hansen): Please be seated. As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I am pleased to assent to the following bills: Bill 1, Human Rights Act; Bill 15, An Act to Amend Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act; Bill 16, Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act; Bill 18, Forgiveness of Debts Act, 2002-2003; Bill 19, Write-Off of Debts Act, 2002-2003; Bill 21, Health Statutes Amendment Act; Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act; Bill 23, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2002; Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act; Bill 25, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 4, 2001-2002; Bill 26, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 2, 2002-2003; Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Elections Act, No. 2; Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, No. 2.

Prior to proroguing this session I wish to announce that the Sixth Session of the 14th Legislative Assembly will convene on Thursday, October 31, 2002 at 1:30 p.m.

As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I hereby prorogue the Fifth Session of the 16th Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

-- PROROGATION

